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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 9, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, entitled “Main Estimates 2024-25”.

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[*English*]

PETITIONS

BASIC INCOME GUARANTEE PROGRAM

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition today noting that a guaranteed livable income would guarantee a livable monthly income to every Canadian with a social insurance number. It would establish an income floor below which no Canadian could fall and reflect regional differences in cost of living.

The petitioners note that a guaranteed income could replace the current patchwork of federal and provincial income assistance programs with a single universal national benefit. It could be progressively—

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: I am sorry. The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is not that far away from me, but I am struggling to hear him. There is some annoying background noise.

[*English*]

The Speaker: I invite the member for Kitchener Centre to start his petition again.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise this morning to present a well-timed petition, given the debate last night, calling for a guaranteed income.

The petitioners call for a guaranteed livable income for every Canadian with a social insurance number. They note that this could establish an income floor below which no Canadian would fall; that it would establish a national framework that would replace the current provincial and territorial patchwork system; that it could reduce poverty, of course, thereby reducing the demand on social services, law enforcement and health care, resulting in additional cost savings for government and for taxpayers; and, most importantly, it would provide a financial social safety net for all Canadians. As a result, the petitioners call on the Government of Canada to implement a guaranteed livable income for all Canadians.

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today on behalf of small business owners who work in the natural health supply, food or products industry.

The petitioners are calling upon the government to decrease red tape to eliminate the regulatory changes that will increase their costs in respect to labelling and licensing for products as simple as vitamin C and fluoride-free toothpaste. The petitioners want the Government of Canada out of the way. They want to have their natural health products freed from more government red tape.

HONG KONG

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present a petition on behalf of Hong Kongers living in Canada.

The petitioners are concerned about the measures to assist Hong Kong residents in Canada, commonly known as stream A and stream B. They write that, as of January, over 15,500 permanent residency applications had been received, with approximately 7,500 granted, leaving over 8,000 applications in the backlog. Because of the shortage of admission targets, the processing time has exceeded the stipulated 6.5 months, with some applicants waiting up to a year or more.

The petitioners are calling on the Minister of Immigration, Citizenship and Refugees to acknowledge the humanitarian crisis that has occurred, adhere to and uphold the priority processing guidelines as outlined and allocate additional admission targets to the Hong Kong pathway to effectively address the backlog.

Orders of the Day

● (1005)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[English]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from May 8 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, could my hon. colleague from Alberta outline, in very clear terms, the threat that foreign governments are posing to Canadian members of Parliament who simply want to stand up for human rights and justice, as well as peace, order and good government in Canada?

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I highlighted in my speech last night, not too many hours ago, this debate is especially prescient at this time. Yesterday evening we learned that Premier Eby in British Columbia had announced that there was a sophisticated cyber-attack against certain government IT infrastructure in that province. That speaks not only to the risks that members of Parliament face but also, ultimately, to the need for Canadians to feel free to engage, be a part of and be active in their democratic process.

I think that, so often, what happens in this place is a signal of what is possible and the potential of what could happen across our country. It is a necessity to ensure that the government is responsive. A big question here is about the fact that the government knew about this, but it did not inform us. There is a need to ensure that we can trust the lines of communication, not only for members of Parliament but also for all Canadians. This includes diaspora groups, some of which may be vulnerable to these types of attacks.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we had this debate last night. This is an important question of privilege.

We have seen information that has come forth in the preliminary report from the Hogue commission that the NDP pushed hard to have set up as a public inquiry. We saw that, at that time, as clearly documented cases of foreign interference came forward, whether in terms of the member for Vancouver East or the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, members of Parliament were not informed. Now we have this question of privilege, where 18 members of Parliament were victims of a cyber-attack but were not informed by the government.

Is it ever appropriate for the government to withhold important information such as that when members of Parliament are involved? Is it ever appropriate that it does not put into place protocols so that the members of Parliament who are targeted by this foreign interference are actually made aware of it?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, that highlights the need to ensure that there are processes and protocols in place. However, we need to be careful in this place that we do not allow ourselves to think we need to look for a solution to something that was obviously a failure of leadership. Time and time again, we have seen the government only acting when pushed, when forced to respond.

Discussions have taken place in the aftermath of Justice Hogue's report and in the continuing conversations around election interference, around making sure that our democratic infrastructure is secure and that members of Parliament are able to do the good work that we do.

I would emphasize again that it is not simply members of Parliament who need to be concerned. All Canadians need to ensure that their voices are protected in our democratic process, because that is the very heart of what democracy is meant to be.

● (1010)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in yesterday's debate, I mentioned that I was one of the 18 parliamentarians targeted by this pixel reconnaissance attack from APT31. As I disclosed, this was not just any cyber-hacking group in their mom's basement. These were actually intelligence officers working for one of the subnational governments that the Beijing government loves to use in order to target legislators. I was targeted because of my work with IPAC.

I want to ask the member this, because he just spoke a little bit about the impact on free speech that this has and about dissident groups. We have heard about it from other members as well. This has a chilling effect on diaspora groups in Canada and their interactions with members of Parliament. Therefore, it has a direct impact on our parliamentary duties and our parliamentary privileges to ensure that we can do this work on behalf of Canadians.

The government responsible for ensuring our protection, as well as the protection of our digital devices and infrastructure, chose not to inform us that we had been targeted, despite having a moral and ethical responsibility to do so. Does the member think this has a chilling effect on people's interaction with MP offices to know that members of Parliament were targeted by foreign governments and that the government chose to do nothing about it?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, the member is right. There is a chilling effect, and it is not limited to the circumstances that we are debating in this privilege motion.

Orders of the Day

Time and time again, we see a government that has refused to act, has been unwilling to act and, in some cases, we learned, has not acted because it would not have been in its political interest. We need to make sure that individuals coming to our constituency offices; parliamentarians, who need to be able to do our jobs effectively, including advocating for those most vulnerable around the world; and all Canadians are safe. This includes those in diaspora communities, who might also face repercussions for their political activities in Canada in terms of their family members and whatnot back home.

This is so serious, because freedom of expression and the freedoms associated with our democracy have to be guarded at all costs.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was also one of the 18 parliamentarians targeted by APT31. What is really disturbing in all this is that not only were we targeted because we are part of the IPAC, the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, but some were also involved in diaspora communities and, in my case, as the shadow minister for national defence, dealing with sensitive information.

Often, people in diaspora communities come to us or send us emails talking about certain issues they are concerned about, whether they are things happening in the Communist regime in Beijing; issues surrounding the corruption and human rights abuses that we are witnessing in Ukraine by the Russian Federation, as in my case, or the kleptocrats in the Kremlin; or, of course, having to do with the theocracy and human rights abusers in Tehran. Those in diaspora communities send us emails, and if this APT31 hack had been successful, sensitive information about the identities of individuals who came to Canada seeking asylum and now call Canada home could have been jeopardized. They could have been targeted even more than what we currently see reported by the foreign interference commission and Justice Hogue.

We have dictatorships and authoritarian regimes, such as the People's Republic of China, that are trying to undermine our democratic institutions and target Chinese nationals right here in Canada. Could my colleague talk to the fact that this is not just an attack on our parliamentary privilege or on us as parliamentarians but on all Canadians and our democratic institutions?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge my colleague's strong advocacy and fighting to ensure that Ukraine has everything it needs to defend itself at a time when its territorial integrity has been compromised by a dictator. I know that Russia and Vladimir Putin's regime is another example of how there have been attempts to interfere in Canadian democracy. I know that Putin, as well as many others, has been sanctioned. It speaks to how the people of this country deserve to be protected.

