



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

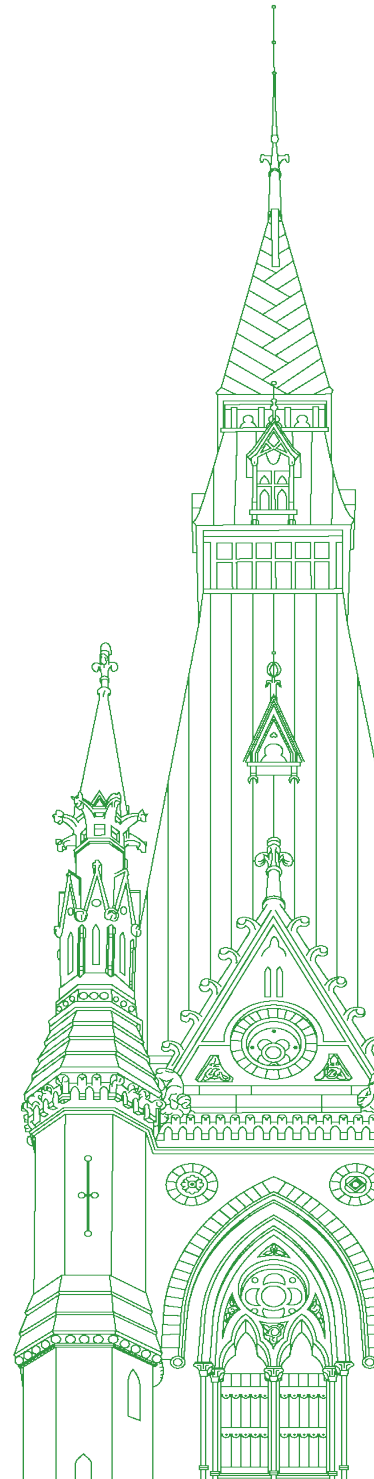
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 8, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, in relation to Bill S-205, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to another act (interim release and domestic violence recognizance orders). The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

I would also like to say congratulations to Senator Boisvenu, who brought forward this bill and who has been a voice for so many victims across Canada. The 11 of us really appreciated working on such an important bill that had such personal intent.

INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs in relation to Bill C-53, an act respecting the recognition of certain Métis governments in Alberta, Ontario and Saskatchewan, to give effect to treaties with those governments and to make consequential amendments to other acts. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

I also would like to thank all of our witnesses and particularly the representatives from the Métis organizations in Alberta, Ontario and Saskatchewan, and the national Métis representative, for their persistence in helping us get through this much-needed legislation at committee stage.

I wish the House all the best in seeing this through to the finish line and on completion through royal assent.

COPYRIGHT ACT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-374, an act to amend the Copyright Act (Crown copyright).

He said: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my seconder of the bill.

This is important for Canada, in particular for businesses, researchers and educators. The act to amend the Copyright Act would actually address a law that was created back in 1911, only adjusted in 1921, where right now, government research, innovation papers and a number of materials are not released to the public. That is counter to most of our other trading partners. In fact, I think Canada is alone on this. Bill C-374 would actually amend and provide those publications to the public, which is something that businesses would support, that researchers would support, that educators would support and that innovators would support. That is the reason we want this amended right now because it goes back to a law created in 1911. That is unfortunate, but we can correct this today.

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

* * *

• (1005)

PETITIONS

CYBERSECURITY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have three petitions to present.

The first one is with regard to amending Canada's policies with cybersecurity. Currently right now, Canada is exposed with regard to cyber hacking, and we have no international agreements that significantly protect Canadians and businesses. In fact, cyber-attacks and ransomware, per population in Canada, are the second highest in the world with global cybercrime costing in the trillions of dollars. Not having proper supports in public policy is putting businesses and individuals at risk.

The petitioners are calling for a national security licensing body to govern Canadian cybersecurity. It would be a progressive way to advance and would also increase the number of people who are occupationally involved in cybersecurity. It would bring us in line to be a world leader.

Routine Proceedings

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the next two very important petitions are on the same subject matter.

The first calls for a ceasefire in Gaza. There is currently a siege on Gaza, which has caused tens of thousands of injuries, and lives have been lost. Sadly, there is also a blockade. The petitioners are calling for countries to meet their international agreements as a potential genocide is taking place. They call for the lifting of the siege and, more importantly, for a ceasefire.

The second petition is on the same subject matter, with regard to Gaza being occupied and attacks increasing. At the time this petition was started, there were around 2,000 casualties. The number of wounded is now significantly higher. It has also affected hospitals and schools, and it involves mostly women and children in the genocide. The petitioners are calling on Canada to call for a ceasefire and to bring itself in line with the more traditional role that Canada has had with regard to the conflict taking place in the Middle East.

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very proud to present a petition from the citizens of Châteauguay—Lacolle in support of Bill C-57, which has just been passed by the House.

[*English*]

Citizens in my riding affirm their unwavering commitment to Ukraine and want the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement to be updated.

FIRST RESPONDERS TAX CREDIT

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, a petition calling for an increase in the amount of tax credits for volunteer firefighters, in particular, for the great volunteer firefighters from Redvers, Saskatchewan, as well as the search and rescue volunteer service.

These first responders provide valuable and essential services to all Canadians, and we deeply appreciate the role they play in keeping us all safe.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have four petitions to present today.

The individuals in the first petition are very concerned about the sexually explicit material that is available on the Internet. It is demeaning and sexually violent and, unfortunately, it is extremely easy to be seen by young people. Because it is made for commercial purposes and is not protected by any effective age verification method, the petitioners are very concerned with what is happening to young people.

Therefore, the petitioners are calling on the government to adopt Bill S-210, the protecting young persons from exposure to pornography act. They say that online age verification was the primary

recommendation made by stakeholders in the 2017 study by the Standing Committee on Health.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, my second petition is with regard to maternity and parental benefits when couples have a child. However, adoptive and intended parents are at a disadvantage under the current system and they should have equal access as new parents. Bill C-318 would deliver equitable access to parental leave for adoptive and intended parents.

I know there is support for this bill across the House, and the petitioners are calling for a royal recommendation on Bill C-318.

• (1010)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, my next petition states it is well established that the risk of violence against women increases when they are pregnant, and justice requires that an attacker who abuses a pregnant woman and the preborn child she is carrying be sentenced accordingly. The sentence should match the crime.

The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to legislate the abuse of a pregnant woman and/or the infliction of harm on a preborn child as aggravating circumstances for sentencing purposes in the Criminal Code.

FIREARMS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, in my last petition, the petitioners are seeking to support the health and safety of Canadian firearms owners, law-abiding citizens of Canada. They acknowledge that sound moderators are the only universally recognized health and safety devices that are criminally prohibited in Canada.

The petitioners are calling on the government to allow legal firearms owners the option to purchase new sound moderators for all legal hunting and sport shooting activities.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I rise to present two petitions.

The first is on behalf of over 3,200 people from across the country, who note that people with disabilities often face barriers to employment along with higher costs associated with health care and housing. They note that the Canada disability benefit was delayed for over two years, as the first attempt to pass the law known as Bill C-35 was postponed due to the 2021 election. They note that the Canada disability benefit would provide much needed financial support for people with disabilities and that 40% of those living in poverty are those with disabilities.

They note that the minister responsible told Canadians that implementing the Canada disability benefit is expected to take at least 18 months following the passage of Bill C-22 in June 2023. In fact, that has been pushed back further still. They note that insufficient supports in current disability programs, both federally and provincially, present a significant risk of life and health for people with disabilities across the country living in legislative poverty.

They go on to note that the federal government has refused to provide an interim disability emergency response benefit similar to the CERB that was provided in the pandemic. They also note that back payments are provided to eligible recipients for other disability benefits, like the disability tax credit, and they note that the federal government has yet to budget the necessary funds for the Canada disability benefit.

As a result, they have two calls in their petition to the Government of Canada. The first is to provide back payments to eligible Canada disability benefit recipients covering the time from when the Canada Disability Benefit Act received royal assent in June 2023. The second is to budget the necessary funds for the Canada disability benefit into budget 2023 to show that the government is committed to providing the Canada disability benefit to the disability community as soon as possible.

FIRST RESPONDERS TAX CREDIT

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, the second petition notes that volunteer firefighters account for 71% of Canada's total firefighting essential first responders. They note that the tax code in Canada currently allows volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers to claim a \$3,000 tax credit if 200 hours of volunteer services were completed in a calendar year. It works out to a mere \$450 a year. If they volunteer more than 200 hours, which many of them do, then the tax credit becomes even less.

They go on to note various reasons this tax credit is insufficient. They also go on to call for the Government of Canada to support Bill C-310 and to enact amendments to subsection 118.06(2) and 118.07(2) of the Income Tax Act in order to increase the amount of the tax credits for volunteer firefighting and for search and rescue volunteer services from \$3,000 to \$10,000.

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have signatures here from all across the country. Petitioners are asking for natural health products to be more accessible and for the new regulations to exempt natural health products, because many people depend on them to stay healthy so that they do not need to buy prescription drugs.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a number of petitions to present to the House today.

The first petition calls on the Liberal government to not involve itself in decisions that should be made by parents and by provinces. It identifies the fact that the Liberal government sought to interfere in New Brunswick's policy in this regard and, more recently, in policy decisions in Alberta.

Routine Proceedings

Petitioners note as well the statements of the Conservative leader calling on the government to not interfere in decisions that should be made by provinces and by parents, further noting that parents care about the well-being of their children and love them more than any state-run institution. The role of government is to support families and to respect parents, not to dictate to them how decisions should be made for their children.

• (1015)

FREEDOM OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition is in support of an excellent private member's bill I put forward, Bill C-257. This bill would add political belief and activity as prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Petitioners note that Canadians should be protected from discrimination, including political discrimination, and that it is a fundamental Canadian right to be politically active and vocal. Further, they note our democracy is well served by ensuring people feel the freedom to express themselves politically without worry about employment-related or other reprisal based on their political views.

The petition asks the House to support Bill C-257 and to defend the rights of Canadians to peacefully express their political opinions.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition relates to International Development Week. I am sure that petitioners join me in wishing a happy International Development Week to all those who are marking the occasion. It is a time for discussion and for advocacy.

Petitioners note some of the key failures in the Liberal government's international development policy. They note the Auditor General's report highlighting how the Liberals' so-called feminist international assistance policy has failed to measure results in terms of impacting the lives of women and girls. They further note how the approach of the government has shown a lack of respect for cultural values and the autonomy of women in developing countries by pushing positions that may violate local laws.

Further, petitioners highlight the Muskoka initiative by the previous Conservative government, which involved historic investments in the well-being of women and girls, achieved value for money, measured results and actually responded to priorities identified by local women.

Privilege

Therefore, petitioners call on the government to align international development spending with the wise approach of the Muskoka initiative, focusing on meeting basic needs of vulnerable women rather than pushing ideological agendas.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition raises concerns about and expresses opposition to proposals for the expansion of euthanasia to include children.

It notes a proposal to legalize euthanasia for minors, including even very young children. Petitioners find the proposal deeply disturbing. They believe that killing children is always wrong and they call on the government to block any attempt to legalize euthanasia, killing or facilitated suicide for minors.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would next like to present a petition regarding human rights in Hong Kong, especially as they relate to immigration.

Petitioners note that there has been a severe decline in the freedoms in Hong Kong. Further, people charged in Hong Kong for political offences, through a justice system that is clearly now severely broken, people who have done nothing wrong and have advocated for freedom and democracy and nonetheless might have been subject to criminal charges in Hong Kong, have difficulty getting a police certificate, etc. Petitioners note that these challenges would impact the ability of these people in Hong Kong to immigrate to Canada.

Petitioners therefore ask the government to recognize the politicization of the judiciary in Hong Kong and its impact on the legitimacy and validity of criminal convictions, to affirm its commitment to render all national security law charges and convictions irrelevant for the purposes of Canadian immigration. Further, they ask the government to create a mechanism by which Hong Kong people with convictions related to the pro-democracy movement may provide an explanation for such convictions, on the basis of which government officials could grant exceptions to Hong Kong people who would otherwise be deemed inadmissible to Canada on the basis of criminality. Petitioners also ask the government to work with like-minded allies on this.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the final petition raises concerns about the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in the PRC and calls on the government to do more to combat this.

* * *

• (1020)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED MISLEADING COMMENTS BY THE PRIME MINISTER

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question of privilege raised on February 6, by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle concerning the statements the Prime Minister made in the House.

[*English*]

The member across the aisle has attempted to conflate two separate events. The first event took place in a joint sitting of Parliament for an address by the President of Ukraine. The second was a special event outside Parliament.

The Prime Minister was asked questions in the House about the events during the joint sitting of Parliament for the address. The Prime Minister said that neither he nor his office was involved with the invitation to the individual in question for the parliamentary event.

The former Speaker admitted to the House that the decision to invite the individual was his, and his alone. The Prime Minister stated, with respect to the parliamentary event—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. government House leader seems to be debating the issue. What point of order is he raising?

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the government House leader is responding to a question of privilege raised by the official opposition. I think he should be provided the amount of time and discretion needed in order to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry the hon. the member's mic was cut off, but I understand what he is saying.

I will allow the hon. government House leader to continue.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister was asked questions in the House about the events during the joint sitting of Parliament for the address. The Prime Minister said that neither he nor his office was involved with the invitation to the individual in question for the parliamentary event. The former Speaker admitted to the House that the decision to invite the individual was his, and his alone.

Points of Order

The Prime Minister stated, with respect to the parliamentary event, “The Leader of the Opposition knows that not one parliamentarian was aware” and “no parliamentarian knew the name or the identity of the person he welcomed to this House and recognized.” The member acknowledges the fact that it was the Speaker who invited the individual to the parliamentary event, when he said, “it is understood that this individual's son approached the then Speaker's constituency office about securing an invitation to the Ottawa address.” The Speaker then, according to his statement in the House, invited the individual to the parliamentary event, and he stated that it was his decision to do so, apologized to the House for doing so, and, as a result of this action, resigned as Speaker.

The member alleges, or, I would say, speculates, that the Speaker invited the individual only because that individual was invited to another event by the Prime Minister. There are no facts to support this claim, and it should therefore be treated as a speculative assumption. However, the Prime Minister has been clear that neither he nor his office was involved in the invitation of the individual in question to the parliamentary event. The former Speaker stated this fact in the House, which clearly corroborates the statements made by the Prime Minister and other ministers in this place. There is a long tradition in the House that members should be taken at their word, especially when there are no facts that would bring the remarks into question.

By conflating the two events into one, the member is trying to leave the impression that these events were coordinated as one. That claim is not supported by the facts and is not supported by statements made by the Prime Minister or his ministers in the House. I would point to the statement the Prime Minister made, which was referenced by the member across the way, on September 27, 2023. He stated, “we apologized today on behalf of all parliamentarians. For the past few days, we have been saying how sorry we are about the mistake made by the Speaker of the House of Commons.”

The matter of the invitation of the individual by the former Speaker is currently before the procedure and House affairs committee for consideration. Let us let the committee do its work. The referral of the matter to the committee was founded on the former Speaker's acknowledgement of his sole responsibility for inviting the individual to the parliamentary event. The member referenced page 85 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, where it states that cases of privilege involve “the provision of deliberately misleading information to the House or one of its committees by a Minister or by a Member.”

There are no facts that support either that the Prime Minister misled the House concerning the invitation of the individual to the parliamentary event, or that any minister or member deliberately provided information that misled the House. The facts speak otherwise. The Prime Minister has been clear. The Speaker has been clear. There are no facts to dispute those claims. By trying to conflate two separate events, the member is twisting the narrative into a situation that bears no resemblance to what the House was debating in the fall.

The question is a matter of debate and not a question of privilege.

• (1025)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the hon. government House leader's providing additional information. It will certainly be taken into consideration as the matter continues to be looked into.

We have a point of order from the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, with respect to the House leader's point of order, I request that he table for the House all of the documentation to back up every statement he made, including the invitation that the former Speaker sent to this individual. All MPs know that it is a matter of record and practice for the Speaker of the House to send a formal invitation for any event they have.

We look forward to being provided with that information and all other supporting documents for every statement he made.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will take the hon. member's comments, in addition to the point of order, under advisement.

We are now going to another point of order, from the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

AMENDMENTS TO BILL C-318 AT COMMITTEE STAGE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order respecting the committee consideration of Bill C-318, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code with respect to adoptive and intended parents, standing in the name of the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Now that the bill has been reported from committee and is now in the possession of the House, I would like to draw the attention of the Speaker to amendments made at committee that should be ruled inadmissible.

During the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities' consideration of the bill, amendments were made to clauses 1, 8, 14 and 17 that exceed the scope of the bill as adopted at second reading. Moreover, the amendments infringe on the financial prerogative of the Crown. Without commenting on the merits of the amendments, I will say that each of the four amendments seeks to add a new concept to the bill and therefore exceeds the scope of the bill as adopted at second reading.

I would also add that, in addition to exceeding the scope of the bill, the amendments would seek to authorize new and distinct spending for purposes not authorized by the Employment Insurance Act or any other statute or appropriation.

During clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, the chair ruled as follows in relation to the amendment to clause 1. He stated:

Business of Supply

The current amendment attempts to create another benefit, whereby an indigenous child could be placed with a claimant different from the child's parents, following different processes from the provincial adoption process as stated in the bill, and the claimant could be entitled to obtain a 15-week benefit drawn from the treasury.

As *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states on page 772:

“Since an amendment may not infringe upon the financial initiative of the Crown, it is inadmissible if it imposes a charge on the public treasury or if it extends the objects or purposes or relaxes the conditions and qualifications specified in the royal recommendation.”

In the opinion of the chair, the amendment proposes a new scheme, one that imposes a new charge on the public treasury, and as such it would require a royal recommendation. Therefore I rule the amendment inadmissible.

The member for Winnipeg Centre moved a motion to challenge the ruling of the Chair. The committee voted to overturn the ruling of the chair, and the clause was adopted as amended.

Since the same amendment was moved on clauses 8, 14 and 17, the chair ruled these amendments inadmissible on the same grounds as the amendment to clause 1. The decision of the chair was then challenged for each of these amendments and the—

• (1030)

[*Translation*]

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

A member has risen on a point of order.

I know that many members ask for respect in the House. However, when someone from an opposing party has the floor, those same members speak at the same time even though it is not the time to have discussions. This applies to both sides of the House and I hope MPs will show more respect to the person who has the floor.

[*English*]

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, since the same amendment was moved on clauses 8, 14 and 17, the Chair ruled these amendments inadmissible on the same grounds as the amendment to clause 1. The decision of the chair was then challenged for each of these amendments, and the chair's ruling was overturned. The committee then proceeded to adopt the amendment in question to clauses 8, 14 and 17.

Since the amendments were deemed inadmissible by the chair of the committee on the grounds that they exceeded the scope of the bill and give rise to the need for a royal recommendation, I therefore submit that the amendments be struck from the bill and a new version of the bill, without the offending amendments, be reprinted for consideration at report stage of the said bill.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will certainly consider that and come back to the House.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I rise on the previous point of order. We just want to block a space to come back to give further information.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL IMMIGRATION TARGETS**

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ) moved:

That the House:

(a) recall its unanimous vote of November 1, 2023, calling on the government “to review its immigration targets starting in 2024, after consultation with Quebec, the provinces and territories, based on their integration capacity, particularly in terms of housing, health care, education, French language training and transportation infrastructure, all with a view to successful immigration”;

(b) call on the Prime Minister to convene a meeting with his counterparts of Quebec, the provinces and the territories in order to consult them on their respective integration capacities; and

(c) call on the government to table in the House, within 100 days, a plan for revising federal immigration targets in 2024 based on the integration capacity of Quebec, the provinces and the territories.

He said: Madam Speaker, I was afraid that I would never get a chance to speak because my esteemed colleague read about four cereal boxes. It was quite interesting. As La Fontaine would have said, it is the fable of the Liberal who was afraid to let the Bloc speak. My colleague thought that he would speak for as long as possible, to take up time on opposition day.

Like everyone who reads francophone newspapers, he saw a Leger poll this morning showing that Quebecers and Canadians basically strongly disagree with the immigration policies of what is left of this government. However, this gives me the opportunity to repeat in the House what I had the chance to say in other places. Anyone who lives in Quebec and who wants to be a Quebecer is a Quebecer. No matter where they come from, how many generations or how many days they have been in Quebec, they are as much Quebecers as anyone in the House.

The world is going to get smaller and smaller, not necessarily geographically—although the surface area of the continents will shrink marginally as the oceans rise—but because there are more and more of us on the planet and resources are going to become less and less abundant, it is going to force more and more people to seek a better life elsewhere. The “elsewhere” refers primarily to the northern hemisphere, America and Quebec. We will have to manage this responsibility toward the people who choose to settle in Quebec with generosity, but also responsibly. I am tempted to say that this must be done in accordance with the rules and the rule of law, which is also a variable that the government does not really understand.

This is something that Quebec society, an extremely generous host society, must carefully consider, bound by duty and tradition. Some people come to this continent on the basis of misrepresentation, to some extent. They arrive in Quebec, but their dream was to come to America. When people think of America, they tend to think of the United States, as opposed to Canada or Quebec. In many cases, they are told that Canada is an English-speaking country, but they arrive in Quebec, where French is the language that is spoken. They wonder what this crazy place they have come to is. They are told that it is a French-speaking place in an English-speaking country. They arrive at Dorval, where everything is in English. They are told that they can speak the language of their choice, because everyone will adapt. However, it is suggested that they choose English if they are on the Island of Montreal, because they will be understood wherever they go. They wonder, "What kind of crazy place have I landed in?" It is a little frustrating. They are given mixed messages, which ultimately misrepresent the situation.

When these people get informed and consult the media, it is a shock for them to see that there is a whole debate surrounding language: They hear about Quebec and Canada, about French and English. They realize that anglicization is persistently being funded. The message being sent to them is completely ambiguous at best.

The systemic part of this debate are the accusations against Quebecers who want to preserve their language while offering a generous welcome. The primary responsibility of a society is to teach the language. If you settle in Italy, you are encouraged to learn Italian. If you settle in Sweden, you are encouraged to learn Swedish, even though a lot of people there speak English. In Quebec, we are mean if we tell people that it would not be a bad idea to learn French. Speaking French can be useful at work or when buying a litre of milk at the corner store. This is not an anomaly. The anomaly is making people feel guilty when they make that request. It is a very clever, but frankly vicious, strategy.

That said, the issues related to asylum seekers are of concern to all Quebecers and, I imagine, all Canadians. When I say "all", I am including Quebecers who are more or less recent immigrants. People of all backgrounds must participate in this discussion because they are part of the "us".

• (1035)

I sometimes wonder whether recent immigrants are all that keen to take in refugees who are not truly refugees.

Currently, the numbers being what they are, people from all over the world, including certain hot spots, are arriving in Quebec and in Canada—especially in Quebec, despite the childish arguing going on over numbers—under just about any pretext and with just about any type of visa, primarily a visitor's visa. They plan to claim refugee status because they know that, even though they are not actually refugees, at worst, they will get a few good years living in peace. What a boon.

Soon, as part of a quick tour of Quebec, we will be speaking with Quebecers who are immigrants. I wonder whether those Quebecers think that this is right. I wonder whether they are asking themselves the same questions we are. We know full well that there are people who slip through the Canadian sieve, people who engage in

Business of Supply

criminal behaviour here, primarily human smugglers, but also car thieves, whom we have been talking about lately, gun smugglers and drug smugglers. Immigrants must be wondering the same things. That is not to say this applies to everyone. I think it is a very small minority.

The people who choose to move to Quebec and Canada seeking a better life are just as honourable as those who already live here and more honourable than quite a lot of them, naming no names.

I wonder if the immigrant Muslim community is happy that we are foolishly letting in radical extremists who promote violence with the blessing of the government, which refuses to take action and hides behind the fig leaf of religion. I wonder if these people have opinions similar to just about anyone else. I think they do, and I think that our duty is to promote successful immigration.

I want to debunk the myth that immigration is monolithic, that all immigrants were the same. That is not at all true, and I am going to show that there are different categories of immigrants, although my classification system is not absolute.

Of course, there are international students. There are a lot of them. Not only are they an important source of funding for Quebec's universities and post-secondary institutions, but they are also a source and a vector of knowledge and culture. In fact, that is their primary purpose. This is a category that Quebec welcomes and wants to continue to welcome generously.

There are temporary foreign workers. There are some major economic sectors in Quebec where those workers are desperately needed. There are abuses happening, where work permits that were supposed to be temporary are being automatically renewed for years. These people are completely integrated into our society, but rarely in the regions and rarely in French, so that system needs improvement. The immigration of temporary foreign workers is extremely important. As I mentioned before, of course, there is the temporary immigration of asylum seekers.

The arguments over numbers aside, we can see that Quebec is doing a lot more than its share. It is almost certain that over half of those immigrants are settling in Quebec, which has resulted in about \$470 million in spending. The federal government told Quebec to pay for that and said that it would pay Quebec back. However, when it came time for the federal government to pay up, the Minister of Immigration made comments that were crude at best, and I am still waiting for him to apologize for saying that I was comparing immigrants to heat pumps. That is vulgar, irresponsible and untrue, and he should apologize. I am sure the Speaker will agree with me.

What is more, when it came time to pay the debt, the Liberals said that they would not pay it but that they would give us \$100 million for temporary housing. We do not know where they came up with that dollar amount for temporary housing for the future. Quebec is taking in half the people, but it is not getting half the money. Meanwhile, Toronto is doing fine as usual. That funding does not cover the past debt, but the government is trying to sell people on that solution.

Business of Supply

● (1040)

In short, Canada is a deadbeat when it comes to Quebec, but we already knew that.

Taking in asylum seekers temporarily is not economic immigration. We welcome asylum seekers not for economic reasons, but for humanitarian reasons. That makes the abuse of the system even more heinous. Some people really need help, but others swoop in and take the help those people need. They try to claim it for themselves under false pretenses.

It is a humanitarian contribution, and every resident pays for the spending it requires, regardless of where they come from or how long they have lived here. We are talking about spending on education, health care, child care and basic income. This is just looking at the number of people. There is inflationary pressure. Demand goes up but supply does not follow suit when there is inflationary pressure. No one is being singled out. This is just about the number of people.

There is also pressure on the housing crisis. Again, no one in particular is to blame. My kids in university who want a place to live put just as much pressure on the rental market as someone arriving from Mexico. The pressure comes from the total number of people looking. No one can deny that.

We have an obligation to do well, or at least to do better, but we are not doing it. The result is that we get weaker. In Quebec, of course, there is the linguistic variable. The Quebec nation is getting culturally and economically weaker. We are slowing that process down by being here. If we were not here to defend Quebec or to speak out what is being done in Ottawa, I do not want to imagine the tsunami that would swamp us. Thank goodness we are here.

In recent days, Quebec's minister of immigration, francization and integration has not denied the possibility of a referendum, which had already been mentioned by the Government of Quebec, to ask Quebecers whether all immigration powers should be repatriated.

I thought that was funny, because we have been fed nonsense about “working hand in hand” so many times. Every time we rise to ask a question about immigration, we are told that the two governments are working hand in hand. The federal government pulled the same trick with health care, talking about how they are working hand in hand. They work hand in hand so much, they must be getting calluses on their palms.

The reality is that, if Quebec is considering a referendum to withdraw all immigration powers from Ottawa and repatriate them to Quebec City, it is certainly not because it is happy. It is a disavowal of the federal government's immigration policies. It is a disavowal of the government's failed immigration policies, and it is a disavowal of this government's immigration minister.

I think it is a great idea, especially because it is normal for a government to consult its population through a referendum. What is more, it helps stop the demonization of the very word “referendum”.

Last fall, this House unanimously adopted our motion calling on the government to consult with Quebec and the provinces when set-

ting immigration thresholds. It was a unanimous motion of Parliament, which is the sovereign voice of the Canadian state, if such a thing exists. The government could not have cared less, however. There was no consultation. It is pushing ahead with its policies, like a steamroller that is going to roll right over the Quebec government and the Quebec nation.

The Prime Minister is above the law. In fact, the Prime Minister is a bit above everyone else. It is cultural and perhaps a little genetic. In this Parliament, almost everyone is ready to put their ideology ahead of statecraft or popular wisdom. However, today, we are back at it. We will have to vote on it again.

This used to be a Quebec thing. People used to say that Quebecers were against immigration because they were racists. Now, people in Toronto are saying that they are having problems managing the volume of immigrants. If they were put in Montreal's shoes for two minutes, they would really understand.

● (1045)

Other major Canadian cities are facing similar challenges, so the problem is no longer that Quebecers are xenophobic. Now, it is a Canada-wide issue worthy of the most serious consideration.

Everyone is being crushed by health care costs, education costs and other costs, as well as by this government's failed immigration policies. Even Quebecers and Canadians who immigrated here are footing the bill for the immigration minister, who is kind enough to grace us with his presence from time to time, though he does not pay his debts. I suggest that he pay his debts like any other person with the slightest sense of honour. He needs to pay up, especially since he is the one who told us to pick up the tab. I do not want to hear him repeat that stupid and offensive joke about me comparing immigrants to heat pumps. I hope that he will honour us with an apology for insulting people in such a crude manner.

The motion calls on the Prime Minister to convene a meeting with everyone to discuss immigration. Since it would be an invitation from all of Parliament, the premiers and the provincial immigration ministers could then sit down to discuss immigration levels that take into account the capacity of the provinces and Quebec to manage and take in newcomers.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister told us, with characteristic perspicacity, that countries have responsibilities. If being a country is the only way for Quebec to fulfill its responsibilities, then I am all for it. The best way to welcome immigrants to the Quebec nation is to have a Quebec nation, with a generous and caring tradition and culture. A Quebec nation will not need to constantly fight and oppose Canadian policies that conflict with its wishes, interests, language and survival on a continent where it plays a key role. Yes, certain things are a country's responsibility, so let us make Quebec a country.

In the meantime, I want and urge the government to show a modicum of decency and responsibility and to convene all premiers and immigration ministers to jointly set immigration levels that take into account the ability of Quebec and the provinces to accommodate and pay for immigrants.

• (1050)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am and always will be a very strong advocate for sound immigration policy. I recognize the benefits of immigration in all the forms it takes.

At the end of the day, the uniqueness of the province of Quebec and the role that it plays cannot be underestimated. I have a very strong passion for the French language. It is one of the reasons I take a great sense of pride when I see someone of Filipino heritage in the area I represent able to dialogue in English and French. We promote French whenever we get the opportunity.

However, consultation is very important. I acknowledge that. I wonder if the leader of the Bloc can express to the chamber to what degree he has done his consultation, particularly with the Government of Quebec, before bringing in this resolution. What did it have to say to him about it?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, I have just heard my esteemed colleague tell us about his great passion for the French language. That is not what we heard, though, because I believe it was in English. I, too, can express my passion for English; it is easy.

That said, we are in fairly constant contact with people at the National Assembly of Quebec, with whom we have a fairly long-standing relationship in some cases. It is easy, not only over the telephone, but simply by reading the newspapers, to see that, in general and even in a great deal of detail, the Bloc Québécois is expressing positions that are completely compatible with those of the National Assembly of Quebec, but that the Liberal Party of Canada is expressing positions that are completely incompatible with those of the National Assembly of Quebec.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the leader of the Bloc for his fine speech. It is clear that the Liberal government has broken the immigration system. We absolutely need a plan for health care and affordable housing, but I have not seen a plan from the government.

The Standing Committee on Official Languages studied immigration. We need many immigrants who speak French. However, once again, this government has no plan.

What does the leader of the Bloc want to see in the plan for Quebec?

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, that is an intriguing question. It raises the issue of numbers wars.

We can opt for the ideological extreme of the Century Initiative proposed by the McKinsey firm, which has been paid to take de facto control of Canada's immigration department. The people in that department are so eager and are moving so fast right now that the figure of 100 million Canadians by the end of the century will be completely blown out of the water. This raises the issue of numbers.

Business of Supply

Right now, numbers wars are being waged because it is easier to talk about a figure in the media. In reality, we need tools to measure—after one, two, three or four years—the quality of integration and overall quality of life of people who decided to come and live in Quebec. It is a set of variables. For these people, it is not enough just to know how to speak French. Is their degree recognized? Do they have a decent job? Do they have reasonably priced housing?

Here we have the other extreme. We are so focused on numbers and so keen to open everything up that people who came here as asylum seekers are sleeping in the streets of Montreal, without housing. This is the most obvious example of the government's heartless failure.

• (1055)

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, my French is not up to par, so *je m'excuse*. My first language is Chinese, and I had to learn English as a second language, so I have many languages to learn, to be sure.

On the issue of the motion, what I am hearing, and what I understand through reading the motion, is that the key point, aside from consulting, which is absolutely critical, is ensuring that the federal government also provides the necessary resources to Quebec, other provinces and territories to help them have the capacity to resettle newcomers. What we are seeing, of course, is that the federal government has fallen short in this regard.

The member mentioned in his speech the issue of debt, so my question is this: Would he also agree that the federal government needs to provide the necessary resources to support Quebec, along with other provinces and territories, in successfully helping newcomers resettle?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, I really like that question. This government does two things.

When it wants to take action in an area under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces, it keeps the money because of the fiscal imbalance. It says that, if we want the money—for example, in health—we will have to relinquish some of our powers. It says it is going to write us a cheque and tell us what to do. It is going to let us do it, as that is what costs money.

In this case, it is basically a federal jurisdiction. What is the government thinking? It is thinking that, since it cannot take away or buy more powers from us, it is just not going to pay us. It will let us do its job, it will not pay us to do its job, and it will continue to accumulate money because of the fiscal imbalance.

The government should at least keep its word. If the past is any indication, having to do the government's job because it is not paying its bills is problematic.

Business of Supply

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, my leader will correct me if I am wrong, but I think that when it comes to immigration, the substance is almost as important as the form. Let me explain. The tone we take when we discuss this sensitive issue of immigration is almost as important as when we talk about things in depth.

Recently, the Minister of Immigration talked to us about heat pumps, but he also told us, when we asked him to make it so that asylum seekers are settled in different areas of the country, that people should not be treated like cattle. His last line was that we in the Bloc Québécois are just armchair quarterbacks, even though we are an opposition party in a British parliamentary system. I think that shows a lack of respect.

My question is simple. Is the immigration minister's tone acceptable when we are debating this sensitive issue?

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, I am having a hard time being objective because, last week, in my absence, the Minister of Immigration blatantly lied in the House when he said that I had compared immigrants to heat pumps—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to give the honourable member a reminder. He knows very well that he cannot say that someone lied in the House. He can choose a slightly different word.

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly has the floor.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, my point still stands. Supposing that the member said something that was devoid of common sense, and that he did not mean it, that is still not a sign of competence. We will take it that way, but there is an accumulation. Insult is the argument of those who have none, and that defines the minister very well.

[*English*]

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my first language is neither English nor French. It is Kannada. Due to the requirement to study English, I lost touch with my culture and heritage due to the lack of my language.

Coming to this debate, while I am interested in the century initiative, which is focused on Canada having a population of 100 million, I too am focused on the next three to four years and the immigration that is required for the next three to four years from an economic development point of view.

I would like to ask the member whether he has consulted business owners in Montreal, Quebec City and Gatineau about the problems they are facing. Has he consulted them about the need for skilled workers and immigrants to help them do their business and contribute to the economic development of Canada?

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, in recent days and weeks, we have seen a significant number of highly credible economic and banking institutions point out that current immigration policies go beyond our capacity for economic integration, and compromise issues of an economic nature. This did not come from the bad, leftist Bloc separatists. So I have no problem asserting that.

We have always recognized the economic importance of immigration. I mentioned it clearly when we talked about temporary foreign workers. There is something I find extraordinary in this morning's survey. People were asked a number of questions, including whether they thought there was additional pressure on housing and inflation. Some people, without malice, answered in the affirmative, but Quebeckers, and even Canadians, overwhelmingly said that yes, it does contribute to the economy.

However, there is one thing the Liberals do not understand, and I am going to explain it to them simply: Let them do this properly and it will work.

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin my speech, I would like to acknowledge that we are gathered on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe nation.

I am pleased to rise today to discuss this motion and provide members with information on the immigration targets set by the Government of Canada.

In the area of immigration, we remain committed to working with our partners in the provinces, territories and municipalities to respond to their evolving situations and needs. Of course, that includes the work we are doing with the Government of Quebec.

I want to make it clear that Canada is committed to its core value of taking care of those who come to this country in search of a better life. I think that is a fundamental value that all Canadians support, and I would hope that parliamentarians from all parties would agree with me on that.

In recent years, Canada has accepted a substantial number of permanent residents. The main reason is that we need newcomers as much as they need us. Immigration is crucial to expand our labour force, to ensure our economy prospers and to guarantee the quality of the social services Canadians depend on. Faced with an aging population, we need qualified and talented newcomers to ensure our future economic prosperity. This is true for all of Canada, including my home province, Quebec.

Today, Quebec is experiencing some of the country's most dire labour shortages. In the third quarter of 2023, the number of vacant positions was estimated at 175,000, primarily in health care. Without immigration, Canadian and Quebec businesses would not have the workers they need, and Canadians would not receive the social services they rely on.

In recent years, Canada has indeed accepted many permanent residents. As I said, this is because we need them. Immigration will continue to play a major role in supporting the nation's priorities in the years to come.

Business of Supply

While we tend to measure immigration from one year to the next and to see people as asylum seekers, refugees or economic immigrants, we should remember that the potential of newcomers greatly exceeds the sum of these circumstances. The benefits of immigration span many generations. A child who arrives in Canada today could be the inventor, athlete, nurse or entrepreneur of tomorrow, or a volunteer who supports and inspires immigrants who come after them. We cannot look only at how newcomers can contribute to today's economy. We must also consider the broader and longer-term benefits that immigration brings to our communities and to society as a whole.