It is unfortunate that the government is only forced to act after being pushed and that we learned about this from our American allies. Action needs to be taken. However, ultimately, we need a government that treats national security, as well as the freedom of Canadians, with the seriousness it deserves.

• (1015)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am entering into this debate, and first of all I want to say I certainly

support the privilege motion before us. The reality is that what we are learning and seeing is that foreign interference is real. It is happening right before our eyes. In fact, it has been happening for some time.

Commissioner Hogue in her interim report indicated that in both the 2019 election and the 2021 election there had been foreign interference activities. What we learned as well is that those activities occur in a variety of formats. While I am shocked to learn that members of Parliament are being targeted this time through potential cyber-attacks, what we know is that foreign interference tactics have been used in a variety of ways.

We know that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills was one of the first individuals for whom we learned that his family had been targeted. He learned this not because the government informed him in the proper format, but we learned it through leaks in the media. It was only because of the escalation of the situation that we were informed that we were also being targeted. I learned much later I am a target of Chinese foreign interference activities and have been for some time. I learned that, in fact, I would be an ever-green target, meaning I will forever be targeted, as I understand the situation.

Now we learn that 18 other members of Parliament have been targeted with cyber-attacks. That is the reality. The public hearing the NDP has pushed for is so important and so significant. In the interim report, what we learned from some of the testimony was shocking to me.

Kenny Chiu, the former member of Parliament for Steveston—Richmond East, was subject to foreign interference activities. We will never know whether those activities would have altered the outcome of the election in that particular riding, but notwithstanding, foreign interference activities were occurring, and even the government's agencies were observing this. They had this information. In fact in my case, in the 2021 election it was noted that the incident related to Vancouver East during the campaign, that campaign activity, is believed to may well have been a foreign interference activity from China. However, none of that information was communicated, not to me, not to Kenny Chiu and not to anybody, really.

One has to wonder, when the government says it has set up teams of communication, different agencies charged with this work, why not one of them informed the people who were impacted the most. This is exactly the case here with 18 members of Parliament who are being impacted by cyber-attacks from China. One wonders how this is even possible. How is it that the government has multiple agencies and that the people impacted the most are not even informed?

What is the purpose of foreign interference activities from China and other countries? They want to disrupt our democratic system. They want to send a message to those being targeted in one way or another. The commissioner noted in her report that the diaspora community is particularly vulnerable and targeted in that way, and yet what work is being done to protect the diaspora community? I do not see a whole lot of activities from the government side. Its communication system is a colossal failure in addressing the issue.

Orders of the Day

● (1020)

Foreign interference activities, as I was mentioning, happen in a variety of different formats. I have to raise a question, as well, with respect to the threshold that the government sets internally, to determine what would require action. The threshold is set so high that virtually nothing will occur. Ministers testified about how high the threshold ought to be. One of the bars, I think, is set at whether or not the interference would change an election. If the bar is set at that level, does that mean to say that all the other activities that were occurring, which may not have changed an election outcome, did not occur? Does that mean to say that there is no foreign interference? Of course not.

The question becomes this for the government: What action will it take to address foreign interference activities and to take them seriously enough to curb those activities and to send a clear message to the actors that this will not be tolerated by Canada? What action will be taken to safeguard those people who are being impacted?

I am a member of Parliament. In many ways, those of us who are members of Parliament are, I would say, privileged people. We have, to some extent, some level of protection, but everyday people do not. They definitely need and deserve protection.

I was at an event just this last weekend with Hong Kongers. There were many people there. It was a cultural event, a celebration of Hong Kongers' culture, their practices, their business smarts and their entrepreneurship. There were people from high school who had crocheted cool little items that they were putting on a table to sell. There were a variety of artisans putting their items forward. There were also people there who wore masks because they were worried about being targeted.

In Canada, the government had much pressure put on it. There was my request for it to have a special immigration measure, a lifeboat scheme for Hong Kongers who are trying to escape the prosecution, the draconian national security law. Most recently, article 23 has been passed in Hong Kong, where there are escalating arbitrary detentions and arrests. Hong Kongers need the government to take action on a special immigration measure.

So many Hong Kongers came to Canada needing to be able to find safety. They applied, under the special measure, for permanent residence. Initially the government processed those applications within six months. It is now up to 21 months. For some of the applicants, their study permits and work permits have already expired. People are in such fear about having to return to Hong Kong and then be out of status.

Thank goodness the government finally made an announcement this week to extend the program. The government could have actually been even more efficient in that process and just automatically renewed the expiring work permits and study permits. Instead, it decided to make everybody go through yet another round of applications, spending scarce resources within IRCC instead of directing those resources into processing permanent residence applications in an expeditious fashion. That is typical; the government always finds some other way to be less efficient.

● (1025)

I wanted to raise that point because of how important it is to ensure that Hong Kongers are able to get to a place of safety and not be sent back to Hong Kong.

I want to turn back to the issue around foreign interference. As I was mentioning, there are a variety of different ways it can happen. In my case there was one particular event that occurred, that I am aware of, where I suspect that there were foreign interference activities, because the information that was provided does not add up. In this event, I made a complaint to Elections Canada. I informed CSIS. I reported it to the RCMP. I do not believe those agencies took the matter seriously. I do not think they investigated it seriously.

Then, Elections Canada closed the case and deemed that there was no foreign interference, even though it did not follow the money and even though, in the background, I learned I am an evergreen target. We have learned in the media, and elsewhere, that there is a \$250,000 slush fund that is put out there for foreign interference activities from China. How do the organizations know, without thoroughly investigating the matter, that there was no foreign interference in that instance?

I know, most likely, that the incident in the 2021 election alone would not have altered the outcome of the election. I would still have been elected because I won by a very big margin. However, that is not the point, is it? The point is that I believe there were foreign interference activities, and we needed to thoroughly investigate the matter. The government has set up multiple agencies to look into these issues. When they learned of the issue, why did they not inform me, in real time, when it was happening?

In the case of Kenny Chiu, a misinformation and disinformation campaign on WeChat was happening. He was not informed either. The agencies and the government were looking into foreign interference activities, and they knew. Did they do anything? Nope. If we juxtapose this to what was going on with the Prime Minister during that time, there was a disinformation campaign about him on Facebook. What did the government agencies do? They phoned Facebook about that disinformation campaign. What did Facebook do? It took it down. My point is this: Why should everybody not be treated equally? They are not, and that is the truth.

We learned in the inquiry that perhaps in the case of WeChat, the government did not follow through on it because it was the Chinese Canadian community that was being impacted, as though somehow Chinese Canadians do not deserve the same protection against foreign interference activities. It is absolutely horrendous.

Orders of the Day

I also want to raise a point for all members of Parliament in terms of potential impact. In her report, Justice Hogue indicated clearly that, with respect to foreign interference, there is a deep concern of the impact on elected officials. The report actually said that foreign interference actors undertake to target elected officials who speak out against certain foreign states such as China by de-platforming them, and there are also misinformation and disinformation campaigns. The goal, of course, is to undermine credibility, and that is what we saw in the last two elections. Of note, the commission said that part of the impact for elected officials, and part of the goal, is to potentially change behaviours and messages.

● (1030)

I can not help but wonder this. In the House of Commons we know there are five poisons with China, one being the Uyghur genocide issue. The other is Taiwan's Falun Gong, and I can go on. However, let me focus on the Uyghur genocide issue for one minute.

We had a vote in the House and some members of Parliament abstained from that vote. They were here prior to vote and participated, but when it came to the vote, they somehow magically disappeared. One of those actors is the member for Don Valley North. As it happens, on the matter related to the member for Don Valley North, the commissioner has some very damning findings with respect to that nomination.

The Prime Minister said that he did not know about all of this. Let us pretend that is the case. Now that he does know, what action is he taking with respect to the finding of the commissioner, who said that foreign interference activities could have impacted its outcome of that nomination? If the Prime Minister believes there is nothing to see here, as he is continuing to say, then why is the member for Don Valley North not back in the Liberal caucus?

Another thing that came out of the hearing that I found shocking is this. The Prime Minister was at the hearing and testified that he did not read documents that were classified top secret. What head of state does not read classified top secret documents that impact national security? That is weird.

Let us put that aside for a minute. The Prime Minister said that he was not informed, with the exception that on that point he was contradicted by the director of CSIS, who said that, in fact, he and his staff were informed, that they were briefed. Magically, it seems like they do not know about it.

There is much to be done. There is a big question, which is the premise of the inquiry, and that is, who knew what and when and what did the government do about it? I am still waiting for the final report to come out, and I am excited to receive it.

The next phase of the inquiry will be very much focused on the impacts and issues related to that diaspora community, which did not get a chance to fully participate in phase one of the inquiry.

Much work needs to be done, and there is no excuse for the government to not take the necessary actions to tackle foreign interference activities. We learned through the hearing that China is the most sophisticated country targeting us in Canada with foreign interference activities. We also learned through the hearing that all

the other countries are onto it and are far more advanced in dealing with this issue, but Canada is not.

For my colleagues, who have just learned they are being targeted, this is absolutely a question of privilege. We must study this issue, get to the bottom of it and be clear about what needs to be done and what actions need to be taken, because Canada's democratic process is in jeopardy. All 338 of us, and the work that we do, are in jeopardy. We cannot allow for any country to threaten us in that way. We must stand together, united in saying no to all foreign interference actors out there, that they will not be allowed to try to take us down. We must do that in the House of Commons.

● (1035)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government does take foreign interference very seriously. We have seen that in the legislative measures and other resources. We have had all sorts of different types of discussions. We have had reports provided to Parliament. We have continued to bring forward legislation as recently as earlier this week. The point is that we do take it very seriously.

We also recognize that Canada is one of a number of countries around the world being targeted with foreign interference. There is more than one player persistently trying to undermine democracies. We are very much aware of those players.

The question I have for the member is this. Looking forward, it is important that this goes to the procedure and House affairs committee. Collectively, it is in all of our best interests for that to happen. I wonder what the member's thoughts are on the importance of working on a consensus and trying to build something out of PROC to ensure that we have a united front in taking on foreign international interference.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that supposedly the government took this so seriously that it actually slow walked the legislation. The foreign agent registry was supposed to be tabled last year. Actually, I was informed by a source that this legislation was already drafted last year. The consultation had been completed. However, months later, finally we see the legislation. The government is not exactly on the ball in trying to fight foreign interference.

Notwithstanding those who are impacted, the government knew long ago and did not even bother to ensure that they were informed, to the point where a member's family could be in jeopardy. Then it did not do anything about it until there was a leak. That does not build a whole lot of confidence for me in terms of what the government is doing to tackle foreign interference. There is new information on which the government needs to take action. We will have to wait and see about that.

With respect to working collaboratively, yes, of course, but not in the interest of trying to hide information. I just wanted to point that out.

*Orders of the Day**[Translation]*

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, up until the beginning of 2023, the Liberal government was completely denying that there was interference. We could ask all the questions we wanted, but they just denied its existence, full stop. The opposition parties fought for a rapporteur to be appointed, and we succeeded in, I believe, March 2023, but his appointment was far from unanimous. It was a failure. Now we have Ms. Hogue, who seems to be doing a great job.

After everything my colleague just said, I really empathize with her. I would like her to use some adjectives and describe to me precisely what she is going through because of this government, which has been keeping us in the dark for years, since it had highly relevant information about foreign interference.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I fear that if I were to use those adjectives, I would be kicked out of the House, as they would be unparliamentary.

However, let me just say this. The government was asleep at the wheel. What we have learned from the commissioner is that, and we are not alone in being targeted by foreign interference activities, Canada is way behind the eight ball. Canada was basically not there, despite continual warnings. That is the reality. Hence, we are here today. We are learning that more and more members of Parliament are being targeted.

I should also add that other actions need to be taken. Take, for example, what is happening in the United States with TikTok and the actions being taken in trying to prevent foreign interference activities that can occur through that platform. What is the Liberal government doing? Nothing. I think that kind of tells us everything.

- (1040)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that Canada is being targeted, and the government is not doing the things it needs to do to be transparent about it.

One of the things that all of us should be concerned about is the fact that so many members learned about that foreign interference through the media. That is not the way anyone should learn that he or she is being targeted.

Could the member talk a little about solutions? With respect to the foreign registry, there is a lot of concern from ethnic communities that feel they are going to be specifically targeted, and they want safety. What are the solutions moving forward? What does the government actually need to take action on?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, first, on the legislation that was tabled, it needs to come into law before the next election and be implemented. That is a key piece of what needs to be done.

Of course, there are many elements within that legislation that will be in regulation. We do not even know what the mandate for the commission looks like. Let us also keep in mind that this is not the be all and end all. That is only one tool to address foreign interference activities.

I would also say this for PROC. The work that PROC needs to do is not done, because what came out in the inquiry was that there was contradictory information. On the one hand, Katie Telford told the committee that of course the Prime Minister read all the confidential documents. Then, at the hearing, the Prime Minister said that he did not read any of them.

Who is not telling the truth? We need to get to the bottom of this. They do not get to sweep this under the rug. We need to get to the bottom of it, to hold people to account and, most important, to actually take the real actions that are necessary to address foreign interference.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate to have debate in this place like we just heard from the member for Vancouver East. We are lucky that we can reflect on the words she shared with us this morning.

I am deeply concerned to hear about the double standard that exists for members in this place when it comes to foreign interference, and I would really appreciate hearing more from her. I understand that she wants to see Bill C-70 move ahead quickly. However, my concern is that the government is going to say that it is no problem at all, that it will all be solved, that Bill C-70 will fix the issues we have shared when it comes to foreign interference.

Could the member share with us the extent to which she feels that is or is not the case? Could she also share more, elaborating on the question from our colleague, the member for North Island—Powell River, on the extent to which she would like to see the government do more, and do it faster, to address the deep concerns she shared with respect to foreign interference?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, on the issues around the bill itself, of course, it needs to go through the House and it needs to go to committee, to have it invite the diaspora community, in particular, to share its comments around it. In talking with the people in the broader public, most of them are just so relieved that, finally, we have this legislation before us.

It is going to be really important to ensure that there is not going to be some disinformation campaign out there, trying to say what the bill is and what it is not. That is critical as well. However, much work needs to be done to get this through the system.

I also want to emphasize that the bill, in and of itself, is not the answer to all the foreign interference activities. We already know, on investigation, that, yes, the bill would create some offenses that would allow for potential prosecution, but a lot of the aspects hinge on other actions that the government can take, for example, nominations.