Similarly, we must consider current immigration pressure points in a broader context. Today's immigration context is very different from that of a decade or even three years ago. Settlement and integration are also evolving. Canada is welcoming growing numbers of people from different places who have been forcibly displaced and have highly complex needs. Canada is not sheltered from the consequences of these forced displacements caused by the rise in conflicts and climate-related catastrophes. We have a moral and legal duty to act, and to maintain a fair, effective and humane immigration system.

To keep pace with our country's changing demographics and needs, my department is working hard to be at the forefront of all these transformations. As I am sure the member knows, our immigration targets are tabled in the House on November 1 of each year, as required by law. I can assure the House that the department conducted extensive consultations on the immigration targets for 2024 to 2026, as we do each year, in fact.

Canada's immigration plan is data-driven, being based on comments and feedback from employers, communities, provinces and territories. Our immigration objectives are based on these comments, the feedback that we received on our most recent action plan regarding immigration targets. They are based on this information and on the comments from stakeholders. The work continues throughout the year as we gather input and information from governments, communities, stakeholders and partners.

We are constantly working to improve the plan every year, conducting ongoing assessments and incorporating the changes, comments and data we receive. The federal government consults its provincial and territorial ministerial counterparts to establish immigration targets and determine the appropriate number of admissions. For example, the Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration meets several times a year. Quebec is invited to these meetings and participates as an observer.

• (1105)

We ask partner organizations, such as the hundreds of settlement organizations from all over the country, to tell us about the challenges they face, both on a global and local level. We learn about the rural and urban communities they serve and support, where newcomers enter the job market and try to have their foreign credentials recognized, learn French and English and seek services in both official languages across the country. This dialogue happens among public servants at various levels at events and conferences as part of official consultations.

We meet with representatives from many municipalities throughout the year, whether to seek their advice or to respond to their challenges and concerns. They tell us how the new immigrants are integrating and which of our programs and services are best suited to their community. These discussions are not a one-time event, but an ongoing dialogue. Last year, we had even more extensive consultations, as the levels and mix of categories of immigrants that we will admit were also an essential factor in our strategic review of immigration and its future in Canada.

We held consultations on the future of immigration to determine which systems, programs and services will be needed to support our provinces, territories and municipalities. The consultations also sought suggestions for how we can support employers in every sector, especially those flagged as priority sectors by the provinces, territories and municipalities, such as housing, health care and technology, as seen in my beautiful riding in downtown Montreal.

In addition to asking the entire country for input, we organized more in-depth sessions, including one in Montreal. We met with experts on key issues such as housing, rural immigration, talent recruitment and social cohesion. We also conducted an online survey of Canadians across the country and newcomers who have used our services. We received responses from close to 18,000 people, more than 2,000 organizations and more than 2,100 former clients on how immigration can help meet their needs for the future.

We met with indigenous leaders, business leaders, remote rural communities, youth councils, provincial and territorial leaders, and educational institutions and groups that offer newcomer support services in order to gather a wide range of comments and understand the different points of view.

The federal government gathers comments about its programs and services across the country. Quebec has its own immigration controls and systems. It is important to point out that the Province of Quebec sets its own levels, which the federal government respects. Under the 1991 Canada-Quebec accord, Canada sets the annual number of immigrants for the country, factoring in the number of immigrants Quebec wishes to take in. This takes into account Quebec's capacity to integrate new immigrants and its ability to resolve labour shortages in key sectors such as agriculture and health care.

Quebec has rights and responsibilities when it comes to the number of immigrants destined for Quebec and to their reception and integration. In recent years, the immigration levels announced by Quebec have been lower per capita than the federal level. We admit that.

Business of Supply

On November 1, 2023, just after I announced Canada's 2024-26 immigration levels plan, the Government of Canada maintained its level at 500,000 new immigrants per year for 2024 and 2025.

Under the Canada-Quebec accord, the federal government provides Quebec with an annual grant to help process newcomers and fund the services and assistance it provides, including French integration. Since 2015, the federal government has transferred more than \$4.4 billion to the province. This year alone, we gave Quebec more than \$700 million to meet its needs with respect to reception and settlement services. That is a significant amount.

Under the accord, Quebec alone is responsible for selecting its economic and humanitarian immigrants and for applying the federal selection criteria for family reunification, while the federal government is responsible for selecting and processing family class applications. As a result, we work within the framework of Quebec's levels plan and process only those applications that have been approved by the province.

If the hon. member or any of his colleagues are concerned about the number of newcomers settling in Quebec or about the immigration levels set by their province, they should speak directly with the Quebec government. We know that they did not consult Quebec about the motion.

The federal government is working on a comprehensive and coordinated growth plan with other governments and partners to make sure that we have the infrastructure, services and support that newcomers need in order to succeed. That means that we need to strengthen our capacity in areas like housing, health care, education and language training.

• (1110)

We are already working on developing a more integrated immigration plan that reflects the roles of our other partners and provides more comprehensive assistance to meet the needs of all newcomers. That will help us better understand where we should invest more, from housing and health care to transportation infrastructure for newcomers so that all Canadians can succeed.

We will also continue to work with the provinces, territories and municipalities to make sure that asylum seekers have a roof over their heads. For Quebec and all of Canada, I recently announced an additional \$362 million for the interim housing assistance program to continue supporting this extremely important work. Among other things, we gave Quebec \$150 million this year, and almost 50% of all funding for this program since 2017 has gone to Quebec. Quebec's immigration minister even said that the measure was a step in the right direction.

There is more. We will continue to be there for Quebec in this and other areas to support newcomers. The Government of Canada is working with all of its partners to strike a balance between supporting employers and our economy, respecting our long-standing humanitarian commitments and making sure that our immigration plans line up with each community's needs and priorities.

A plan that stabilizes Canada's future immigration levels will also make it easier to take into account capacity issues and unforeseen changes in the different provinces. The immigration levels for

2024 already reflect the needs of Canadians in every region of the country and support demographic growth in Canada, while mitigating its impact on essential national systems, such as housing, infrastructure and newcomers, which are vital to our communities. Many temporary and permanent residents in Canada work in key sectors such as health care, transportation, agriculture and manufacturing. Newcomers are part of the solution for Canada's future and are essential to our future growth.

The core objective of Canada's 2024-26 immigration levels plan is to attract skilled workers who will contribute to our economy. We are more confident than ever that we can preserve our top-notch immigration system, which is the envy of the world. We will reduce waiting times; we are doing so now. We will foster family reunification and continue to support the most vulnerable populations of the world with one of the best refugee resettlement programs on the planet.

Canada has a long-standing tradition of welcoming immigrants. Canadians are rightfully proud of their past when it comes to immigration. Immigration is what made Canada a strong country and helped it keep growing, and immigration is what made it possible to connect people by diversifying our communities and driving the economy.

• (1115)

[*English*]

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am glad that the minister was able to contribute to this debate. It is hard to take him seriously, though, because that immigration plan was tabled November 1. By that time, in his own ministry, there were now over one million international students in Canada. He knew that. He came two to three months later to announce a cutting down of 35% and capping all over the country on a system that he knew, by his own admission and in his own words, was out of control. He knew this when he tabled the report to Parliament, which included what the temporary resident numbers were going to be for the following year. Then, to add insult to injury to the House, we had the former minister of immigration, now the minister of housing, say that the system was a mess. This gentleman is still moonlighting as a senior minister for immigration.

We know that the immigration system is broken and we know that it is not working with what the government is doing. How can we believe the minister now when he says, with all these golden words, that things are going so well?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Speaker, as the member well knows, the plan that I put forth in the fall deals with permanent residency numbers.

We know that the number of temporary foreign workers we have in Canada, under various descriptions, has increased significantly in the last couple of years. This has been good for the economy, but it is also something that has gotten out of control in some sectors, which we acknowledge.

Business of Supply

As the member saw, I took three measures two weeks ago to make sure that we were addressing the integrity of the system with respect to international students. I think this is something that all Canadians can support, because the international student visa system was not created for fly-by-night operations in various parts of the country as a backdoor entry into Canada. This is about the integrity of the system and, obviously, the future of Canada. There are some bright students out there, and they do not need to be stigmatized. However, this is something that the government needs to be responsible for reining in.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for his speech.

When the Bloc Québécois raised the issue of Quebec's intake and integration capacity, we were accused of being armchair quarterbacks. Even if we let that slide, there is still a recent survey that found that most Canadians and Quebeckers believe that Canada is unable to integrate newcomers properly and that its intake capacity is insufficient. I hope that the minister will not call the Canadians and Quebeckers who answered the survey names.

I would like to hear what the minister has to say about the public calls for Canada to review its process, because right now it is not working. Can he respond to the substance of this question?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Speaker, the survey in question shows conclusively that immigrants are good for the economy.

There is much left unsaid by the Bloc Québécois. They ask us to revise the targets, but I think what they mean is we should lower them without consulting the government of Quebec. I believe they should make more of an effort if they wish to have a reasoned discussion of the issue.

I ask the members of the Bloc Québécois if they would like to help solve the problem instead of being armchair quarterbacks, and tell me whether the integration capacity covers the labour shortage of some 175,000 workers in Quebec, a shortage that also affects the rest of Canada. They do not seem to consider this factor in their analysis and demands.

I ask this question and I await their answer.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, we all know that the immigrant community contributes to Canada in more ways than I can articulate. We all know that in this House.

What is important for provinces, for Quebec and for territories is having the resources that are necessary to help with the resettlement process. The federal government's policy is such that asylum seekers, for example, do not get federal resources. Until more recently, there was huge pressure for the government to come in with some resources. On the whole, the federal government is not there. I think that is also part of the problem and the tension that is created in the communities.

Will the minister actually review the policy to ensure that asylum seekers who come to Canada are fully supported, so they are able to properly resettle in Canada?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question and, obviously, her passion on this issue.

This is not just about coming to Canada and treading water. We have asylum seekers and refugees who are members of cabinet and members of Parliament. One even crossed at Roxham Road and is now a great serving member of Parliament in Ontario.

Our settlement services are the envy of the world. I just went to Geneva, and this was noted by my counterparts, particularly in a forum dealing with this issue.

Clearly, we can do more. We are facing flows of historic proportions in Canada. This is about coordination with the provinces. This is not the sole responsibility of the Government of Canada. It is shared with the provinces, including the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia. We have to work together to make sure people have shelter over their heads. We provide interim health benefits and interim housing. However, this is absolutely not a long-term solution.

We need to do more and we need to do better for people who are here, while they get their due process. They are not necessarily entitled to be here, but if they are so entitled, if they are truly fleeing war or oppression from their source country, they clearly have a home in Canada. That needs to be done quickly and in a way that respects their humanitarian rights.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in our country, there are many cases of Quebeckers and Canadians who have married someone abroad and want to bring their spouse to Canada, but they encounter obstacles. It is not a question of housing or money. These people already have all they need to welcome their spouse. Sometimes, there are even children involved.

I would like to hear from the minister on this. Is there a way to remove the obstacles so these people can come?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Speaker, I would like to sincerely thank the member for her question about Quebeckers trying to reunite their family.

Clearly, the government of Quebec sets family reunification thresholds. At present, I believe these thresholds are kept artificially low. This causes great harm to many Quebeckers when they try to reunify their families.

Talks are under way with my government of Quebec colleague to rectify this situation. I am hopeful the situation will be corrected, because the wait times in Quebec are several times longer than elsewhere in Canada, and I find that unacceptable.

The federal government is doing its part.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question for the minister has to do with the recent announcement about cutting the number of foreign students in Ontario by 50%.

Lambton College, in my riding, depends on those foreign students to keep tuition low. It produces nurses, personal support workers and paramedics. With the aging population, we need those workers. However, the minister decided that master's and Ph.D. students could stay, while all the rest of these colleges would be cut. Lambton College built student housing, and it is building more student housing that will be there by the time the caps come into play.

Will the minister either allow exemptions for colleges that are not part of the issue or revisit the decision that was made and maybe focus on eliminating the fake colleges in strip malls that exist?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Speaker, the answer is no. We need provinces to step up and actually do their jobs in regulating designated learning institutions that they have authority over. We trusted for far too long, and perhaps we should have verified this. However, this is really something that needs to be brought under control. That is notably in Ontario, but there are other provinces that need to do a better job as well.

I do not want to single out any colleges. A lot of trade colleges are doing great work. Perhaps there is a permanent residency pathway for those people, but that was not the guarantee to them when they came into the country. The guarantee was to get a high-quality international education.

Filling up the coffers of colleges and institutions on the backs of international students was not the business plan behind the international student visa model. It needs to get under control. Colleges and universities need to go see their provincial governments and talk to them about sorting out the cap. This is something that needs to be done. It is crucial for the integrity of the system.

We will absolutely work with them. I would encourage anyone who is interested in dealing with the federal government to get with the trusted or recognized institution model. We can talk about that in the fall.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague, the minister, what he thinks of the fact that Quebec is so fed up that it is thinking of or would like to hold a referendum to repatriate all powers relating to immigration.

What is his response to that?

Hon. Marc Miller: Madam Speaker, I am in politics to work with the Government of Quebec. I am not in show business. There is no question that we can work with the Government of Quebec.

Everyone knows the Bloc Québécois does not speak for all Quebecers. Several members in the House come from Quebec, including the Prime Minister. We are hearing very clearly that the federal government has a role to play in immigration.

[English]

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on a Bloc opposition day motion. To summarize it briefly, it would recall a vote in the House that tied immigration targets in Canada to various areas of capacity in social services, French and English-language training, transportation infrastructure, health care, jobs availability and education. This was voted on at the end of last year, typically when the permanent residents plan is tabled in Parliament, but also the temporary residents plan of the government. A three-year rolling plan is put forward. This motion refers to it and tells the government to do its homework once again, in light of a lot of new announcements that have been made.

This debate involves the Minister of Immigration. My experience on the immigration committee is that often invectives are hurled toward members who simply have questions, concerns and comments. A few members of the Bloc have already said that whenever they expressed a concern about the integration capacity in Quebec, especially on the island of Montreal where there is a lack of capacity, for example, for French-language training, they were quickly called names and insulted by the Minister of Immigration outside of the House quite often. It happened again yesterday at committee and on the minister's Twitter account.

The Conservatives have that same experience very often from Liberal members of Parliament. If the Liberals do not have an argument, they move on to insults. Margaret Thatcher loved to say that quite commonly.

Today, I will outline what I think is a common-sense Conservative proposal to what we should take into account when redoing the targets. A lot of it comes directly from government sources. We see it in government talking points and what different ministers have said. We have the bizarre situation today of there being a junior and senior minister of immigration. The new Minister of Immigration says that the system is out of control, by his own admission. He has said it several times. He was quoted as saying it in the *National Post*. He said it on CTV's *Question Period*. He also said, "That volume is really disconcerting. It's really a system that has gotten out of control."

In an article by journalist Ryan Tumilty, the headline was, "Out of control! Immigration minister says he wants to reduce international student arrivals". It goes on to say, "The increase is considered one of many factors leading to housing shortages and rent hikes across the country." That is the tie-in to housing.

Business of Supply

Then there is the senior minister of immigration, who is now the Minister of Housing, and he has a lot of regrets, because for two and a half years he essentially let the system get out of control. That is what the Minister of Immigration is saying today about his predecessor's work. It is not Conservatives, Bloc MPs or New Democrats saying it. Over the last three months, two ministers have been fighting it out in public about whose fault it is that the system became out of control.

The Minister of Housing now, the senior minister of immigration, went even further. In a different article by Touria Izri for *Global News*, the housing minister was quoted as saying, “temporary immigration programs are putting pressure on the housing system and creating a ‘serious issue we need to address.’” Why did he not address it when he was the immigration minister? Why has he only discovered this now?

In fact, the journalists refer to a briefing note that was given to the minister, the new Minister of Housing, the senior minister for immigration, that warned him that the targets the Government of Canada was setting, especially on what it was doing with temporary resident permits for international students, foreign work permits for the temporary foreign worker program and the international mobility program, were going to lead to pressures in rental housing. People were going to have a tough time affording housing, either purchasing or renting a home.

The Bank of Canada said that 60% of newcomers would rent, especially for the first 10 years. I know this for a fact as I was a newcomer. When my father came here in 1983, he rented. When the rest of the family came here in 1985, we rented for many years on the south shore of Montreal. I am very well aware of the newcomer experience. When newcomers first come to Canada, they rent, and rents across the country are going up.

In the last nine years, rents have doubled. Down payments have more than doubled. The price of homes is out of control, and that is not the fault of immigrants or newcomers. That is the fault of the government for vastly overspending during the pandemic, \$600 billion of pandemic spending, \$205 billion of which had nothing to do with the response to the pandemic.

• (1125)

When a lot of cash is chasing fewer goods, it leads to higher prices. When a briefing note is provided to the minister by his own immigration department that tells the minister about concerns of continuing to allow a lot of newcomers to come to Canada, well over a million last year and I think it will be a million before the same deadline this year, as well as over a million in the next six months, then we have a system that is out of control. I am referencing the junior immigration minister. The system is a mess. I am quoting the senior immigration minister, who is titled as the housing minister.

Of course they have regrets. They are going on different podcasts, complaining about each other's work and drawing attention to whose fault it is. It is the fault of the Liberals. They have been in government for nine years. They bear responsibility for the chaos on our streets today, with crime that is out of control. They are responsible. If we are renewing our leases this year and we see a 20%

or 30% increase to them, we have only three people to blame: the Prime Minister, his housing minister and his immigration minister.

Every other minister on the front bench bears cabinet responsibility for the decisions they make. The Conservatives are not making this argument; I am using their own words. They have been in the news. At the end of November, Mia Rabson from the Canadian Press quoted the senior immigration minister, who is now moonlighting as a housing minister.

The current minister said of the student visa system, “It’s a bit of a mess...It’s time to rein it in.” He then went on to talk about Uber drivers. On the international student program, he was making comparisons, saying some of these colleges were behaving like puppy mills. What kind of bizarre commentary is that, to try to insult international students who are here?

I was an international student at one point in the United States and I do not remember being insulted in such a way. If, in fact, for the last two and a half years there were these private colleges and others, which the minister is now accusing of being puppy mills, it was the department that was issuing visas for them. Why were they doing that? They were warned.

A briefing note was circulating somewhere. Some journalists have it, but I do not. I was actually asked by a journalist from the Toronto Star whether I had it. It is the one that ties temporary immigration numbers to the potential for housing crisis. That is not me saying it; that is the department. The immigration department was warning the previous minister, the now housing minister, that this might happen. The articles go on and on.

We have these two ministers who are having a public debate, an argument. I am sure that it started some time in cabinet. There is a Yiddish proverb I am reminded of, because I love Yiddish proverbs, as many members know. My grandmother used to say them in Polish, but Yiddish used to be a common language and culture to eastern Europe. The proverb is that when a fool and a wise man are debating, there are only two fools debating. Sometimes it feels that way when I am watching the debate in public, because—

• (1130)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are a few members who I am sure would want their colleague to be heard as opposed to being interrupted. They may not realize that their voices are loud, so I would ask them to please take their conversation outside and not interrupt their colleague by the background noise.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I really appreciate Yiddish proverbs. I am asking if the member could repeat that so we have it on the record, nice and clearly, without the interruptions.

If he wanted to just—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I think he was just getting to it.

The hon. member for Calgary Shepard has the floor.

Business of Supply

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, a Yiddish proverb I love is that if a wise man and a fool are debating, and rabbis love this proverb as well, what we have are two fools debating between each other. Sometimes I feel this is what I am watching. I have listened to the Herle Burly Podcast, and the new Minister of Immigration has appeared on it twice now. He talks a really tough game when he is on the podcast. Then he comes here and sings us a song on how great things are.

We have an immigration system with a backlog of 2.2 million in applications. I have been told everything, including that moving to digital would fix it, that there would be a new system and that there would be more people. This department has more than double the staff and double the money it had in 2015, yet nothing is getting better. It is pretty much static. The backlog was about 2.9 million applications near the end of the pandemic and it is barely any better. A million people are waiting in the queue.

We hear about this constantly. Members of Parliament and their constituency offices are inundated, with 80% to 90% of our case file work related to the immigration department. Families are broken because they cannot be reunited. Small businesses locally are missing that one critical person to fill a gap so they can then start hiring other fellow Canadians to fill the jobs, but they cannot do it. International students, who maybe have changed colleges, or are moving to a different program or are applying for a post-graduate work permit, are being told they cannot do that anymore, or they apply and run out of status and lose the temporary jobs they had. All of this is related to the customer service levels at the immigration department, which have not improved. I rarely hear the minister saying that this is being addressed.

It is a concern for Conservatives, and it continues to be a concern, that service levels are poor and that immigration backlog continues to be very high. Nobody seems to want to take responsibility in the moment when they make the decisions. I believe we are on immigration minister five or six so far after almost nine years, and it still is not getting better. It is still not improving, except for the rhetoric among the cabinet ministers who accuse each other of letting the system get out of control or of making it a mess. Again, I am not the one saying that. I am quoting two ministers who are having this public fight among each other on whose fault it is, pointing fingers at each other. The most incredible part of it all is that they are blaming each other.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

In our great country, we of course have two official languages, so I will make some comments in French as well.

We already had this debate in the House, in October or November when we debated another motion during a Bloc Québécois opposition day. It is actually mentioned in today's motion.

Of course, we know that the government did not react to the motion. It did nothing. Going by what we can see, it made a few minor announcements for foreign students who are here in Canada. We know that more than one million international students are already here, according to a question that was answered in the House in October. We also know that the government reacts very slowly when

opposition parties offer it solutions to new challenges for which we need to have an answer.

Today, one of these new challenges is asylum seekers who have the right to come to Canada, particularly those from a country in which there is a huge problem. That is an issue we need to address, because in January, the Premier of Quebec, Mr. Legault, had to write a letter almost four pages long that was addressed directly to the government.

If there were any consultations, it is obvious that nobody listened to the Premier of Quebec, since he had to write a letter. His letter says: "Over time, we have welcomed Chilean, Vietnamese, Haitian and Syrian refugees, and more recently Ukrainian nationals, whom we continue to take in".

We know that we now have problems with one country in particular, because in 2016, this government withdrew the requirement for Mexican citizens to apply for a visa to come to Canada. They can go online and just pay seven or eight dollars to get permission to come to Canada. Now, in Montreal, tens of thousands of people are seeking asylum after not informing the government about their reason for travelling to Canada.

In 2016, about 250 asylum seekers came to this country in this way, back when there was a visa requirement. I have a press release that the government published at the time. It is only in English, unfortunately. I will read the relevant section. It comes from the Prime Minister's website and is dated June 28, 2016. It may have been taken down, but maybe it is still on the site. Here is an excerpt from the press release:

[*English*]

Closer collaboration between Canada and Mexico on mobility issues will also help encourage travel between the two countries while preventing any increase in asylum claims or other irregular migration. Officials plan to meet regularly to promote these mutual interests.

[*Translation*]

We have gone from 250 asylum claims in 2016 to tens of thousands in 2023. According to the figures I saw online, 11% of the claims were accepted, which means that 89% of them were rejected. We are not the ones rejecting them; the independent panel is rejecting them. The panel says that it has seen the file and that the rules for becoming a refugee in Canada are not being respected.

The 2016 press release indicated that systems would be put in place to prevent an increase in asylum claims. Yesterday, I asked the minister to give us examples of programs implemented and actions taken to ensure that asylum seekers from one country, in this case Mexico, will not make bogus claims. Of course, 11% of the claims were accepted. Yesterday, the minister said it was much higher, 30%. These are figures given during the debates. Perhaps he can give us the figures in committee. Even with those numbers, that means that 70% of the asylum claims were rejected. These people came here because the visa requirement had been lifted. We have to wonder what the government is doing. It has not created any programs.

Business of Supply

The only example the Minister of Immigration was able to give me had to do with programs implemented during the pandemic. However, they were public policies and the minister got rid of them in December, a month and a half ago, because they were no longer useful, he said. I reminded him that there was no pandemic in 2016. It began in early 2020. There was clearly no connection between the two. In committee, he had no other examples to demonstrate what he had done to keep this from happening.

In his letter, Premier Legault talks about the cost of these decisions. We are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars. Then there are also costs in terms of human lives. People have come to Canada, thinking they are eligible to apply for asylum for a variety of reasons. Premier Legault says that in the “first 11 months of 2023, no fewer than 59,735 new asylum seekers were registered in Quebec. Projections show that Quebec will receive a record 65,000 applicants this year”. The trends continue. Of course, with this increase in asylum claims, there is also a human cost. Real people will be affected by the Liberal government's negligence. Two immigration ministers are publicly attacking each other. They are pointing fingers and accusing each other of creating all the problems, damage and mess in the areas of immigration and housing.

I am going to talk about two articles by Romain Schué. In “Immigration Cartels”, he wrote: “*Enquête* uncovered human smuggling networks and fake passport makers linked to powerful Mexican organized crime syndicates that are becoming more and more heavily involved in human trafficking at the Canada-U.S. border.”

Two Mexican cartels in particular, the Sinaloa cartel and the Jalisco New Generation cartel, have ties to human trafficking.

The government could not even talk about a program. I asked the minister to name one program, any program. One would have been enough, but the minister could not even come up with one name.

In the other article, “South American crime network targets Canadian homes”, the journalist starts describing exactly what is happening now because the government made this change in 2016 and did not follow up. I wanted to share that example because basically the same thing happens with reports to Parliament on permanent immigration, as the minister said earlier. They are tabled in the House every November. They also cover temporary immigration. Lots of people come to Canada as temporary immigrants to work or study. Many of them change their temporary status to permanent after they get here.

• (1140)

According to information provided by the department, about half of temporary immigrants become permanent immigrants through programs such as the provincial nominee program and the immigration program for construction workers. Roughly half of these people are already in Canada and have a home, be it rented or owned. It is simply a matter of changing their status.

What matters to us, the Conservatives, is the experience newcomers have when they come to Canada. Today's newcomers are not having the same experience I had when I came to Canada. I arrived in Quebec, of course, because my father worked at the Sorel shipyard at the time.

The leader of the Bloc Québécois talked about the fact that many immigrants who come to Canada are told that Canada is an English-speaking country, but when they arrive in Quebec, they realize that French is spoken there, especially at work. That is what happened to my father. I know because he talked about it often.

As we can see, cabinet is unable to decide who is to blame for the mess. The immigration system is out of control, and it is their fault. Even when the government appoints a new Minister of Immigration, it is his fault. In nine years, the government has destroyed the Canadian consensus on immigration.

We need a common-sense government, and that is what we will have when the member for Carleton becomes prime minister in the next election. We will give Canadians hope for the immigration system.

• (1145)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate my colleague from Calgary Shepard. He delivered a pointed speech, and he clearly has sound knowledge of the issue. He is also pleasant to work with in committee. Once again, I congratulate him on his speech.

I completely agree with him that the management of the immigration portfolio is unacceptable. The government has appointed three different ministers of immigration since 2019. That says a lot about the way the Liberals are managing the immigration portfolio.

My question is simple. My colleague spoke a great deal about the Legault government, and more specifically about Minister Fréchette's letter. Am I to understand that, should a Conservative government be elected, my colleague would agree with her about repatriating all immigration powers to Quebec to settle the matter once and for all?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, what I am prepared to say is that we will have a common-sense immigration system. We will not need a referendum, since we will have a federal government that is able to work with all the provinces fairly. Furthermore, our government will make sure that the provinces are able to tackle the challenges. It will not call them names, compare them to heat pumps or insult them. It will work with them. That is what the Harper government did. It worked with the provinces, not against them.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was the critic for immigration back when the common-sense Conservative government was in place and denied Canadians the opportunity to sponsor parents and grandparents to come to Canada for permanent residency. It literally killed the program.

Business of Supply

When we had the common-sense immigration issues, it took years to try to get a loved one, a wife, a husband or a significant other, to immigrate to Canada under permanent residency.

Is this the type of common-sense, or should I say nonsense, Conservative policy we are going to see brought back under that type of administration?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, it is sad that those members have not read the immigration plans pre-2015. It was a Conservative government that created the super visa program for parents and grandparents. It was a Conservative government that made the PGP, the parents and grandparents permanent immigration system, work better.

What the Liberal government has done is create a lottery system whereby people have spent years in the lottery not knowing when their loved ones will be allowed to immigrate to Canada. In fact, in a case that was reported in the CBC, even the CBC is going after the government, nationals from Iran had been waiting five years to be reunified. Therefore, those married couples were apart for five years before seeing their loved ones again.

By the way, every single permanent immigration stream to Canada is longer today than it was in 2015. It is the same way for student visas, work visas or tourist visas. It is taking longer.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Not true.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: The member is saying it is not true. I invite him to check the immigration committee's records, because all the numbers have been tabled successively over the last year, which proves the case that all the backlogs are worse than they were in 2015 for almost every single program the government controls today.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know that the Conservatives fancy themselves as friends of the immigrant community, but let us not forget that they brought in cessation, which said to refugees who came to Canada that they could not return to their country of origin for any reason. Even in the case when Saddam Hussein did not exist any more, if a person came from that place, they were not allowed to return to that country of origin to visit a dying family member. Also, they took away the ability for a second-generation born to pass on their Canadian citizenship to their children, which was being challenged in the court, and the court found it be unconstitutional.

Would the Conservatives reduce immigration target numbers? Is that their common-sense policy that they are not telling Canadians?

• (1150)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, the member has a lot of experience, especially on the immigration committee. I usually do not agree with her, but I do respect the fact that she brings a deep level of knowledge to a lot of the immigration issues that she approaches. We are usually on opposite sides of voting. She has basically supported this government for the last three or four years without objection, every single one of these immigration targets and the running of the department, and so she bears responsibility for the backlogged 2.2 million applications. She bears responsibility for the experience of Iranian nationals who are trying to flee the region—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): On a point of order, the hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, the member is categorically wrong to suggest that I did not raise any concerns with the government's immigration policies—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, that is a point of debate.

The hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, I did say that she bears responsibility with voting on every single confidence motion and every single confidence measure in the House, and so she does bear responsibility for decisions made by this government. She is supporting the spending, she is supporting the employment, she is supporting the number it is hiring and how it is handling the files. That is what I am saying.

The member wants to debate pre-2015 and what our previous Conservative government did. We have nine years of a Liberal government's tenure in office. We have two immigration ministers fighting it out in public, one saying it is out of control and one saying it is a mess. I rarely hear that member in committee side with the Conservatives who are trying to advocate for people and trying to find a solution to some of these problems. So, I am just calling her out here. I am trying to bear out on the public record what I see happening on the immigration committee and what I see happening in the House of Commons.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In the last couple of questions that I have allotted, after members have asked their questions, they seem to want to ask other questions. I would just ask them to wait until the appropriate time to do that as opposed to trying to interrupt the member.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Calgary Shepard for his intervention and for his sensitivity on this issue. I think he made a number of important distinctions.

He mentioned a few times that the government was not facing up to its responsibilities and was shirking its duty. I would like to ask him a straightforward question, and I hope he can offer some clarity.

First, will the Conservative Party support the Bloc Québécois's motion? Second, as a shadow minister in the shadow cabinet of the member for Carleton, will he agree not to abide by McKinsey's goal of reaching a population of 100 million by 2100?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, concerning the first part of my colleague's question, it depends. I know that this is not the answer he was hoping for. However, it depends. We will see how the debate unfolds.

As for the second part of his question, as the member knows, we Conservatives voted in favour of the Bloc Québécois's motion on the Century Initiative. At the time, we voted with the Bloc Québécois and the other opposition parties in the House.

I think that answers his question.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to focus on the time I was in opposition when we had a Conservative government and on another program where the member says that Conservatives did not have backlogs. I recall the backlog for experienced workers that got so long that Minister Kenney, as opposed to dealing with it, literally hit the delete button, and hundreds of thousands of people who were in the stream were deleted out of the system.

I think Canadians need to be aware that the Conservative common-sense approach is to the detriment of the long-term healthy immigration policy. We have seen a number of areas where processing times are far better than what they were in the Conservative era.

• (1155)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, the member is wrong. When the Paul Martin government was defeated in 2006 and a new Conservative government took over, it took a few years to realize that, in fact, there was a six million to eight million application backlog created by previous Liberal governments.

At that time, the decision was made to reset the system to zero, because there was no way to fix it. Liberal governments, from the 1990s to the early 2000s, had basically broken the immigration system, like they have broken the immigration system today.

The decision was taken to return people's money and their applications, to restart the system at zero. That was their fault.

Let us talk numbers. I have the numbers for 2015. In 2015, according to IRCC, study permits took 31 days to process. Work permits took 42 days to process. Temporary resident visas took 13 days to process.

In April 2023, study permits took 88 days to process. Work permits took 62 days to process. Temporary resident visas took 72 days to process. Those are bigger numbers than the first ones.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague has outlined some of the failures of the Liberal government in terms of huge backlogs in almost every area.

I think it is important to point out, as well, the types of people who are being allowed in. We are talking about needing to build homes, but the numbers of construction workers are low. Meanwhile, there is an open door at Pearson airport, where people can just show up and claim refugee status.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, the member for Sarnia—Lambton is correct. I asked the government to tell me how many construction workers were brought in through all immigration streams under the different NOC codes. The minister claimed that he was not the minister responsible for NOC codes.

It is about 4,500 per year since 2016. We have a shortage of 100,000 residential construction workers just in Ontario. They are not going to meet their targets, because it has not been their focus area.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with my wonderful colleague from Vancouver East. I also want to note that the representative from the Conservative Party did not answer her very good question whatsoever. The Conservative Party seems to want to hide its intentions when it comes to immigration objectives. Other than fine speeches, the official opposition remains vague and is kind of playing secretive games. I think it is a shame that my colleague from Vancouver East did not get the response she was entitled to when she asked a very simple and very direct question to the representative of the Conservative Party.

Today's debate is an important discussion that sometimes gets people, the media and certain columnists worked up. It is an entirely legitimate question on the type of society we want to build, the type of welcoming nation we want to be, the economic development we want to have and the contribution of people who want to come share their life here, with us, in Quebec or in Canada.

There is a joke I have been making for some time. Obviously, Quebec and Canada are lands of immigration. I myself am a 13th-generation immigrant. The first one came in the late 17th century. His name was Jean, and he was a potter, a “turner” to the king. Incidentally, the name Boulerice was not written that way at the time; initially, it was a Breton name spelled as two words.

I think we need to continue this tradition of integration and of welcoming people that we have had for centuries. However, it has to be done well and in a positive way. It must also be done with a positive eye to the contribution of all those who, for various reasons, want to come and settle here in the hope of a better life, to seek protection or to flee persecution, or to hope for better things for their children and families.

These are people who work extremely hard and contribute to our development and economic activity in extraordinary and wonderful ways. According to recent statistics, 33% of recent immigrants start their own small businesses when they arrive here, and then hire people who have sometimes been here longer. These are entrepreneurs and job creators, people who also contribute to various sectors of our society.

Twenty percent of immigrants are working in the construction industry. We are in the midst of a housing crisis, and these people are coming here to work. Yes, they live in houses and apartments, but they are also going to build houses and apartment buildings. One in five immigrants works in construction. That is a lot, and it is important to point that out.

A total of 1.6 million immigrants across the country are working in our health care system. They are caring for our friends, our parents and our grandparents, for people in Canada who are sick. That is an huge number.

When we talk about immigration levels and immigration capacity, we need to look at it from that perspective. Immigration is not only positive, but it is necessary for our economy.

Business of Supply

Most of the chambers of commerce are saying that there is a labour shortage in Quebec and that we need hands and minds to join our workforce. It is not every day that members will hear a New Democrat quoting chambers of commerce, but the NDP agrees that this is what is needed. The need for workers is being felt throughout Montreal and the regions of Quebec. Businesses want to do more and take on more contracts. They want to undertake new projects, but they need workers to be able to do so. We therefore need to be able to welcome immigrants and welcome them properly.

I will say right off the top that I have no idea if Quebec should welcome 50,000, 70,000 or 35,000 economic migrants. I am not an immigration expert, demographer or economist. It all depends on the context, our needs and whether we can properly welcome and integrate them. Once again, the notion of integration capacity is very vague.

• (1200)

Obviously, we are in the middle of the housing crisis right now. Our public services are feeling the pressure. The community groups that work with those immigrants and refugees are feeling the pressure. We need to acknowledge that, but closing the door to immigrants is not necessarily the answer, because that would cause collateral damage to our economic development and to our SMEs and businesses that need those people. We need a tailored response that is smart and, most importantly, based on evidence and reality. We do not need speeches that can sometimes be quite discriminatory or xenophobic towards the people who come here.

This happens on a fairly regular basis with some columnists, and it seems to me a terrible shame that immigrants are being singled out and blamed for things like the housing crisis. It is utterly ridiculous. How dare we blame today's immigrants for our inaction over the past 30 years on building affordable and social housing? How dare we tell immigrants that they stopped us from building social housing over the past 30 years? They came here and they want to participate, start a family and send their children to school and university. This housing crisis is the outcome of inaction by Liberal and Conservative governments in recent years. The housing crisis existed before these immigrants and temporary migrant workers arrived here to work and make a contribution. For some columnists to point fingers and blame them is irresponsible, discriminatory and misguided.

The federal Liberal government stopped investing in social and co-operative housing in 1994, and that is when the problem started. Then the Harper government made it even worse. That is a fact.

The reality on the ground today is that the vacancy rate is 1.5% in Montreal, which gets a lot of newcomers and immigrants, and 0% in Rimouski. The housing shortage is worse in Rimouski than in Montreal, and it is not because Rimouski gets a lot more immigrants per capita than Montreal.

It is important to set the record straight. NDP members think it is important to be able to do that. My colleague, the member for Vancouver East, will share some constructive suggestions later on that will enable us to examine every aspect and every nuance of this issue. Quebec's former immigration minister said that immigrants do

not want to integrate, do not want to speak French and do not want to work. Let us stop saying that. It is not true.