On the question around nominations, and I have already highlighted the potential impact for the nomination that took place in Don Valley North, what action will the government take with respect to nominations? On the question around independence of these matters, it is also all the different agencies within government that, frankly, are not exactly independent and need to follow up on foreign interference activities.

Orders of the Day

• (1045)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we do in this place matters. This place is the only place at the federal level that is a democratic institution. This is Canada's democratic institution. The other place is not; it is appointed. The Prime Minister and his cabinet are not; they are appointed.

In Canada, we do not elect governments. We do not elect prime ministers. We elect a legislature, a single national legislature of 338 Canadians to sit here on behalf of Canadians to make decisions. The way we make decisions in this country, under our constitutional order, is not through the tip of a sword but through debate. It is through our words, and the words we use in this place influence the votes, which are votes on motions and bills that lead to decisions taken by Parliament.

Therefore, protecting members of Parliament in their execution of their duties, in the words they are freely allowed to use on the floor of the House and in the actions they take, whether it is in respect of legislation in front of the House, motions in front of the House or administrative matters, is incredibly important. Members should be free from interference, from coercion and from threats. That is why what is in front of us today is so very important, because what we do in this place matters. What we did in this place in 2020 and 2021 mattered.

On November 18, 2020, the House adopted a motion calling on the government to ban Huawei from our national core telecommunications network and also calling on the government to come forward with a robust plan to combat foreign interference. That motion ultimately put enough pressure on the government to make a belated decision to ban Huawei from our national telecommunications network.

Several months later, in early 2021, the House, on February 22, 2021, adopted a motion recognizing that the PRC's repression of some 12 million Uyghurs in Xinjiang province in western China constituted genocide under the 1948 genocide convention. That mattered, because what came out of that was coordinated action between the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada to impose sanctions on a number of individuals and one entity in Xinjiang in response to these gross human rights violations.

What we did mattered back then, and the PRC noticed. The PRC implemented a full-spectrum response against members of this House, some legitimate and some illegitimate. It pursued legitimate diplomatic action. It pursued legitimate counter-sanction action. That is not in question. What is in question is that it illegitimately violated international law and targeted members of this House.

Justice Hogue, as the previous member outlined, has outlined how the PRC interfered in the 2021 election. CSIS concluded clearly that the PRC interfered in the 2021 election, and Justice Hogue found exactly that in her initial report of May 3, last week.

The PRC also illegitimately targeted six members of this place, who have come forward on this point of privilege, and that is the question in front of us today.

These members were cyber-attacked by the PRC. Six members among 18 legislators in Canada were cyber-attacked by the PRC,

and some of those 18 are members of the House, six in particular. They were attacked for being members of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China and simply attacked for doing their job in upholding the international rule of law and criticizing the PRC for its gross violations of international law, whether that is related to the genocide against the Uyghur people, which is a contravention of the 1948 genocide convention; whether it is the PRC's illegitimate and illegal crackdown in Hong Kong, a violation of the 1997 Sino-British Joint Declaration, which guaranteed Hong Kongers their rights and liberties for 50 years from 1997; whether it is the PRC's violation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, where it is harassing other states, fishing vessels and other marine vessels in the South China Sea; or whether it is the PRC's violations of the trade system that has been established under WTO rules and the status it obtained in 2000 as a most-favoured nation, which it is obliged to uphold.

• (1050)

As a result of these six members of Parliament being targeted, our counter-intelligence agencies and the Five Eyes alliance started to take action. They started to monitor what was going on with APT31, a hacking group that is an organ of the state of the People's Republic of China, a hacking group that is run out of Hubei's State Security Department, which is an arm of the People's Republic of China's Ministry of State Security. It is a massive secret service state apparatus that is monitoring not only its own citizens in the PRC but citizens of countries abroad.

The FBI discovered this hack by APT31 in 2022, and it immediately passed it along to the Communications Security Establishment, part of the Government of Canada's national security apparatus. CSE, in turn, did its job. It passed the information along to parliamentary officials, and this is where the system broke down. While I have absolutely no doubt that the IT officials and personnel in the House of Commons administration did their job to ensure the integrity of our IT systems, that is not the question in front of us today. The question in front of us today is transparency. The question in front of us today is sunlight and transparency and why six members of this House who were targeted by the PRC through a cyber-attack were not informed at the time the Government of Canada became aware.

Orders of the Day

The government tells us all the time that we need to be situationally aware. We cannot be situationally aware if we are not armed with information. What the procedure and House affairs committee should be looking at, if this motion is adopted, is why these six members were not informed at the time when the CSE and parliamentary officials were made aware. That, ultimately, is not only the responsibility of the executive branch of government and the CSE, but also the responsibility of the Speaker and officials the Speaker is responsible for.

In the United States and the United Kingdom, elected members of national legislatures are regularly informed about foreign interference threat activities that are directed at them. That is a fact. That has not happened here in this case, and it has not happened in the past. The argument about security clearances in this place, that parliamentary officials knew about these attacks two years ago but could not tell members because they did not have security clearance, does not hold water.

Philippe Dufresne, the former law clerk and parliamentary council, gave a legal opinion to committees of this House on many occasions, indicating that section 18 of the Constitution Act, 1867, makes it clear that in this place, members of Parliament have an unfettered right for documents and information that is not restricted by anything else, not restricted by laws that have been adopted by this place or by whatever views the Government of Canada may hold on classified materials. Therefore, when parliamentary officials became aware of it, they should have informed these members.

I will finish by encouraging members of this House to vote for the motion so that the procedure and House affairs committee can take this matter up and ensure that in the future, when a Five Eyes intelligence agency notifies part of our national security establishment, whether it be the Communications Security Establishment, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Department of National Defence intelligence unit or any other part of the security establishment, that Canadian members of Parliament are being targeted by a foreign state or by non-state actors, those members are informed forthwith so that they can be situationally aware and protect themselves and their families against these hostile threats.

• (1055)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would encourage those individuals who are following the debate on this issue to give serious consideration to actually reading the entire context in which the Speaker made his presentation, and I would assure individuals following the debate that the government has taken and continues to take foreign interference very seriously. One will see that in the actions that we have taken virtually from 2016 all the way up to this past week.

Having said that, I would look to my friend across the way and ultimately argue that I think Canada is in a relatively good position to be able to demonstrate leadership on the issue.

We want to see the issue go to PROC. PROC has the capabilities and the abilities to come forward, hopefully, with a report that has the support of all political entities in the chamber. I am wondering if my colleague across the way could provide his thoughts in regard

to how good it would be if we are able to have a report come back from PROC where we have the support of all political entities inside the chamber.

Does he not believe that this would give a much stronger impression, collectively, of us working together to deal with foreign interference?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I think opposition parties in the House have been highly responsible in how we have handled the information on foreign interference threat activities that have come to our attention over the last two years.

When these stories broke, they did not break because the government informed members of the House or the House's committees about these foreign interference threat activities. They broke because they were printed on the front page of newspapers like *The Globe and Mail*.

When we received that information, which the rest of the general public received at the same time, we treated it in a highly non-partisan and responsible manner. In fact, I do not recall many questions in this House about Don Valley North or about Steveston—Richmond East over the course of the last year and a half, because we were not certain what the facts were. It was not until May 3, last week, when Justice Hogue released her initial report, Justice Hogue having found certain things in those ridings, that we began to raise questions, because she received the evidence and made findings based on her judicial judgment.