I live in Montreal. There are a lot of newcomers who work extremely hard. They all work extremely hard. They want to build a new life here in Quebec. They make an absolutely extraordinary contribution. They want to learn French. The problem is that there are not enough teachers. There are not enough French training services. The wait lists for French classes are endless. Part of the reason is that the Government of Quebec is not using the funding it is given by the federal government to help immigrants learn French. It uses it for other things, but that is another debate. Still, saying that these newcomers, these workers, do not want to integrate, do not want to contribute and do not want to speak French is not only shameful and irresponsible, but it is also completely false when we look at what is actually happening.

Last Friday, I had the opportunity to meet with representatives of an organization in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie called the Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes. They made the same observation that we need these people. The debate about the number is a bit of a distortion in itself, but the reality is that these groups that help these people settle and manage the administrative tasks with the schools and hospitals are overwhelmed and do not have the resources they need. That is where our governments, here in Ottawa and in Quebec City, must do more to support those people on the ground, who are there to ensure good integration and who are able to do so. Our capacity to welcome immigrants relies heavily on these community groups that do not have enough and are overworked at this time. They themselves are telling us that it is not because there are too many immigrants, it is because they do not have the human and financial resources to do a good job.

We need to build more housing; that is true. We need to build social and affordable housing. However, I think we have to look at the next logical step. Immigrants did not cause the housing crisis. Immigrants should be welcomed by us, whether they are asylum seekers, refugees or economic immigrants, who are selected by the Government of Quebec, by the way, with points for knowledge of French. Let us do better.

I look forward to questions from my colleagues. I will be pleased to provide answers.

• (1205)

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie talked about the community organizations that work very hard to help newcomers integrate.

Granby is a welcoming place, and I am very proud of that. I am in regular contact with Solidarit  ethnique r gionale de la Yamaska, the organization responsible for integrating these folks. Its staff make an incredible contribution to that community back home. I commend them for their work, but they are definitely overwhelmed.

Business of Supply

I would like to come back to another point on which I wish I could agree with him. We in the Bloc Québécois, including myself and my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean, do not want to start a war of numbers. We merely want to talk about the issue and have a discussion that is calm and as respectful as possible.

What does my colleague think about the issue of international students and the immigration minister's idea to lower these thresholds? On the ground, if there is one thing that people in our communities and in the schools are telling us, it is that these students are part of our community. They are the lifeblood of our post-secondary institutions. Indeed, the immigration minister would be hitting the wrong targets by limiting the number of international students.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague and I commend the organizations in her riding that work hard to integrate people who arrive there.

That is an excellent question. It is a very complex file. Sometimes there is a tendency to mix apples, oranges and bananas. There are different types of immigrants: economic immigrants, refugees, family members and students. There are also temporary foreign workers. We have not talked about them, but there is a large number of them in Quebec and they are very much needed in many sectors. Of course we think about agriculture, but this can also be in processing, slaughterhouses, and also the health sector. These people are sometimes stuck with closed permits and that creates a host of problems.

There is no doubt that foreign students also make an economic contribution: They spend money here, they work here too. Sometimes, they stay here and share their talents with us. Wanting to reduce their numbers at any cost might hurt our universities. It is a significant source of revenue. If the universities need these foreign students, who pay a lot to come study here, it may be because they are chronically underfunded as a result of the cuts the federal government made for years.

We need to invest in student housing and in our universities. Foreign students must not become scapegoats when they want to benefit from the expertise and knowledge our universities have to offer.

• (1210)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on the exchange that just took place. When we talk about cutting the number of international students, my biggest concern, quite frankly, is the exploitation of international students. That particular program has led to exploitation because provinces and post-secondary education facilities have not stepped up to the plate when they should have.

We are talking about hundreds of thousands of international students every year. The federal government needs to step in more because we have seen neglect at other levels. As a result of the current minister getting more directly involved and putting in a cap, we are going to prevent the exploitation of potential international students. We need to continue with that.

Would my colleague across the way not agree that the federal government needs to continue to work with other jurisdictions and be sensitive to the issue of international students? It is not as simple as saying that we need to cut the numbers.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, rarely have I been so taken aback.

It is not by preventing them from coming here that we will protect foreign students. We need to prevent their exploitation.

If my Liberal Party colleague is serious about stopping exploitation, he should look at what is happening to temporary foreign workers who truly are being exploited and are not protected by the Liberal government. He should look at closed permits. How is it that his government continues to issue closed permits that mean workers cannot change jobs or employers, and are subjected to pressure, abuse, harassment and assault? These workers have to keep their mouths shut or get shipped home.

The Liberal government offers temporary foreign workers nothing but empty rhetoric.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the logic of Liberal members is to blame the victim. They are subject to exploitation, so they blame them and stop them from coming. That is their logic.

To the point about migrant workers, many migrant workers come to Canada and are subject to exploitation, yet the government will not give them landed status on arrival, which would allow them to have full status and protection. Would the member call on the government to stop the exploitation by ensuring migrant workers get full status upon arrival?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. If we are serious about giving rights to temporary migrant workers who come here and protecting them, we have to be able to change how things are done.

These people have no status and are at risk. In two of the immigration minister's mandate letters, the Liberal government promised a process to regularize the status of undocumented workers. He has done nothing. Meanwhile, people are being exploited before our eyes, in our country, even as we say we respect workers' rights.

It is disgraceful.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to enter into this debate today, and of course we are talking about newcomers. We are talking about the capacity for Quebec, and other provinces and territories, to successfully resettle newcomers. We are talking about the federal government needing to properly consult Quebec, other provinces and territories on Canada's immigration targets. All of that is absolutely valid, and we should be engaging in that discussion.

I want to point out very clearly that we just heard the government's parliamentary secretary blame the victims. The Liberals' approach is to say that we have too many newcomers, and they have decided to first pick on international students and put a cap on the number of international students. They claim that they are doing that because they want to protect them from exploitation. I do not know in what universe it is normal to actually say it is the victims' fault. It reminds me of old debates, back in the day, when women facing domestic violence were being blamed. The women facing violence were being blamed, not the abusers, and that is absolutely shameful.

Now we have Conservative members saying that they have a common-sense approach, and that they are so good and love newcomers. They were specifically asked the clear question of whether they would reduce the immigration target numbers. Did they answer the question? No, they did not. They will not answer questions clearly. They speak in euphemisms and slang. They talk in such a way that they can make a clip out of it, but they do not actually answer the question. They will say that we should not look at their record and that it was so long ago. My goodness, the record of who one stands for what one believes in and where one's values are.

Let us be clear. For the immigrant community, the refugee community, the Conservatives brought in cessation laws so that refugees facing persecution would not be allowed to return to their country of origin, and if they did, they would lose their Canadian status. This is even in the cases where the threat that caused them to flee their country of origin no longer exists, even if they want to go back to visit a dying loved one. If they were to return, they would be subject to cessation and lose their status in Canada.

This is the Conservatives' record. The current leader of the Conservatives was part of the administration that oversaw all of this, and he agreed with it. As well, on the Conservatives' record on how they treat immigrant communities, they brought in a law that second-generation Canadians born abroad would no longer be allowed to pass on their Canadian citizenship to their children. In Ontario, families brought this to court, and the Ontario court found it to be unconstitutional. This is the result of the Conservatives' record.

Conservatives want to talk about what a great job they did in dealing with backlogs. I still remember back in 2015, when I was first elected, and I came to the House and was the NDP immigration critic, which I continue to be. One of the first issues people brought to my attention was the long delay in the processing of spousal reunification. Family members told stories of how much pain and suffering they had had to endure as a result of the separation because of 10 years of the Harper administration. According to

the Conservatives, we are to just forget about that and pretend it did not happen.

Let us just be clear about where Conservatives stand and what their record has been. I could go on for days about that, but I only have 10 minutes for this entire speech, and I want to spend a bit of time talking about the value of newcomers and how they contribute to Canada. Their being here helps to fill the gaps that exist in the labour force. They pay their taxes and support our local economy. Just to be clear on the demographics of things—

• (1215)

The Deputy Speaker: I believe we have a point of order from the hon. member for Miramichi—Grand Lake.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I worry the member speaking forgets it is actually the Liberal government that is in power. For eight years—

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the intervention, but that is debate.

The hon. member for Vancouver East has the floor.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, the contributions from newcomers are significant. There are 1.6 million newcomers and immigrants engaged in the health care sector at a time when we have a significant skilled labour shortage in the health care sector. They are doctors, nurses and care aids. They are the people who care for us when we are sick and who care for our families when we need them the most. During COVID, they were there, risking their lives to take care of our loved ones.

Who else are newcomers? They are people who help build houses. Of the immigrant community, 20% are engaged in the construction sector where we need them to build the infrastructure and to build the houses we desperately need. They are people who put food on our tables. They are people who do the farming work where there is a significant skilled labour shortage. I can go on about their contributions, so I will say this: When Canada is faced with a housing crisis, do not blame the immigrant community. Do not blame the migrant workers. They are not at fault.

Who is at fault? It is the successive Liberal and the Conservative governments that failed Canadians by not ensuring that Canada builds the housing that is needed and that is affordable for Canadians. The Conservatives cancelled the co-op housing program, and the Liberals cancelled the national affordable housing program and left the whole thing to the private sector to deal with. When we have, 30 years later, a significant housing crisis, do not blame newcomers for that; blame the governments that failed Canadians in that regard.

I want to add one other thing, in terms of contributions of newcomers. They also create jobs. A third of the businesses in our communities are created by immigrants. They hire Canadians, and they actually create employment as well.

Just so that everybody understands, do not blame immigrants. We need the federal government to also step up to ensure that provinces, Quebec and territories are properly resourced. To that end, for successful resettlement, I am going to move an amendment.

Business of Supply

I move:

That the motion be amended by adding the following: “d) call on the government to table in the House, within 100 days, a report on the gap between the resources that are needed to align federal immigration targets in 2024 and the capacity of Quebec, provinces and territories to successfully resettle newcomers; and e) call on the government to table in the House, within 100 days, a plan to ensure adequate resources are provided to Quebec, provinces and territories to support the successful resettlement of newcomers.”

That is what is needed. Do not blame the newcomers. Hold the people to account, and that would be the government that needs to step up and do the job in support of provinces, Quebec and territories.

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion. If the sponsor is not present, the House leader, the deputy House leader, the whip, or the deputy whip of the sponsor's party may give or refuse consent on the sponsor's behalf.

Since the sponsor is not present in the chamber, I ask the deputy House leader if she consents to this amendment being moved.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the member for Beloeil—Chambly, who is the sponsor of this motion, we welcome this request for an amendment.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Vancouver East for her speech. I think that she is not only a person who is easy to work with on the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, but one who also knows everything there is to know about Canada's immigration system and all of its programs. She truly has a sound knowledge of the subject, and I wanted to say so today in the House.

That being said, we welcome the amendment tabled in relation to our motion. I get the feeling that the Conservatives will agree with us on this point, and that the NDP, the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives will all vote in favour of our motion on immigration, which leads me to believe that the Liberal government will have no choice but to also vote in favour of the motion.

My question to the member for Vancouver East is simple: When there is a coalition like this between the NDP, the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives, does that not prove that it is the Liberals who are the problem when it comes to immigration?

• (1225)

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank my colleague for his collaborative approach. I enjoy working with him at the immigration committee and most certainly in the House as well.

On the question around immigration, there are issues that need to be addressed, and we need to ensure that in addressing these issues, newcomers are not to be blamed.

I hope the amended motion is passed in the House. I have no idea where the Liberal government members are going to go. I have no idea where the Conservatives are going to go. They did not indicate

in this debate that they would actually support it. I would wait to see, and I do hope that the motion passes.

It is very important to make sure that proper processes are in place, that proper resources are in place and that proper information is in place. The issue around the gap between what is needed for provinces, Quebec and the territories, and what the resources are from the federal government needs to be in place and needs to be put on the table so that newcomers are not being blamed for the problems, the housing crisis and others, that Canadians are faced with.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have listened closely to the member opposite over the last half hour or so. On the issue of immigration, I am very much interested in knowing the NDP's position on overall numbers that they would like to see come to Canada. She indicated, very clearly, that temporary foreign workers who come to Canada should be granted permanent resident status. She also indicated that an unlimited number of international students should be allowed to come to Canada.

I am wondering if she could share with us two things. Should international students also be provided with assurances that they could become permanent residents. If so, when she factors that into the number of permanent residents through the temporary foreign workers program, what is the target goal, the overall number of immigrants in any given year? Does the NDP have one?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. The NDP has always stood and supported the principle that if one is good enough to work, one is good enough to stay. If one is good enough to study here, one is good enough to stay. That principle ought to apply.

The truth of the matter is this: between successive Liberal and Conservative governments, they have brought a significant number of people with temporary status, whether they are students or workers, to the tune of over half a million people, over 500,000 people and counting, into the country without permanent status.

Those individuals are subject to exploitation, and we know that. The government knows that. What are they doing about it? Not a heck of a lot. It is time to recognize them and to give them full status so that we can ensure that exploitation is eliminated for these individuals.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, to get a specific answer, is the member clearly saying that if one comes to Canada to study and one comes to Canada as a foreign worker, one should be granted permanent resident status?

If she is saying that, and that is what I am hearing, then does the NDP have any sort of limits they would put on the numbers that they would allow in every year? A clear answer, I believe, is owed to Canadians on that question.

Business of Supply

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I will tell members what is owed to Canadians. The government brings in immigration policies that set people up for exploitation. The government brings in immigration policies that blame newcomers for the problems it has created. Look at what has happened with the international students. Who is the government blaming? It is blaming international students for exploitation. What sort of joke is this?

The government is proceeding accordingly because of what it is. That tells us a whole lot about who the Liberals are.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Salaberry—Suroît, who is also my treasured whip. One must always be kind to one's whip.

The federal government needs to revise its immigration targets if it wants to build a successful immigration model and make sure that newcomers find favourable living conditions here. On its opposition day on Tuesday, October 31, 2023, the Bloc Québécois invited elected officials from all parties represented in the House to vote in favour of its motion asking the federal government to revise its immigration targets after consultation, of course, with Quebec, the provinces and the territories.

Today, the Bloc Québécois reiterates this invitation and asks the House to reaffirm its unanimous vote on November 1, 2023, calling on the government “to review its immigration targets starting in 2024, after consultation with Quebec, the provinces and the territories, based on their integration capacity...all with a view to successful immigration.” Also, the Bloc Québécois “call[s] on the Prime Minister to convene a meeting with his counterparts in Quebec, the provinces and the territories in order to consult them on their respective integration capacities”. Finally, it asks that the government “table in the House, within 100 days, a plan for revising federal immigration targets in 2024, based on the integration capacity of Quebec, the provinces and the territories.”

There is no doubt that Quebec and the provinces are in the best position to understand their reality on the ground. Considering their integration capacity for health, education, language and housing services is a necessity to build a successful immigration model and to ensure that newcomers can find good living conditions here, with us. Ottawa must respect our integration capacity.

Quebec is generous and welcoming. What we want is for all newcomers to be received in the right way, with access to housing, health care, child care and education services and, of course, to French-language training so that they can fully integrate with us and become “us” as well. Basically, what we want is to have the means to welcome everyone through the front door and with the dignity and respect they deserve.

What is unfortunate, for lack of a better word, is that the Liberals, at the exact same time that they were supporting the Bloc Québécois motion for successful immigration, unveiled new immigration targets that they set without consulting Quebec. On November 1, 2023, the federal government announced new targets without knowing if new immigrants would have access to housing, health care, child care, education and French-language training services. It

is too bad for the federal government, but the Bloc Québécois will not let that slide.

Recently, the Premier of Quebec wrote a letter to the Prime Minister of Canada mainly to address the issue of asylum seekers. Let us be clear: This issue is also linked to Quebec's integration capacity. Support organizations are overwhelmed. Quebec alone welcomed over 55% of all asylum seekers in Canada. That is a major financial burden. By the way, Quebec is still awaiting the reimbursement of the \$470 million it had to spend to welcome these asylum seekers, which is a federal jurisdiction. As usual, the federal government cloaked itself in virtue and announced a \$100-million payment, thinking that would silence Quebec. I do not think it is the responsible thing to do.

As members know, I love democracy. It is normal and healthy, in a democratic Parliament such as ours, to hold public debates on important subjects that shape our future. It is also essential for the government to consider the requests of the opposition parties, just as we must also respect differences of opinion. Understandably, I am not here today to play politics at the expense of the lives of migrants and asylum seekers. On the contrary, I believe that, as a parliamentarian, it is more than necessary to rise to the occasion and be there for the most vulnerable and those who are seeking a better life.

The migration path is not easy. It is often costly and sometimes perilous. In the face of such a situation, it is our duty to be responsible and worthy of the trust of people who leave their homes and travel a long distance with their families and children in the hope of finding a host community and happier days. The problem is that the federal government is not giving Quebec a chance to keep doing what it is doing. Quebec has far exceeded the capacity it considers essential to welcome immigrants with dignity.

● (1230)

Since the House came back, we have been called every name in the book, but “armchair quarterbacks” has to be the most ridiculous one. Unfortunately, that shows the level of respect this government has for opposition parties, such as the Bloc Québécois, here in the House. They wave us off, call us names and use the typical Canadian insult that Quebecers are always looking for a fight. Worse still, they turn a deaf ear when we speak. From what I understand, that is also how the federal government treats the Quebec government when it comes to discussing immigration thresholds.

Yesterday, Quebec's immigration, francization and integration minister said that Quebec is at its “breaking point” and that “the situation has become unsustainable”. It has gotten to the point where, as we speak, the people on the other side of the bridge are considering holding a referendum to repatriate immigration powers in full.

Business of Supply

Do I really need to explain my position on this? The Bloc Québécois has always been in favour of what is good for Quebec and we will always support what is good for Quebec. If Quebec's relationship with the federal government is as good as the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship claims, if things really are that good with Quebec City, which is what he says every time we ask him a question, I think it is time he showed a little more openness. Something tells me that this relationship is in tatters.

Quebec's immigration minister said yesterday that she did not sense any openness on the part of the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. That is how the media reported it. Quebec's minister is considering holding a referendum on the issue of whether to repatriate all immigration powers to Quebec. Meanwhile, the minister in Ottawa keeps saying that everything is just hunky-dory, that the relationship is great and that they have had some good discussions. I think I trust the Quebec immigration minister more than the federal immigration minister.

The Bloc Québécois motion that we have brought back again today aims to ensure a better future for all Quebecers and those who hope to become Quebecers. It cannot be done haphazardly or at any price. It has to be done in a responsible manner by showing newcomers and their families that we can be trusted in Quebec.

• (1235)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois talked about problems with the current immigration system. Here is my question. What would the Bloc Québécois's plan be if Quebec were responsible for immigration?

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, my plan is for Quebec to have full authority over immigration. It is not complicated. I have never heard a Conservative member tell me whether they agree with Quebec's immigration minister, so the next time a Conservative member rises to ask me a question, I would like them to answer the following question. Do the Conservatives agree that Quebec should have full authority over immigration?

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to a Leger survey, 70% of Quebecers believe that the Quebec government should do more to increase the pool of available workers through economic immigration. Does the Bloc Québécois agree?

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I will answer by repeating what the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship said. If the Quebec government wants to grow the labour pool or totally control economic immigration, it first has to have all immigration powers.

Let us take the example of temporary foreign worker program. People say that Quebec has complete control of this type of immigration and its labour force, but that is not true. The largest portion of foreign workers in Quebec are here through the international mobility program, which is under the control of the federal government.

As a result, at the economic level, and even when it comes to temporary foreign workers, it is not true that Quebec is in control. I think that that is perfectly normal. This Parliament recognized that Quebec is a nation. A nation should be in control of all immigration powers.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that through the expansion, in particular with Jean Chrétien back in 1998 and the provincial nominee program, it sent a very clear message that we do need, from an Ottawa perspective, to continue to work with the provincial jurisdictions. I think Quebec was the model province at the time, and it continues to be in many ways in regard to immigration, but there is a need for people to be working together.

Does the member agree with the NDP position that temporary workers should be given permanent residence status? If not, why not?

• (1240)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question.

We had this debate in the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, and I do not agree 100% with the NDP's proposal. However, there are things we can look at. Recently, the Union des producteurs agricoles proposed facilitating access to permanent resident status for temporary foreign workers in the agriculture sector.

As people can see, I agree with my NDP colleagues on some things, but not all. Once again, as I said earlier and I will say again, if Quebec had all immigration powers, the question would not have been asked, since there would not be a Bloc Québécois immigration critic. There would be no need for one.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean for his speech.

He spoke about the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship's very scathing tone towards the Bloc Québécois. He called us armchair quarterbacks. Politicians have a thick skin and are capable of handling such insults, but the problem is that if the minister is busy insulting us, it means he is not dealing with the situation.

Meanwhile, it is the immigrants who suffer the most. There was a report last week of an asylum seeker who said he was afraid for himself and his nine-year-old daughter, because they were on the verge of having to live on the streets.

Does my colleague agree with me that, while the minister is serving up insults, there are real people suffering as a result of his inaction and irresponsible decisions?

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question.

Business of Supply

There is a management problem at the immigration department and it starts at the top. It actually starts with the Minister of Immigration, whose scathing, abrasive and disrespectful tone is unbecoming of his position. Consequently, the debate on immigration, which should be sensitive, responsible and impartial, sometimes winds up going downhill.

Things must not be going too well, since this is the third immigration minister since 2019. How is this department going to recover? Let me be clear: The federal immigration department is probably the most dysfunctional department in the Canadian government. That said, replacing the captain every six months because things are not going well is not going to stop the ship from sinking.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this Bloc Québécois opposition day on the important topic of successful immigration.

What can I add to what has been said by the Bloc Québécois immigration critic, the member for Lac-Saint-Jean? Since he has a strong command of this file and detailed knowledge of the problems, I have decided to speak more specifically about successful immigration and what that means, in practical terms, for my riding. In some of the speeches that I heard this morning, members often had a tendency to talk about successful immigration by presenting statistics and numbers, but today I want to talk about people in my riding.

My riding, Salaberry—Suroît, is part urban, part rural. In other words, there are two large industrial towns and several rural municipalities there. When I talk about the rural reality, I am also talking about a lack of transportation options and a lack of access to local services.

I have been an MP since 2019, but I was also an MP from 2006 to 2011. Since returning to politics, I have noticed that, in my riding, the issue of immigration, the large number of newcomers, is relatively new. We did not have that before. We had a few newcomers, mostly temporary workers. Today, we are very happy to see our communities flourishing. People who come to Salaberry—Suroît contribute to the development of the region by settling there, starting a family, getting a job and sharing their culture. We are one big family. This is something relatively new for us, especially in comparison to Montreal or other major cities, such as Toronto or Vancouver.

All these people coming in are shaking things up. As my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean said, there have been no discussions or conversations between the provincial and federal governments with a view to planning immigration. Successful immigration planning means determining how many people we want to welcome and knowing what our capacity is.

I would like to tell my colleagues a little story. My riding includes an industrial or working-class town called Huntingdon, which is home to a huge processing plant that makes sweet potato fries. This company had to hire temporary workers to keep its plant going. Maison Russet and Les Fermes Valens sought out foreign workers but were very mindful of the quality of their integration. They know that if they welcome temporary foreign workers who want to settle in the community and they help them through the im-

migration process, these individuals will feel like an integral part of the community and will want to stay in Huntingdon.

Because my riding is in a rural area where immigration is a relatively new phenomenon, we had a collective discussion about the issue of French integration. Huntingdon has one high school and two elementary schools, but not many local services. Because this huge influx had not been planned or discussed, there were no classes to help the many workers employed at the plant integrate into French-speaking society. When a problem arises, my riding's trademark response is to get together and try to find solutions. We held several meetings and, in the end, it was decided that the best thing to do was to set up French integration services close to where the people were working, so they could access them without needing public transit. That is the challenge we faced. The federal government does not think about planning and has little interest in considering integration capacity, so communities are not equipped to deal with the influx.

• (1245)

We sat down at a table and decided that, since classrooms are usually empty in the evenings, if Arthur Pigeon high school started evening classes, temporary foreign workers could go there at the end of the workday to learn French. We figured that it would take some teachers, some rooms and money to fund the whole thing. We realized that our school had not budgeted for developing a large number of French classes. Again, when we talk about successful immigration, we are mainly talking about discussions around planning immigration levels based on integration capacity.

By having discussions and being innovative, we managed to find rooms and teachers and all of that. Once we had succeeded in setting up French classes thanks to our teamwork, we started thinking about what we would do about the other services these workers and their families need. I am talking about the whole issue of service delivery.

Is there an early childhood centre nearby? Do people have access to transportation to get to these services? It is a complex issue because we are reacting to something that we could have planned for and examined if the government had taken this issue seriously and, above all, if the provinces had been considered major players in analyzing the issue of integration capacity. There is clearly a lack of foresight on the part of the federal government. The provinces do not have enough money to welcome immigrants, but immigrants are the primary victims of this lack of planning.

That is why the Bloc Québécois believes that, in order for immigration to be successful, the federal government must stop acting like the big boss and making all the decisions without considering the provinces, without bringing them to the table. The federal government must agree to listen and find solutions. In today's motion, the Bloc Québécois is proposing a solution. The motion was amended with very specific timelines. We are waiting for the government to come up with concrete proposals to measure the quality of each province's integration capacity and therefore measure the integration capacity of Canada as a whole.

I said that the primary victims of the failure to plan for integration quality or integration capacity are the immigrants themselves. I will provide some statistics. I said I would not, but I cannot help myself.

How long does it take to process an application for permanent residency, say, for someone who shows up at our office and is waiting for permanent residency? Right now, it takes 11 months to obtain permanent residency.

How long does it take to complete the family reunification process? It takes 34 months.

How long does a refugee or asylum seeker have to wait for their work permit? When they arrive here, they do not have a work permit and they cannot work without one. The answer is, it takes too long.

As a federal MP who represents a riding that wants the best for immigrants and wants them to immigrate successfully, I urge all my colleagues in the House to support the Bloc Québécois's opposition motion to revise immigration targets from 2024 onward after consulting with Quebec, the provinces and the territories, based on their own integration capacity in terms of housing, health care, education, French-language learning and transportation infrastructure, to ensure a genuinely successful and respectful immigration process for the human beings we want to welcome to Quebec.

• (1250)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a relatively quick question.

Given the nature of the matter we are discussing, could the member give a clear indication of whether she or her party actually consulted with the Government of Quebec with respect to what they are proposing?

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question, which strikes me as quite partisan.

The Bloc Québécois has raised an issue that is of concern to all the provinces, and one on which there is consensus this morning. I guess the member did not have a chance to read the *Journal de Montréal*, which very clearly indicated that both Quebecers and Canadians think that Quebec and the provinces really need to sit down at the same table because everyone has a say. We often talk about two solitudes, but in this case, everyone is on the same page. Everyone agrees that we need to find the solution to successful im-

Business of Supply

migration together. The people who would benefit most from that kind of democratic exercise would be immigrants themselves.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard someone say today that there is a shortage of services for French language training in Montreal, in the riding of the member who gave her speech. What can the government do to increase services?

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, I thank my Conservative colleague for her question, because it is a great question.

The federal government owes Quebec \$470 million, so paying that back would be a good place to start. Quebec would then have the money and financial flexibility needed to be able to increase services.

We know that integration capacity is a complicated and complex issue. We also know that, although we do not have all the solutions, funding is needed to increase services to give newcomers everything they need to have a successful immigration experience and want to stay.

The people I find the most courageous are those who leave their country and their families behind, who arrive here hoping for a better life, but then face inhumane bureaucracy and endless delays in accessing services or obtaining a work permit or any other documents required to successfully integrate into our communities.

• (1255)

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît, our party whip, for her speech, which was very compassionate. She clearly explained the full continuum of services that we need to provide to ensure that these people who enrich our communities are welcomed in a compassionate way. I am experiencing the same thing in my riding.

Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, I would like my whip to talk more about the fact that we cannot reduce the immigration issue to a simple matter of housing. It is much more than that. It is a full continuum of services, including health care services, for which the government needs to increase transfers, and day care services.

We cannot reduce immigration to a matter of housing or say that immigration alone is responsible for the housing crisis. That is not true. It goes beyond that.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Shefford for her question. I know she is very attuned to this issue as well.

When we welcome around 40 students from francophone African countries and we are so happy to have them in Salaberry—Suroît because they speak French and they want to study to become nurses and contribute to our health care system, it breaks my heart to know that they get here but do not have everything they need for a successful immigration experience. Some are forced to rely on donated clothing or food banks, some need help moving house, and some have nowhere to live or are forced to share an overcrowded home.

In all sincerity, I cannot imagine the government not voting for the Bloc Québécois motion. It makes sense, and it is specifically targeted to newcomers, who are human beings who need to be taken care of.

Business of Supply

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share my time today with the member for London West.

I would like to thank the hon. member for his interest in the role the federal and Quebec governments play in setting objectives for welcoming new permanent residents to Canada. When we talk about immigration policies, we often forget that these decisions have a real impact on the lives of individuals here, in Canada, but also abroad. These decisions have an impact on lives, today, and for generations to come. It is important that we continue to have these conversations on this very important issue. Anyone who has ever attended a citizenship ceremony certainly knows all the work that permanent residents have to do to become citizens. They have seen the joy on their faces when they swear the oath of citizenship and continue to build their life with their family in Canada.

Over the past few years, Canada has undergone many changes, and immigration has taken on new importance. The 2021 census clearly shows that Canada's population is aging. Immigration is now the main driver of population growth and workforce stability. Many people may not realize that young families, students and workers from other countries who choose to come to Canada play a vital role in our daily lives and in our country's growth. Canadians are living longer, and families are having fewer children. Fifty years ago, the ratio of workers to retirees was 7 to 1. A lot has changed since then. Today, that ratio is almost 3 to 1. The Globe and Mail recently reported that Canada's fertility rate hit its lowest level ever in 2022. Unless we bring in more newcomers, that rate will hover around 2 to 1 in the decades to come. This outcome would put additional pressure on our key infrastructure and programs, such as health care and education, and expose them to undue risk.

When the hon. Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship announced Canada's latest immigration levels plan, he said that the government was stabilizing future immigration targets to ensure that housing and social services were available to all Canadians and newcomers. These immigration levels will help us take in the skills and talent needed to fill labour shortages and support Canada's economic prosperity, while helping reunite families and enabling us to remain a global leader in refugee resettlement. Immigration levels are part of a long-term strategy focused on economic growth, with the economic category accounting for approximately 60% of permanent resident admissions.

According to Statistics Canada, in the third quarter of 2023, there were nearly 180,000 job vacancies in Quebec. This includes over 44,000 vacancies in the health care sector. In addition, the labour shortage in Quebec's manufacturing sector is costing the economy \$7 billion. I had the opportunity to travel around Quebec by bicycle this summer. Everywhere I went, I saw signs that read "we are hiring". I have to wonder why the Bloc Québécois moved this motion, which essentially calls on the federal government to reduce its immigration targets, when the facts show that Canada and Quebec still face labour shortages that are affecting small businesses across the country. Are they rooting for economic stagnation?

• (1300)

The federal government recognizes the need to align our immigration levels with the needs and capacity of newcomers in communities across the country, including in Quebec. Of course, we did not arrive at our goals by accident. Our government consulted widely on the number of permanent residents that the Government of Canada should intake and on the balance between the different categories of newcomers. We sought the views and priorities of federal partners, regional representatives, provinces and territories, indigenous communities, stakeholders and the general public. These immigration levels will help set the pace of Canada's economic and population growth while mitigating its impact on key systems such as infrastructure and housing.

These levels also maximize the economic and social benefits of immigration that will be felt in all regions of Canada, including in francophone communities outside Quebec. In my riding of Milton, we have a vibrant francophone community. There are wonderful French-language schools and an extraordinary francophone community. I would therefore like to take a moment to applaud our government's commitment to supporting francophone communities outside Quebec by increasing francophone immigration outside Quebec to 6% of total immigration in 2024, 7% in 2025 and 8% in 2026.

The Minister of Immigration also recently announced a new francophone immigration policy that will attract talented francophone workers from around the world, which will contribute to the economic and cultural development of francophone minority communities. For example, thanks to recent changes to the express entry program, we were able to invite more than 1,500 trade workers from abroad, including those who can help build new homes across Canada to relieve the pressure on our housing system.

Under the Canada-Quebec Accord on immigration, Quebec has rights and responsibilities concerning the number of immigrants who come to Quebec and how they are selected, received and integrated. Canada sets the annual number of immigrants for the country based on how many immigrants Quebec wishes to take in. Quebec is solely responsible for selecting its economic and humanitarian immigrants and for applying the federal selection criteria for family reunification. The federal government is responsible for selecting and admitting family class applicants.

This means that in planning for future immigration levels, we will develop a more integrated plan to balance immigration with housing, health care and infrastructure needs across federal departments, as we work with the provinces, territories and municipalities.

Business of Supply

The truth is that a newcomer's potential is much greater than the sum of their present circumstances. We must measure the benefits of immigration in terms of generations. A child who arrives in Canada today may become the inventor, the leader, the athlete, the nurse or the entrepreneur of tomorrow, or even a volunteer who supports and inspires future immigrants.

Let us not forget what the government said earlier. We need newcomers as much as they need us, and our current immigration levels reflect that reality. Canada will continue to be a welcoming country that understands the benefits of immigration and provides a safe haven for those fleeing persecution, war and upheaval. We will continue to benefit from the diversity and openness of our communities. These are just some of the reasons why Canada is one of the best destinations in the world for people from all walks of life.

• (1305)

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about the length of time it takes for every kind of immigration permit, whether it is a permanent resident card or a permanent work visa after someone has been a student. It is literally taking years, and the department has increased in size by 50%.

Can the member tell us what exactly the Liberal government will do to bring down wait times?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, it is a little ironic that the Conservatives are complaining it takes too long, when they cut the public service that we rely on to get wait times down.

It is absolutely essential to make sure the public service has the resources and capacity to ensure that wait times are low and reasonable. At the same time, many constituents rely on good members of Parliament, which I am grateful we have a lot of on this side of the House. Perhaps some well-experienced members on the other side like to cross their arms and say I will be out of a job soon, which is ironic given recent comments by the member.

It is great to hear that Conservatives are on board with immigration and making sure new Canadians get the services they desire.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that Quebec experienced a phenomenal 46% increase in non-permanent residents this year. Furthermore, the federal government has allocated only \$100 million of the \$470 million requested by the Government of Quebec, despite this government's many calls.

What is the government actually doing to prevent Quebec's economic and social collapse? What is it doing to ensure that our plea to improve our immigrants' living conditions is heard?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, I had the opportunity to tour Quebec by bicycle. My group and I saw a lot of signs posted by small businesses saying, "We are hiring".

Quebec is facing a shortage of workers. We have to ensure the vitality of our economy and small businesses. It is important for workers to live and work in Quebec.

• (1310)

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Northern College in my region has had extraordinary success with relations with international students. So many students have come here, gotten an education and helped build our economy. Now we suddenly have an arbitrary cap that is having a huge impact not just on the college but also on all area businesses that rely on students who come here, get educated and want to stay. As well, of course, it has a huge impact on the students themselves.

Instead of one size fits all, is the Liberal government willing to address the obvious fault in its plan in order to make sure regions like mine and colleges like Northern College are not unfairly impacted by the new cap?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, the question is very important.

Conestoga College, Wilfrid Laurier University and McMaster are in my region. All of them rely on international students, as does our economy. However, some less-reputable colleges and universities are bringing in students by the tens of thousands, in some cases by the hundreds of thousands, and that is what we need to look at. They arrive with the expectation of a really good education. I am certain the college referenced by my colleague from northern Ontario is a reputable one and an excellent school; however, a lot of colleges are in basements of strip malls, and we need to look at that.

I would note that this is a provincial responsibility, and it is unfortunate that the system has been taken advantage of both by the provinces and by some of the smaller colleges of low reputation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to provide my colleagues with information on how the federal government works with its provincial, territorial and municipal partners to welcome and integrate newcomers.

We all know that immigration is one of the defining characteristics of Canada. We are a very welcoming country, where newcomers can feel like they are an integral part of a community. We live in a country where we understand that immigration contributes to the growth of our economy, our diversity and the building of the communities in which we live.

Business of Supply

Although our immigration system is considered world class, we are also aware that with nearly 110 million displaced people around the world, we are facing global migration crises. Canada is not alone in feeling the effects.

We also continue to have a significant demand for newcomers, especially for workers who bring the skills and assets needed to meet our country's evolving economic needs, including in the health, construction and technology sectors.

To maintain our position as a world leader and to continue to attract newcomers, the federal government recognizes that we must plan the future of our system to ensure that it is effective, resilient and innovative. That is why Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada launched "an immigration system for Canada's future", a strategic review of immigration that took place between February and May of last year.

The purpose of this full-scale consultation initiative was to look at the way Canada's immigration policies and programs can promote a common vision for the future of Canada. The minister worked with partners, stakeholders and Canadians from across the country to answer the following questions. What does the future and an immigration system for Canada's future look like? How can we respond to the rapidly changing needs of employers? How can we ensure that newcomers to Canada are able to integrate quickly into our communities?

• (1315)

[English]

IRCC inputs from partners, stakeholders and Canadians have enabled us to prepare measures that will improve Canada's immigration system and be implemented through a whole-of-government approach and whole-of-society collaboration. In addition to soliciting input from all regions of the country, we also organized an in-depth session with experts on key issues such as housing and attracting the skills our economy requires.

The impacts that these results will have on the improvement and evolution of our immigration system are invaluable. The findings have revealed a way forward based on three key themes: improving the reception and integration of newcomers, better aligning our immigration objectives with the needs of the Canadian labour market and, most importantly, developing a comprehensive and coordinated plan that brings together all levels of government and partners to ensure that we have services and supports that newcomers actually need and will use.

[Translation]

To improve how we welcome and integrate newcomers, we are working to make our systems easier to use and more responsive to user needs. Clear and predictable decisions will be made based on our service standards, which will help users make informed choices.

We will also continue to work with communities and our partners to ensure that everyone has access to the support services they need to attract and retain newcomers to these communities.

Our immigration level plans play a crucial role in addressing labour shortages. Immigration remains a key tool to ensure that we

have enough nurses in our hospitals, trade workers to build new homes as well as tech workers to support our innovative businesses.

By linking sectoral, federal and provincial worker and employer needs strategies to our immigration priorities, not only are we helping to stimulate economic growth, we are also developing a global competitive advantage.

IRCC has launched a new francophone immigration policy to foster the economic development and vitality of francophone minority communities across Canada, like my own. To bolster the presence of French in Canada, we have also renewed and expanded the welcoming francophone communities initiative and are continuing to implement the action plan for official languages. These measures will help increase the demographic weight of francophone communities across Canada.

Immigration is also helping to address labour shortages in the health care sector. On January 15, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages announced a series of measures to accelerate credential recognition for some 6,600 foreign-trained health care professionals.

[English]

We know that optimizing our immigration system is not an easy task, but the federal government is determined to continue to work in harmony with the provinces, territories, municipalities and all other partners, to implement innovative, sustainable solutions that will benefit all Canadians.

The federal government is also committed to continuing to advance Canada's humanitarian leadership on the world stage, and to protecting our competitive advantage in attracting the talent and the skills our economy needs, but above all, to welcoming newcomers in a way that reflects the difficult decisions they made to change their lives when they come here.

Thanks to this strategy review, the federal government is now better equipped not only to meet the needs of newcomers in the communities that welcome them, but also to meet the needs of Canadian society as a whole.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in her speech, my colleague talked about the importance of being able to integrate newcomers. That is precisely the crux of our motion. It is to have consultations that will allow for a bit of predictability. What happens is that Canada sets targets, but then we have to try to meet those targets and we realize that we do not have that capacity.

Business of Supply

We are not the only ones saying so. CMHC mentioned the number of housing units that would be needed so that they are not in short supply. Academics have talked about the added pressure. Toronto has sounded the alarm. On the ground, we feel that we are not able to meet these targets because integration capacity was not taken into consideration.

What is it about our motion that my colleague does not agree with? What we want is a comprehensive discussion on integrating immigrants, because it is not just a financial issue. It is a matter of ensuring that we can meet the goals my colleague aims for, namely the proper integration of people who have made the difficult choice to leave their previous lives behind to come and find a welcoming country here.

• (1320)

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

In my speech, I talked about plans that we are implementing to continue to offer support. We are working in partnership with every sector, including those that provide services to determine how we can increase our services and make them better. That is what I just said in my speech.

We have brought in systems to address this. The government launched this at the beginning of the year and we will continue to ensure that newcomers arriving in Canada, in our communities and our municipalities, get everything they need to lead a good life.

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite mentioned in her speech that we need nurses and construction workers, and I agree. We are short 100,000 construction workers in Ontario alone, and many thousands of nurses. The Minister of Immigration just made an arbitrary decision to cut, by 50% in Ontario, colleges, which produce nurses, construction workers and those kinds of things.

Would the member commit to take this back to her caucus to try and get exemptions for colleges that are providing housing and adequate support, and producing the nurses and construction workers we need?

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, we are working with partners, territories, provinces and municipalities to make sure that we are targeting key sectors when we are receiving newcomers, especially through the different measures we have.

I think the minister said he is trying to figure out a way to proportionately move newcomers across the country, not have them in areas where there is already a high concentration. I mentioned in my speech that we are looking at different sectors, such as nursing and construction, that are really key for Canada. That is something we have already started to do.

We will continue to support the minister's work on having our employment sector, which is changing rapidly, continue to respond to those needs through these conversations we are having across the country. He is not cutting. We are putting a pause for the next two years to make sure we are appropriately bringing newcomers into

the parts of Canada where they are most needed, and that will have an impact in our economy.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the member could provide me with some insights.

We are seeing right now immigrants being blamed for the overcrowded health care system and our lack of housing, when we know what is to blame is consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments that have severely underfunded our housing and health care systems. Our provinces and territories need money to provide health care in our provinces.

As such, I am wondering if the member could please share some insights as to when we will see, in health care specifically, our provinces being provided with the funds necessary to provide the health care required. In particular, there was \$4.5 billion promised by the Liberals in mental health transfers. We have yet to see that. Our health care system is overloaded. When will we see the appropriate investments being made?

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to say in this House that immigrants are not to be blamed for any challenges our country faces. The challenges are already embedded here, and when immigrants come they also face challenges similar to those Canadians are facing, so they are not to be blamed for health care issues or housing issues. I appreciate my colleague's question, but I think she knows that health care is in the province, and the federal government has made the investments that continue to support provinces to do so.

We have Conservative premiers across the country whom I have not seen at the table to be able to respond to those questions. I think the questions the member is asking are really good questions that I think the Conservative premiers across the country can answer as well.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Saint-Jean.

I am very pleased to rise today to speak to an extremely important issue, a sensitive issue if ever there was one, and I would say that the Bloc Québécois was pretty much the first to raise the integration capacity limit when we began talking about immigration thresholds. As we know, it was a sensitive issue back then. People called us xenophobic. They said we did not like immigrants, and they even called us racists. Obviously, at times all Quebecers were labelled as such.

However, we need to have a respectful debate in the House on such an important matter. I know that having a respectful debate with the Minister of Justice is like trying to catch a fly with chopsticks. We will still try in the future. By that I mean that the minister himself is not behaving in an extremely honourable manner, despite being called honourable. We would like a respectful debate.

Business of Supply

They kind of thought we were out to lunch at a time when, in the context of multiculturalism and a postnational Canada, people were praising mass immigration. We said that maybe people should listen to us and think about integration capacity. Since then, National Bank economists Mr. Marion and Mr. Durocher have said that population growth is too high compared to absorption capacity. That sounds a bit like what we were saying, that the demand for housing was much higher than the supply, that there were shortages.

Some people say that a country's production, its GDP, is the most important thing. Obviously, if Canada's population continues to increase, the GDP will increase as well. Are we really richer? What actually reflects the wealth of a country, a people, the individuals who make up that nation, is GDP per capita. In Canada, GDP per capita has stagnated for the past six years. We are not getting richer. Why is that? Because our production capacities are not high enough in terms of fixed capital to enable newcomers to bring high productivity. We are limited. That has to do with integration capacity.

Soon after that, CMHC said that there was a housing shortage. It said that 3.5 million units needed to be built by 2030 because of immigration, which is extremely important. CMHC said that immigration was leading to housing problems for the entire population. When we talk about housing supply and demand, we never talk in terms of the demand arising from one particular thing or another. "Demand" refers to the sum of people who want a place to live, a home. It is not broken down into parts. It hardly takes a Ph.D. in mathematics to see that the more people who come to this country, the more the demand for housing rises. That is a no-brainer. The point is to underscore or identify the upward pressure on demand, which leads to a problem that will eventually exacerbate the housing crisis.

Immediately after that, CIBC said that CMHC is already behind the times and that five million housing units will have to be built by 2030. That is more than double the current supply. The University of Waterloo goes on to say that immigration lowers wealth and the per capita GDP. This information comes not from the Bloc Québécois or our leader, but from the University of Waterloo. Then TD Bank chimes in, saying that immigration is causing a sharp increase in demand which, combined with the central bank's interest rate increases, has caused supply to fall, resulting in a shortage of 500,000 housing units in two years.

It is not the Bloc saying this. We are no puppeteers. We do not have puppets all over the place, with a complex network of strings that we would be pulling. We are not the ones saying this. It is TD Bank, National Bank, CMHC, CIBC. Finally, this government's own public service rang the alarm and warned that the immigration policy was making the housing shortage even worse. What was the government's response to that? The Minister of Immigration said that they were going to bring in immigrants who would build their own housing.

• (1330)

Does he realize *Bob the Builder* is a cartoon, not real life? Does he understand that Bob's little hard hat is not real? That is not how things work. People cannot show up here with good intentions and say they will build their own house. They need land, for starters, and there is no more land around Montreal because of agricultural

zoning. People have to find land, but land is hard to come by. They may have to go further afield. Where I live, some people have land, but they no longer have drinking water. That means infrastructure has to be built.

What is Bob the Builder, with his uniform and his toolkit, supposed to do if there is no drinking water? He cannot build a house. He may have no choice but to build one outside the greater Montreal area, but if he wants to work in Montreal, he has a transportation problem, an infrastructure problem. What is he supposed to do, hop on a dragonfly? He has to get to work.

These are all things that the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the federal government do not seem to understand. They are ideologues. That is the problem. They are out of touch with reality. They have absolutely no idea what the integration capacity is.

Housing is part of integration capacity. Yes, we can play around with the supply a little, but the demand for housing has skyrocketed because of the Liberals' immigration policies. They also do not manage health care or education. They are not responsible for educating people or providing them with health care services. They have absolutely no idea what that involves. When it comes to French and teaching immigrants French, their policies are making the situation in Quebec worse. In order for immigrants to integrate, they need to speak French.

Those are the realities that the federal government is unaware of. The Liberals should be consulting the provinces and Quebec about those things, but no, they will not. They cannot consult because they know everything. Ottawa knows best, apparently. Since they know everything, they do not need to talk to anyone. However, when it comes time to pay, they do not do so. They pretend they have a hearing problem and look completely taken aback. They are surprised that they have to pay. They have a \$470-million debt because Quebec is welcoming their asylum seekers. I say "their" because those asylum seekers are the federal government's responsibility, but the federal government is not paying back its debt.

I imagine that the immigration minister's accountant gets nervous when he sees him coming, thinking to himself that the minister may not be repaying his debts. I do not know. That is not the way to go about making a name for himself or the Prime Minister. He should be more careful.

I have some impressive figures here. In 2023, Quebec had to create 1,150 French-language training classes just to educate newcomers. That is the equivalent of building 50 elementary schools in one year. Those are the kinds of integration issues we are talking about. These people must be integrated. They deserve to have a happy life, one filled with joy and happiness, one that will allow them to flourish.

The government based its decision on McKinsey. The member for Beauport—Limoilou asked Mr. Barton the following:

[Y]ou said earlier that you were concerned about the French issue.

In the Century Initiative and the growth council reports, which of the recommendations address the protection, development and promotion of French in Quebec and Canada?

Here is what Mr. Barton, from McKinsey, had to say:

Business of Supply

I think the focus, again on the growth council, was just on economics. It wasn't thinking about the social context. It was on productivity.

Since then, economists have proven that productivity does not increase with increased immigration.

With that, I want to leave the House with this thought. We have a responsibility. We must be compassionate towards the people who arrive here. We have a duty and a responsibility. We must welcome them intelligently. To do that, we must have the necessary integration capacity.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to hear my colleague's speech, especially since we come from the same area and share the same challenges. I imagine that, like me, he is dealing with a number of cases in his office of Canadians and Quebecers who have married someone abroad and want to bring their spouse to Canada.

I would like his thoughts on that. What does he think of the barriers we see every day in these people's files?

• (1335)

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member, who is from a neighbouring riding, for that question.

Yes, we often get this kind of request. I would say we need to show respect for the people who are making these requests. We should be able to support these people as a condition for welcoming them, and I think this work is generally done quite well. Sometimes it takes a long time, but my office is often able to solve these kinds of problems and make people happier. That much is certain.

[English]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the number of public servants in the immigration department, does the hon. member have any idea how many there currently are and whether what he is proposing would create additional layers of bureaucracy that could contribute to a lack of efficiency in the system?

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, quite simply, Canada operates with two levels of government that often fight over jurisdictional issues. In the case of immigration, both levels of government are involved.

To simplify this situation and cut out some of the public service without cutting services, which would be better, responsibility for immigration needs to be transferred to Quebec.

I would go even further. If we want to have a more effective and more responsible public service, if we want to have the same number of services with fewer public servants and therefore save money, then Quebec's independence is a must.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will try to speak in French, but it is hard for me. I am sorry.

In Alberta, more specifically in Edmonton Strathcona, we have a fast-growing francophone community. In fact, Edmonton's French quarter is in my riding and the people there add so much to the city.

Does the member not think that we should focus on the objective of francophone immigration and adequate resources instead of targeting immigration levels?

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, I must commend the hon. member on her efforts and the quality of her French. I humbly salute her. I have never been to Edmonton's French quarter. Maybe one day I will go if I am invited.

I must say that it is important that the francophonie be preserved, especially in cases where it is concentrated in neighbourhoods, cities or regions. When we talk about adding resources so we can take in more people, what I want is for every immigrant who arrives here to be able to reach their full potential.

If we want high integration capacity, we need a lot of resources. As I was saying earlier, resources are scarce. Those resources can only go so far. When we talk about land or infrastructure, for public transit or other purposes, the limitations eventually become fairly obvious.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is always a bit intimidating to speak after my leader. I will try not to disappoint him so that I can still come to his office when I want to filch some of his almonds.

I was the first to speak last fall during a similar debate on the issue of immigration thresholds and the capacity of Quebec and the provinces to accept immigrants. As the first speaker, I began by expressing the hope that the speeches to come would present arguments rather than lob cheap attacks and insults. I even suggested a list of epithets I hoped not to hear in the course of the day, namely, the words "racist", "xenophobic" and "anti-immigration". Unfortunately, it appears I was a lone voice in the wilderness in expressing that hope. It is clear that, since October, the government, and the Minister of Immigration in particular, have not been open to that approach to debating this very important and sensitive issue. We would have liked to see some real openness.

This morning, the member for Beloeil—Chambly, leader of the Bloc Québécois, used an expression that I have used myself, namely, that insults are the arguments employed by those who are in the wrong. I am still trying to figure out the government's reasoning for opposing the content of our motion, which I think is extremely thoughtful, balanced, reasonable and focused on something important: the immigrant as a person. Our motion concerns the ability to properly accommodate, integrate and accept the responsibility we take on automatically as soon as we say "welcome".

Business of Supply

The Bloc Québécois's voice is not the only one that has been heard since October. My colleague, the member for La Prairie, spoke about this a bit and I want to as well. Toronto also sounded the alarm by saying that its integration capacity has been far exceeded, that community organizations are at their wits' end, and that shelters are full and lack the funds needed to properly accommodate people. Suddenly, it seems like the issue is getting a little more of the government's attention. When Quebec speaks out, they turn a deaf ear. Toronto, on the other hand, is a little harder to ignore.

My colleague from La Prairie also mentioned banks. They are generally not the first ones to say that we should perhaps reconsider what we do with immigration and review the thresholds. Economic circles are generally pro-mass immigration. However, they have started to say that too much immigration, without taking integration capacity into account, can have an impact. They have begun to worry about the harmful effects of a massive and uncontrolled influx of immigrants that would put pressure on a number of sectors. They focused on housing, and that is what we are hearing a lot about right now, but the problem also extends to the availability and quality of public services.

Academics have also started talking about immigration and integration capacity. For example, Brahim Boudarbat of the school of industrial relations at the Université de Montréal said that, when the population increases, whether it comes from birth, permanent immigration or temporary immigration, the pressure on services and infrastructure increases accordingly. He said that sharp increases reduce the time we have to adjust and, as a result, lead to problems in terms of housing, child care services and hospitals, as we are now seeing. Furthermore, the speed of the increase does not allow us to adjust in real time and provide adequate and appropriate services to the people we are trying to integrate.

As my colleague also mentioned, the CMHC has begun to say that there is a problem with the number of housing units. By 2030, we will need approximately 3.5 million homes based on the higher thresholds the government is anticipating. I understand that it may actually be even more than that. It is impossible to build 3.5 million homes overnight. That takes time.

I would like to remind the House of something. The Bloc Québécois has never said that the housing crisis is caused by newcomers, and we will never say that. Newcomers are among the many victims of the crisis, but they are not responsible for it, just as they are not responsible for the lack of classes for children or for health care service delays. They are victims of these situations.

• (1340)

If we are not responsible for managing the thresholds, we are ultimately responsible for the results, that is, a decline in the quality of services for the population as a whole and, above all, for the most vulnerable, namely immigrants.

Earlier today or yesterday, more people added their voice on the issues of immigration, thresholds, intake capacity and integration. We are talking about regular people. Through a poll, Canadians and Quebecers conveyed the message that there are in fact problems related to integration capacity. The Leger poll mentions the failure of integration, but we still have to temper the way this discourse is presented. People sometimes say that this is simply anti-immigra-

tion rhetoric. However, one thing that comes out of the polls is that Quebecers recognize the benefits of immigration much more than the people of Canada, particularly when it comes to the economy, labour and the aging population. This led Jean-Marc Léger to say that the fact that Quebecers want immigration levels to be reviewed is not because they are anti-immigration. On the contrary, it is because they want better services for these people. They want solutions for the people we are welcoming.

In short, all these fine people—the banks, the mayor of Toronto, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, academics and the general public—started to say something more or less similar to what the Bloc is saying. That is quite a few people for the Minister of Immigration to insult instead of making arguments. I hope that as time goes by, the minister will calm down and come up with real answers.

I was talking about housing, but that is not the only factor related to integration capacity. That is why we need to have a broader discussion to explore what we can do to improve our integration capacity. This includes issues such as language, a crucial factor in Quebec and a key aspect of integration capacity.

We can also talk about infrastructure. It is all well and good to want to build housing, but if the zoning does not allow it, if there is no groundwater or insufficient access to drinking water and sanitation infrastructure, new housing cannot be constructed. Some towns and cities no longer have any land on which to build new housing. We need to think this through with the various stakeholders in the field.

As far as health and education are concerned, even if we were to build hospitals and schools, we need teachers and health care workers. What is more, we need people who are much more specialized in immigration, especially when it comes to asylum seekers. In the case of children, those who arrive in Canada sometimes have more specific needs in terms of special education or social work. Unfortunately, they often arrive with trauma that requires much more individually tailored management. We therefore need to have these kinds of professionals available.

It goes beyond the financial issue. It would be nice if the federal government paid back the \$470 million it owes Québec, but that will not solve everything. In fact, showering Quebec with money is not going to make health care professionals, housing and French language training magically appear. We need to discuss it with the various stakeholders, but we have not done that yet. Despite the unanimous support for the Bloc Québécois motion last fall, the next day, the minister announced new thresholds that had obviously not been discussed with the provinces and Quebec, and we did not know where they came from.

Business of Supply

That is why we are introducing this motion with a specific request: We are asking that consultations be held with the Quebec and provincial counterparts within 100 days. Also within 100 days, we are asking the government to present a specific plan and provide accurate answers to justify the thresholds it is going to establish, including the discussions that lead it to come up with the numbers. That will provide concrete proof, this time, that government support for our motion, if we do get it, will not simply be, “talk all you want, I will turn a deaf ear no matter how I vote”.

As I said at the outset, the main people targeted in the debate are the most vulnerable, those we want to take in. Although I do not think it will come true, I will repeat the wish I made last time: We must be able to debate this in a healthy, co-operative and comprehensive manner with all stakeholders, rather than get mired in a rash of insults that serve absolutely no purpose and certainly do nothing to help the people this motion targets, namely newcomers.

• (1345)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I very much appreciated my colleague's speech. I believe it is Montérégie Day today. It is very important to highlight our region and the importance of immigrants in our region. I am going to repeat the question I asked earlier.

My colleague spoke about housing issues. I would like to talk about Quebecers who are waiting for their spouses, who are abroad. These people do not have housing issues. Often, they even have a job waiting for them here in Canada. I would like my colleague to tell us about this situation. Apparently, Quebec has set a target, and people are stuck. There is a long waiting list because of Quebec's criteria.

• (1350)

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to come back to what I was saying, which is that the discussion on levels must be comprehensive and must also take place outside the provinces, because there is something called interprovincial migration. All of that has to be taken into account. The housing problem is critical, regardless of immigration categories. People who have always lived here are also struggling to find housing.

Take, for example, the situation in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, which I mentioned in my last speech. In a newspaper article, it was reported that many asylum seekers who had entered the country through Roxham Road went to Montreal, but then ended up going back to Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu because the city was welcoming, rent was a bit cheaper and it was easier to find work. Sometimes they had developed local ties, but there was still a housing shortage for these people.

It is even more urgent now. This week, it was announced that the vacancy rate in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu is 0.4%. There are currently only 56 housing units available in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, which has a population of 100,000. It does not matter who the people looking for housing are; the problem exists. This needs to be taken into consideration when determining integration capacity as part of a comprehensive discussion with everyone, especially the people on the ground.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I take a look at the larger picture of immigration, what we have seen over the last 15 or 20 years is a movement towards more provincial participation. To amplify that fact, one only needs to take a look at the provincial nominee program. Over 100,000 people will be coming, targeted, over the next year under that program alone.

I wonder if the member could provide her thoughts in regard to the fact that when we talk about the supports that need to be put in place, provincial jurisdictions also have a role to play, given that they also have an interest in the immigrants who are coming to Canada.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, the provinces certainly do have a role to play in immigration, especially Quebec, because of the language issue. The problem is that despite the role Quebec already has, the system is clearly not working, since Quebec's minister of immigration, francization and integration is so fed up that she is threatening to hold a referendum to repatriate all immigration powers. This comes from a party that is not really known for wanting to talk about referendums. On the contrary, it campaigned on the fact that it would never speak of holding a referendum on Quebec's independence.

Now that party has reached the point where it has to talk about having a referendum because this is not working. Even though there are powers for Quebec, Ottawa is clearly turning a deaf ear, and this is the result. Theoretically, the provinces and Quebec have powers, but in reality, if the government decides to do as it pleases, which apparently it is perfectly capable of doing, then we end up in the situation we are in. Everyone is shouting that the threshold has been exceeded, that the government is managing immigration irresponsibly and that newcomers are the ones paying the price.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Saint-Jean for her speech, which was interesting as always.

I think that 338 parliamentarians can say with one voice that our riding offices are overwhelmed with the backlog of immigration applications. There is a backlog of nearly one million applications. That is the reality after eight years of this Liberal government.

Could the member tell us if she is seeing this situation in her riding? How is she managing the situation?

Statements by Members

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, I can confirm to my colleague that he is not the only one getting calls about immigration. All of our offices are being contacted, sometimes even by people who live in government members' ridings, if I may take a little shot at them, because they cannot get services from their own member and they know that the Bloc Québécois is good at its job. They are calling us and asking us for help with their problems because, once again, we are showing that the government is incompetent when it comes to managing immigration. One example is the backlog of one million applications. Every day, we get one phone call after another, proving that it is not working and that the government is missing in action.

● (1355)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kings—Hants.

I am pleased to rise today to discuss Canada's immigration system as it relates to asylum claims.

As we are all aware, the world continues to face an unprecedented migration crisis. Canada is not alone in welcoming a significant number of people fleeing violence, war and persecution to seek refuge at our borders.

Canada has made a commitment, grounded in domestic law and international conventions, to provide support to individuals who apply for asylum.

The federal government is meeting its legal and humanitarian obligations, and we are continuing to provide support at a level that reflects the ongoing consequences of asylum claims across the country.

Our government continues to work with our provincial, territorial and municipal partners to determine how we can support them better and support them as effectively as possible. To that end, we have put additional resources at their disposal. While the provinces and municipalities are responsible for housing and support for asylum claimants, we recognize the need for the federal government to play a role and for all levels of government to continue working together on finding solutions. We have been there throughout the entire process and we will continue to be there.

Since its inception in 2017, the federal interim housing assistance program, or IHAP, has been providing funding to provincial and municipal governments on a cost-shared basis to alleviate housing pressures and boost capacity to better respond to the increased volume of asylum claims. IHAP reimburses direct housing costs, such as shelters, hotel rooms and other interim housing arrangements; triage and transportation operations; and indirect costs, such as meals. Amounts per area of jurisdiction are set following the submission of requests for reimbursement and allocated based on the available envelope.

To date, the federal government has provided provinces and municipalities with nearly \$750 million in IHAP funds to help alleviate housing pressures related to asylum seekers. Since 2017, nearly half of all federal IHAP funding has gone to Quebec to support the increased need for housing for asylum seekers.

The Government of Canada is committed to working collaboratively with provinces and municipalities to implement permanent housing solutions. That is why, last July, the government contributed an additional \$212 million through IHAP and extended the program in response to the higher volume of asylum seekers.

Last week, my colleague, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, announced an additional \$362.4 million for the program. In all, a total of \$150 million has been given to Quebec under IHAP during this fiscal year. This new funding will help the provinces and municipalities deal with a surge in demand for places in shelters. This will help stop asylum seekers from becoming homeless.

I wanted to talk about Reaching Home, Canada's homelessness strategy, but I see that I am out of time.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

LUNAR NEW YEAR

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, representing Richmond Hill has given me the privilege of learning about different cultures, joining in their celebrations and, most notably, enjoying lots of delicious food.

I am delighted to rise today to acknowledge the beautiful celebration of the lunar new year, which is taking place on February 10. Many Canadians of Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and other Asian heritage will celebrate the start of the year of the golden wood dragon. My riding is home to many of these vibrant communities. Over the past two weeks, I have had the honour and the privilege of celebrating this occasion with different community members, organizations and representatives, where we were able to enjoy lively performances, music, art and, especially, food.

My family would like to wish all families lots of joy, good health and good fortune this new year. *Long nian kuai le. Long nin fai lok. Saehae bok mani badeuseyo. Chuc mung nam moi.* Happy lunar new year. *San nin faai lok.*

*Statements by Members***CARBON TAX**

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal government, living has never been more expensive for Canadians. The temperatures in Saskatoon were below -30°C for 10 days straight in January, and now the bills are coming in from that cold spell.

It is shocking how much the carbon tax is costing businesses. For one owner, 33% of their bill was carbon tax and GST on the carbon tax. That amounted to \$1,127 for one month. For another, 35% of their bill was carbon tax. That amounted to \$1,690 in one month. Now the Liberals plan to quadruple the tax with another increase coming on April 1. Common-sense Conservatives would build the homes, fix the budget, stop the crime and, more importantly, axe the tax.

* * *

LUNAR NEW YEAR

Mr. Paul Chiang (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Markham—Unionville, I rise today to celebrate the lunar new year, the year of the dragon. This culturally significant occasion brings our diverse communities across Canada together in joyous celebration, reflecting on traditions and values that enhance our nation. In Markham—Unionville, the lunar new year holds a special place in our hearts, as we embrace the rich diversity of Asian cultures that contribute to our community's sense of belonging. From vibrant parades to festive gatherings, the spirit of renewal and hope resonates throughout our riding.

On behalf of the constituents of Markham—Unionville, I extend warm wishes to all Canadians celebrating the lunar new year. May the year of the dragon bring abundance, happiness and good fortune to all of their loved ones.

[Member spoke in Mandarin]

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[Translation]

TRAGEDY AT LAVAL DAY CARE

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one year ago today, people were horror-struck in Laval as a city bus hit the Ste-Rose day care, killing two of the children and seriously injuring many.

Last year, I was there with the leader of the Bloc Québécois. It was shocking to experience such emotions, especially for someone who has spent their life with children, as I did as a school principal,

In that tragic moment, some people were able to rise to the occasion and show compassion and admirable composure, such as Mike Haddad, who had just dropped his son off at the day care. He promptly acted to help the children trapped under the bus, in addition to controlling the driver, who was the suspect. Today, let us commend his extraordinary courage.

While we still do not understand at all what could have led the driver to commit such an appalling act, today we have a duty to think of the innocent victims and their grieving families.

• (1405)

[English]

CANADIAN SCHOOL COUNSELLING WEEK

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week marks the 10th anniversary of Canadian School Counselling Week, celebrated by the school counsellors chapter of the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association. The week recognizes the contributions of the school counselling profession to the personal, social, educational and career development of students at all grade levels.

School counsellors support students in their social and academic needs, as well as life and career planning. As mental health professionals, school counsellors are responsible for maintaining a very high standard of professional competence and ethical behaviour. Through comprehensive programs and services, school counsellors continue to make a positive and meaningful difference in the lives of children and youth in communities across Canada. I wish everyone a happy Canadian School Counselling Week.

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NORMAN KWONG

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the late Norman Kwong of Calgary will again make history next week when he is celebrated with his own Heritage Minute. A 60-second snapshot of his life will be thrust onto TV screens from coast to coast, injecting culturally historic education into an entertainment segment.

Normie was the hard-working son of Chinese immigrants who had settled in Calgary and ran a grocery store in the early 1900s. He joined the Calgary Stampeders Football Club in 1948, just a year after the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed, and he became the first player in the CFL of Chinese descent.

He won four Grey Cups in his 12-year career. He was inducted into the CFL Hall of Fame. He was named to the Order of Canada and recognized with the Alberta Order of Excellence. He helped bring the Flames to Calgary and is one of five people with their name on both the Grey Cup and Stanley Cup. In 2005, he broke another barrier and became the first Alberta Lieutenant Governor of Chinese descent.

That is a lot to fit into a minute.

*Statements by Members***JEOPARDY! CHAMPION**

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a sense of pride and admiration to recognize the outstanding achievement of one of Whitby's finest. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Juveria Zaheer on her remarkable and well-deserved triumph in the Jeopardy! Champions Wildcard tournament.

I join our community in applauding Juveria's achievement and wish her continued success as she moves on now to the Tournament of Champions. Juveria has brought immense pride to our community, and she has proven herself a champion to her legion of fans. Her extraordinary achievement speaks to her incredible intelligence and commitment that brought her to this pinnacle of success.

The Whitby mom and psychiatrist, who is the head of medical at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's emergency department, has represented Whitby and Canada with distinction, and I am sure all members of the House will join me in wishing her continued success in future shows.

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TERRY CARTER

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in December, Newmarket lost a true community leader. Terry Carter was a newsman, a historian, a business leader, a family man and my friend. His work as the editor of *The Newmarket Era* over 25 years reflected his caring perspective for the community he loved to call home.

He had deep roots in our community. He was our historian. He played a significant role in the revitalization of the Sharon Temple, which gained a national historic site designation for this architectural gem. He embraced our heritage and dedicated much of his life to ensuring the history of Newmarket was well known and documented. In 2008, Terry received the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for lifetime achievement.

I was proud to have arranged the naming of Terry Carter Court to recognize his meaningful contributions to our community. Newmarket has lost a kind gentleman.

* * *

FIRST NATIONS RESOURCES

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for hundreds of years, first nations have suffered under a broken colonial system that takes power away from their communities and places it in the hands of politicians in Ottawa.

The Indian Act hands over all resource land and money to the federal government. This means that first nations have to go to Ottawa to ask for the tax revenues collected from resource projects on their land. This outdated system puts power in the hands of bureaucrats, politicians and lobbyists, not first nations. The direct result of this Ottawa-knows-best approach has been poverty, substandard infrastructure and housing, unsafe drinking water, and despair.

Conservatives have listened to first nations, and today, the Leader of the Opposition announced his support for an optional first nations resource charge that would enable them to take back control of their resources and money. Putting first nations back in control

of their money and letting them bring home the benefits of their resources would also help get local buy-in for good projects into the future. Only common-sense Conservatives will fight for real economic reconciliation by supporting first nations taking back control of their lives.

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● (1410)

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, February is Black History Month, a time to reflect on the many contributions Black communities have made to the fabric of our country.

I am extremely proud to be the member of Parliament for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, where we have the largest multi-generational Black community in Canada and also the largest Black Cultural Centre in Canada. We are proud of the remarkable social, economic and political achievements of Black Canadians and recognize that many barriers still exist.

This month, we reaffirm our commitment to working with Black communities across the country to combat systemic anti-Black racism, support Black economic empowerment and help promote mental health and wellness.

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[Translation]

PIERRE-HUGUES BOISVENU

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to a remarkable man who, despite being required to leave the Senate, is not leaving behind his active involvement in our country. He is my colleague and friend, Senator Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu.

It takes courage and strength to survive the unspeakable, as suggested by the title of his 2008 book, where he shares his journey of resilience after the loss of his two daughters, whom he adored with all his heart.

Pierre-Hugues' fate led him to support women's safety and, out of pure kindness, he leaves us with the legacy of the Victims Bill of Rights to defend the rights and interests of victims within the criminal justice system. This bill of rights establishes fundamental principles for ensuring fair and respectful treatment of victims throughout the judicial process.

If I had to sum up Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu's career in one sentence, I would say that his commitment and his actions give new meaning and worth to the term human dignity.

Thank you, Senator Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu.

Statements by Members

[English]

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has seen a sharp increase of sexual assault reports since 2015, with 20,948 violations. Stats Canada has reported an increase between the years 2015 to 2022 at 71.66%. Although these stats are not broken down by gender, we know that the crime is more likely against female victims of violent crime, especially sexual assault. Women are five times more likely to experience sexual assault compared to men. According to a report, victimization reporting rates were 106 out of 1,000 for women and 59 men out of 1,000. These stats are a direct correlation to the failure of this government's catch-and-release bail policies passed in Bill C-75 and Bill C-5, which removes mandatory minimum sentences for certain major crimes.

A common-sense government can ensure that repeat offenders remain behind bars while awaiting trial and will bring back mandatory jail time for serious violent crimes that were repealed by the Liberal government. Conservatives will always stand with victims of crimes. Conservatives will bring home safe—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one's car is not just a way of getting around. For many in my riding, it is a part of their livelihoods and a main source of income. In 2022, nearly 6,000 vehicles were stolen around Mississauga, and auto theft rates rose by 48.3% in Ontario alone.

I have been working on this issue within my community, including with Chief Nishan Duraiappah of the Peel Regional Police and with federal agencies to fight auto theft and to make our community safer. This is why our government has committed \$121 million to fight gun and gang violence, including auto thefts, with \$28 million more to the CBSA. It is why, as we speak, the Liberal government is hosting a national summit on combatting auto theft, with all levels of government, police and industry leaders, to build real solutions. We will keep working diligently with all partners to reduce crime in our communities and to keep us all safe.

* * *

[Translation]

AEROSPACE

Mr. Alexandre Bouleric (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our aerospace sector is something to be proud of. It accounts for 212,000 jobs in Canada and more than 37,000 in Quebec. These are good jobs, often unionized, with unparalleled expertise.

We are one of the few places in the world where our companies can create, simulate, manufacture, assemble and certify an airplane, a helicopter or a surveillance aircraft.

Yesterday and today, I listened to Pierre, Michael, Peter, Pascale and Mélanie talk about their trades and professions with pride and passion. Their sector is one of the largest exporters and biggest in-

vestors in research and development. The federal government has to step up and help them innovate, train workers and be part of the green transition, which is so crucial to our shared future.

A national aerospace strategy has been a long time coming. I am calling on the Liberal government to make up for lost time and take action now for this sector and its workers.

* * *

● (1415)

AEROSPACE

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, representatives of the aerospace industry are on Parliament Hill at the invitation of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada. I want to wish these dynamic industry players a warm welcome. They are making us one of the few major aerospace hubs on the planet.

This strategic sector's presence on Parliament Hill is an excellent opportunity for us to confirm our unwavering support. However, we also need to back up our words with commitments. The aerospace industry deserves to be a top priority, at least on the same level as the auto sector.

Since this is a strategic industry, it should have a strategy. However, we have no aerospace strategy, and we need one urgently. We need a strategy developed in consultation with stakeholders, including governments, businesses and unions, a strategy based on public procurement policies with local benefits, support for research and development, labour training, and support for projects and SMEs to access the international supply chain.

I want the aerospace industry to know that it can rely on us to be fierce defenders of its outstanding work.

* * *

[English]

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians across the country are dealing with the result of eight years of the Prime Minister's catch-and-release bail policies. Repeat criminals are out on the streets while law-abiding Canadians are afraid to walk them. The numbers do not lie.

Oral Questions

Under the former Conservative government, the number of sexual assaults in Canada decreased between 2010 to 2015 and overall, violent crime was down by almost 25%. However, since 2015, as a direct result of the Liberal government's soft-on-crime policies, the number of sexual assaults has increased by almost 72%. In my city of Calgary, the total number of violent Criminal Code violations is up by almost 40% since 2015, and women and girls are terrified to ride the CTrain. These numbers affect us all, but statistics confirm that women are far more likely to be victims of sexual assault and violence than men. Women need to feel safe, and that is why a Conservative government will eliminate bail for repeat violent offenders.

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LUNAR NEW YEAR

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 10, communities across Canada will ring in the lunar new year, also known as the spring festival. This year, we welcome the Year of the Dragon, which is associated with energy, good fortune and success.

Lunar new year is traditionally celebrated for two weeks, ending with the lantern festival on February 24. This joyous time of the year includes gathering and feasting with family and friends, wearing new clothes, getting a haircut, giving red envelopes to children and singles for good luck, hanging lanterns and, my personal favourite, making dumplings and, more importantly, eating them.

I wish the Vietnamese community *chuc mung nam moi* and lots of luck in 2024.

To the Korean community, I say *saehae bok manui badeuseyo. Long nian kuai le. Long ma jin son.*

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the crime. The previous Conservative government reduced car thefts with common-sense policies like tougher penalties for repeat offenders. The Prime Minister changed that and gave car thieves easy bail and house arrests. Under Conservatives, car thefts were down by 50%. Under the Liberals, car thefts are up by 34%, and now the Prime Minister is being told, at his fancy summit, that his policies are the problem. Celyeste Power of the Insurance Bureau said that car thefts are up because profits are high and penalties are light.

When will the Prime Minister abandon his soft-on-crime approach so that car thefts can come down?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary. Would the Conservatives actually like to know that, since 2006, the five years with the highest amount of car thefts in Canadian history were under the Steven Harper government? We are ac-

tually reducing crime today. We had the auto summit where we brought in leaders from across the country, including police. We are working on tangible solutions, not just slogans from the Conservatives.

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● (1420)

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those were the first five years we inherited from a previous soft-on-crime Liberal government. However, it is not just crime that this government's policy is making worse. On April 1, the Prime Minister is going to drive up grocery prices again with another hike to his carbon tax, and the impact from this affects Canadians every step of the way from farm to fork. Keith Warriner, a professor at the University of Guelph, said that 44% of growers are operating at a loss presently, and three-quarters have difficulty offsetting production cost increases.