I think, in this whole matter, opposition parties have been highly responsible in how we have treated this information. I expect that we will be highly responsible going forward if this matter goes to the procedure and House affairs committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I too want to express my full support for the member, who has first-hand experience with interference and threats to his own family. I think all our colleagues here feel the same way. Having said that, we now need to turn those feelings into action. I think the member will agree with me.

Last week, a report on foreign interference was released. I would like to know whether my colleague is satisfied with the report. If I am not mistaken, he sits on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

I think everyone is familiar with cyber-attacks, actually. All we have to do is log on to social media to see there is a large number of bots and fake accounts flooding social networks. We suspect it is coming from abroad.

Given that we often learn through the media, and at the last minute, that there has been interference, can my colleague, who sits on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, tell us where we need to start looking and what we should be focusing on in order to anticipate future hits?

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Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I believe that Justice Hogue's initial report is a good start. She will present a second report in December of this year. I will continue working with the commission to ensure that the second report is very strong and contains solid recommendations for building a national security system that will protect our democratic institutions.

I also agree that the government must act. The director of CSIS sounded the alarm in 2018 when he publicly announced that there was a national security problem here in Canada, specifically in relation to the People's Republic of China. That was six or seven years ago. The government dragged its feet over proposing a measure or taking action. As my hon. NDP colleague said, they took too long introducing a bill aimed at creating a registry of foreign agents.

A lot more needs to be done, and I think that the government needs to do these things.

• (1100)

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is exactly right. Throughout the entire hearing with the commissioner, all the parties that participated were working in a non-partisan fashion. We were being as helpful as we could in working in collaboration with the commission so that we could find the truth.

The commissioner noted there is a real risk of politicians modifying their positions or messages as a result of foreign interference activities. Can the member comment on that?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for all the work she has done on countering PRC foreign interference. It has been very constructive.

The member rightfully points out that Justice Hogue found that the PRC interfered in the 2019 and 2021 elections. That is incontrovertible. That is a finding of fact by Justice Hogue. She also concluded that the intelligence relating to the member for Don Valley North led to well-grounded suspicions that the PRC's interference could have impacted the individual who was elected in Don Valley North to this place. She said, "This is significant."

She also concluded, with respect to the riding of Steveston—Richmond East, it is a reasonable possibility to conclude that the PRC's disinformation operations in Steveston—Richmond East "could have impacted the result in this riding." Again, these are Justice Hogue's findings. They could have impacted the results in certain ridings. Much of it centres around disinformation operations.

As my hon. colleague stated earlier, we found out that the government did nothing about these disinformation operations in Steveston—Richmond East, but it jumped to attention when a Facebook post was made by the Buffalo Chronicle. A PCO official immediately called up Facebook, using the full weight and threat of the Government of Canada, to tell Facebook to take it down during the election. That shows us how uneven the playing field is with respect to the government's handling of foreign interference during the writ period.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know the Liberals kept silent and knew about the foreign interference in the 2019 and 2021 elections because it was electorally advantageous to do so. We had a number of opposition members hacked by the PRC, which was potentially politically advantageous to the government.

Would that be why the government kept silent?

• (1105)

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I think that we need a full range of tools, which is what experts have been telling the government.

The government needs to implement a full range of tools to counter these foreign interference threat operations, and one of the tools that it needs to start using, which it is not very good at, is sunlight and transparency. The government needs to tell us and the public about foreign interference threats that it has derived from intelligence so that we are equipped with information to ensure that we become more resilient as a Parliament and more resilient as a society to counter the threats coming from authoritarian states.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy 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.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that this pass unanimously.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—LEGALIZATION OF HARD DRUGS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC) moved:

That, given that since the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister took office, opioid overdose deaths across Canada have increased by 166% according to the most recent data available, the House call on the Prime Minister to:

- (a) proactively reject the City of Toronto's request to the federal government to make deadly hard drugs like crack, cocaine, heroin, and meth legal;
- (b) reject the City of Montreal's vote calling on the federal government to make deadly hard drugs legal;

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(c) deny any active or future requests from provinces, territories and municipalities seeking federal approval to make deadly hard drugs legal in their jurisdiction; and

(d) end taxpayer funded narcotics and redirect this money into treatment and recovery programs for drug addiction.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

A couple of years ago, I paid a visit to the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, and I was both shocked and surprised. The shock is self-evident. Anyone who has been there would have seen the carnage of our fellow citizens lying face-first on the pavement in overdoses, the many more who stand on two feet with their heads between their legs, bent over in a spine-twisting posture that is common among those who are maxed out on fentanyl. These are spine-twisting postures that leave them bent forward, often for the rest of their lives. Those lives are often shortened, as the game of Russian roulette of using fentanyl risks ending their breathing every time they do it.

There is an unmistakable smell of too many people and too few bathrooms, with tents that go block after block after block. The police pointed to one tent, identifying it as the headquarters of the “United Nations”, a self-described gang that supplies the guns and other deadly weapons for the street. There are people screaming at the top of their lungs, having lost control of themselves while in a static state of near overdose. These things are all stunning to witness, even though one might have expected, knowing the stats, that they were all there.

We know that the Downtown Eastside was an experiment brought in by NDP municipal and provincial governments, but it was an experiment that the Prime Minister saw and said needed to be expanded right across the country. He has succeeded as, now, these tent encampments are regular in every part of the country. In your home province, Mr. Speaker, Halifax has 35 homeless encampments. That is 35 encampments in quaint, beautiful, peaceful Halifax. Every Canadian knows of such an encampment in their community, even though nine years ago it was unthinkable.

The unmistakable link between this policy and the results that I just described play out now in the rare but courageous journalism that has begun, finally, to expose the cause. I point to an article in the National Post that reads, “Miller says that her daughter Madison told her that they 'could go up to a drug addict and ask for dillies and they'd have bottles of them, because they would go into pharmacies, get them filled up and sell them to the kids.'” “Dillies” is slang for the hydromorphone that is funded by government.

A National Post article from March 11 reads:

“I had several patients who were drug-free for a long time and just couldn't resist the temptation of this very cheap hydromorphone that was now on the street,” said Dr. Michael Lester, a Toronto-based addiction physician. “Every addiction medicine doctor I have spoken to has told me that, on a daily basis in their offices, they're dealing with diverted hydromorphone, either from new clients coming in who are addicted to it, or patients of theirs that are using it as a drug of abuse.”

Global News provided rare, courageous journalism on this as well, showing that the price for a hydromorphone pill on the streets of Vancouver has dropped from \$10 to 25¢ since the government began subsidizing and spreading the drug far and wide. There are reports of dealers standing outside of pharmacies waiting for those

who have the prescription to get the so-called safe supply to immediately deliver it to the dealers who can then sell it to finance other terrible drugs. Then, of course, we have the overdoses that result as people graduate from those drugs.

● (1110)

The Prime Minister has all of this evidence. He has the evidence that, since he took office, overdose deaths are up 166% nationwide. They are up the most in the places where his and the NDP's radical policies have been most enthusiastically embraced. That is in British Columbia, where it has grown by 380%. Only with an election on the horizon did the B.C. government admit its failing and try to reverse the policy, just in time to go to the polls. However, still, Toronto and Montreal are applying for the same decriminalization of hard, illicit, unregulated drugs that caused such carnage in British Columbia, a request that the Prime Minister steadfastly refuses to rule out.