Instead of driving grocery prices up even higher, why does the Prime Minister not cancel his plan to hike the carbon tax?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will take no lessons from the Conservatives who have no plan. I guess their plan is to ask Jenni.

However, on this side of the House, we have a plan to stabilize prices in this country. It is called "competition". Canadians at home understand that. The Conservatives are the only ones who are blocking further reforms that we want to put. Canadians understand that we want to stabilize prices. We want more choice, and we want more competition. On this side, we will fight for Canadians every step of the way.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one would think they would have thrown those talking points out after this week when we learned of all the relationships between Liberal staff and Loblaws, like Brian Topp and Don Guy who both collect cheques from Loblaws. Last week, they met twice with the PM's director of policy, or like Tahiya Bakht, the in-house lobbyist at Loblaws. She used to have an office in the PMO. One could run a superstore with all the staff over there who have relationships with Loblaws.

When will the Prime Minister realize that it is not Conservative volunteers driving up grocery prices? It is the carbon, stupid.

The Speaker: Although that is a political expression known to many, I warn all MPs to stay safely on the right side of parliamentary debate.

The hon. Minister of Innovation.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will abide by your words.

When the member talks about superstores, he is right, and I am happy to talk about that, because that is actually what we are trying to bring. We are trying to bring more competition. I have been in touch with foreign grocers to bring more competition, to bring more options for Canadians. People who are watching at home understand that on this side of the House, we have a plan. We are working for Canadians. On that side, they have no plan. The only plan we have seen is to ask Jenni. We will continue to work for Canadians every step of the way.

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[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this Liberal government, the housing crisis is hitting all Canadians hard.

Take Quebec City, for example. The average rent has increased by more than 19% over the past year. It will take twice as long to pay off a mortgage. They will need up to 25 years to be able to put aside the down payment to buy a house. That is the reality Canadians are facing after eight years of this Liberal government.

What are the Liberals doing? They are the undisputed champions of photo ops. When will they champion real action to build houses and apartments?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing the Conservatives are champions at, it is insulting mayors. The last time we heard from the Conservative leader, he was insulting the mayors of Quebec City and Montreal, who are working with us to create more affordable housing.

On this side of the House, we believe in having programs, building affordable housing, as well as working with the provinces and with Canada's mayors. Canadians understand that we need to work together to tackle the housing problem. That is exactly what we are going to do.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for eight years, this government has insulted Canadians with its housing record, which is dismal right now. Even the president of CMHC acknowledges that this government has no plan to turn things around.

Housing starts have dropped by 28% over the past year. That is the Liberal reality. We will take no lessons from this minister.

When are they going to stop holding press conferences and photo ops? When are they going to take real action to build houses and apartments? That is what Canadians want.

• (1425)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a tremendous

Oral Questions

amount of respect for my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent, but I do not think he has any lessons to give on videos.

In the last video we saw of the Conservative leader, he was in front of the port of Montreal. He thought a video would solve the issue of auto theft. Today, we were gathered with leaders from across country to tackle this issue. We talked about intelligence, coordinated approaches and innovation.

What Conservatives do not understand is that, to move this country forward, we have to work together.

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JUSTICE

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec is a pioneer in Canada when it comes to compassion for people who are suffering. It was the first to implement medical assistance in dying. It is only natural that it is still ahead of the curve today.

Quebec is ready to authorize advance requests for persons suffering from serious, incurable neurocognitive diseases. Quebec's legislation was adopted eight months ago, and those who are suffering have waited long enough. Will the government amend the Criminal Code so that Quebec can move forward with advance requests?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish I could be the minister of both health and procurement. I did get to be Minister of Health.

As Minister of Procurement and a minister from Quebec, I recognize, as my colleague did, the important contribution that the Government of Quebec and Quebecers have made over the past few years to advance the discussions, reflections and actions on this very sensitive topic, on which we must all work together. That is what we are going to do.

We will continue in this way with the Government of Quebec and all Quebecers over the coming months and years.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada can continue to think about it, but Quebec is ready.

The Quebec National Assembly is unanimously calling for the federal government to amend the Criminal Code so that Quebec can move forward with advance requests. Ottawa has the moral duty to grant Quebec's unanimous request.

Canadians have the right to take more time to think about this, but they do not have the right to make Quebecers suffer needlessly for years. Will the government legislate so that Quebec can authorize advance requests?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague once again for bringing up this very sensitive issue.

Oral Questions

We know that freedom of choice, control over one's own life and the choice for a dignified death are options that Canadians already have access to. We also know that we need to work to protect the most vulnerable members of our society. We know that we need to work very closely with health care providers, develop case studies and, obviously, work on jurisdictions for issues that fall more under the Criminal Code and those that fall more under the delivery of health care.

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GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people are feeling the squeeze at the grocery store. Food banks have been over capacity for months. Liberal members from Montreal know this. It is happening in their ridings, just as it is in ours.

Unlike the Liberals, the NDP is solution-oriented. Our bill to lower grocery prices passed yesterday, even though the Liberals voted against lowering prices for Quebeckers.

The Liberals really want to keep the Sobey family and Galen Weston happy. Are the Liberals afraid of making Loblaw's boss lose money?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, but I do not understand exactly where he is going with it.

He should be proud and happy. We included many of the NDP leader's recommendations in our three-pronged approach to competition reform. He should be happy that we are working together to increase competition in this country. All the experts say that more choice and more competition will help stabilize prices.

He should rise in the House to thank us for working together because we do so for the sake of Canadian consumers.

[*English*]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the Liberals voted no on the NDP bill to lower food prices for Canadians. They voted against giving the Competition Bureau more power to crack down on greedy grocery chains that take advantage of families.

Sky-high food prices are forcing Canadians with full-time jobs to resort to food banks to feed their families. Under those out-of-touch Liberals, ultrarich CEOs win and Canadians lose.

Why are the Liberals determined to keep grocery prices high for Canadians?

• (1430)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague should be happy, because we have listened to what the NDP have to propose. A lot of what has been proposed by the leader of the NDP has already been included in our bill to reform competition in the country.

One thing we should do is work together. The bill that was presented yesterday will go to committee. We will listen to experts. We will listen to recommendations.

One thing Canadians should know is that we have their back and we will fight for them to bring stabilization in grocery prices.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal government's reckless policies, our country is in a place of crime and chaos.

Since 2015, sexual assault cases have increased by 72%. That is a big number. The Liberal government's soft-on-crime approach is a direct attack on women and girls in our country. It is disgusting.

How many more sexual assaults need to take place for the government to finally do something?

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue that requires a serious response. It is not something that should be highlighted in a negative way in the House of Commons.

The Liberal government has taken steps through Bill S-12, Bill C-3 and Bill C-51. We have taken serious measures to address sexual assault crimes, including sexual assault offenders being included on the sex offender registry.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right that this is not something to be made light of, but that is exactly what the Liberal government's policies have done.

Unfortunately, after eight years of the Liberal government, the number of sexual assault cases in the country has skyrocketed by 72%. That is a very large number, and that is many women and girls who are affected. What makes this even worse is that so many of these crimes are committed by individuals who are out on bail, who should not be. The reason they are is because of the Liberal government's soft-on-crime policies.

The Liberals are putting women in danger. It is the Liberal government's decision to do that. When will the Prime Minister take it seriously and do something—

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Public Safety.

Oral Questions

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issues around sexual violence and violence in general toward women is something we take incredibly seriously, including the fact that we supported legislation, non-partisan legislation, to have proper training for judges, something, unfortunately, Conservative senators blocked. We persevered to ensure that women go through the criminal justice process, respecting the violence that has happened and the under-reporting that happens. We are going to continue to do everything possible to make sure women are safe.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, chaos and crime is at epidemic levels.

Just weeks ago, a mom of three was murdered in Calgary in front of an elementary school in a targeted domestic killing. Her offender had previous charges, multiple active warrants and a no contact order. She did everything that was asked of her and she was still murdered in broad daylight.

Why? It was because of the Liberal government's soft-on-crime policies. Enough. We do not need summits; we need action and we need a timeline.

When will the Liberals reverse these deadly policies?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not a partisan issue when dealing with violence against women. Crimes like that are absolutely horrific. It is something that we are working hard on with not just the Minister of Public Safety but across governments to ensure that women across the country are not only safe but are safe to report violence. We know that oftentimes violence starts early with domestic violence and can escalate. That is one of the reasons we are also banning guns.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this became a partisan issue the minute the fake feminist Prime Minister let women die. That is the reality. Ninety four municipalities in Ontario alone have declared domestic violence an epidemic. Violent crime is up almost 40%, sexual assault up 72%, sex crimes against children up 126%. Members can bet this is partisan.

It is the Liberal policies that are destroying the lives of Canadians. The Conservatives will stop the crime and make sure that women are not murdered in front of elementary schools and that the guy who did it is behind bars.

• (1435)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see the Conservatives fired up about taking violence against women seriously. That is precisely why we have put in firearm legislation to deal with situations of intimate partner violence and gender-based violence. We are putting a national freeze on the sale, purchase and transfer of handguns.

When it comes to violence against women, we are going to put in place every measure possible to keep women safe. We are committed to this, and I am glad to see the Conservatives passionate about protecting women.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this government, violence is increasing at an alarming rate across the country. Violent crime is up 40%. Sexual assaults are up 72%. Femicide is on the rise along with domestic violence. Women live in a constant state of hypervigilance.

The Prime Minister sees this sorry state of affairs and still lets criminals bask in the comfort of their homes. A Conservative government will bring back common-sense law and order and protect our citizens. In the meantime, what does this Prime Minister intend to do to protect Canadian women?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that the Conservatives are concerned about the issue of violence, and especially about women's safety.

Our government has taken significant steps, such as strengthening laws that restrict firearms in Canada. It has also introduced measures to prevent violence against women in domestic situations. Unfortunately, as we saw, the Conservatives opposed these measures to protect women and to restrict the use of firearms.

We are waiting to hear all the wonderful solutions they will propose to help us protect women across the country.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, women victims of violence have shared their stories of the fear, distress and abuse they have suffered at the hands of a violent partner or sex trafficker.

Conservative bills, like Senator Boisvenu's bill, have been introduced to protect women. What has this government been doing for eight years? It sides with the criminals instead of the victims. The good news is that a Conservative government will reverse this trend.

Why does the government insist on sending violent criminals home instead of keeping them safely behind bars?

Oral Questions

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this feminist government has been working hard for eight years to protect women, especially vulnerable women. That is why we have made it a priority throughout our mandate. Whether it was before COVID-19, during COVID-19 and now, that has always been the case.

The Liberal government has won three elections on our firearms policies, and the Conservatives have voted against those policies at every turn. I am pleased to see that my female colleagues on the other side of the House are suddenly interested in the plight of women who are victims of violence in this country. We will continue to show leadership on this issue.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Colleagues, this is a very serious issue being raised by members. It is deserving of members' respect to listen to the questions and also listen to the answers.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Drummond.

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NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is another sad day for the media, news and democracy.

Bell just announced that it will be cutting 4,800 jobs and selling 45 radio stations, seven of which are in Quebec. The federal government is literally watching our news media die before its eyes by not extending a single penny to save broadcasters.

Meanwhile, there is no emergency funding, as the Bloc Québécois called for this fall. There are no tax credits for electronic media modelled on what is already offered to print media. How many more workers will have to be sacrificed before the minister realizes that Bill C-18 will not save news media in Quebec?

● (1440)

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a really tough day for 4,800 people across Canada who found out this morning in the news that they are facing layoffs. It is really terrible for them and their families. They have my full support and solidarity.

Now, my colleague knows very well that the CRTC gave \$40 million a year in relief to Bell Canada so that it could continue to produce its newscasts.

Bell Canada is still making billions of dollars in profit this year. It is up to them to fulfill their commitment to continue to provide news to the entire population. We will not give more taxpayer money to a billionaire corporation.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am not talking about helping a billion-dollar company. I am talking about helping an industry that has been suffering and in crisis for years. As we speak, the only new money to assist our media organizations with Bill C-18 came from Google, which put it on the table. That is like putting the fox in the chicken coop.

There are so many options: an emergency fund, a payroll tax credit for electronic media, a tax credit for advertisers who buy time on traditional media and more government advertising on traditional media, instead of slipping \$50,000 into Meta's pocket, like the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party have been doing for the past three months.

When will this government take action?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share my colleague's outrage at the decisions companies like Bell Media are making today to put 4,800 people out of work and protect dividends for shareholders, who are getting them again this year.

My colleague knows very well that we have been fighting to modernize the Broadcasting Act for over three years and the Conservatives have opposed it at every turn. The regulatory framework would have been in place for three years now if they had not opposed it spouting nonsense like censorship. What is happening today at Bell is on them.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in November, Radio-Canada revealed that Mexican criminals are using the lack of visa requirement to come to Canada to conduct their smuggling operations.

Yesterday, in committee, the Minister of Immigration, the RCMP and the CBSA denied any link between waiving visas and crime. They are burying their heads in the sand, yet all three have access to internal reports that say just that, in black and white. All three have evidence that the cartels use visa-free travel to import drugs, traffic people and so on.

Why is the immigration minister not reinstating the visa requirement, knowing that criminals are taking advantage of the situation?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it does not take an expert in the field to know that criminals exploit vulnerabilities.

The member opposite should be well aware that any announcement with advance notice would be another sign of vulnerability and people could exploit it. If he thinks I am going to do it publicly, he should think twice, because there are people who pay attention to every word the immigration minister says and can exploit us and those vulnerabilities in the future.

I would ask him to show respect given the context.

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[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, we know that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost of groceries.

Dawn, an independent, multi-generational greenhouse operator, was forced to sell because of the cost of the carbon tax coupled with rising interest rates. After she told the Minister of Agriculture her story directly and asked him to pass Bill C-234 unamended to reduce costs for farmers, he ignored her.

What does the minister have to say to Dawn and the many like her facing challenges: losing their businesses, their livelihoods and their family legacies because of the Liberal government's policies?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it quite ironic to be lectured by the Conservative Party on our support for farmers when, just at the end of last year, the Conservatives voted against the climate action fund to support sustainable agriculture. They voted against the dairy innovation and investment fund. They voted against support for dairy, poultry and egg supply management producers.

On this side of the House, we will support our farmers in the transition toward a low-carbon economy and will help Canadians make that transition.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Try talking to a farmer.

The Speaker: I would like to remind the member for Battle River—Crowfoot that he had the opportunity to ask a question. I would encourage him and all other members to listen carefully to the questions and answers.

The hon. member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

• (1445)

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax on food is working against Canadians by decreasing both the amount and the type of food they buy. Visits to food banks are at record highs, with over two million visits, and just think of the new records we are going to set once the carbon tax is quadrupled.

Highline Mushrooms is in Leamington. It supplies American and Canadian retailers with mushrooms. Its American competitors do not have to pay the carbon tax, so it is forced to pass along the carbon tax cost to the Canadian consumer.

The Prime Minister is not worth the cost. When will he axe the tax?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the Conservative member for Regina—Lewvan, who recognized that there is absolutely no data to support any link between the price on pollution and higher grocery pricing. In fact, there is no pricing on pollution in the United States of America, and its grocery prices are the same as we have here in Canada.

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Beverly Greenhouses is an award-winning greenhouse operation in Flamborough that produces healthy, fresh cucumbers for Canadians. Almost \$4,000 of its \$13,000 natural gas bill in October was carbon tax, and it has only increased since then. When the NDP-Liberal government quadruples the carbon tax, the operator of Beverly Greenhouses is going to struggle to compete with the price on cucumbers imported from Mexico.

Oral Questions

After eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. When will the government finally axe the tax so this family farm can continue to feed Canadians?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, being a farmer, I am well aware of how important it is to take care of the environment. That is why it is so important to have a tax on pollution. In fact, last Tuesday in committee, Tyler McCann of the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute indicated to the committee members that there is no data to support that carbon pricing is resulting in any increase in the price of groceries.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the CBC reported that the Liberals made the decision to suspend life-saving funding to UNRWA without having seen any evidence of allegations or having waited for the results of the independent investigation. UNRWA is the only organization that can reach Palestinians in Gaza who are starving and who are being killed in the tens of thousands, and the government cut life-saving support. The decision needs to be reversed, and somebody needs to be held accountable.

Was it the minister or was it the PMO that decided Canada should turn its back on starving Palestinians?

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. The funding that Canada is giving to civilians in Gaza has increased: just last week, \$40 million more on top of the \$60 million that was already there. This makes Canada a top donor for aid, helping with the crisis in Gaza. We are proud, and Canadians want us to help. Every time there is a time of emergency, we stand up and we are clear. We will always be there.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, every day, the Liberals show how out of touch they are. This week alone, they voted against an NDP bill that would lower food costs for Canadians. Then, with only two weeks' notice, they scrapped the greener homes program that helps Canadians lower their heating bills, while they still give out billions of dollars to big oil and gas CEOs. Canadians want to do their part to fight the climate crisis.

Oral Questions

Heat pumps lower costs and save lives. We need a program to make sure that every Canadian who wants one can get a heat pump. Will the Liberals do it?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the most amazing things we have seen is how popular the greener homes grant and the greener homes loan have been among Canadians, who are taking steps to switch the way they heat their homes and to reduce their bills at the same time.

We are working on the next steps for the greener homes program, which is actually going to make sure that the people who most need the help have access to the program. We would ask members to keep watching for the progress of this new program.

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• (1450)

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2015 to 2024 the International Decade for People of African Descent. This proclamation recognized the over 220 million people of African descent in the Americas and in Canada. The government has fully embraced the UN's proclamation by investing in and developing new programs to help support Black communities in Canada.

Can the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion please update the House on the decade as it moves closer to an end?

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night we gathered with thousands of Black trailblazers from across the country to celebrate Black History Month. It was a perfect opportunity for the Prime Minister to announce that Canada will be extending the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent until 2028. The extension builds on the \$860 million the government has committed to deliver Black-made, Black-led solutions.

On this side of the House, we have always been deliberate about choices: choice to invest in Black communities, choice to call out and combat systemic racism, and a choice to celebrate Black History Month. We are going to continue to make sure we support our communities all across Canada.

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HOUSING

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, Canadians are literally living in housing hell. Rent has doubled. Mortgage payments have doubled. The cost to buy a house has almost doubled. It takes 25 years now to save for a down payment. It is no wonder there are tent cities all across this country.

When will the Liberals realize people cannot live in an announcement, a photo op or a press release, and support our common-sense Conservative plan to get houses built?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr.

Speaker, it is unfortunate that the member contradicts himself every time he speaks. Just a few days ago, he was praising the federal government's record on housing. Today, he critiques it.

Let me offer something else regarding contradiction. He talks about the challenges of homelessness, which admittedly are unacceptable in this country, and unaffordability in housing, which is unacceptable in this country, yet he voted against every measure the government has put forward to address them.

The national housing strategy is there. It is yielding results, and it will do more. We are working with municipalities to incent changes at the local level with respect to zoning. He has voted against it and so have they.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one knows the Liberals' housing plan is an utter disaster when the only support they can find for it is to misquote a member of the opposition. That is how bad it actually is.

Here are the facts: Housing investments in December were down another 18%. There are all these fake Liberal announcements and photo ops, and guess what? Fewer houses are getting built. The Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost, because his announcements mean nothing.

Will the Liberals finally realize they have caused housing hell in this country, and support our common-sense Conservative plan to get houses built?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, those are more slogans from the member and the party opposite.

What do we see on our side? We are putting serious measures forward to work with municipalities. Across the country, over 500 municipalities have applied for the housing accelerator fund. We have completed deals with 30 municipalities, working with mayors, not denigrating them.

What do we hear on the other side? We hear no plan at all. Conservatives want to tax homebuilding, for example. That will not lead to more homes built. What is another big idea? They want a snitch line for residents to rat on their neighbours if there are concerns around NIMBY. That is not at all how one gets change.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, the costs of rent and mortgage payments have doubled. This was at a time when housing starts were down in 2023.

Even if the Liberals' plan were to come to fruition, CIBC has reported that the plan falls 1.5 million homes short of restoring affordability. People are in a cost of living crisis, yet the Liberal housing minister jumps from one photo op to another. No government has ever spent so much to achieve so little.

When will the government build homes, not bureaucracy?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we are taking a comprehensive approach to building more housing. That means increasing supply. We are eliminating the GST on purpose-built rentals. We have struck deals with over 30 municipalities from coast to coast in order to ensure that we are getting more supply in the system.

We will make sure we are there for vulnerable Canadians and the middle class. All the while, the Conservatives on the other side of the House vote against measures to support Canadians. That is not our approach. We will always be there for Canada.

• (1455)

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years under this government, the price of homes has doubled, rent has doubled and this government is not worth the cost. A homeless shelter, the Bercail, in Saint-George in Beauce, says that it is overwhelmed by requests for rooms in 2024.

The government keeps abandoning Canadians when it comes to housing. It needs to get out of the way and allow the municipalities to prosper like they are in Victoriaville, Saguenay and Trois-Rivières.

Why does the Prime Minister not build more housing instead of building more bureaucracy?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to hear a question from a colleague from the greater Quebec City area.

During its 10 years in power, the Conservative government built 24,000 housing units. Over the past five years, we have built nearly 10 times as many. Over the past few months, 500,000 more have been announced.

Now, would my Conservative colleagues from the Quebec City area agree to come with me to meet the Quebec City administration, namely the mayor and the municipal councillors, and explain to them why their Conservative leader is referring to every single one of them, everyone from Quebec City, as being incompetent?

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, French is hanging by a thread in Canada. We saw it again in committee.

The Liberal parliamentary secretary, the Conservatives and the NDP all voted against bilingualism for the miscarriage of justice review commission. The Liberal member's pretext was that he was defending unilingual francophones. Give me a break. Francophones

always lose when bilingualism takes a back seat. He added that he was defending anglophones. That I can believe.

If justice is bilingual, if Canada is bilingual, why can the minister not commit to appointing bilingual commissioners?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a very proud Franco-Albertan. We know we have standards when it comes to promoting bilingualism. This applies to the courts and everywhere else in our system.

We are also committed to protecting French in Quebec and across the country—not with one, two or three, but with \$4.1 billion. We are here for bilingualism and for Canada's francophonie.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if that is true, then he will have to talk to his parliamentary secretary about it.

As I was saying, French is hanging by a thread in Canada, even in the Prime Minister's Office. Radio-Canada reported that it obtained a copy of a letter from the Privy Council indicating that it would take too long and cost too much to translate the documents produced for the Rouleau commission. Even providing a simple index would take too long and cost too much. It seems as though they just did not want to do it and that the rights of francophones are only important when respecting them is easy and does not cost anything.

Will the Prime Minister remind his own department that respect for French is mandatory?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I respect my hon. colleague.

We promote bilingualism. We respect the tribunal. We respect the committee. A 2,000-page bilingual report that Canadians can read is coming.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the justice minister has spent the last week arguing with Conservatives and telling Canadians that strengthening penalties for auto theft will not work.

We all know that the Prime Minister has a habit of throwing his justice ministers under the bus. Earlier today, the Prime Minister finally admitted that stronger penalties are required to tackle the auto theft crisis that he created. They cannot both be right.

Will the minister finally admit that he was wrong and Conservatives were right and commit to repealing Liberal soft-on-crime policies such as house arrest for car thieves?

Oral Questions

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we all know, auto theft is a very serious problem in Ontario, in Quebec and across the country. It requires consultation with experts to find a proper solution, not slogans or simple criticism that does not really address the problem.

Today, we had the auto summit. We brought in people from all the provinces, the police associations and different levels of government. They are going to come up with constructive solutions to address the issue.

• (1500)

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an auto summit is not what Canadians are calling for. They are calling for action. Auto theft is up 300% in Toronto and 120% in New Brunswick. These are the Liberals' own numbers since they took office.

Only Conservatives will do what is necessary to stop the crime with a proven approach of jail, not bail, for repeat offenders; ending house arrest for auto theft; and bringing in mandatory penalties for repeat offenders.

The numbers are in. The facts do not lie.

Why will the minister not stand up and admit that the Liberals' soft-on-crime agenda is a failure that needs to change?

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will agree with him insofar as the facts do not lie. Some people just have a problem interpreting them. The reality is that we have toughened the sentencing requirements for auto theft. We have improved and strengthened the bail system. We have improved the system in a way that is going to protect Canadians and keep them safe.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government loves photo ops and convening meetings, but it is light on action when it comes to auto theft.

The government's own news release shows that auto thefts in Toronto have increased by 300% under its watch. At home, Niagara Regional Police indicated that they were investigating some 20 auto thefts just from January.

The Prime Minister is responsible for the ports, the CBSA, the RCMP and the Criminal Code. It is time to stop the crime. Will the PM reverse his soft-on-crime, catch-and-release policies, which have helped cause this auto theft crisis?

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said already, this a problem that requires consultation with all the parties involved: industry, different levels of government and the law enforcement community. Slogans are not going to find a solution.

Jenni Byrne has obviously been hired by the bumper sticker industry, and that is her pool over there for drafting them.

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this weekend, my province of Nova Scotia was hit with one of the worst snowstorms in two decades. The Cape Breton Regional Municipality declared a local state of emergency and some communities in northern Nova Scotia like Pictou and Antigonish remain isolated.

Community members are deeply concerned about their safety and that of their neighbours. Therefore, I ask this question on behalf of my hon. colleagues, the members of Parliament for Central Nova, Cape Breton—Canso and Sydney—Victoria.

Could the Minister of Emergency Preparedness update the House on what is being done with the Government of Canada in partnership with municipal and provincial authorities to help residents in need?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the members of Parliament from Nova Scotia who have kept me informed so we can make the appropriate and timely decisions to get the support to the people in need.

Parks Canada leveraged the crucial snow removing equipment, and we did that within hours. I also want to thank our partners like the Canadian Coast Guard and Team Rubicon that rapidly put people on the ground to help their neighbours get out from under the snow. Over 500 people were made available to provide this support.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for hundreds of years, first nations have suffered under a broken system that takes power away from their communities and gives it to Ottawa. The Indian Act hands over all reserve land and money to the federal government, meaning first nations have to go to Ottawa to ask for their tax revenues collected from projects on their land. After eight years, the Prime Minister has allowed this system to continue.

Our Conservative leader just announced his support for the optional first nations resource charge that would enable first nations to take back control of their resources and money.

Will the Liberal government put first nations in control and support the FNRC, or will it let the Ottawa-knows-best model continue?

*Oral Questions***CHILD CARE**

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Conservatives for actually asking a question on indigenous issues, considering the fact that we agree the Indian Act needs to change. This is exactly why the government introduced the legislation on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This is why we continue to support that as Liberals. When Conservatives have the chance, they obstruct and vote against.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night, in a shameful display, the NDP-Liberal coalition tried to shut down the committee studying the arrive can scam. This \$54-million egregious abuse of taxpayers must be fully studied. Canadians deserve no less.

More and more details are being revealed, and the corruption within the CBSA and the government is astonishing. The walls are caving in. The rot is being exposed.

What is the coalition so desperate to hide?

• (1505)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said in the House time and time again, we are happy to see the work the committee is doing. When we issued a contract for the ArriveCAN app, we expected all procurement policies to be followed.

The president of the CBSA has confirmed that there are internal audits and investigations happening. The police have been called when necessary. We look forward to the results of that investigation, because any acts of wrongdoing will come with consequences.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that type of response proves that the Prime Minister and the NDP-Liberal government are simply not worth the cost. Let me clarify the record: 76% of ArriveCAN contractors performed no work; \$11 million went to a two-person basement company for no work; and now top bureaucrats at the CBSA face accusations of lying to committee and even destruction of evidence.

After everything else that has been exposed in this \$54-million boondoggle, what else is the coalition government trying to hide?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have faith in the CBSA president, who has already acknowledged that they have launched an internal audit on the current procurement process. We look forward to the OAG report on ArriveCAN next week.

I have said time and time again that we are working hard to ensure that when contracts are issued all procurement policies are followed. We look forward to these audits and the AG report, because if we can make further procurement improvements, we will. We expect contracts to be done properly.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that families are struggling with the cost of living. For parents of young children, the Canada-wide early learning and child care system is helping them return to the workforce while accessing affordable, quality child care. In Prince Edward Island, \$10-a-day child care has been available since January 1, and we can already see its positive impacts.

Can the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development update this House on the progress that has been made as this important national system continues to be built out?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, child care is good for our kids, it is good for families and it is good for our economy. Islanders have already been benefiting and seeing the savings. As of January 1, they have \$10-a-day child care, as do six other provinces and territories across this country. At a time when families are feeling the pressure, \$4,200 in savings a year is outstanding.

Instead of preying on Canadians' fears, the Conservatives need to start listening to families.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, four first nations, Wasagamack, Red Sucker Lake, St. Theresa Point and Garden Hill, have declared a state of emergency. They are unable to bring in fuel and other necessities; the ice roads they depend on have melted because of climate change. We are talking about thousands of people who are stranded. For years, the Liberals, like the Conservatives before them, have ignored the need for an all-weather road for these communities.

What will it take for the Liberals to help build the all-weather road needed for the first nations on the east side who are already paying the price for climate change?

Points of Order

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that northern communities are dealing with the impacts of climate change first-hand, and this is no different. Remote communities relying on winter roads are living with first-hand impacts. The pressures are real. There is a shorter season and a shorter window to work on infrastructure projects, such as schools and water plants.

We will do what it takes to make sure essential resources are delivered and communities have what they need throughout the year. I understand that meetings are in place right now with the Minister of Transport and the community leaders. We are going to get to the bottom of this and make sure they have access.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, on October 23, I asked the Minister of Environment a question about why the federal government was taking an unreasonably long time to reimburse people under the Canada greener homes grant. I was told that the government was aware of the problem and that the situation was going to improve.

However, some people in my riding received a letter in December that said that their grant application had been approved and that they would get their cheque in the next 30 days. What they actually ended up getting, 30 days later, was a letter saying that their grant application had been denied. It takes two months to be reimbursed by the Government of Quebec, but it takes more than 18 months to be reimbursed by the federal government.

Is there anyone responsible in this government who could make sure that this program, which is so important, actually works?

• (1510)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that it is good to see so many Canadians using the Canada greener homes grant and loans.

We worked hard with Canadians for this to work well. We will continue to do so. Our program will soon help people to be better able to make these changes to their homes.

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as it is Thursday, I am very excited to ask the Thursday question. I was wondering if the government House leader can update members as to the business of the House for the rest of this week and into the next week.

I will take this opportunity to ask how the government plans to manage Bill C-62. Bill C-62, as members will know, is the response to a court deadline to protect vulnerable people with mental health afflictions. The government has had over a year to deal with this,

yet here we find ourselves again on the eve of an expiration of a court-imposed deadline with not a lot of House time.

If the government could enlighten members as to how it foresees Bill C-62 will move through the House in time for that court-imposed deadline so that vulnerable Canadians are not in any way victimized by the regime around MAID, I am sure members from all sides would like to know that.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): I would first like to thank my hon. colleague and his colleagues in the official opposition for finally letting Bill C-57, the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement, come to a final vote. That is good news for Canada and our Ukrainian friends, with whom we stand in solidarity.

As for the business of the House, we will continue to have ongoing discussions that would see us dealing with Bill C-62, medical assistance in dying, next week. We are, of course, well aware of the deadlines that are looming. I remind all members of this House that there is a March 17 deadline attached to this very important legislation.

[Translation]

I would remind the House that we wanted to allow all parties in the House, as well as in the Senate, to participate in a process that could guide the government's choices on medical assistance in dying. We produced a report that resembled a consensus, and the bill reflects that consensus.

We will also give priority to bills that have been examined and amended by the Senate and are therefore now in the final stage of debate in the House. These include Bill C-29, which would create a national council for reconciliation, and Bill C-35 on early learning and child care in Canada.

As I said at the outset, we will continue to consult with the opposition parties. My door is always open. If necessary, we will make adjustments so that the House can continue to work in an orderly fashion.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER**AMENDMENTS TO BILL C-318 AT COMMITTEE STAGE**

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to intervene on a point of order raised by the member for Winnipeg North this morning respecting Bill C-318, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code, adoptive and intended parents.

My colleague, the member for Winnipeg North, mentioned the committee process, where I tabled crucial amendments to this legislation that would bring the bill into compliance with Canadian law, specifically with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Let me remind the government that it is the government that passed Bill C-15, which affirms that all legislation going forward has to be compatible with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Not including these important amendments means that the legislation now is not compliant with articles 19, 21 and 22 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The member of Parliament for Winnipeg North talked about the amendments being out of scope, but even the sponsor of the bill said that the amendments were absolutely within the scope of what Bill C-318 was trying to do.

My colleague, the member for Winnipeg North, also pointed out the need for a royal recommendation for these amendments. I would like to encourage him to reconsider this, considering he has the highest number of kids in care in an urban area in the whole country, 90% who are indigenous.

What my colleague failed to mention is that the Liberal government has the power to allow the amendments to proceed by giving notice of a royal recommendation for Bill C-318. In fact, Bosc and Gagnon, at page 839, states the following:

...since Standing Order 79 was changed in 1994, private Members' bills involving the spending of public money have been allowed to proceed through the legislative process on the assumption that a royal recommendation will be submitted by a Minister of the Crown before the bill is to be read a third time and passed

The only ones who can act right now are the Liberals. On their watch, they are not upholding Canadian law, which includes Bill C-15. We are meeting about the red dress right now, about murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. The child welfare system is called the pipeline for becoming murdered and missing. The government's failure is not addressing the 90% of kids in care.

It is only the Liberals who can save the lives of indigenous children who are being dropped off at shelters, separated from their families and communities. I am asking them to table a royal recommendation to do the right thing to ensure that Bill C-318 can go to a vote at third reading with the amendments adopted by committee. Although they have mentioned they are putting forth Bill C-59, a similar bill, once again it is not consistent with upholding Canadian law and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

It is in the hands of the Liberals. Lives are in their hands. They need to put forward a royal recommendation. This is a life and death matter. They have to stop playing with indigenous lives and do what is needed now.

• (1515)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre for raising this point of order. It is one that the Chair will take and come back to members after I have closely looked at the arguments raised by the hon. member.

On a point of order, the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

Privilege

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGEDLY MISLEADING STATEMENTS MADE IN THE HOUSE

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a question of privilege arising out of question period today.

Standing Order 48 waives the required hour's notice when a breach of privilege occurs during the proceedings of the House.

Misleading comments were made on the floor of the House. It is imperative not only to correct the record but to draw a firm line against misleading comments being tossed around in a way the Liberals have done so egregiously. Normally we chalk these things up to debate, but the misrepresentation offered by the government is so egregious that I think it rises to the level of being a *prima facie* case and a contempt of Parliament.

Here are the facts. Here is what I had originally said, in the Hansard transcript:

Madam Speaker, as always, one has to be very careful with the Liberals when they talk about truths and untruths. What Dr. Charlebois said was that there has not been enough data collected to see exactly what the effect of the carbon tax is on food prices. He also said—

Which the member conveniently omitted.

that he called for a pause on the carbon tax to lower food prices. Charlebois has said that...

When one hears a story coming from the Liberals, it is always interesting to listen to the facts.

Talking to Mr. McCann, I also asked if the point of a carbon tax is to increase the price so that consumers change their behaviour. He said that this is exactly what the Liberals say the point of a carbon tax is.

The truth is that, when it comes to food inflation, food prices and the relationship with the carbon tax, it will come out in the wash that there is a correlation. When one talks to farmers and dairy farmers today, their highest input cost now is the carbon tax and the heating of their barns. If someone does not think that affects the price of what a farmer does, then they should maybe get out of downtown Winnipeg and go to a farm once in their life.

As the Speaker will recall from today's question period, what was portrayed as being said is nowhere close to the facts.

To find a *prima facie* case of privilege, three things must be established: the statement must be misleading; the member making the statement must know it is misleading; and the statement must have been offered with the intention to mislead the House.

This has happened three times, twice yesterday with the Prime Minister and then, today, with the Minister of Environment. All three of these conditions have been met here because of the wanton and reckless misquoting and misrepresenting by an hon. member.

If you agree with me on these points, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to move an appropriate motion to refer the matter to the procedure and House affairs committee.

Business of Supply

• (1520)

The Speaker: I thank the member for Regina—Lewvan for putting his points very clearly. The Chair will take this under advisement and will come back to this House.

On the same point of order, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I see that you were very generous in listening to what the member across the way was saying.

I had the opportunity to witness the exchange. From my perspective, it is very much a dispute over the facts at best. I would suggest that what was being suggested as a point of order or a matter of privilege is just a matter of debate that should have, in all likelihood, stayed inside the committee. I realize that the member might have been embarrassed, but it does not justify bringing it into the chamber.

The Speaker: On the same point of order, the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have just a few points I want to address.

First of all, it was the government that decided to bring something from committee into the House of Commons by allegedly repeating what was said.

He did not say it, and that is the whole point.

Usually the Speaker does not arbitrate the veracity of statements that are made, but previous Speakers have indicated that members must be very judicious in their words. Completely fabricating a statement to try to give the impression that a member from an opposition party actually supported something as egregious as the carbon tax does rise to the level where the Speaker should have an interest in order to preserve the integrity and the reputation of members.

If not, we could all just come here and make things up, saying, “Oh, the member for Winnipeg North said this at committee. He said that carbon taxes were terrible and that the Prime Minister is responsible for car theft increases,” even if he did not say anything like that.

I do think there are some very unique and special circumstances where the Speaker should look at just how diametrically opposed what was actually said is compared to what the Liberals' paraphrasing of that is. I do believe that my colleague's point rises to that level.

The Speaker: I would like to thank the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle for raising this point, and I would also like to thank the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader who I had not had an opportunity to thank until this point.

The Chair has heard what needs to be said. I will come back. I am really quite convinced that the Chair has heard very well pointed-out arguments in regard to what was raised in this matter. I will come back to the House with a ruling. I will look very carefully at what was raised here today by the member for Regina—Lewvan

and supported by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, I will also reflect upon what was raised by the parliamentary secretary, and come back to this House.

The matter is now closed.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I would ask, for the sake of being transparent, if I could table the original comments on the floor of the House of Commons.

Also, the member from Winnipeg who talked about the point of order said it happened in committee, but it actually happened in the House of Commons. His interjection was actually wrong.

The Speaker: I appreciate that, and I think that was the original point that was raised by you, as well as by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle. I thank the hon. member for the opportunity to do that. We will review all transcripts to make sure we take a look at that.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1525)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL IMMIGRATION TARGETS

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a wonderful and good afternoon to all esteemed and learned members in this House.

[Translation]

This new funding will enable the provinces and municipalities that are facing an increased demand for shelter spaces to better respond to that demand. It will also help to prevent asylum seekers from ending up homeless. What is more, as part of “Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy”, the federal government has committed nearly \$4 billion over nine years to fight homelessness across the country. Do we not all have the fundamental right to a safe place to live?

These are not the only ways the federal government is taking action to respond to the consequences of the increase in asylum claims.

When these claims put increased pressure on Canada's shelter system, we worked with the provinces and municipalities that were most affected to transfer asylum seekers who needed temporary housing from provincial shelters and churches to hotel rooms paid for by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or the IR-CC. Since the end of last month, we have approximately 4,000 hotel rooms in six provinces that are safely housing some 7,300 asylum seekers.

In addition to extending the interim housing assistance program, or IHAP, we introduced the interim federal health program so that asylum seekers can receive health care coverage to meet their immediate and essential medical needs.

Business of Supply

IRCC has also implemented a temporary public policy that provides asylum seekers with timely access to open work permits, allowing them to enter the Canadian labour market faster and to support themselves while they wait for a decision on their asylum claim.

Finally, the federal government continues to implement innovative immigration measures to address housing shortages, category-based selection and regional immigration programs. These programs are essential to attracting the workers the construction sector needs to start projects and build new housing.

Immigration is one of Canada's defining characteristics. We are a welcoming country, where newcomers can feel as though they are an integral part of the community. We are a country where we understand that immigration contributes to the growth of our economy, to our diversity and to the building of our communities.

In short, the federal government is listening to its provincial and municipal partners and will continue to do so in order to make sure that Canada remains a safe place for the world's most vulnerable people seeking refuge. Canadians expect no less of us.

[*English*]

This opposition motion deals with immigration. My parents were immigrants to this country, this country we are blessed to call home. I will always be proud to rise on behalf of them and the millions of newcomers who have made Canada home as we debate policies that bring newcomers here to Canada and get them working, contributing to our economy, building their family and strengthening, most importantly, our social fabric.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question that I previously asked the former minister of housing, Mr. Hussen, during question period here in the House. It has to do with the Century Initiative, which, when it was launched, announced a goal of increasing Canada's population to 100 million by 2100.

Before the government announced that number, which is absolutely mind-boggling, did anyone ask the Minister of Housing for his thoughts?

This morning, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce announced that we are no longer just 3.5 million housing units short, but based on the new immigration targets that Canada adopted, we are five million housing units short. I would remind the House that only 250,000 housing units were built last year.

Does my colleague think that the Minister of Housing was involved in the discussions?

• (1530)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, the issue of housing construction is very important, not only for immigrants, but also for every Canadian who wants to be able to buy a home.

[*English*]

We must ensure that our infrastructure here in Canada is robust. We must ensure that builders have those approvals in place, which is what we are doing with the housing accelerator fund, to ensure

that they can put shovels in the ground and build the homes that not only newcomers want and need but also Canadians want and need in our communities. We need to make sure we can absorb newcomers and they have a place to call home and so forth.

We know our immigration system is between two different streams, permanent and temporary residents, and we always need to balance the needs of workers and the need to build a better and better country we are all blessed to call home.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, a couple of years ago the immigration department released a study in which it questioned whether Canada had a diversified immigrant pool or not. Also, it has recently been suggested that if one was trying to undermine the great Canadian consensus on immigration, the policies the government has implemented would be indistinguishable from those meant to destroy the consensus on immigration.

I wonder if the member could reflect on whether he thinks Canada is losing faith in its immigration system and to what extent, if any, the government policies and what it has done in the last few years have contributed to that consensus.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, Canada is home to millions of newcomers from all over the world who have come here to build a better future for themselves and add to Canada's future. We always need to maintain the consensus that folks are coming here; they are working, thriving and learning, and their kids are going to have a very bright future. On the immigration policies of not only our government but past governments, we always need to evaluate them and make sure the integrity of the system is robust, that newcomers are coming here on an efficiency basis, that they are being welcomed, that our economic capacity can absorb them and that the supply labour is great. It is not only that, but that we are nation building, and that is what our immigration should always be about. It should be about nation building and making Canada a better and better place to call home.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I recently met with representatives from a group known as the Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes. They are absolutely overwhelmed, they need money and people, and they want more resources to help asylum seekers and refugees, but they are not getting any answers from the federal government.

Does my colleague think that more could be done to help these organizations, which are essential to helping newcomers integrate?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, it is very important for us to help the most vulnerable people in our country.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

That includes those people who have come to this country to receive help and apply for asylum. If they receive refugee approval to be here, to stay here and to build a better future, we need to make sure we have the resources in place, not only at the beginning but as we go along.

The whole world is continuing to face a migratory problem because of climate change, war and a number of reasons. We know there are literally millions of people, if not tens of millions, who would love to come to Canada this afternoon if they could, to call this beautiful and blessed country home so we can all build a better future for ourselves and our families.

[Translation]

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House and have the opportunity to respond to the opposition motion concerning our shared responsibility in welcoming newcomers.

I would first like to share a little reflection with the House. When I read the text of the Bloc Québécois motion, I wondered why the Bloc Québécois would move such a motion. After researching the various programs and agreements currently in place, I concluded that using an opposition day to move this motion was unnecessary, because the mechanisms and tools for collaboration between the Quebec government and the Government of Canada have already been put in place to address the Bloc's concerns. I will explain.

First, it is important to note that since 2015, the Government of Quebec has received more than \$4.4 billion in federal funding through the Canada-Quebec accord relating to immigration and temporary admission of aliens to support its immigration needs. It is also important to note that the federal government has allocated more than \$700 million this year alone.

As a Nova Scotia MP, I understand the importance of Quebec's place in the federation. That is a very impressive number. We can see that the federal government is co-operating with Quebec. In Nova Scotia, it is different. I believe that this initiative could also be a good idea in the other regions of Canada in order to meet their specific needs.

The governments of Canada and Quebec have a long history of working together to advance shared immigration priorities. Quebec's immigration powers are enshrined in the 1991 Canada-Quebec accord. I would like to get into the details of the Canada-Quebec accord.

Quebec is the only province that receives an annual grant from the federal government to compensate for the delivery of settlement services to newcomers. In all other provinces and territories, the federal government provides annual funding directly to settlement service providers in local communities, who provide services directly or indirectly to newcomers in those regions. Funding is therefore available directly to the Government of Quebec. I think that is important to say in the circumstances.

Quebec receives an annual adjustment to regularly update the amount of federal funding. The funding formula takes into account net federal spending on immigration, as well as the number of non-

francophone newcomers who have arrived and settled in Quebec, compared to the previous year.

The accord ensures Quebec's integration capacity by guaranteeing that the federal grant cannot decrease from one year to the next, regardless of the proportion of permanent immigrants requested by the province. The grant must either remain constant or increase. The amount granted in a given year becomes the basis for calculating the following year.

I would like to note that the value of Canada's grant to Quebec continues to increase. This is very important in order to continue offering programs, subsidies and resources for integrating newcomers in Quebec. In fact, it has more than doubled from \$387 million in 2016 to over \$724 million this year.

- (1535)

Quebec is not required to tell the federal government how it spends the funds it receives. However, under the Canada-Quebec accord, the province is required to provide settlement and integration services comparable to those in the rest of the country.

It is very important that a strong relationship between governments, with public servants and with the elected ministers responsible for this portfolio be sustained. The agreement defines the bilateral relationship between Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and Quebec. Its main objectives are to preserve Quebec's demographic weight within Canada and support the integration of immigrants in the province while respecting Quebec as a distinct society. I mentioned the principle that recognizes Quebec's distinct character within our federation.

The accord aims to ensure co-operation between the governments of Canada and Quebec throughout the immigration process in all immigration categories. The federal government is responsible for setting national immigration standards and objectives, including national levels of permanent immigration, admission criteria, and conditions for granting citizenship. It must also ensure that Canada's international humanitarian obligations are respected.

The Government of Quebec has the right to decide the number of permanent immigrants it wants to welcome every year. I will say it again: The Government of Quebec is allowed to figure out the number of newcomers it wants to welcome to the province based on federal thresholds. It retains the right to exceed this figure by 5% of the Canadian total for demographic reasons, in order to protect the Quebec identity, but also the French language, of course. We understand the importance of protecting the French language in this context as well. However, recently, Quebec asked to meet only 10% of Canada's target for permanent immigrants, even though its population represents 22.5% of the country's population. The Legault government decided that Quebec's desire was to maintain a low level in relation to the federal total. That is Quebec's right and it is a decision based on capacity. At the same time, it was the Government of Quebec's decision.

Business of Supply

I am a little confused. Why is the Bloc Québécois moving an opposition motion today in relation to the decisions made by the Legault government? Is the Bloc Québécois opposed to the Legault government's measures and decisions to accept a relatively low number of newcomers in relation to Quebec's percentage of the Canadian population?

I understand that Quebec and Canada have a special relationship given its place in Confederation. I am a Nova Scotia MP. The accord contains different tools and mechanisms to ensure that a certain relationship exists, in addition to certain mechanisms and tools for managing the newcomer arrival process in Quebec and in the federation. I see no need for this motion. Both governments are following the proper procedures.

• (1540)

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague is confused because someone else wrote his speech for him and he has not read the 1991 Canada-Quebec accord. He is talking about amounts that Quebec receives without explaining that Quebec has immigration responsibilities that the other provinces do not. This is compensation for work performed by Quebec.

He is practically claiming that Quebec is getting gifts, while ignoring the fact that the Couture-Cullen and McDougall-Tremblay agreements, entered after the 1991 accord, make no provision for refugees.

The \$470 million requested by Quebec is meant to pay for refugee integration. Refugees come under the jurisdiction of the federal government, not the Legault government.

Now that my colleague has received an explanation about agreements he has not read, is he willing to go see the Minister of Immigration and tell him to get out his cheque book and pay up the \$470 million that Ottawa owes Quebec for matters under Ottawa's jurisdiction, but currently being paid for by Quebec?

• (1545)

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, the thing is that Nova Scotia and all of the provinces and territories in the federation are responsible for managing certain services. My speech was very direct. Federal funding is available for the Government of Quebec.

When it comes to refugees, of course, Quebec is having more issues as a result of Roxham Road and other crossings. However, the Minister of Immigration recently announced several million dollars in funding, not just \$1 million. I think he announced close to \$4 million to improve resources for refugees.

I expect that some of that funding will go to Quebec. I am sure that my colleague will contact the Minister of Immigration about that.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke very well in French.

[*English*]

I hope that, at some point, I will be able to deliver a speech as the member did, in our nation's second language.

I want to ask the member about the temporary foreign worker program. There was an op-ed written in 2014, entitled "How to fix the broken temporary worker program". It stated:

It cuts to the heart of who we are as a country. I believe it is wrong for Canada to follow the path of countries who exploit large numbers of guest workers, who have no realistic prospect of citizenship. It is bad for our economy in that it depresses wages for all Canadians, but it's even worse for our country. It puts pressure on our commitment to diversity, and creates more opportunities for division and rancour.

That was written by the Prime Minister when he was leader of the official opposition.

Since that time, the government has tripled the size of the temporary foreign worker program. I wonder if the member—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I need to allow time for the hon. member for Kings—Hants to answer.

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, I will talk very confidently about the programs we have for temporary foreign workers in this country. They are extremely important.

The member for Simcoe North's communities, I would presume, would also rely on such programs. Kings—Hants welcomes over 2,000 international workers a year, particularly in the agriculture sector. The seasonal agriculture worker program, in my opinion, is one of the best programs we have to provide direct aid to other individuals in host countries, such as Jamaica and Mexico. The money goes directly to families.

I have heard personal stories of how their contribution to Canadian agriculture has allowed them to put their sons and daughters in school or buy vehicles. I am extremely supportive of the program. Do we need to have proper mechanisms to protect workers and ensure proper housing? Yes, absolutely.

This is an extremely important program. I will always stand in the House and defend it. I am proud of the work the government has done, particularly around the trusted employer program. That is going to help ensure the program is run properly and there are good mechanisms in place to reward good employers that are taking care of workers, who are helping to contribute to Canadian society.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the NDP believes that immigration makes Canada stronger, so we support this motion.

I will read a quote by the premier of Nunavut on immigration. He said, "We do want to welcome new workers to Nunavut, but our immense housing shortage is the biggest obstacle we face today."

In an effort to have Nunavut welcome immigrants, will the member support increasing investments in housing so it can do the same as other provinces and territories?

• (1550)

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, I agree that housing and health care are important elements in ensuring that new arrivals to Canada are confident that we have proper systems in place.

Business of Supply

The Minister of Housing was actually just in that hon. member's riding to announce housing for Nunavut. I noticed that she voted against the fall economic statement and the measures that actually contain the housing for Nunavut that was announced just recently.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would first like to note that I will be sharing my time with the member for Terrebonne, who is going to give us a hard-hitting speech. She said so herself.

Quebec or McKinsey? For our part, we choose the first option. Clearly, Ottawa is choosing the second. By meekly accepting the targets set by a sprawling firm, a state within a state, Ottawa is the real armchair quarterback here, to use the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship's term. He claps and hurls insults at dissenting voices, accusing them of xenophobia and so on.

The faucet metaphor is generally used to describe the phenomenon of immigration. People talk about valves, but they also sometimes talk about faucets. The purpose of a faucet is to adjust the rate at which water flows, depending on how full we want the glass to be. If we do not want it to overflow, we slow down the flow a little. We adjust it. It pays to be careful, and this needs to be handled with care. Before the Minister of Immigration accuses me of comparing immigrants to drops of water, let me make it clear that this is not the case. I am using the faucet metaphor, which has been used before.

Delegating something as important as immigration thresholds to big business is as irresponsible as wanting to ban all public debate on the issue. Ottawa is obviously acting in bad faith. Ottawa not only refused to confer with Quebec, it did not even bother to warn Quebec of its plans to increase its immigration threshold. A major crisis could be looming, and pointing that out is in no way xenophobic.

The number of temporary immigrants has skyrocketed in Canada in the past year. Statistics Canada puts the figure at 2.5 million, which is a 46% increase in one year, the largest ever recorded. In Quebec, the non-permanent resident population has also increased by nearly 46% to 470,000. Last fall, the Legault government's immigration minister, Christine Fréchette, asked Ottawa to review its immigration thresholds accordingly, since Ottawa wants to take in 500,000 permanent immigrants per year starting in 2025.

Quebec and the provinces are best placed to know the reality on the ground. To me, accounting for integration capacity in terms of health services, education, language and housing seems to be the foundation for successful immigration. It is the foundation for guaranteeing that every newcomer can have halfway decent living conditions. When I say that a crisis is looming, I mean there are consequences in terms of housing. My colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert is very knowledgeable about this and could talk about it much better than I could.

We are already experiencing a serious crisis. In the major city in my riding, Saint-Hyacinthe, we often engage with cities that are not far off from holding the dubious honour of having the lowest vacancy rates in Quebec. Some villages are so full that they are even

worrying about the use of potable water. Space is more than limited.

In a report from September 2023, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC, says that Canada as a whole needs 3.5 million additional housing units by 2030 according to the base-line scenario, and that is contingent on “the current immigration policy ending by 2025”.

Another CMHC report, this one from 2024, explains the rising costs as follows:

Strong demand for rental housing in Greater Montréal is largely attributed to population growth. Net migration to Québec more than doubled in 2023...with the arrival of a record number of non-permanent residents (net of nearly 150,000 new residents).

CMHC goes on to explain:

The metropolitan area attracts the largest share of non-permanent residents in the province—namely international students, temporary workers and asylum seekers—most of whom rent. Migration's solid post-pandemic recovery therefore contributed to the strong rebound in rental demand in the area.

In 2023, 872,000 Quebeckers had to resort to food banks. One in 10 Quebeckers cannot afford to eat. With the price of rent and mortgage payments rising and more and more people living in precarious situations, it is clear that now is not the time to increase immigration levels so drastically.

• (1555)

That also means that there will be an impact on public services. Immigration entails engaging various services, for example, French training, education, legal aid, child care, welfare, social services, health care services, temporary housing and help finding housing. Every newcomer must be able to access these services, with dignity. However, in order for them to do so, these services must be able to meet the demand.

Ottawa sees immigrants as symbols. One could even say that Ottawa takes them hostage and throws them into the jungle without a compass because newcomers are the main victims of the increased immigration thresholds. Then, after sending newcomers out into the jungle, Ottawa has the nerve to paint a romantic picture of immigration to ensure that the public sees its decisions in a good light.

Increased immigration thresholds also have economic and cultural impacts. I would like to quote something that was said by the late Milan Kundera. He said, and I quote:

What distinguishes the small nations from the large is not the quantitative criterion of the number of their inhabitants; it is something deeper: for them their existence is not a self-evident certainty but always a question, a wager, a risk; they are on the defensive against History, that force that is bigger than they, that does not take them into consideration, that does not even notice them.

His description fits Quebec perfectly: a small nation whose survival has never been a permanent guarantee. Quebec is already struggling with integrating newcomers into French-speaking society. According to demographer Alain Bélanger:

In order for immigration not to anglicize Quebec, 90% of new arrivals would have to choose French. At present, the figure is between 50% and 60%, and that's not about to change.

At this rate, our language could very well die out. That threat will drastically increase if these new targets come into force.

Needless to say, Ottawa has not conducted any studies on the impact of its targets on linguistic dynamics in Quebec. Anglicization looms. We are at risk of becoming another Louisiana, even as Montreal wants to create a “French quarter” like the one in New Orleans. The result would be a French quarter in a city that is officially French, but is becoming increasingly anglicized, in a francophone province, in a country that is officially bilingual, but is in fact English. I do not know if everyone gets what I am saying, but that is what would happen. I hear one of my colleagues suggest that it is like Elvis Gratton.

Let us refuse to be just another community. We are a proud nation. We must have full and complete freedom to control our immigration levels and what diversity should be within our borders. The best way to avoid xenophobia is precisely to ensure harmonious integration into the host nation. For that to happen, we need a realistic and achievable vision.

The problem is that there are two nations with two separate visions for managing diversity. One is tainted by the ideology of multiculturalism, and the other wants inclusion and a shared national culture. We have two nations and two visions. The solution is to have two countries.

[English]

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened attentively to the hon. member's speech. I have the pleasure of working with him in the international trade committee, where I have seen him working very proactively for the economic development of Quebec and raising important topics at the committee for the interests of Quebec.

What is the member's opinion on the number of immigrants needed by the business sectors in Quebec, whether the housing sector, the electrical industry sector or various manufacturing sectors, which are all facing a shortage of skilled workers? What approaches has the Quebec government taken to increase skilled manpower through immigration?

• (1600)

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Standing Committee on International Trade for his kind words. I am surprised he is in the House because we are supposed to be meeting right now. I will be going there right after this, and I imagine we will see each other over there in a few minutes.

His question is about the immigration that is needed in Quebec. Quebec is the only province that knows what kind of immigration it would need. It is not up to Ottawa to tell Quebec that it is sending immigrants and then let Quebec deal with the cost. It is not up to Ottawa to do that, and it should not be the way it works.

Not only did Ottawa not consult Quebec, but Ottawa did not even inform Quebec of its targets, and that is a real problem. We are therefore asking for consultation to occur quickly and, ideally, we would like all immigration powers to be transferred to Quebec. In fact, we would like all powers to be transferred to Quebec.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I can well understand the Bloc wanting to have a day to talk about why the Liberals are not balancing the number of people coming into Canada with our resources. Quebec is receiving a larger share compared with the other provinces, and this could impact its culture.

However, why did the Bloc choose to have this motion instead of the one on the near surface disposal facility at Chalk River? I was so looking forward to talking about the clean electricity generated through nuclear power and clarifying the misinformation about it being a low-level, completely encased place for booties, gloves and not a deep geological repository—

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

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. However, I would like to remind her that it is up to us to choose the subject of the motion we want to debate during our opposition days.

Yes, Chalk River is a huge problem. However, the fact remains that immigration is an important issue that needs to be addressed. The Quebec national government has been calling for action in this area. That said, I agree with the member on Chalk River. I invite my colleague to convince her own party to stop talking about the carbon tax for one of the next 15 opposition days. Chalk River would be an excellent topic.

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I do not normally like to ask questions with respect to other parties. However, I feel compelled to do so in this case. The previous member misstated a fact about the way I voted instead of answering my question on the need for increased investments so that all provinces and territories, including Quebec, could do better to make sure immigrants get the help they deserve. For example, Nunavut wants to welcome more immigrants, but it is unable to do so because of the overcrowded housing situation that exists in all the communities.

What does the member think about this kind of response and what the Liberals always attempt to do, which is to underinvest in any major social issues?

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. However, she is talking about Liberal talking points. Personally, I am under the impression that we do not usually get answers from the Liberals. My colleague told us that she asked a Liberal member a question, but he did not answer. I am stunned. It is a good thing I am not sitting down, because I would have fallen off my chair in shock when I heard that. Seriously, we are used to not getting answers.

Business of Supply

Regarding the substance of our discussion, it is obviously all about the integration capacity. We must not be ideological about this. If we do not have the means, we must also be able to adjust the levels.

I see the Chair signalling that my time is up. I was going to give a long explanation, but that will be for another time.

• (1605)

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Canadian dream is often presented as an El Dorado for people who are looking to build a better life. They think about wide open spaces, safety and democracy. They think about how nice of a home they will have in Canada. However, for years, this government has been turning the promise of a better life that it sells abroad into a real trap by failing to enforce its own laws.

The government often presents immigration issues as a battle between open-minded people and close-minded people, between progressive thinkers and racists, between people who are kind and those who are mean. That is convenient because it eliminates the need for nuanced thinking. Nuance is so tiresome and exhausting. No, it is much better to vilify one's enemy, to pander to voters and to virtue-signal or fake indignation. Quebeckers deserve better than that and so do the immigrants who come here to build a new life with us.

My mother, who came here from Peru when she was 37 years old and built a great law career in her third language through hard work and sacrifice, would have deserved better had she arrived today. I, too, would have deserved better, newly arrived at the age of six, had there not been any space in the local public school for me. My younger sister would have deserved better had there not been enough room for her in day care.

Rest assured, the Prime Minister's Canadian dream upholds at least one great Canadian tradition: It disregards democracy when it comes to the big issues. Of course, I am talking about irresponsible immigration targets. I say this in French in the House, precisely because French was never taken into consideration when this policy was being developed. Some of its authors even admitted as much.

There was also never any consideration of housing, health care, education or infrastructure. If none of those factors was considered, that means that it is probably an election ploy.

Earlier, I heard a Liberal MP make virtually her entire speech about the economic importance of immigration. I can talk economics. In fact, I would like to say a few words about that. Quite simply put, the Liberal government is basing its immigration targets on economic parameters that are just plain false and simplistic. In order to solve the labour shortage, we supposedly just need to bring people from all over the world to work here. No.

Although immigration has a role to play in filling specific gaps in the labour market, it is far from being a magic bullet to fix this problem. As Professor Pierre Fortin explained in the report he presented last year to Quebec's ministry of immigration, francization and integration, a sustained increase in immigration creates a bigger workforce, but also increases demand for goods and services. He believes that in taking into consideration the further increase in de-

mand for additional health services and education, the increase in employment opportunities would be negligible.

Other public policies can be put in place at the same time to address the labour shortage, as the Bloc Québécois has proposed on numerous occasions and in a constructive manner. For instance, tax credits should be granted to people who have reached retirement age but who may want to extend their careers. Let us think about it. These individuals are trained and want to work longer. Instead of pushing them into retirement because of ill-suited tax measures, why not review what specific improvements can be made, and why not do that right away?

Rodrigue Tremblay, professor emeritus of economics and a minister in the Lévesque government, explained that a rapidly growing population requires additional infrastructure, such as housing, hospitals and schools, to name a few examples, and that savings and capital are needed to build that infrastructure.

There also needs to be an appropriate economic context that is conducive to construction, which we do not have right now. Mr. Tremblay also says, "When a population grows too quickly, this can sometimes lead to a general decline in the standard of living".

Armen Sarkissian, former president of Armenia, recently said in his book that small states can navigate the complex challenges of the twenty-first century in smarter ways than greater powers—such as countries with 100 million inhabitants by 2100—for smallness, often regarded as a weakness, can be a strength. Large states are ponderous; small states can be agile and adaptive.

Ultimately, the countries with the best standard of living and quality of life are not the most populous countries in the world. They are countries like Norway, Ireland and Switzerland, whose population size is more similar to that of Quebec than Canada. If we want to talk about economics, then we should talk to economists.

Just this morning, we read in the papers that the CIBC has published its new figures. It is not 3.5 million, but five million housing units that we need to build by 2030, simply to meet demand and restore affordability to the market. That is huge. That means that there should be cranes everywhere. That is not the case. What are we going to do by 2030?

• (1610)

In addition to language and culture, what distinguishes Quebec is the quality of its social safety net and the public policies it has adopted over the past 60 years. Quebec is a model for its low-cost child care system, its affordable education system, its parental insurance plan and all its other social policies. In order to maintain, if not improve, the quality of the services that the Government of Quebec provides to its citizens, it must make sound economic and demographic decisions to ensure the long-term viability of its social services. It is up to the National Assembly of Quebec to determine Quebec's optimal population, because it is ultimately responsible for providing social services to Quebeckers.

I am really sick of hearing the Liberals virtue signalling or invoking economic principles that they simply do not understand. They accuse us of undermining social peace and creating tensions between newcomers and those who are already settled, simply because we are asking the government to take integration capacity into account. Is it not true that the people who are really undermining social peace are the one who are ignoring the housing crisis when setting immigration targets, the ones who are unable to provide health care and spaces in schools and day cares for newcomers? It is irresponsible to say that the number of landed immigrants is more important than the quality of the services provided to help them integrate.

Our motion is very clear. We are asking this government to walk the talk. What good is it to tell people around the world that they are welcome in Canada if we cannot even assure them of the basic minimum that any self-respecting society should be able to provide? The Prime Minister's "Canadian" dream is so wonderful.

The government needs to take action, for newcomers and for us. It needs to commit to change course in the next 100 days. It does not take a rocket scientist to understand what we are asking for. Perhaps some do not even understand that expression. First, the government needs to call a meeting with its Quebec and provincial and territorial counterparts. Second, the government needs to review the immigration targets with them based on their respective integration capacities.

If Quebec needs to get the federal government to respect its integration capacity by holding a referendum to take back control of immigration powers or even all powers, then I would be more than happy to work on that. My mother, my sisters and I chose Quebec. It is our country. We will build that country with our indigenous brothers and sisters whom we must absolutely not leave behind, as well as with the newcomers whom we want to welcome properly with open arms.

I am asking the Minister of Immigration and the Prime Minister to take action because immigrants deserve it. We owe it to them. We do not owe it to them because of elections, votes or for other purely electoral reasons. We owe it to them out of compassion.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to go back to a question I asked one of the member's colleagues. Bloc members talk about the importance of consultation in regard to the immigration file, and they have done so a lot in the last couple of months. When we factor in things like the provincial nominee program, international students, temporary workers in agricultural communities, and so forth, there is no doubt there is a need to have ongoing conversations, which have taken place in a wide spectrum of ways.

Has the Bloc had any official discussion with the Government of Quebec with respect to the motion it is proposing today?

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, first of all, if the Bloc Québécois has discussions with the Quebec government,

Business of Supply

that is really none of his business. That is between the Bloc Québécois and the Quebec government.

Second, I have indeed mentioned the importance of consultations several times. How is it that Quebec's premier, François Legault, is talking about a breaking point?

To my mind, that means that if there have been consultations with Quebec, the government is incompetent. If there have not been any, perhaps it is time there were.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I particularly enjoyed the end of my colleague's speech, the part about compassion.

This is because of not her comments or because of the motion the Bloc is presenting, but in some Quebec media, some columnists are using a sort of intellectual shortcut and conflating higher immigration with the housing crisis we are experiencing, as if immigrants arriving today were responsible for the shortcomings of the past 30 years in terms of investment in social and co-operative housing.

We see the vacancy rates in Montreal and Rimouski. If there is 0% housing available in Rimouski, it is not because of immigration.

I would like my colleague to comment on this shell game that is being played to try to blame immigrants for a crisis that the federal Liberal government caused in 1994 when it stopped investing in social housing.

• (1615)

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie is right about one thing. The housing crisis cannot be blamed solely on immigration. No one here is doing that. Perhaps some media outlets are, but I completely disagree with them.

The housing crisis is not just due to immigration. It is due to a lot of other things, as I mentioned in my speech. The current economic climate is not conducive to building housing. In recent years, housing was not built at times when there was less immigration. During the pandemic, we were unable to build housing. Even before that, housing was not built. For nearly a decade, we have been behind on our housing construction targets.

However, it is important to note that immigration does have an impact on demand. It may not be solely due to immigration, but immigration does affect the demand for housing. Thus, there may be a mild to moderate impact that is related to immigration and that must be considered in our capacity to integrate newcomers.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question as a follow-up to the question from my NDP colleague.

In fact, the misleading information about how immigrants are partly responsible for Canada's housing problem came from the Liberal Minister of Housing. He said it, not me.

For the past two months, we have witnessed two ministers publicly pass the buck by saying that the other is to blame. There is chaos in immigration, and both are accusing each other of bungling their policies.

Business of Supply

I would like to know the member's opinion on that.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, the current federal Liberal government's bickering is nothing new. Ministers passing the buck and playing ping-pong with very important issues is nothing new either.

As I mentioned in my previous answer, although immigration may be having a mild to moderate impact on the housing crisis, it is not, I repeat, not the cause of the housing crisis. Many other causes are at play.

I encourage the current ministers, both the Minister of Housing and the Minister of Immigration, to reflect and perhaps start listening to the people on the ground, because they are clearly out of touch with what is happening.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been following the issue of immigration since the early 1990s. I have been very passionate about and have understood many different aspects of immigration over the years, whether at the provincial level or the national level, both when I was in opposition and now while we are in government. I am very passionate about it because I understand and appreciate the true value of immigration and how Canada is what it is today because of sound immigration policy. It would take quite a bit to fool me on some of the things I have been hearing on the immigration file, and I want to quickly make reference to that.

One of the concerns I had was about a comment made by the member for Calgary Shepard. He was talking about immigration, and I actually wrote down the quote.

Before I continue, I will say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough Centre.

We were debating immigration target numbers and so forth, and the member for Calgary Shepard said, "They bear responsibility for the chaos on our streets today with crime that is out of control." I do not like whatsoever that the member opposite was trying to imply in any way that immigrants are a problem when it comes to crime and chaos on our streets. That is surely what could be interpreted, based on the manner in which he presented himself.

I then take a look at my New Democratic friends. I want to be kind, but it is hard when one gets statements saying something like if someone is an international student, they should become a permanent resident, and, at the same time, saying we should have no cap on international students. To me, that is irresponsible public policy. Just so the member is aware, I can guarantee that, virtually overnight with that sort of policy, we would exceed, and I will be conservative with my number, well over a million international students applying every year.

Further, the member from the New Democratic Party said that she would like to see temporary residents in the form of workers also automatically becoming permanent residents. That is the reason I posed the question to the NDP. Does it have any cap whatsoever? If one follows the advice or the comments that were provided, we would probably be taking in at least 1.5 million to 2.5 million resi-

dents a year. I do not think that would be a practical number. It is important that we be serious.

I will now move to the Bloc. The Bloc brought forward a motion. I will talk about immigration any day of the week, and I asked whether they have done consultation. I know the importance of consultation on this file; as I said, I have been working on the file since the early 1990s. I understand the role and the impact on the Manitoba economy. That is one of the reasons I was a very strong advocate for Jean Chrétien and the provincial nominee program.

History will show us that no province in Canada did better than the province of Manitoba in taking advantage of the provincial nominee program. Our immigration numbers grew rapidly as a direct result of a progressive program, at that point instituted by and signed off on by Jean Chrétien and, in my home province, Gary Filmon. Manitoba has benefited; the program has been gold to the province of Manitoba.

When one thinks of the provincial nominee program, when one takes a look at the unique nature of immigration into the province of Quebec and when one factors in temporary visas, obviously there is a great deal of discussion that takes place at many different levels, whether it is with ministers, deputy ministers, civil servants and so forth. It takes place all of the time and in different ways.

I posed the question to members of the Bloc, and I am of the opinion that they did not do any consultation with the Province of Quebec, in terms of the resolution they are proposing today.

● (1620)

Many would ultimately argue that there is a bit of a hidden agenda with the Bloc whenever immigration matters are raised, but that is for another day.

When we talk about immigration as a whole, let us take a look at the targets and understand and appreciate the actual numbers. When we think about provinces, they are involved in a direct way. I mentioned the provincial nominee program. Let us take a look at the targets that were provided to the House. In 2024, the targeted number is 110,000; in 2025 it is 120,000, and it is followed again, in 2026, by 120,000. That is a very high percentage that is going toward supporting provinces, and that does not take into consideration the number, which I believe is around 35,000 a year, going into Quebec under the skilled worker type of programming.

Let us look at the numbers and at the freedoms the provinces have in terms of recruitment. There is a wonderful opportunity to deal with things such as health care workers and the trades, whether it is the plumbers, electricians or so forth. That program is designed to support them.

Members opposite point the finger and say that Ottawa is to blame for this or that. They talk about the issue of housing, but do they not believe that provincial jurisdictions have the capability to understand what is happening in their local economies? If they really want to get more electricians, plumbers and so forth approved, they have an excellent window through the provincial nominee program, because they are the ones that issue the certificates.

They should not just try to say that it is immigrants who are to blame, because that is not true. What we find is that through the skilled worker program and the nominee program, it is provinces and territories that are identifying what they believe are the priorities in terms of their economic development.

We can look at other numbers. The federal government actually gets fewer than the combined provinces do in terms of skilled workers, but we do process just over 100,000 a year.

Then we also have the spouses. There is somewhere in the neighbourhood of 75,000 to 85,000 spouses and partners on an annual basis. Are we going to start saying no? That is a really important aspect of our immigration policy, which the federal government has complete jurisdiction over.

We can look at how we have actually managed that file. When I was critic, people were waiting for years and years. We are talking three, four or five years to get a spouse to come over. I used to apply under dual intent, to try to get someone a temporary visa while they were waiting. Do members know how many times I applied and the number that were actually approved when Stephen Harper was the prime minister? It was a big goose egg. Nothing.

Since we have been in government, I have been successful. I have talked with immigration officials; I have talked with ministers of immigration; I have explained the situation to caucus, and we have seen significant movement, not only in terms of processing times but also in terms of providing temporary visas for those who are trying to get a spouse here from abroad.

I could talk about parents and grandparents. When I was critic, Jason Kenney cancelled the program. He said people could not sponsor their mom and dad. The response I get when I pose that question to the Conservative critic is that they came up with the super visa. Yes, the super visa is a good thing, but they also cancelled the program.

They also say, “Well, we wanted to deal with processing times, and we improved processing times.” Sure, they did, because it was so bad under Stephen Harper in terms of sponsoring parents and grandparents that people were dying or actually dead by the time they finally got to them.

We do not need a lecture from the Conservative Party on immigration policy. All we have to do is reflect on just how bad the Conservatives were, and that does not include the many different programs in terms of refugees, whether they were from Afghanistan, Syria or Ukraine, or from what is taking place today in the Middle East.

We understand, appreciate and value the role that immigration plays in public policy, and we will continue to work every day on that particular file.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech given by the member for Winnipeg North. He said that he is an immigration expert. He has been working in that area for years. He said that he even participated in the process with the

Business of Supply

Chrétien government at the time, so I would like him to explain something to me.

In 2015, the federal government's immigration target was 285,000 people a year. Ten years later, in 2025, it is 500,000. That is a 75% increase. I would like my colleague to tell me whether the government consulted the provinces, particularly Quebec, to determine what impact an 75% increase over 10 years would have on Quebec's ability to integrate these people and help them to learn French. Second, this will have an impact on infrastructure, the education system and the health care system. Was that taken into account?

It is not good enough to pick a number out of a hat, thinking it is good ideologically. We need to consider the consequences. What we are saying today is that the government needs to respect the integration capacity. In order for immigration to be successful, we need to be able to properly receive people in suitable, decent conditions.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, absolutely. It almost goes without saying that all one needs to do is take a look at the provincial nominee program. At one time the program was somewhere in the neighbourhood of 40,000, and now it is well over 100,000. The demand is there. We know that because there are provinces that want to receive more provincial nominees. The provincial nominees have contributed immensely. That is only one aspect. In the provincial nominee program, for example, if a single person later gets married to someone from their home country, their spouse would be able to come in through the spousal program.

Of course there has to be coordination taking place. That coordination has been taking place for decades, in some jurisdictions more than others, depending on the province or territory, what its agenda is in regard to immigration and how it ultimately complements the national targets and agenda.

All in all, immigration has been a gold mine for Canada and will continue to be well into the future, as Canada needs immigrants more than immigrants need Canada, quite frankly.

• (1630)

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am not sure if I just heard the member opposite refer to immigrants as a gold mine. One of the other members also referred to immigrants from “puppy mills”.