I said that I was shocked and surprised. What surprised me when I went to the Downtown Eastside were the people who greeted me there. They were not the addicts. They were not the police. They were a small platoon of activists who somehow learned of my arrival, even though it was unannounced and was not posted anywhere for either the media or the social networks. They were there to record and to follow me, and to heckle me, which is fine. I can deal with that. I do it every day.

However, it confused me. Who is paying for all this? Where is the money coming from for the activists who are pushing this? It turns out that there is a lot of money being made. Let me read a headline. “Prof, former public health officer launch company to produce legal heroin for treatment”.

Martin Schechter, who led the study, called the the North American Opiate Medication Initiative (NAOMI), and Perry Kendall, B.C.'s first public health officer, are moving to change that.

Frustrated by the lack of action from government, the two have launched a company called FPP...short for Fair Price Pharma, with the goal of producing an affordable domestic supply of legal, injectable heroin for use in treatment.

More than 5,500 British Columbians have died from illicit drug and overdoses since 2016, including 170 in May.

Dr. Schechter, who is also a professor of the School of Population and Public Health at the University of British Columbia, said in an e-mail that the overdose poisoning crisis [was a] failure to expand...legal heroin—a proven...cost-effective treatment—in the face of desperate need for safer supply, [that] drove the two doctors to act.

[They said that he has a company] to set up a dedicated facility to manufacture the product and offer it at a cost to interested health care providers, including those in other provinces.

He and Dr. Kendall are expected to meet this month with Health Canada's therapeutic products directorate, which regulates prescription drugs, to determine the tests and evidence needed to obtain a license.... They estimate they will need about \$3-million to launch the product.

Of course, they are making money. Later, they would complain. “B.C. doctors upset their 'safe supply' of heroin going unprescribed during overdose crisis”. They began to lobby for more money.

This is from other news articles. Perry Kendall, the former Provincial Health Officer until 2018 is an advocate for safe supply. He founded Fair Price Pharma to distribute heroin.

Mark Tyndall, who was B.C.'s deputy provincial health officer and was an executive medical director, is the founder of MySafe project.

As I said, Martin Schechter was not with the B.C. government directly, but was responsible for the research that led to the so-called safe supply. He founded Fair Price Pharma.

These are the companies that are actually making the money and are intimidating opponents of their plan. This is turning into a gigantic, self-licking ice cream cone, one that needs to end. It is in the service of money-making and not of the public.

That is why common-sense Conservatives would stop funding hard narcotics, would ban hard drugs and would put the money into treatment and recovery services that would bring our loved ones home, drug-free.

• (1115)

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have heard the words from the member for Carleton today.

I have just one very simple question to him. He has listed a lot of headlines and news stories. He talked about brave people. Why will the Leader of the Opposition not meet with Moms Stop the Harm, an organization of mothers who have lost their children to the overdose crisis and who are brave, in this moment, for their children?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I have been meeting with families who have suffered as a result of the addiction crisis. We have met with people. What we try to do, though, is to meet with the organizations that are getting people off drugs and are actually saving lives.

Our approach is to meet with recovery centres, all of whom have been unanimous in telling me that the minister's radical policies are actually killing people, not stopping the harm, but perpetuating the harm. That minister and the NDP government in B.C. have perpetuated the harm because the apparatus of corporate, pharmaceutical and activist groups that are profiting off this crisis have kept it going.

She should be ashamed of herself for pumping more money into the hands of those pharmaceutical companies, those so-called public health officials in the bureaucracy, who then move into the profit-making world of selling hard opioids on our streets.

We, in this common-sense Conservative government, will actually stop the harm by bringing our loved ones home drug-free.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition said in his speech that the City of Montreal had voted in favour of decriminalizing drugs. If that is true, why does point (b) of the Conservative

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motion use the phrase “make...legal” instead? That is my first question.

My second question is as follows: Can the Leader of the Opposition explain to us, using neutral and objective language, the difference between legalization, decriminalization and diversion?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, there is no real difference. It is just semantics for these extremists because they do not want to defend their record. Every time they introduce a measure that fails, they change its name. First they called it “safe supply”, and now they have changed it to “regulated supply”. They use the words “legalization” and “decriminalization” to make distinctions that do not exist in the real world. That is the reality.

In British Columbia, people were allowed to use methamphetamine, crack, heroin and other hard drugs in hospitals, public transit and children's parks. It was 100% legal. This is legalization, pure and simple, no matter what it is called.

The Bloc Québécois supports it because the Bloc and other lefties support all the radically ideological programs introduced by the government and the New Democrats.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to send my condolences to all the families who have been impacted by this terrible, tragic crisis.

We heard earlier about the mothers, and certainly, the mothers know the danger of the toxic drug supply better than anybody. They also have lived experience of what it is like to support someone with substance use challenges. They have insight. They have understanding and knowledge.

We heard from Petra Schulz from Moms Stop the Harm at committee, who comes from Alberta, which now has the highest toxic drug death per capita in the country. They have been requesting a meeting with the leader of the official opposition. They have tried repeatedly. He is the only leader who is not willing to meet with them, to look them in the eye and to listen to them.

Can he please explain to Moms Stop the Harm, the moms across this country, why he refuses to sit down with them?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, that is false. I have sat down with mothers who are affected by drug overdoses, right across this country, who reflect the view of almost all those who are survivors of drug overdoses and drug addictions. They are nearly unanimous in their opposition to the NDP-Liberal radical agenda of giving out hard drugs.

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They want their loved ones in treatment and recovery so that they can be brought home drug-free, happy and healthy, and that is the hopeful future that we offer.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, this is such a serious issue. I asked a serious question and what I got was a condescending answer—

The Deputy Speaker: I would not know if this was a point of debate or not, because I cannot hear it. However, I am going to guess it was a point of debate.

Continuing debate, the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I was 10 years old, I had a similar experience in Gastown, British Columbia, in the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver. I remember driving in with my mom for the very first time and being shocked about the chaos and despair I saw, even as a young boy. Anyone who goes to that neighbourhood in Vancouver sees that chaos. Unfortunately, now, that addictions crisis has spread right across the country and into every community in British Columbia. People are struggling. People are dying, and something needs to change. However, 15 months ago, this Liberal-NDP government launched a wacko, hard-drug legalization policy that has led to even more crime, more chaos, more drugs and more disorder, especially in British Columbia.

While the opioid addiction crisis has accelerated in severity in recent years, it is not a new problem. In 2009, Doctors of BC, formerly known as the BC Medical Association, published a policy paper entitled “Stepping Forward: Improving Addiction Care in BC”. The paper made 10 recommendations, including “Formally recognizing addiction as a chronic, treatable disease under the BC Primary Care Charter and the BC Chronic Disease Management Program”.

The recommendations state, and this is crucial, “Create and fund 240 new flexible medically supervised detoxification spaces”, as well as “Fund the development of 600 new addiction-treatment beds across the province”.

Fifteen years later, the availability of treatment beds has not improved. In fact, it has only gotten worse. However, nowhere in that paper did it suggest that making drugs like fentanyl, heroin, crack and meth legal would help British Columbians.

Today, the leading cause of death for youth aged 10 to 18 in my province is overdose; it is drug toxicity. Let that sink in. In 2023, more than 2,500 British Columbians lost their lives to illicit drug overdoses. More than six British Columbians lose their life every day due to deadly drugs. Since 2016, there have been 42,000 people lost to the opioid crisis across Canada, and since the Prime Minister took office, opioid overdose deaths have increased 166%.