The member opposite made a reference earlier to people dying. Under this government, multiple students a month have been sent home in body bags because they are being invited here without a reasonable prospect of success. By the way, each student visa is stamped by the federal government. It is unfair to those students to invite them to a country and then not provide the support they need to succeed.

Business of Supply

In fact, it was the Prime Minister, when he was the leader of the third party, who wrote an op-ed that said Harper had broken the immigration system and the temporary foreign worker program. Since he has become the Prime Minister, he has tripled the size of the temporary foreign worker program and blown a hole through the student visa program. That was all under his watch. Now, every single person and every op-ed is saying that there is no longer a consensus on immigration in this country. It has been reckless.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member is wrong on several points. I only wish you would grant me the amount of time that would enable me to provide a complete answer. I would be happy to do that if I had unanimous consent.

In terms of international students, there has been great demand. That demand, in good part, has been fuelled by individuals out there courting and getting students to come into Canada, in a very real and tangible way.

The Conservative Party of Canada, along with others, needs to recognize that provinces also have to play a role. At the end of the day, how many international students does the Conservative Party believe we should have? We know what the NDP believe. They believe there should be no limit.

We believe there has to be a sense of responsibility. We are working with provinces. That is the reason there is a cap. They can distribute the students among the post-secondary facilities and others, so that we can have a reasonable and responsible policy to help the provinces, the territories and, in fact, the international students themselves.

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 Saanich—Gulf Islands, Natural Resources; the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Public Safety; the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, Oil and Gas Industry.

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to provide information to the members on how the federal government has supported Quebec, and all our provincial, territorial and municipal partners, as we all work together to support newcomers to Canada. Immigration is a shared responsibility that involves the input of provincial, territorial and municipal governments.

We also need to continue to respond to global issues. For example, there are more than 110 million people displaced all around the world. People have been displaced because of wars, coups, and economic and political upheaval. They could also be fleeing oppressive regimes and violations of human rights in other, less progressive countries. We, as Canadians, have an obligation to step up and continue to support individuals.

Our government will continue to be responsive and support individuals today and into the future. Canada remains committed to our humanitarian efforts and to supporting those who arrive at our borders needing a new home. Immigration requires all levels of government to work co-operatively to attract new workers in areas such as construction, homebuilding and health care. We are also mindful of the special relationship established for immigration under the Canada—Québec Accord from 1991, which clearly outlines the

work that the federal and provincial governments will undertake separately and together.

Not only have we made sure to respect the decisions the Province of Quebec will make, but we have also been there as a strong partner. When larger numbers of people began crossing into Canada, the federal government was there to support provinces and municipalities with funding, programs and support. Canada established an interim federal health care program to pay for the health care needs of asylum claimants. The federal government set up transportation and paid for temporary housing for the asylum claimants.

As the challenges persisted, we set up a formal program, the interim housing assistance program. That program reimbursed the costs faced by the provinces and municipalities to support newcomers. The first part of the program was launched in 2017, and it ran for five years. A total of \$750 million was provided by the federal government to provinces and municipalities to support rehousing asylum claimants. Nearly 60% of that funding went to Quebec. That is \$440 million in federal funding to support costs borne by the Province of Quebec. The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship recently renewed funding for the interim housing assistance program to reimburse provinces and cities for housing costs related to asylum seekers. The amount of \$150 million was specifically set aside for Quebec.

When a province, territory or municipality needs help from the federal government, we are there to respond. When COVID began, the federal government established temporary housing for asylum seekers to quarantine, even if they were asymptomatic, before they could enter Canada and take up interim housing. At the request of the provincial government, the federal hotel spaces continued to provide hotel rooms after the pandemic measures were lifted to ensure the availability of additional living spaces for communities in need, including in the province of Quebec.

Quebec had asked for the federal government to get our agreement with the U.S. government renegotiated so that asylum claimants could no longer cross at Roxham Road. We agreed. In March 2023, President Biden took his first official trip to Canada to announce the renegotiated deal of the safe third country agreement. Under the new agreement, anyone entering a country deemed as safe from persecution had to make a claim to the first country they arrived in. Asylum seekers could no longer take a trip to the U.S. and then travel to Canada to make a claim. Thanks to our continued efforts, the safe third country agreement now applies to the entire land and water border between the United States and Canada. Additionally, the safe third country agreement has significantly reduced asylum claimants at our land entries.

Business of Supply

The federal government was also there to be a partner for Quebec when the premier said that Quebec was reaching the limit of its capacity to manage new asylum seekers. The federal government worked in co-operation with the other provinces and municipalities to share the burden, as the premier had asked.

Starting in early 2023, the federal government supported new arrivals' being willingly relocated to other parts of Canada, including locations in most of the Atlantic provinces and numerous cities across Ontario. The program helped relocate over 11,000 asylum seekers from Quebec to places such as Cornwall, Niagara, Saint John, St. John's, Halifax and Ottawa.

• (1635)

Under the accord, since 2015, we have provided \$4.4 billion in funding to Quebec to support immigration, settlement services and all the other supports. For 2023-24, over \$700 million will be provided to support the provincial government of Quebec in welcoming newcomers.

As everyone can see, the federal government has been there as a partner with Quebec and all the other provinces and territories, as well as the municipalities, to support their needs. We have delivered federal support for housing, health care, transportation, relocation, integration and settlement, and also renegotiated a major international agreement with the United States.

Canada has a strong tradition of welcoming newcomers in this country. Canadians are proud of their immigration history, as they should be. It has made our country strong and allowed it to grow. It has strengthened our nation by diversifying our communities and fuelling our economy.

We will continue to work with partners from all levels of government to support newcomers, whether they are refugees, asylum claimants, family or economic immigrants. We are a country built on immigrants.

• (1640)

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, I rise on a point of order in response to the erroneous comment made by the member for Kings—Hants when, in response to my question, he said, “I noticed that she voted against the fall economic statement and the measures that actually contain the housing that was put to Nunavut just recently.”

I abstained on the ways and means vote because this government has and continues to fail Inuit and indigenous communities. The housing crisis and all the consequential impacts of overcrowding continues among my territory.

For the record, I abstained. I did not vote against as the member indicated. I ask that the member apologize.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): This is well noted, and I will ask the hon. member to do so at the first opportunity.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think the point my colleague for Nunavut made is a very important one. It emphasizes the fact that this Liberal government cannot do two things at once. It has not been able to provide the housing required and handle immigration in this country. I think it

is a disgrace that a member from across the aisle today made those comments about my colleague for Nunavut.

However, I want to ask the member specifically about the government's decision to continue to beef up profits for corporate landlords and then to try to blame the housing crisis on immigrants. Will the government take the necessary measures to stop the financialization of housing, such as implementing a moratorium on the acquisition of affordable housing units by financial landlords and creating a non-profit acquisition fund, such as they have in B.C.?

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Madam Speaker, housing is an important issue, which we are all facing here in Canada, and immigration is one of Canada's greatest strengths. As we continue to face an aging population and see the decline in birth rates, it is very important to welcome newcomers to Canada. At the same time, we need to make sure that we build appropriate housing so that all those who are coming to Canada have a safe place to call home.

We will continue to invest in housing and in building housing faster. Over the last few months, the Minister of Housing has been working actively with municipalities on the housing accelerator fund to make sure that we increase the stock of housing. However, one thing cannot resolve the housing issue. There are certain factors. We have a national housing strategy, and we will work on all fronts to make sure that we build housing while we continue to make sure we welcome new immigrants to Canada because we are a country that has been built by immigrants, and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, an NDP amendment to the motion was put forward today that I want to read a part of. It looks to add the following to the motion:

e) call on the government to table in the House, within 100 days, a plan to ensure adequate resources are provided to Quebec, Provinces and Territories to support the successful resettlement of newcomers.

This exactly reflects what I have heard from settlement agencies in my community. They are calling to ensure that, whether it comes to housing, health care or employment, those resources are there for newcomers, as they require them when they come to Canada. If this is not put in place, then our immigration goals will actually counterproductively feed anti-immigration sentiment. I wonder if the member for Scarborough Centre could comment on the extent to which she supports that part of the amendment to the motion.

Business of Supply

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Madam Speaker, we consult the Government of Quebec and all the provinces and territories whenever we implement any new programs and policies. Under the Canada-Quebec Accord, Quebec has the exclusive authority to determine its immigration levels in line with its ability to welcome and integrate newcomers. We continue to support Quebec. In the last two years, we have provided over \$1 billion under that accord to support—

• (1645)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I need to give the opportunity for one more question.

The hon. member for Nepean.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am sure the hon. member understands the importance of immigrants for the economic development of Canada, whether it is in the housing sector, the manufacturing sector or the tourism sector. I would like to ask her whether she recognizes the need for more skilled immigrants in the country for Canada to keep up its economic growth and improve the growth of the economy?

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Madam Speaker, immigration is very much needed. My own riding of Scarborough Centre is home to so many new immigrants. People from different parts of the world have called that place home.

Whenever I talk to the businesses in my riding, they tell me about the shortages of labour. I have been a member of the immigration committee for over eight years, and I have heard hundreds of testimonies regarding the need for making sure we continue to welcome new immigrants.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House in advance that I will be sharing my time with the member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

The Bloc Québécois has decided to devote today's opposition day to the issue of immigration. I will give a bit of background to explain why, but basically, on November 1, 2023, so last year, the Bloc Québécois decided to devote its opposition day to immigration. We unanimously passed a resolution calling on the federal government to review its immigration targets for 2024, after consulting Quebec, and the provinces and territories, to verify their integration capacities in terms of housing, health, education, francization and transportation infrastructures. The aim was obviously to ensure successful immigration.

Today, we remember this vote because despite the fact that the vote of November 1 was unanimous, less than an hour later, the Minister of Immigration left the House to announce new immigration thresholds of 500,000 new immigrants, without consulting Quebec. It would be hard to believe that he could have held a proper consultation in less than an hour before announcing these new thresholds. In fact, this borders on perjury after voting with everyone in favour of our motion.

We are back at it today because there is currently a fundamental problem in the Quebec nation, but also in Canada: our integration capacity has been exceeded in housing, health care, education and francization structures. At some point, this no longer works.

We are calling on the government to sit down with the different provinces and territories and ask them for their respective integration capacities. Once the government has their integration capacities, it will have to provide a revised plan for its measures within 100 days to have the 2024 immigration plan truly correspond to the integration capacities of each.

The much-touted target of 500,000 immigrants that the minister mentioned is essentially what the century initiative policy is all about. This policy was put forward by Dominic Barton who was, at that time, head of both the consulting firm McKinsey and the Canadian finance minister's advisory council on economic growth. The initiative's goal was for Canada to reach a population of 100 million by 2100. At the rate the Liberals are going, we will reach that goal much sooner.

There is this vision that Canada is going to become a bigger country with a large population. Therefore, we need to bring in as many people as possible to grow the economy, with more people and more demand. They are right about the demand; there is indeed more of it.

When the Bloc Québécois devoted an opposition day to the Century Initiative on May 11, 2023, and said that it did not reflect Quebecers, the Liberals replied that it was not their policy. However, when you look at their actions, that is exactly their policy and that is exactly the direction they are taking as a government. In fact, it is a bit like someone going to see their doctor and saying, hand on heart, that they no longer smoke, that they have quit and are done with cigarettes, when all the while they are smoking a pack a day in secret. That is more or less it. Basically, the Liberals are saying that it is not their policy, but in reality, that is what they are doing as a policy.

Why do we oppose the Century Initiative, the Liberals' secret policy? It might be interesting for people who may be watching us to understand that it is simply because Quebec's current capacity to integrate immigrants has been exceeded. We are in the middle of a housing and inflation crisis, and our schools, day cares and hospitals are overflowing. The pool is overflowing, but the Liberals want to put more water in it.

Canada is truly delusional in its ideology, which obviously comes from the Liberal Party. Their vision of the world is one of massive, uncontrolled immigration, and there are absolutely no facts or data that could stop them from moving in that direction.

I might try to illustrate this for the people watching our debates. These 100 million people, this direction Canada wants to take and this famous Century Initiative, are they really the cure-all? Will Canada automatically become twice as rich or much richer just because it has a population of 100 million?

Business of Supply

● (1650)

What are the famous countries that have at least 100 million people on the planet? Among those that have a population of more than 100 million we have China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Pakistan, Brazil, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Russia, Mexico, Ethiopia, Japan, the Philippines, Egypt, Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Anyone who knows the financial reality or the GDP per capita of these countries will never claim that they will become fabulously rich. In fact, when we look at the GDP per capita of these countries according to the World Bank, we see the following numbers: China, \$21,500; India, \$8,400; Indonesia, \$14,600; Pakistan, \$6,400; Brazil, \$34,000; Nigeria, \$5,800; Bangladesh, \$7,400; Russia, \$36,600; Mexico, \$21,500; Ethiopia, \$2,800; Japan, \$45,500; the Philippines, \$10,000; Egypt, \$15,100; Vietnam, \$13,400; and the Democratic Republic of Congo, \$1,300. We are talking about GDP per capita: in the Democratic Republic of Congo, people live on \$1,300.

Almost all of the countries that I named, except the United States, are poorer than we are in terms of GDP per capita. Is having a population of 100 million really an automatic cure-all? I think that the numbers are clear and that the answer is no. We are not going to become wealthier by bringing in more people. We need to bring them in the right way, in the right circumstances. We need to have the infrastructure to support this population increase.

Like everyone else, immigrants need to eat and so they go to the grocery store. They need a place to live so they look for a house or an apartment. They need care when they get sick and so they go to the hospital. They need schools and day cares for their children. Every time we add a person, we put more pressure on those services.

There comes a time when everything reaches a breaking point, but that is not the villainous immigrant's fault. If everything is reaching a breaking point, that is the fault of the person who let that immigrant in. They knew full well that everything had reached the breaking point. This notorious person—or, in this case, group of people—is the government in power, sitting there on the other side of the House, the Liberal Party.

Bringing in people who will not have a roof over their heads and who are going to have to go to food banks to feed themselves is not having a vision for society, at all. In fact, it is deeply irresponsible.

I will continue by sharing a few numbers. In 2007, there were 47,000 temporary immigrants in Quebec. Today, there are 470,000, an explosive increase. In Canada, there are 2.5 million temporary immigrants. In 2023, the Canadian population grew by more than 1 million people. However, while the population increased by 1 million, barely 150,000 housing units were built. Clearly, 150,000 housing units for 1 million people is not going to work. People do not need a Ph.D. in mathematics to understand that this does not work. In Quebec, there are about 200,000 new people for approximately 40,000 new homes. That does not work either, and, no matter how hard we try, it is impossible to come to the conclusion that it does work.

Yes, we need to increase the number of housing units being constructed, but members will understand that it is impossible to maintain the thresholds that would mean taking in the same number of people that we did last year. The current policy is unsustainable.

That is why Premier Legault, from the Quebec government, wrote to the federal government not long ago to let it know that there is a problem. At the beginning of the school year last year, there was a shortage of 8,500 teachers in Quebec schools. We had to run 1,150 new emergency classes to receive new students, integration classes for people who are new to the country. That is the equivalent of 50 elementary schools. That is a lot of people, and it obviously puts a strain on our system.

When the Bloc Québécois talks about immigration, the Liberals and some of the other parties like to say that we are talking about immigration because we do not like immigrants. That must be true; I dislike immigrants so much that I am having children with one. My wife is an immigrant. My two daughters are actually immigrant girls, because I had two daughters with my wife, who is an immigrant. The truth is that I am always very happy to learn about the stories of people who arrive here after having travelled all over the world to come and meet us and discover our nation. As a member of Parliament, I organize receptions to welcome these newcomers who are settling here. People who come here need to be properly welcomed in French, but unfortunately, that is not what Canada offers them.

● (1655)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is somewhat concerning, when listening to the member. I do not believe we should, in any way, try to blame immigration as being an issue, as the Conservatives attempted to with regard to crime or housing. There is a great deal of co-operation between the provinces and Ottawa. I will use the example I used earlier: the provincial nominee program, which is driven by provinces. It continues to increase in numbers as there is demand from provinces and territories that indicates they would like to receive more.

Is the member suggesting we reduce the provincial nominee category? Are there specific categories that the Bloc would advocate to be reduced?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, I find the question from my colleague across the way to be rather hypocritical. It speaks to his government's vision. Immigration for the Liberals is like oil for the Conservatives. They always want more and there is no limit.

My colleague is asking me whether the provinces that want more immigrants can have more. The answer is of course they can. Our motion does not seek to prevent the other provinces that want more immigrants from having more. Our motion seeks to have the federal government consult its counterparts before setting its targets and ensuring that the targets take into account the integration capacity of each province. That means not improvising targets that do not correspond to the integration capacities of the provinces. We are not intentionally exacerbating the existing problem.

Business of Supply

It is simple: What we want is to be respected. We want the people we receive back home to be properly received.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, several times today, Liberal members mentioned consultation. Several times, they gave the impression that there had been consultations about the cap on the number of foreign students before decisions were taken and the Minister of Immigration made his announcements.

From what I gather from the different provinces, universities and colleges, there were no consultations. The federal government simply gave a directive.

I would like my colleague to ponder this question: Before capping the number of foreign students, did the Minister of Immigration hold consultations or did he simply give a directive?

• (1700)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, first, there were no consultations. Second, it really is a directive. Actually, it is more than a directive. It is interference, because education, schools, universities, CEGEPs and elementary schools all fall under the jurisdiction of the provinces and the Quebec nation.

When the federal government starts saying that it is going to limit the number of students Quebec can have in its schools, it is limiting Quebec's decision-making capacity in its own jurisdiction. That is obviously extremely problematic. It is up to the Government of Quebec to set its thresholds for temporary immigrants, temporary workers, asylum seekers, family reunification and economic immigration. It is up to Quebec to make its own decisions, and it is the federal government's job to respect those decisions.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know that, after serving newcomers to Canada for over eight years in my previous position, immigrants to Canada are some of the most amazing, hard-working and dedicated future Canadians anyone could see. What concerns me is that, during these times of change, often immigrants are targeted and blamed for challenges we have in our country. I am sadly seeing that happen around the housing crisis.

Does the member agree that the housing crisis will not be solved by pointing blame at immigrants, but rather by stopping corporate profiteering by wealthy landlords?

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, the kind of debate we are having today is a good opportunity to clarify a few things and explain the data and the facts, rather than engage in the kind of extreme polarization that pegs people as nice when they want higher targets or as nasty xenophobes when they want lower targets. In reality, it is much more complex. For example, it is important to have a good sense of Quebec's capacity to help people learn French and of how many people it can realistically integrate, given its existing infrastructure.

People who come here must not feel guilty, nor must they be attacked just for coming here. People must feel welcome, and we

must do everything we can to set them up for success from the get-go.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to our opposition motion today. I really want to clarify that today's topic is successful immigration. That is what we want. Our motion today is not anti-immigration, far from it. On the contrary, it seeks to bring in newcomers decently and properly, with class and dignity.

I heard a lot of things today, but no one has spoken about one aspect that I would like to remind members of. We are talking about people who are leaving their home country. It is not easy for people to leave the place where they were born. It requires huge sacrifices. The people who leave do so for good reason. They often leave their country to come here under circumstances that make it hard for them to find a job and that leave them with a low income. Often first-generation newcomers make that sacrifice for their children. That is noble and it deserves respect. They deserve to be decently received. A few minutes ago, someone pointed out that immigrants are excellent workers, dedicated people who will give body and soul and who will work hours and hours each week to improve their situation and that of their children and descendants.

That is why I want to say that it is a crime to bring them into the country and not take care of them. I am ashamed to know that there are asylum seekers living on the streets of Montreal. That does not make any sense in a G7 country. That is why we are moving this motion again today and we are asking the government, not to decide everything or to stop immigration, but to sit down with the provinces and Quebec and to respect the provinces' integration capacity.

There is even a Liberal member who had the nerve to say earlier that the provinces and Quebec are in the best position to set their integration capacity. I certainly hope so. That is what we are saying. What is wrong with working together? Why is starting a discussion a problem? We ask questions just about every day during question period. We are told that they are working hand in hand and that they have no business working together with the Bloc Québécois because they are working together with the Quebec government. How is it, then, that the Quebec government is reduced to complaining publicly about the fact that Ottawa is disrespectful and is not listening? I would appreciate it if someone could explain that to me.

I invite the parliamentary secretary to ask me a question about this. I want him to explain it to me as part of his question. They say they are working with the provinces. Why then did Quebec's premier have to write a letter that was published in the newspapers? Are people here laughing at us? Our approach is compassionate. It is about respecting people. It is about respecting integration, our institutions and our capacity as a country. Everything is working fine for the federal government. It sets the threshold at 500,000 newcomers per year and wants to reach a population of 100 million. However, the federal government is not the one taking on this responsibility.

Earlier, someone listed all the hundreds of millions of dollars and the billions of dollars that have been given for so many years under the agreement with Quebec on immigration. I should hope so, since we entered into that agreement because of the work we are doing. As we know, Canada has a revenue problem. The federal government collects half the taxes, but it does not take on half of the responsibilities. In fact, it is not even fulfilling the responsibilities that it does have.

My colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères reminded me of a very good example, namely shoreline erosion. Navigation is a federal responsibility. The federal government has been ignoring this file since the 1990s, leaving people to deal with their problems on their own. It is doing this in several sectors.

There is no foresight, no planning. The government decides that this is what it is doing and opens the floodgates. However, it has not looked into how we can integrate these people into our social systems.

I want to talk about community organizations. I see this as subcontracting on the cheap by governments, at both levels. These organizations do critically important work and are often forced to allocate half of their human resources to looking for grant programs and filling out paperwork in order to please the other levels of government. Instead, these people should be providing direct services to the disadvantaged people they serve.

● (1705)

I really admire these people. I admire them so much. I would also like to salute them, on the off chance some of them are listening.

Someone was saying that the Bloc Québécois saw immigration as a problem. No, immigration is not a problem. It is even a solution for a number of things, including labour. It is not the only solution, but it is one of the solutions. I have colleagues who proposed other solutions also, such as tax credits for people 65 and up.

Immigration is not a problem. The problem is the Liberal government's management. That is a seriously big problem. They do not see the costs coming. They do not plan because it is not sexy to say that now is the time to invest to be able to welcome people in five or 10 years. It is not politically expedient, so they just open the gates. What we are asking the government today, is to respect the people who actually do the work of integrating newcomers. We are calling on the government to sit down with them and talk to them.

Earlier, I started talking about the \$470 million for asylum seekers. This week, Quebec was told to stop complaining because we are so lucky and they are going to give us \$100 million for temporary housing. That is another topic. We do not mind getting \$100 million. Still, there is a lot of debate in the House. It may look good for the government to give us \$100 million. The Liberals are pros at that kind of thing. They stand up and say that they have always been there, that they have handed over \$100 million, and so on. That \$100 million will cover about 27.6% of the total amount that has been spent on temporary housing.

The thing is, we take in more than half the asylum seekers. They think we should be happy to get 27%. No, we are not happy. We are saying, fine, we will take it, but we need more. The other \$470 mil-

Business of Supply

lion is still up in the air. We are talking federal responsibility. Do not tell me the feds give Quebec money every year for the Quebec-Canada agreement. I explained that a few minutes ago. That is a separate thing.

Why do we need to shout ourselves hoarse here for months just to get the government to give us the bare minimum? We are tired of that. Then, some members are surprised that there is group of people, which seems to be growing, who are convinced that Quebec would manage its affairs better on its own because it would control all of its tax revenue. We would not always be required to get down on our knees and beg just to get back a fraction of the half that we sent to Ottawa or to try to make do with 27%, when we should be getting more.

That is the problem. It is policies, it is predictability, it is our systems, including the education system. Quebec recently went through some very arduous strikes in the education sector. I am a teacher. I was a teacher for 25 years. If those people were willing to walk the picket line for more than 20 days, that means things are pretty bad. We have problems. Now they are being told that it is no big deal and they have to take in more people.

It is not that immigration is a problem, but we have to look at how we can take these people in. It is important to respect local authorities, sit down and work together, instead of constantly telling us they are working hand in hand. I am not even sure what they mean by "hand in hand". If they are working hand in hand, why does the Premier of Quebec have to write letters to the media? It makes no sense.

We are urging the government to be reasonable. The government should sit down with the provinces, the territories and Quebec for a genuine conversation and ask them how best to proceed.

● (1710)

[*English*]

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I heard the hon. member say that Quebec manages its own affairs better and that immigration in the Canada-Quebec accord has been and continues to be managed by the Province of Quebec.

I would like to know how successful that management has been during the last several years. Do the housing, manufacturing and tourism sectors in Quebec have adequate numbers of skilled immigrants, as required for their needs? What has been the success in those fields?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, my colleague asks a very interesting question. We have a lot of success in Quebec. I invite him to observe the situation in Quebec. In a bunch of sectors, we are still ahead of the rest of Canada. I am not saying that to put down the other provinces. Let us think of child care, or of immigrant integration levels.

Private Members' Business

Quebeckers make up one of the most welcoming societies in the world. It has been one of the most mixed societies since its establishment. Last week, we celebrated Polish heritage. These people arrived during the time of New France. Immigration did not start with the great Canada of the 2000s. People have been coming to Quebec for a long time and we have always been capable of living well with them.

What I was saying is that it is an administrative issue. We always have to fight for resources to manage what should be managed by Quebec. When it comes to federal jurisdictions, it is even worse because we are delegated responsibilities, but we are not given the necessary funding. That is what I was saying.

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for pointing out the reality of the impacts of leaving one's homeland.

Does the Bloc agree with the NDP that the answer to respecting immigrants is to stop pointing fingers at them and instead address corporate greed and profiteering in Canada's housing sector and beyond?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, my colleague touched on a key point.

We have to look at wealth distribution and where the government puts its resources. When we talk about greed and record, disastrous, even shameful profits, I immediately think of the oil and gas industry. It is funny that I do not often hear my Conservative colleagues talk about this and the millions and billions of dollars being funnelled into it. We often ask for resources to welcome people and help our farmers. No one here complains about giving money to the oil and gas companies when they have plenty. We need to work on getting that money back.

We could also talk about tax havens where billions of dollars are sitting idle. There is so work much to do. We need to look after the common people.

• (1715)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the amendment.

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

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncass: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Monday, February 12, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect if you would canvass the House at this time, you would find unanimous consent to call it 5:30 p.m., so we could begin private members' hour.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.) moved that Bill S-202, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (Parliamentary Visual Artist Laureate), be read the third time and passed.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is a great honour to rise again in the House and speak to Bill S-202, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act to establish a parliamentary visual artist laureate.

As mentioned in my speech during second reading, I want to thank former senator Patricia Bovey for all her hard work in getting this bill through the Senate and to the House this last time.

I am also incredibly grateful to former senator Wilfred Moore for his initial push of work on this legislation in 2016.

I also want to thank Senator Andrew Cardozo for stepping forward and offering assistance should the need arise to return this bill back to the other place to consider amendments that are now before the House.

These three senators are each strong champions of the arts, and each deeply understands the need for this legislation. I am truly honoured to be working with these three senators on this bill to ensure that the Canadian arts are featured prominently through the parliamentary visual artist laureate. This position would arise from the successful passage of the bill, as amended at the Canadian heritage committee.

I will note that the heritage committee made two amendments to the bill at committee stage. While I believe both amendments were covered in the original form of the legislation, they further clarify two aspects.

Following consultation with the above three senators, who in turn have consulted with the larger arts community, we have accepted the validity of these two amendments and ask the House to formally adopt them as part of the legislation that is once again before us.

In a previous session, when this bill was known as Bill S-205, the members of this House delivered many excellent speeches when they debated the legislation. It is clear that, in the three times this bill has been before the Senate and the House, it has had overwhelming support from parliamentarians in both chambers. There have been a lot of positive discussions on Bill S-202 to date, with my colleagues from all parties providing supportive statements during this Parliament's second reading of the bill, as well as during the committee stage.

Bill S-202 is about supporting Canadian art and artists. The arts community was hard hit economically during the COVID-19 pandemic but is slowly recovering from that time. The arts provided a respite to Canadians during that challenging time in our country's recent past. During my time away from this place between 2019 and 2021, I worked for the Township of Langley as the cultural services manager, where I had the opportunity to work very closely with the arts community. I have always understood the importance of the arts, but it was during the pandemic that I truly came to understand how essential artists are to the well-being of society.

For over 150 years, Canadian artists have influenced Canadian culture and its beautiful microcultures. Acclaimed and beloved artists such as Emily Carr, Kenojuak Ashevak, George Campbell Tinning, Claude Vermette, Jack Chambers, and Maud Lewis illustrated their experiences, desires and perceptions with exhilarating grit and comforting beauty. They all worked to elevate cross-cultural understanding, curiosity, unity and proud expressions of Canadian culture.

To make a position within Parliament specifically for artists to create in, just as many Canadians before them have done outside of these parliamentary walls, honours the creativity and perseverance of Canadians. Along with these well-known artists, I believe we can all name more than one inspiring artist in our own home community, demonstrating how art is embedded in all our communities across Canada.

George Elliott Clarke, our parliamentary poet laureate from 2016-17, wrote the following poem in support of this legislation for Senator Bovey. I apologize to the interpreters, who will have to do this on the fly.

The poem is as follows:

The blank page—the blank canvas is—
 Undeniably delicious—
 Like fog, which obscures, then reveals—
 What Hope imminently congeals—
 A fantastic architecture—
 Imagination born secure:
 What Vision—the I of the eye—
 Had dreamt, is What answering Why. . .
 Rainbows erupt from paint or ink—
 And film sculptures light—in a blink;
 A needle, weaving, is lyric,
 And whatever is shaped is epic.
 Art's each I articulate,
 Whose vision ordains a laureate.

As a reminder to my colleagues, Bill S-202 seeks to amend the Parliament of Canada Act to create the position of parliamentary visual artist laureate. The parliamentary visual artist laureate would be an officer of the Library of Parliament, akin to the position of

Private Members' Business

the parliamentary poet laureate. The selection process for this role would consist of the Speaker of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Commons acting in tandem to select artists to reflect Canada's linguistic and cultural diversity.

The mandate for the parliamentary visual artist laureate is to promote the arts in Canada through Parliament, including by fostering knowledge, enjoyment, awareness and development of the arts. In carrying out this mandate, the laureate may "produce or cause to be produced artistic creations, at the request of either Speaker, especially for use in Parliament on occasions of state".

A two-year period is in place for this position, as is in place for the poet laureate, with the intention of rotating different ideas and perspectives, ensuring that multiple voices and approaches are heard and seen.

• (1720)

As mentioned in the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, the important consideration here is that this position would become a part of the institution of Parliament and would be here for the long term. Having that longevity, that permanence, would allow for the arts to reflect various aspects of current and future Canadian culture, including the experiences of everyone from around the world that has come to call Canada home.

Canadian artists from across the country, whether lifelong Canadians, immigrants, indigenous peoples or others, will benefit from having a parliamentary visual artist laureate in Ottawa. The appreciation of the arts unites us, and in a multicultural country such as Canada, we should promote our many different forms of art at every opportunity.

Senator Bovey had a long and wondrous career as a visual arts curator, a director of several major Canadian art galleries, a professor and an author before joining the Canadian Senate in November 2016. She carried that passion for the arts with her during her tenure as a senator, and she continues her advocacy today, reminding us that the arts are a critical part of living and realizing Canada's diversity.

In her maiden speech in the Senate in 2016, Senator Bovey said, "The arts play an uncontestable and considerable role in all aspects of society". As chair of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, I would like to build on Senator Bovey's statement. The role that the arts can play in society includes building relationships and knowledge with indigenous nations.

Indigenous artists are arguably the best-known Canadian artists outside Canada. As we look toward reconciliation and renewing relationships with indigenous peoples, I want to remind everyone of what Senator Bovey said in 2016. She indicated, "The power of the arts is infinite.... The arts are letting the world know who Canadians are, where we are and what we value".

For my colleagues who may not have noticed it, I mentioned future Canadian culture. The next generations of youth are Canada's future, and art is a critical component in engaging with, teaching and learning from our youth.

Private Members' Business

As a witness in heritage committee, former senator Bovey stated:

The visual arts also have the power to teach and inspire. I believe the visual artist laureate will be a bridge to our youth regarding the role of democracy, the workings of Parliament and your commitments, and will assist in addressing the gap in knowledge about civics. It would be a connector across this country and across generations, and open doors to bring us together at a time when that has never been needed more.

Art, as a mirror of society, is not a lie, an exaggeration or a fleeting, impermanent digital commentary. It is permanent, good and an important part of our heritage and ongoing history, portraying honestly what we are and what we are thinking.

I want to take a moment to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage for their careful consideration of Bill S-202 and for putting forth two previously referenced amendments that enshrine our commitment to diversity and equality of opportunity for all artists.

Similar to the position of the Poet Laureate, the selected visual artist laureate would alternate every two years between someone who works primarily in English and someone who works primarily in French. With the first amendment accepted, the committee is ensuring a reflection of Canada's linguistic reality in the position of the parliamentary visual artist laureate. I thank my French-speaking colleagues for their clarification of current practices of the House by making sure French Canadians are equally represented as the parliamentary visual artist laureate through this amendment.

I also want to thank the heritage committee for amending Bill S-202 to ensure digital creations are included in the definition of "arts". While the original legislation included reference to future art forms and would have included digital creations, this amendment solidifies digital creations as a legitimate art form. As more and more artists express an interest in digital media, we must ensure that digital creations are included to reflect the diversity of Canada through this evolving art form.

As Senator Moore said in his final speech in the Senate in 2016, when the legislation was known as Bill C-234, the position of parliamentary visual artist laureate would augment the Poet Laureate's office and expand the types of artistic expression that depict Canada both at home and abroad. The federal government has actively promoted the arts since the Massey Commission in 1949, which recommended that federal funding be made available for a wide range of cultural activities.

The Massey Commission stated that "it is in the national interest to give encouragement to institutions which express national feeling, promote common understanding and add to the variety and richness of Canadian life". I want to note that the Massey Commission recommended the founding of the National Library, the National Gallery and the Canada Council for the Arts; we readily founded these institutions to support the artistic expression of Canada.

• (1725)

I wholeheartedly agree with Senator Moore that the expansion of artistic creativity deserves recognition in Parliament. As the former senator noted, our chambers of Parliament are defined not just by those of us sitting in its hallowed halls, but also by the artwork hanging on the walls that remind us daily of the sacrifice of those who built this nation. Canada has so many talented artists, and it is

time we celebrate these visual artists and their contributions to our culture and the expression of who we are.

As we discuss Bill S-202 during its third reading, for its third time in the House, I urge my colleagues from all parties to support this bill and to vote in favour of its passage. Let us show our support for the arts across this beautiful and diverse country.

[*Translation*]

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

This bill may not look like much, but appointing a visual artist is quite important. We already have a poet in the House. Obviously, as an actor, as an artist who has worked in television, theatre and film, I am going to applaud having more arts in this Parliament. In fact, I will have a chance to talk about that shortly.

However, there is one little detail I want to talk about. We should make sure that Bill S-202 includes alternating appointments. If an English-speaking visual artist is appointed, a francophone must follow. At this time, Bill S-202 does not include such a provision.

I would like to know if my colleague agrees with that.

[*English*]

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank my colleague for his passion for the arts and, obviously, for his commitment, over a lifetime, to arts in Canada.

The amendment that was brought forward by the Bloc in Bill S-202, to reflect the ongoing practices of Parliament in alternating between English and French, will do exactly that, should this amendment and this legislation as proposed be carried.

I think it is an important amendment to actually codify the practice that we have here in Parliament to make sure the cultural and the linguistic diversity is reflected in how the visual arts laureates are selected on an alternating two-year basis. I think that with the Bloc's input on this and with the support of other francophone members within this chamber, we will make sure that this linguistic and cultural diversity is reflected.

• (1730)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I enjoy the hon. member's chairmanship at the indigenous and northern affairs committee very much. I know that he answered this question a little. I also want to thank the member for including indigenous artists like Kenjuak Ashevak in his statement and for noting the importance of ensuring that indigenous peoples are laureates as well.

I wonder, in addition to what was just asked, in terms of alternating laureates, if we are making sure that indigenous artists are at the forefront of those selections and those rotations.

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, I thoroughly enjoy working with the hon. member on the indigenous and northern affairs committee as well. The insights that she brings are invaluable.

I believe we did have quite a lengthy discussion about how we bring in indigenous artists to make sure they are reflected in the selection process. As much as we are building and working to retain the various indigenous languages in Canada, right now, we are a country of two official languages. Therefore, in this bill, it is a reflection of English and French, alternating, while respecting that people living in Canada will likely have a working ability in either of those languages, as well as in an indigenous language, for those who are indigenous persons.

My sense is that it would not preclude indigenous artists from being reflected or selected within this process, but it would also make sure there are opportunities for Inuit, first nations and Métis artists to be selected as part of this—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to take the floor this evening remotely. I want to signal to the member for Cloverdale—Langley City my support for the private member's bill, Bill S-202.

I appreciate it, because I remember the work that former senator Patricia Bovey did on this bill, and it seems such a shame that it slid off the Order Paper. I think the circumstances were unfortunate at that time. I will not go into the details, but I want to thank the hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City for bringing it forward and for finding ways to bring forward our visual artists from various cultures and backgrounds, both francophone and, of course, the emphasis on our extraordinary indigenous artists.

Meegwetch.

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, for her recognition of the importance of this legislation and her support of it during multiple interventions here in the chamber of the House of Commons.

We look forward to seeing this being created so that we can move on with it. I would love to see some of our west coast indigenous artists and other west coast artists eventually be selected as a part of this process.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, as my colleague mentioned, Bill S-202 has to do with the appointment of the parliamentary visual artist.

As I said earlier, I am a stage and film actor, as well as a fan of literature. I therefore agree that art should have a bigger place in our lives, even in Parliament. I could not agree with that more.

Today, I decided to treat myself because someone has expressed much better than I could the importance of literature and art in our lives. I am talking about David Goudreault, a slam performer and poet from Quebec. He has written a lot and has even won some awards. He was awarded the World Cup of Slam Poetry in Paris in 2011. Since then, he has been writing novels and continues to slam and do shows. We also see him on television, where he works as a commentator. His words are striking, touching, penetrating and impactful. He has a much better way with words than I do, and he

Private Members' Business

wrote about how we should leave more room for art, poetry and literature in our lives.

That is why, today, I decided to treat myself and read one of David Goudreault's poems. I hope he will forgive me—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1735)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): May I ask hon. members to take conversations outside of the chamber, please, so that we can hear the speech?

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, I am going to talk about something very serious, that is, poetry. I would like my colleagues to listen. It is not that often that we talk about poetry in the House. I am not sure we ever have. It is important that members listen.

I apologize in advance, because David Goudreault is also an extraordinary performer. When he reads his own poetry, when he speaks his own words, it is utterly amazing and fascinating. I encourage my colleagues to go see one of his shows. Still, I will read this piece, because it is worth it.

I call for poetry
A deep breath held in, underworld apnea
For all the teachers that won't skip a chapter
Hands sunk and guts poured into the subject matter
A light that can express itself freely
In free verse, spoken work, sonnets or haikus
"O Captain! My Captain!"
Loot the coffers and bring us poems
Enough to fill every school
Starting in first grade: Jean Narrache for today's dictation
Football players forced to read Marie Uguay
Heads of the class can tackle Vanier
Between math class and phys-ed
Let's give them credits for each moment of quiet
Where speech can grow, all crooked and alive

I call for poetry
In back alleys and on farm roads
Let's have every streetworker pacing the void
Whisper Roland Giguère in misery's ear
Let's have poets in residence
In every residence for senior citizens
Let's pair every illiterate with a poet
And pay them to reconquer the words
They can paint huge signs in front of psych wards, "Amazing specials inside!"
In front of l'Assemblée nationale, "Don't feed the wild ideals"
On library stone walls, "Welcome to the Art Therapy Community Centre"

Private Members' Business

I call for poetry
 Let's have every SAQ cashier recite "La romance du vin"
 With every purchase of over 20 bucks
 Let's replace the Hockey Night theme with a poem by Pozier
 Let's ask Anonymous to do their thing
 So only works by Josée Yvon can be bought on Amazon
 Let's canonize Yves Boisvert
 Let's give Hélène Dorion a Nobel Prize
 Let's have lines by Francoeur on rolling paper
 Beausoleil on boarding passes
 Desbiens on Trans Canada bus tickets
 Daoust on tinted glasses that cover the eyes
 And the yous and the theys

I call for poetry
 From Miron's country, yet to be chosen and invented
 To the occupied lands of the last First Nations
 There's more than Ani Couni, you know
 Why not teach Joséphine Bacon
 Jean Sioui and Rita Mestokosho
 Let their voices be heard, Yawinda
 From Mohawk lands to Iujivik, Nakurmik

I call for poetry
 In Chloé Sainte-Marie's mouth-shaped heart
 Go ahead and give her a doctorate honoris causa
 So she can pawn it for a tiny fraction of her selflessness' worth
 And by the way, Montreal City, where the fuck is your Leonard Cohen
 Street?

• (1740)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the hon. member. I am sure he understands that this poem contains a word that can be offensive. Other members are already reacting.

Anything that can disrupt the House's work is inappropriate. I would ask the hon. member to put that word between brackets.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Duly noted, Madam Speaker.

What about your Hélène Monette Boulevard?
 My GPS is no use; recognition for poets, it would seem
 Is harder to find than organic and fair trade cocaine

I call for poetry
 From Speak White to Speak What
 From Michèle Lalonde to Marco Micone
 By those who blaze the trails
 And those who draw tears from the page
 By Rodney Saint-Éloi and all our diasporas
 By Herménégilde Chiasson, Georgette Leblanc
 And all of Acadia straight in the eye
 Let the path of poetry stretch out
 From St-Venant-de-Paquette to Wendake
 Let an artist from Trois-Rivières climb Duplessis's statue
 To sculpt Godin's face up there

I call for poetry
 In songs, on pages, in rap bars
 By Gilbert Langevin, Nicole Brossard, Sol or Manu Militari
 In its noblest forms or proudly bastardized
 By our inspired successors
 Apathy will never recover
 By its peaks and roots
 Its iridescent brothers and incandescent sisters
 Its promises that we will hold high
 With arms open wide

I call for poetry

I call for poetry
 Hoping that you will answer

I have a minute and a half left, but I do not know what I could possibly add to David Goudreault's words, what he just said, what I just read. What a magnificent poem.

Not many members in the House are artists, which is too bad. We have a lot of doctors and a lot of lawyers. We have engineers. That is fine, but it seems to me that art would help us in our debates. It would help our debates if there were more room for art, music and visual arts. There is also cinema, of course.

I could also talk about the precariousness of artists' situations. That is another debate. It is important, but we do not talk about it very much. In Quebec, 80% of artists earn less than \$20,000 a year. That is the poverty line. These are the people we see on our phones, watch on television and hear on the radio. They live in precarious situations, and yet they are the spice of life in this country. They are what makes life worth living. In fact, for people who spend most of their lives on their devices, we see images, we see photos and we see videos. There are people who create them. There are people who come up with all that. There are ordinary people, and then there are artists. These people need to be paid properly, like everyone else. They have to be able to earn a living, because we need them. We need them more than ever in these difficult times.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am reminded why I love Quebec culture. I thank the hon. member.

• (1745)

[English]

It is an honour to stand today on behalf of the residents of Port Moody—Coquitlam to talk about the arts. Port Moody is, by design, the city of the arts due to its vibrant arts and culture scene. Not only does it have a strong community of artists, including painters, sculptors and potters, but many of these individuals also have public art installations across Canada. I will speak of one today: Sara Graham, who shared her vision with the world by installing *On the Other Side of Tomorrow* at the entrance of the Gordie Howe International Bridge in Windsor. Congratulations to Sara.

Port Moody is home to various arts institutions, such as galleries, theatres and studios, which provide spaces for artists to showcase their work and for the public to engage with the arts. It boasts numerous public art installations throughout the city, including sculptures, murals and interactive pieces. These artworks contribute to the cultural identity of the city and enhance public spaces. Overall, Port Moody's commitment to fostering creativity, supporting local artists and celebrating cultural diversity has earned it the moniker "City of the Arts".

The Port Moody Arts Centre, which recently celebrated its 25th year, is a hub for artistic activities in the community. It offers a wide range of art classes, workshops, exhibitions and events for people of all ages and skill levels. The centre also houses galleries where local artists can display their work.

In Coquitlam, Place des Arts is a non-profit arts education centre offering classes and programs in visual arts, music, dance and theatre for people of all ages in the historic part of Maillardville, the largest French quartier in British Columbia. It also hosts exhibitions, concerts and performances by both local and visiting artists.

These organizations play vital roles in fostering creativity, supporting artists and enriching the cultural life of the Port Moody and Coquitlam communities. It is exciting to think that with the passing of this bill, and I thank the member for Cloverdale—Langley City, and the introduction of a new visual arts laureate position in Canada, artists from communities across this country would get more visibility.

Having visual arts laureates is important as a form of recognition for an artist's excellence and contributions to the field. It acknowledges their talent, creativity and impact on the cultural landscape and communities. Visual arts laureates often serve as ambassadors for the arts, promoting artistic expression, creativity, cultural enrichment and more. Their public visibility can help raise awareness of the importance of the arts and encourage support for artistic endeavours. This is needed now more than ever, as postpandemic times and the unrest in the world are leaving people feeling more isolated and lonely.

Visual arts laureates not only inspire emerging artists but also can excite community. Their success stories can motivate others to pursue careers in the arts and can engage a community to learn more about its own and other cultures.

One of the outlined requirements of the new visual arts laureate role is to have it represent the cultural identity and diversity in Canada. The laureate role has an opportunity to reflect different perspectives, traditions and experiences through the arts. The appointment can help ensure that a variety of voices and artistic practices are celebrated and supported, most often without words or language, making it truly inclusive.

Visual arts laureates have the potential to bring community together by engaging communities through public events, workshops and educational programs, fostering connections between artists and their audiences. Their involvement plays an important role in celebrating, promoting and having vitality in community.

Canada is home to a diverse range of artists, and I wanted to take this opportunity to highlight some indigenous visual artists, each with their own unique style and techniques. These artists create powerful and thought-provoking artworks that contribute to the rich tapestry of Canadian history. I will point out that my NDP colleague from Nunavut said that indigenous artists should be part of the diverse rotation of the new laureate.

I speak of Rebecca Belmore, who is an Anishinabe artist from Ontario, whose work addresses issues of indigenous identity, politics and social justice. She also received the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts in 2013. Also, Christi Belcourt is a Métis visual artist based in Ontario, whose intricate and vibrant paintings celebrate indigenous culture, environmentalism and community. There are so many incredible visual artists in Canada and I look forward to this bill creating an additional platform for Canadians to see and learn from.

Private Members' Business

The richness of visual arts is a gift to society, and we must nurture it. At the same time, we must protect it. The creativity and ideas of artists must be protected. I think specifically about how artificial intelligence tools have brought numerous benefits to artists around the world and yet, at the same time, have put their craft and the ownership of their own ideas and work at risk.

AI tools can create art using people's thoughts and ideas, and this can lead to infringements on copyrights of artistic styles and works. The availability of AI-powered tools, like image editing or video production, may lead to a devaluation of traditional artistic skills and craftsmanship. As AI automates certain aspects of the creative process or replicates them entirely, we risk losing artists' autonomy and society loses some of those skills and techniques that have been passed down by generations.

This also raises ethical concerns about the use of AI in arts. Authorship, cultural appropriation and fair compensation are potentially at risk. For example, if an artist uses AI to generate artwork based on images or data created by others, questions may arise regarding the ownership of the resulting work and the ethical implications of using it. Another concern with AI entering in to the visual arts space is algorithms that can implant inherent biases. Discriminatory outcomes in AI could affect creative projects.

On the topic of fair compensation, artists already struggle to make a living from their art. The automation of certain artistic tasks through AI tools may lead to further job displacement for artists working in industries where AI technologies are adopted on a large scale. For example, AI-generated visual arts could potentially replace human-created content in commercial applications, reducing opportunities for professional artists to earn an income.

In closing, New Democrats want to be sure that the Speakers of both chambers exercise a fair and equitable process to select a parliamentary visual artist laureate because these are the important issues that they will be dealing with, as well as educating and sharing their beautiful art with the world. With so much talent in our country, we know this is going to be a very busy job, and the NDP supports it.

● (1750)

The Speaker: I now recognize the member for Cloverdale—Langley City for his five-minute right of reply.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues who spoke in favour of Bill S-202 today.

Adjournment Proceedings

As we discuss what is hopefully the final version of Bill S-202, I am filled with a profound sense of pride in our nation's rich cultural heritage. Canadians have much to offer and, in honour of this, we ought to continue forward with the establishment of a parliamentary visual arts laureate.

Again, I would like to thank those who worked on and pushed for this legislation over many years. I thank Senator Patricia Bovey for her tremendous efforts in ensuring a genuine appreciation of the arts makes it to the House once more. I would like to thank Senator Wilfred Moore and Senator Andrew Cardozo, who have shown perseverance and commitment to this bill. Lastly, I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to all who contributed to getting Bill S-202 to this stage.

The creation of the parliamentary visual arts laureate to go alongside the parliamentary poet laureate strengthens our recognition of the arts, while fostering a sense of pride for our country that Canadians express in the creation of their artwork. Even the very building we are in today is visited by people across Canada and from around the world for its beauty, artistic appeal and the history captured within its walls. There is no place better suited to support the continuing legacy of Canadian art through a resident artist than here.

Canada's stories, and our cultural and linguistic diversity are demonstrated in their most raw form when we, as parliamentarians, intentionally recognize our fellow citizens' abilities to strengthen our Canadian culture. When I worked as the Township of Langley's cultural services manager from 2019 to 2021, my discussions with artists heightened my understanding of how crucial art is to our resilience. Our communities flourish when we respect and encourage the creation of art within them. Art celebrates with us, mourns with us, encourages us and inspires us. Art captures moments of our history for reflection and lifts our spirits when we need to take the next step forward.

By supporting artists through the creation of a parliamentary visual artist laureate, we are taking the next step forward to ensure that Canada remains a beacon of artistic excellence for generations to come.

• (1755)

The Speaker: The question is on the motion.

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

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded division.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 98, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 14, 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]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am returning to a question I asked in question period on October 18, 2023, just last fall. The question was asked five days after the Supreme Court of Canada struck down sections of the government's bill on environmental assessment, which it redubbed "impact assessment" and which came forward through Bill C-69.

I practised environmental law. I will briefly share with the chamber that I actually worked in the Mulroney government and took a draft environmental assessment law through to the Privy Council to get permission for the government of the day to bring forward the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, which ultimately entered into force around 1993. It went through several changes. It was an excellent piece of legislation; it worked well. It was repealed under an omnibus budget bill under Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government and was struck down and eliminated by Bill C-38 in spring 2012. That was more than lamentable.

When the new government came in, in 2015, the current Prime Minister gave a mandate letter to the former minister of environment, Catherine McKenna, to fix this. Tragically, she ignored the advice of environmental experts, even those she had empanelled.

What I asked on October 18 was whether the new Minister of Environment and the Minister of Justice would follow the excellent advice of the expert panel on environmental assessment law that was chaired by former Chair of the BAPE, Johanne G  linas, and many environmental experts, and which was thoroughly supported, certainly by the Green Party and by me. I asked whether we would follow the advice that the essence of environmental assessment law is to evaluate the projects of the federal government itself: at a minimum, the panel said, federal land, federal money or where federal permits are issued. There was an additional list of concerns.

Tragically, the government ignored the advice. It took the advice of the Impact Assessment Agency itself. What I asked the minister on October 18 was whether the government would now commit to reviewing and putting in place the recommendations. An excellent opportunity was created by the court's striking down, as I completely predicted it would, the sections that were based on the designated project list itself, a creation of Harper's Bill C-38, which was a terrible way of weakening environmental law while at the same time failing to honour federal jurisdiction.

Adjournment Proceedings

The minister missed the point of my question and merely said that they were going to fix it. I am desperately worried they are going to do a quick fix, and that in the quick fix, they will once again listen to the advice of the wrong people.

I beg the parliamentary secretary to tell us tonight that the government will follow the advice of the expert panel that gave them the right road to fixing the environmental assessment law in this country.

• (1800)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope that my hon. friend and colleague's working virtually does not mean that she is not feeling well. I hope she is well.

I thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for raising this important fact and for highlighting one of the reasons I chose to get involved in politics. It was because of the disastrous environmental policies of the Stephen Harper government, which put our country's international reputation in peril, along with our most essential natural resource, our natural environment.

This government conducted extensive public engagement sessions in the development of the Impact Assessment Act, and I am happy to speak to some of those actions this evening. At the time, the government heard from a range of individuals and organizations, including not only environmental lawyers but also indigenous groups, the public, industry representatives and academics. They all provided invaluable input into the creation of the impact assessment regime. My colleague also reminds me that the rules introduced through the Impact Assessment Act on assessing major projects were needed to address issues that had been identified with the former legislation, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act of 2012. I can say from personal experience in Milton that the former legislation was a disaster.

This government heard from Canadians who were calling for the restoration of public trust and confidence in the environmental assessment process, and enacting the Impact Assessment Act was the necessary change to provide predictability, accountability and transparency. The Supreme Court of Canada's opinion on the constitutionality of that act does not discredit the progress this government has made in protecting the environment, nor does it undermine the federal government's ability to exercise leadership on environmental protection. In fact, it confirmed that Parliament can enact impact assessment legislation. The Supreme Court also confirmed that the overall structure of the Impact Assessment Act is sound. The court provided clarity and direction to further refine the Impact Assessment Act process to ensure that it meets Canadians' needs and values, as well as Canada's unique constitutional requirements.

The government recognizes that responsible development is critical to the prosperity of our country and that time is of the essence with respect to projects that are currently in the impact assessment system. As the government lays out a plan to make more amendments, it will continue to listen to Canadians and uphold commitments to mitigating climate change; transitioning to a green, sustainable, net-zero economy; and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples.

The government is working quickly and diligently on introducing the targeted and meaningful proposed legislative amendments required to provide regulatory certainty for major project proponents, indigenous peoples and investors. We will continue to work collaboratively with provinces and territories, indigenous peoples, industry, environmental groups and the public to determine a path forward for environmental assessments in Canada. We will remain committed to providing clarity for our stakeholders and indigenous partners, upholding indigenous rights, protecting the environment and growing our economy, all at the same time.

To this end, I issued a statement on the interim administration of the Impact Assessment Act to provide guidance on ensuring continuity for proposed projects in the impact assessment process. Amending the Impact Assessment Act continues 50 years of federal leadership in impact assessment, and this remains a priority for the Government of Canada and for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, here is the tragedy: Again, the government ignored the advice of the experts it had empanelled. I want to just stress that the extent of public consultation undertaken by that expert panel was extraordinary. There were hearings in every single province and territory and thousands of witnesses in person, as well as advice. This advice was ignored by the former minister of environment and, tragically, that led to parts of it being struck down.

I am making it as clear as I can that, if the government rushes and puts amendments in the budget implementation act in the spring, it is very vulnerable to the criticism that it has not consulted. Its only and strongest protection is to rely on the advice that came from the panel chaired by Johanne G  linas, because it was the product of extensive consultation and thoughtful review of key pieces of legislation. The advice it is getting right now, I hear through the grapevine, is wrong once again.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court of Canada's opinion provided new guidance on the Impact Assessment Act, while affirming that the federal government's leadership role in environmental assessment legislation is critical. The Government of Canada also developed the Impact Assessment Act to create a better set of rules that respect the environment and indigenous rights and ensure projects are assessed in a timely way. We remain committed to those principles.

Adjournment Proceedings

I just left the environment committee a little while ago and, over the course of two hours, we heard from nine different witnesses. With just nine, there was not necessarily consensus on all issues. Therefore, when the process was undertaken to hear from thousands of Canadian stakeholders with respect to environmental protection, it is important to note that there was no way to develop a full consensus on every single issue. However, deep consultation is and will continue to be a priority of this government as we reassess the Impact Assessment Act.

• (1805)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, on November 6, I asked the government if it would take any action to address hatred targeting Jewish communities by pro-Hamas terror rallies across Canada.

There were rallies in Toronto where genocidal slogans called for violent acts against innocent people. At a solidarity rally at Queen's Park, where I proudly stood with Toronto's Iranian and Jewish communities, a Jewish woman was later assaulted for the simple act of holding a poster of a hostage. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize that person, Olga, whom I have since gotten to know. I want to thank Olga for her advocacy and countless others for calling for the immediate and unconditional release of the 136 hostages still being held by Hamas. Hamas and the militants holding the hostages should release them so that a path to peace, a just and durable peace, in the Middle East can be possible.

I asked the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada why he was being so silent on the grotesque and illegal displays of anti-Semitism, hatred and public incitement. Honestly, I just could not understand why he was turning a blind eye to these rallies in Toronto, in the city where he is also an MP, that were clearly supportive of Hamas, a listed terrorist organization. I reminded the minister that Canadians believe in the rule of law, not mob rule. I asked him if he was engaging his provincial and territorial counterparts to ensure that Canada's hate propaganda laws were being enforced.

In response, the Minister of Public Safety indicated that the government was far from being silent. He claimed that he condemned all incitements to violence and all expressions of hate and that, allegedly, the government is there for all communities. The key word in the minister's response was "all". Sure, other than Hamas and other terrorists, who would not be against all hate and stand for all communities, except since October 7, all communities are not being targeted. It is one particular community that is being disproportionately targeted, and that is the Jewish community in Toronto and across Canada. Protesters only seem to care about intimidating innocent Canadians who are Jewish. It is Jewish-owned businesses in Toronto, and in my riding, that are being vandalized. It is Jewish schools receiving bomb threats, and it is even a Jewish-owned deli that was firebombed in Toronto.

This evening, I want to focus on a specific, tangible action that the government can take, but thus far has not. I would like to ask if the government will follow in the leadership of two democracies, Austria and Germany, two nations that know all too well the levels that hatred and anti-Semitism can lead to. Both states have banned

the use of the protest slogan, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free". Freedom of expression does not mean someone has the right to call for genocide, and the Austrian and German governments are painfully aware of the true meaning of the slogan in Hamas terms, which calls for the elimination of the State of Israel.

Just yesterday, a motion was filed in the Dutch Parliament to do what the Austrians and Germans have done. Therefore, I would like to ask if the government will take this tangible action to actually fight hate in Canada against an identifiable group and a minority, the Jewish community.

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone in this country has the right to live their life free from fear of attack or abuse because of who they are as an individual. Hatred that targets people based on race, faith, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability or any other personal characteristic is counter to Canadian values. Everyone in Canada deserves a safe space to be themselves and to thrive. Unfortunately, hate, intolerance and racism, and particularly anti-Semitism, exists in many ugly and dangerous forms throughout Canadian society and the world.

Our government is taking action to combat this issue. For example, in the fall, the Minister of Public Safety announced enhancements to the security infrastructure program, which will help all communities that are understandably concerned for their safety to better prepare for and discourage any potential acts of violence. The minister announced an additional \$5 million for this program in light of the rising hate we are seeing in this country. I think this is an important investment. I will give the member a personal example. The justice minister and I attended the Bosnian Islamic Centre in my own riding to discuss some of the funding it received through this program for security purposes.

I also want to mention the upcoming online safety legislation from the Minister of Justice. Hate exists in many forms, including online, and we want to combat hate in all its forms. I am looking forward to this legislation being tabled.

I have no doubt that for many in the Jewish community, recent events have undermined their faith in what Canada stands for. I want to assure them that I, the Minister of Justice and our government stand firmly opposed to anti-Semitism and hate in all its forms. We will continue to work to combat it.

• (1810)

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Mr. Speaker, the slogan that I have referenced is used at Canadian pro-Hamas terror rallies and sends a message of intolerance and hatred towards an identifiable group of Canadians, a minority, the Jewish community.

Is our government and the hate propaganda enforcement system that oblivious to the obvious?

I cannot emphasize enough that delaying a rapid and direct response to hate propaganda and racism is a matter that Canadians are very concerned about. The federal government cannot ignore or sidestep its responsibilities to upholding Canada's hate laws and their provisions, and working to eradicate anti-Semitism here in Canada. As is the case with justice, delaying a response to racism and hate denies the removal of the scourge. Anti-Semitism must be met directly and by the full extent of Canadian law. That takes action, not more platitudes.

I will ask again. Will the government take direct action to address this recurring hate?

Mr. James Maloney: Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes.

As I noted, our government has made several investments to address hate crime in Canada. The \$5-million expansion of the SIP, which I mentioned, includes programs in my riding and in other ridings across the country.

Our government has acknowledged the realities of racism and prejudice in the country, something not all parties are prepared to do. We are committed to building a safer, stronger, more inclusive and just future for all by fighting hate and discrimination.

I will conclude by saying they are not just words, there are actions being taken and further action will continue to be taken. We stand by this commitment.

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise tonight to follow up on a question I asked of the Prime Minister just before the holidays, which feels particularly relevant now, in advance of the 2024 budget.

At the time I had asked why the Prime Minister and the federal government had not yet funded the Canada disability benefit when they seemed to have tens of billions of dollars to throw at expanding a leaky pipeline. At the time, rather than answering my question, the Prime Minister read back a stock answer.

I would like to get into more detail tonight and hopefully have a more meaningful conversation. Here is the reality: budgets are about priorities, and there are many pressing priorities in my community that require significant investment.

I will offer just a few this evening. Of course we need to end legislated poverty for our neighbours living with disabilities. If we did so, we could cut poverty by 40%, because 40% of people living in poverty across the country are people with disabilities.

Priorities include building the affordable housing we need at the scale and the pace that we need to do so. Even if we doubled the social housing stock in this country, we would still just be middle of the pack in the G7 as a result of 30 years of underinvestment in housing.

Other priorities include incentivizing homeowners to retrofit their homes to be more energy efficient, with things like insulating attics and improving building envelopes. We could do it by replenishing and expanding the greener homes grant program to even

Adjournment Proceedings

fund deep energy retrofits when that program, right now, is no longer even accepting applications in Ontario.

We could do it by investing in public transit to avoid more fare hikes and reduced service, by accelerating and expanding the permanent public transit fund.

To pay for these items, myself and others in the past have suggested new revenue tools, like the Canada recovery dividend to be applied to the oil and gas industry, the way it has been applied to banks and life insurance companies. Even just a 15% windfall tax on their profits over \$1 billion could generate \$4.2 billion to fund these kinds of solutions.

Another option, and the one I focused on in this question, is to stop wasting our money on projects like the TMX pipeline. Projects like these, new fossil fuel infrastructure, in the midst of a climate crisis, are what UN Secretary-General António Guterres calls “moral and economic madness”.

As recently as November 30 of last year, though, the Liberal government quietly guaranteed a new \$1.75 billion to \$2 billion in commercial loans for the Trans Mountain Corporation for expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline. If that money is borrowed, the project's total costs are going to grow to \$35 billion. That is well in excess of \$1,200 for every Canadian taxpayer in the country.

To close, budgets are about priorities. This budget is an important moment for this government to align its priorities with those of folks in my community and across the country. The parliamentary secretary is a reasonable person. I wonder if he would agree that it is past time we stop throwing Canadians' money at expanding a leaky pipeline, and use those funds to invest in Canadians who need it most, like Canadians with disabilities?

● (1815)

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will return the compliment and say I find the member to be quite a reasonable individual, too.

When it comes to our energy future, I would refer the member to the recent report of the International Energy Agency, which stated that global demand for oil and gas will continue in some form for decades, but overall demand for oil and gas will peak in this decade. At the same time, the deployment rate of renewables and uptake of electric vehicles are soaring.

Adjournment Proceedings

To the member's original question, the Prime Minister responded by affirming that Canada will continue to push forward to meet our net-zero targets, including our commitment at COP28 to lower the production emissions and consumption of fossil fuels over the coming decades.

Part of that includes the proposed cap on oil and gas sector pollution in December. It was another step in our commitment to creating pollution caps on emissions that are both ambitious and achievable. The emissions cap is one that will ensure that the economic well-being of Alberta's energy sector does not come at the expense of our environment, by incentivizing investments in decarbonization, technological innovation and efficiency.

Canada is the first major oil- and gas-producing country in the world to have done this. Allow me to quote Dr. Robb Barnes from the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, who said, "This announcement marks a significant turning point. Canada is the first major fossil fuel-producing country to commit to capping emissions from oil and gas production. We recognize the Canadian government's leadership on this and urge other countries to follow."

In addition to the cap on emissions from this sector, we are also supporting energy producers in driving down methane emissions by at least 75% through world-leading environmental standards. Despite fearmongering from the Conservatives in this House, 12 major companies said that, thanks to this regulation, they would nearly eliminate methane emissions by 2030. That is incredibly encouraging news for the climate and for the workers in these competitive industries.

We know that the responsible path forward is to invest in decarbonization and clean energy development to ensure that workers have a bright future and communities have clean air. Meanwhile, the Conservative Party's plan is to let the planet burn. Their plan is to axe environmental protections, axe job-creating projects and put moratoriums on renewable energy projects, as they have already done in Alberta and are trying to do in Atlantic Canada. While the Conservatives block vital legislation like the sustainable jobs act and our offshore wind bill, Bill C-49, Liberals are working hard to ensure that communities across this country benefit from the opportunities presented by a low-carbon future.

The Liberal plan has delivered over \$200 billion of investment into clean energy and the clean economy, helping to create thousands of sustainable jobs for workers today and in future generations.

● (1820)

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that when it comes to investing in a sustainable future, we cannot do it by buying and expanding a pipeline. That is exactly what the government has been in the midst of doing since 2018. As recently as November of last year, it continued to double down on that investment to the tune of \$2 billion more in a new subsidy to continue with this failed investment. This is at a time when Canadians across the country are calling out for something as simple as investing in home energy retrofits, expanding public transit and ending legislated poverty for people with disabilities.

Will the parliamentary secretary use the influence he has inside his caucus to shift these kinds of investments toward the priorities of his community and mine?

Mr. James Maloney: Mr. Speaker, we share the same priorities, but allow me to illustrate my earlier point by sharing some of the investments that the Government of Canada has made in southern Ontario, where the member and I are both from.

For example, we provided \$3 million to Kitchener-based Kuntz Electroplating Inc. to strengthen its manufacturing capabilities, creating 45 new jobs in the automotive and EV industry and supporting the growing green economy. We invested \$10 million in the University of Waterloo's aeronautics program to help it orient to a more sustainable future for the aviation industry. In the auto sector we have attracted major investments from companies like Volkswagen, Stellantis and Umicore, which will create thousands of good-quality and low-carbon jobs for our communities.

This is just the beginning. We will continue on this path forward and accomplish our goals together.

The Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:22 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, February 8, 2024

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Committees of the House

Status of Women

Mrs. Vecchio 20801

Indigenous and Northern Affairs

Mr. Aldag 20801

Copyright Act

Mr. Masse 20801

Bill C-374. Introduction and first reading 20801

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) 20801

Petitions

Cybersecurity

Mr. Masse 20801

Foreign Affairs

Mr. Masse 20802

International Trade

Mrs. Shanahan 20802

First Responders Tax Credit

Mr. Kitchen 20802

Pornography

Mrs. Wagantall 20802

Employment Insurance

Mrs. Wagantall 20802

Criminal Code

Mrs. Wagantall 20802

Firearms

Mrs. Wagantall 20802

Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Morrice 20802

First Responders Tax Credit

Mr. Morrice 20803

Natural Health Products

Mrs. Gallant 20803

Children and Families

Mr. Genuis 20803

Freedom of Political Expression

Mr. Genuis 20803

International Development

Mr. Genuis 20803

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mr. Genuis 20804

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Mr. Genuis 20804

Falun Gong

Mr. Genuis 20804

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux 20804

Privilege

Alleged Misleading Comments by the Prime Minister

Mr. MacKinnon 20804

Points of Order

Amendments to Bill C-318 at Committee Stage

Mr. Lamoureux 20805

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Business of Supply

Opposition Motion—Federal Immigration Targets

Mr. Blanchet 20806

Motion 20806

Mr. Lamoureux 20809

Ms. Gladu 20809

Ms. Kwan 20809

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 20810

Mr. Arya 20810

Mr. Miller 20810

Mr. Kmiec 20812

Ms. Normandin 20813

Ms. Kwan 20813

Mrs. Shanahan 20813

Ms. Gladu 20814

Mr. Desilets 20814

Mr. Kmiec 20814

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 20817

Mr. Lamoureux 20817

Ms. Kwan 20818

Mr. Lemire 20818

Mr. Lamoureux 20819

Ms. Gladu 20819

Mr. Boulerice 20819

Ms. Larouche 20820

Mr. Lamoureux 20821

Ms. Kwan 20821

Ms. Kwan 20822

Amendment 20823

Ms. Normandin 20823

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 20823

Mr. Lamoureux 20823

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 20824

Ms. Gladu 20825

Ms. Barron 20825

Mr. Lamoureux 20825

Ms. Normandin 20825

Mrs. DeBellefeuille.....	20826
Mr. Lamoureux.....	20827
Ms. Gladu.....	20827
Ms. Larouche.....	20827
Mr. van Koeverden.....	20828
Ms. Gladu.....	20829
Ms. Bérubé.....	20829
Mr. Angus.....	20829
Ms. Kayabaga.....	20829
Ms. Normandin.....	20830
Ms. Gladu.....	20831
Ms. Barron.....	20831
Mr. Therrien.....	20831
Mrs. Shanahan.....	20833
Mr. Aboultaif.....	20833
Ms. McPherson.....	20833
Ms. Normandin.....	20833
Mrs. Shanahan.....	20835
Mr. Lamoureux.....	20835
Mr. Deltell.....	20835
Mr. Sorbara.....	20836

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Lunar New Year	
Mr. Jowhari.....	20836
Carbon Tax	
Mr. Waugh.....	20837
Lunar New Year	
Mr. Chiang.....	20837
Tragedy at Laval Day Care	
Mr. Desilets.....	20837
Canadian School Counselling Week	
Mr. Dhaliwal.....	20837
Norman Kwong	
Mr. Webber.....	20837
Jeopardy! Champion	
Mr. Turnbull.....	20838
Terry Carter	
Mr. Van Bynen.....	20838
First Nations Resources	
Mr. Hoback.....	20838
Black History Month	
Mr. Samson.....	20838
Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu	
Mr. Gourde.....	20838
Gender-Based Violence	
Mrs. Vecchio.....	20839
Public Safety	
Ms. Khalid.....	20839

Aerospace	
Mr. Boulerice.....	20839
Aerospace	
Mr. Savard-Tremblay.....	20839
Gender-Based Violence	
Mrs. Kusie.....	20839
Lunar New Year	
Ms. Yip.....	20840

ORAL QUESTIONS

Public Safety	
Mr. Scheer.....	20840
Ms. O'Connell.....	20840
Carbon Pricing	
Mr. Scheer.....	20840
Mr. Champagne.....	20840
Mr. Scheer.....	20840
Mr. Champagne.....	20841
Housing	
Mr. Deltell.....	20841
Mr. Champagne.....	20841
Mr. Deltell.....	20841
Mr. Champagne.....	20841
Justice	
Mrs. DeBellefeuille.....	20841
Mr. Duclos.....	20841
Mrs. DeBellefeuille.....	20841
Mr. Duclos.....	20841
Grocery Industry	
Mr. Boulerice.....	20842
Mr. Champagne.....	20842
Ms. Mathysen.....	20842
Mr. Champagne.....	20842
Public Safety	
Mrs. Thomas.....	20842
Mr. Maloney.....	20842
Mrs. Thomas.....	20842
Ms. O'Connell.....	20843
Ms. Ferreri.....	20843
Ms. O'Connell.....	20843
Ms. Ferreri.....	20843
Ms. O'Connell.....	20843
Mrs. Vien.....	20843
Mrs. St-Onge.....	20843
Mrs. Vien.....	20843
Ms. Joly.....	20844
News Media Industry	
Mr. Champoux.....	20844
Mrs. St-Onge.....	20844
Mr. Champoux.....	20844
Mrs. St-Onge.....	20844

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	20844
Mr. Miller	20844

Carbon Pricing

Mr. Kurek	20844
Mr. Guilbeault	20845
Mr. Epp	20845
Mr. Guilbeault	20845
Mr. Muys	20845
Mr. MacAulay	20845

Foreign Affairs

Ms. McPherson	20845
Mr. Oliphant	20845

The Environment

Ms. Collins (Victoria)	20845
Ms. Dabrusin	20846

Diversity and Inclusion

Mr. Coteau	20846
Ms. Khera	20846

Housing

Mr. Seeback	20846
Mr. Fragiskatos	20846
Mr. Seeback	20846
Mr. Fragiskatos	20846
Mrs. Gray	20846
Ms. Anand	20847
Mr. Lehoux	20847
Mr. Duclos	20847

Official Languages

Mr. Fortin	20847
Mr. Boissonnault	20847
Mr. Fortin	20847
Mr. Boissonnault	20847

Public Safety

Mr. Moore	20847
Mr. Maloney	20848
Mr. Moore	20848
Mr. Maloney	20848
Mr. Baldinelli	20848
Mr. Maloney	20848

Disaster Assistance

Mr. Blois	20848
Mr. Sajjan	20848

Indigenous Affairs

Mr. Patzer	20848
Mr. Battiste	20849

Public Services and Procurement

Mr. Brock	20849
Ms. O'Connell	20849
Mr. Brock	20849
Ms. O'Connell	20849

Child Care

Mr. Casey	20849
Ms. Sudds	20849

Indigenous Affairs

Ms. Ashton	20849
Mrs. Atwin	20850

The Environment

Mr. Rayes	20850
Ms. Dabrusin	20850

Business of the House

Mr. Scheer	20850
Mr. MacKinnon	20850

Points of Order**Amendments to Bill C-318 at Committee Stage**

Ms. Gazan	20850
-----------------	-------

Privilege**Allegedly Misleading Statements Made in the House**

Mr. Steinley	20851
Mr. Lamoureux	20852
Mr. Scheer	20852

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**Business of Supply****Opposition Motion—Federal Immigration Targets**

Motion	20852
Mr. Sorbara	20852
Mr. Trudel	20853
Mr. Chambers	20853
Mr. Boulerice	20853
Mr. Blois	20854
Mr. Garon	20855
Mr. Chambers	20855
Ms. Idlout	20855
Mr. Savard-Tremblay	20856
Mr. Arya	20857
Mrs. Gallant	20857
Ms. Idlout	20857
Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné	20858
Mr. Lamoureux	20859
Mr. Boulerice	20859
Mr. Kmiec	20859
Mr. Lamoureux	20860
Mr. Blanchette-Joncas	20861
Mr. Chambers	20861
Mrs. Zahid	20862
Ms. Zarrillo	20863
Mr. Morrice	20863
Mr. Arya	20864
Mr. Barsalou-Duval	20864
Mr. Lamoureux	20865
Mr. Kmiec	20866
Ms. Blaney	20866

Mr. Perron	20866
Mr. Arya	20867
Ms. Zarrillo	20868
Division on amendment deferred	20868

Mr. Aldag	20873
Division on motion deferred	20874

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Parliament of Canada Act

Mr. Aldag	20868
Bill S-202. Third reading	20868
Mr. Trudel	20870
Ms. Idlout	20870
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	20871
Mr. Trudel	20871
Ms. Zarrillo	20872

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Natural Resources

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	20874
Mr. van Koeverden	20875

Public Safety

Mr. Vuong	20876
Mr. Maloney	20876

Oil and Gas Industry

Mr. Morrice	20877
Mr. Maloney	20877

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