The main argument the government has made in support of this reckless legalization and decriminalization policy was that it would reduce the stigma surrounding addiction. In reality, it has only made that stigma worse. Canadians are good people. They are compassionate people, but that compassion is evaporating quickly as

crime and chaos increase in conjunction with the radical policies of the government, and I will give an example.

Last October, the Abbotsford Soccer Association published an open letter to the City of Abbotsford, decrying the state of their fields and calling for change. It reads:

The state of sports facilities, especially soccer pitches, within the city, is nothing short of lamentable.

It goes on to say this:

Abbotsford Soccer Association (ASA) members are witnessing an increased incidence of individuals with substance abuse disorder loitering on the grounds of [Matsqui rec centre] which has subsequently led to the increased presence of drug apparatus scattered on the fields and surrounding walkways including syringes and needles, and shattered crack pipes and liquor bottles.

It is not acceptable for any parent or any child to face those conditions when going to play sports.

The letter goes on to outline that community parks are the most common place for children to be injured by dirty needles and that children “imitate the behaviours” that they see around them. In other words, what is happening at Matsqui rec centre is normalizing drug behaviour, and kids are being exposed to that.

The government knew from the start that its wacko policy of allowing open drug use in public would put children at risk, but it went ahead with it anyway. That is shameful, and it is a complete dereliction of its duty to protect children.

At the Legion in Mission, veterans have to clean up dirty needles and have to ask people to stop smoking crack on their property, daily. That goes for every business in the downtown Mission core. It is like the Liberal government has created a crack tax because their windows are shattered, and they have to have haz-mat materials on site to clean up because of the possibility of fentanyl.

● (1125)

In Mission, there was an addictions clinic operated by Dr. Larina Reyes-Smith, which provided addictions care, STI screening, counselling and more. Dr. Reyes-Smith is a strong advocate for increased access to detox treatment and treatment of mental illness rather than the so-called safe supply model being pursued by the government and the Province of B.C. In October, she came to me distressed because she was forced to close her clinic due to high costs and a lack of support from the provincial government, which did not understand her approach to wraparound care, nor the quality of care she gave to those people desperate to get off drugs and live a better life.

Physicians continue to speak out, saying that treatment funding needs to be under the same umbrella as primary care so it can be billed to provincial health coverage, but that, frustratingly, is not the case. Even in publicly funded detox centres, patients are charged a per diem out of pocket, making it extremely challenging for those struggling with addiction to access life-saving treatment.

Why is the emphasis not on bolstering the number of addictions doctors rather than on legalizing hard drugs and leaving people to die on their own? Why is the focus not on building the infrastructure we so desperately need in order to address the crisis?

The opioid crisis is not limited just to B.C. either. Last fall, the town of Belleville, Ontario, declared a state of emergency after 23 people overdosed in two days. Belleville is only a little bit bigger than Mission. In a town of just over 50,000 people, 23 people overdosed in just under 48 hours. Again, let that sink in. This is the stuff being normalized in Canada. Thirteen of the overdoses took place in just two hours.

Now the government is contemplating allowing more cities and provinces to make the same mistake British Columbia did. As a British Columbian, I am scared that the Prime Minister will expand this wacko policy and that other provincial governments will make the same mistake ours did. That is why the Conservatives today are calling for the government to do four things. The first is to proactively and clearly reject the City of Toronto's request to the federal government to make deadly hard drugs like crack cocaine, heroin and meth legal.

• (1130)

[Translation]

Secondly, the motion calls on the Prime Minister to “reject the City of Montreal's vote calling on the federal government to make deadly hard drugs legal.”

[English]

Third is to deny any active or future requests from provinces, territories and municipalities seeking federal approval to make deadly hard drugs legal in their jurisdiction. Fourth is to end taxpayer-funded narcotics and redirect the money into treatment and recovery programs for drug addiction.

Every day, 22 Canadians lose their life to this deadly crisis, and the government is only making the problem worse. Therefore I call on all members of the House to support our motion today and put an end to the wacko and deadly hard drug legalization experiment once and for all so we can focus on getting people access to the treatment, recovery and supports they desperately need.

Canadians love that our country is peaceful. They love an orderly country. That is being taken away from them because of the radical ideological approach. Let us bring our loved ones home.

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I truly appreciate that the party opposite is talking about treatment, because treatment is a critical and definitely core piece of our actions and policy when it comes to addressing the overdose crisis. However, actions speak louder than words. Would the member commit to sus-

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tained funding on treatment, unlike the previous Conservative government that cut two-thirds of drug treatment funding?

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, the basis of that question is completely false. Under former prime minister Stephen Harper, health care funding to the provinces increased on an incremental basis. We never reduced funding for health care. We provided for the demands of the provinces and territories at that time.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to acknowledge and offer my condolences to all those who have lost loved ones to the toxic substance crisis. In particular, I lost my own cousin Peter in his twenties as a result of the toxic substance crisis. I really would like for us to be talking about solutions on how we can help people.

I am wondering whether the member can share why he is taking the approach he is, when we know that in British Columbia, which has a person-centred, multi-faceted approach, the death rates have been reduced in the last 12 months by 11%. When we compare that to Alberta, which has a treatment-only model, and treatment is an important pillar of course, instead we are seeing that Alberta has the leading death rate per capita of all the provinces, with Lethbridge having three times B.C.'s death rate.

Does the number of people who are so tragically dying in B.C. versus Alberta contradict what the member is saying in his speech?

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, as I outlined in my speech, the crisis we are facing is not limited just to British Columbia. I think the real question the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith needs to consider is why her ideologically extreme premier, Mr. Eby, has done a 180 on the policy. That goes to the very point I made in my speech, which is that parents do not want drug addiction normalized in our communities. Parents want to be able to go to downtown Nanaimo, downtown Mission or downtown Abbotsford and access a recreational centre without being fearful of being exposed to a methamphetamine.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the Conservatives have woken up to the poison drug crisis in this country. When it comes to solutions, the reality is that Alberta has already done everything that is being called for in the motion, and Alberta has the largest number of deaths per capita in the country.

Will the member meet with moms who have lost their kids to poison drugs so we can get some real solutions to a real crisis?

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I wish the member for Kitchener Centre would follow my social media a little more closely. I have met with dozens of parents who have lost their kids to the overdose crisis.

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In fact in the last year I met with a mother whose son had overdosed while at a treatment home because open drug use was allowed there. That mother lost her child. Afterwards, on the one-year anniversary of his death, I went to a reception hosted by the mother to feed some of the people her son used to hang out with, at the Diamond Head Motor Inn in Mission. I asked some of the people currently addicted to drugs, and those who have been addicted, whether safe supply is making a difference. They said, “The government is just laughable because we are just selling the drugs. What has happened is a joke, a complete joke.” They know it and we know it. We need to stop it.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a bit earlier the leader of the Conservative Party refused to explain the difference between legalization and decriminalization. The latter does not allow people to consume drugs wherever they want. Rather, it ensures that people with a drug problem are not systematically dealt with by the prison system and can get the care they need. This all stems from the fact that drug dependency or addiction is a public health issue.

I would simply like to know—

The Deputy Speaker: I must interrupt the hon. member.

I think we have an interpretation problem. I want to make sure the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon understands what I am saying in French. I hope the interpretation is working.

It is working now. The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party leader refused to answer the question by one of my colleagues, who asked him to give us the definition for legalization as opposed to decriminalization. This is important in the debate we are currently having.

Decriminalization does not allow people to systematically consume drugs everywhere. It allows us to ensure, in cases substance abuse, that the person will not necessarily go to prison, but can receive adequate care. We consider drug addiction to be a public health issue.

My question for the member is simple: Does he consider drug addiction to be a public health issue?

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois member did not listen to my speech today. I said it was a problem. The 2009 report that I mentioned states that the government has to start treating drug addiction like other chronic diseases.

[*English*]

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North.

I rise today for the families of loved ones, who have lost the people most precious to them due to an overdose. I rise for the parents I have spoken to who have lost children and for the neighbours who

have lost friends. I rise for those whose stories I have heard from across this country, people with lived and living experience, and for the many advocates I have met with who are called to do this work on the front lines and who fight against this crisis each and every day. I think of the mothers who have taught me that harm reduction and health care belong to all of us, everywhere, that people who are dead cannot recover or get into treatment, and that together we can make a change.

Each of these conversations has highlighted that a full spectrum of health services, including harm reduction is needed to meet people where they are, with dignity and compassionate care. These are the voices that drive our fight to save lives. Sharing these voices is our job as parliamentarians. To do that, we need to listen to them.

However, the Leader of the Opposition refused and continues to refuse to even meet with or learn from the many mothers, fathers, families and communities we need to listen to in order to better shape substance use policies. He is a leader who has weaponized and dehumanized our most vulnerable in society who need critical health care. He has done it to sow fear and to bring back the failed policies of the war-on-drugs era. This is not leadership.

We must look at the crisis, step into the eye of the storm that it is and do what needs to be done. We must use this moment and every tool we have at our disposal to fight the crisis, because doing nothing is not an option. The fact is that an ever-changing, ever more deadly toxic drug supply in the streets is killing our loved ones every day. It is the increase in fentanyl in the illegal supply that is driving the overdose crisis. This crisis is complex and all-pervasive. It leaves no community untouched. It cuts across ethnic groups, age, sex, geography and socio-economic status. Any plan forward must look at the full picture and see that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to meet this moment.

That is why, on this side of the House, we are guided by the renewed Canadian drugs and substances strategy to address the overdose crisis and other substance use harms. This is Canada's model. It is compassionate, comprehensive and person-centred. It is a holistic approach that balances health, social well-being and public safety. It recognizes that we need to keep doing more to help people and to keep our communities safe. This includes a full continuum of culturally appropriate and equitable supports and services for Canadians across the spectrum of prevention, harm reduction and treatment and recovery.

We need to place a high priority on children and youth, providing young people with the tools and supports to prevent, delay and lower the rates of their substance use. We want to curb substance use from the beginning and keep our communities safe.

With every policy and every program under the Canadian drugs and substances strategy, we consider potential risks and benefits through a public health lens and a public safety lens. We have also been prepared to adjust our approach as needed to reflect what is actually happening on the ground and what is working. Governing is deciding. Sometimes we may not get it right on the first try, but we owe it to those whom we serve and are trying to save to do everything we can.

We are working with partners to take action against criminal organizations that are trafficking and producing illegal drugs. We are leveraging all tools at our disposal to work toward an end to this national public health crisis. However, in this work, we have supported and will continue to support provinces and territories, indigenous communities and organizations so they can deliver the full suite of resources that are needed.

• (1140)

Building on historic health care investments, including those for mental health and substance use from last year, budget 2024 provides \$150 million for a new emergency treatment fund for municipalities and indigenous communities to be able to respond rapidly to the emergent and critical needs related to this opioid crisis, such as in Belleville.

This commitment is in addition to the \$1 billion we have directly invested to address this crisis, recognizing that all levels of government have a role to play to help Canadians and save lives. Collectively, the new investments we are making and funding will help provinces and territories expand the delivery of timely, quality and accessible mental health and substance use services across the country, as well as reduce harms, prevent overdoses, reduce stigma and save lives.

When it comes to substance use, our top priority continues to be protecting the health and well-being of people across Canada. To do that, we need an approach that puts health first while maintaining community safety, one that is compassionate, equitable, collaborative and based on evidence. The work of community-based organizations is a key part of this equation. Through the substance use and addictions program, we are supporting community organizations in delivering innovative prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery on the front lines and other evidence-based health interventions that are so desperately needed. These grassroots organizations have the trust of their communities and the first-hand knowledge needed to make a real difference in people's lives.

We know the main driver of the overdose crisis in Canada is the toxic and unpredictable illegal drug supply. It is contaminated by fentanyl. On any given day, it is likely that many people do not know what or how much they are even using. As a first step, we need to give people a chance to access the health and social services they need to improve their well-being. A dead person cannot recover.

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The programs those in the opposition are against are health care. How can they be opposed to Canadians seeing a doctor? Why do they not trust doctors to make the best decisions in collaboration with their patients? People who use drugs are just that: people. They are not numbers, not props for a video. They are people who need our compassion. That is why we are pursuing an innovative and evidence-based harm reduction program, including supervised consumption sites, drug checking and naloxone. All of those tools are needed and so much more, because addressing this complex and evolving crisis requires us to continue to try new and innovative approaches. This is how we meet the moment to help save lives and better connect people who use substances to health and social services, health care for those who are ready.

Let me conclude with one very simple and straightforward principle. This is a public health crisis, not a criminal one. The Leader of the Opposition believed it at some point when he said, "opioid addiction is a disease and its victims are victims", but victims have no place in prison. This is what advocates and experts remind us every single day. Our primary goal is to save lives and improve health while maintaining public safety. We need to reduce the barriers to health care, not build them up and perpetuate the stigma of criminalization.

I am proud of the comprehensive model that our government is advancing, one that helps reduce stigma and promotes access to a range of evidence-based services. Let us also talk about the bravery of the health care workers, the experts and frontline peer workers who are on the front lines every single day, meeting the moment and seeing who needs our help. We will continue to support their work and the work of the provinces, territories and other jurisdictions. We have to.

We will continue to support an approach that will help divert people away from using drugs, but also away from the criminal justice system and toward health and social services, because we cannot look away. We cannot put those who need our compassion and health care into forced treatment to become someone else's problem. It has never been more important for all levels of government to be working together because when people get the right support, there is hope and we can save lives.

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• (1145)

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during my speech, I referenced Dr. Reyes-Smith and her attempt to provide the wraparound services that she felt her patients needed. I will note that she was one of the authors of the 2009 report I referenced as well. Dr. Reyes-Smith is a small business corporation, like every other doctor in the province of B.C. When doctors face their ability to operate, they have to work within a funding system that does not allow for wraparound care.

Why has the Government of Canada, with the \$4.5 billion that it has not delivered on mental health yet, not tried to change that and allow for an innovative solution that allows a doctor in B.C. to provide wraparound services and treat the mental health addiction crisis more like primary care instead of a one-off visit with a patient?

Hon. Ya'ara Saks: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for acknowledging that this is a health care crisis, as opposed to the Leader of the Opposition, who continues to dehumanize and criminalize those who need health care.

It is a great opportunity to highlight our comprehensive approach, which is a wraparound approach for addressing substance use in Canada. It is a four-pillar approach that includes prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement, and also recovery. We recognize that meeting people where they are at, with a full suite of supports, with every tool at our disposal, is exactly what we are doing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the Conservative leader's response to one of my colleagues who was asking him to make the distinction between legalization, decriminalization and diversion. He said it was just semantics, that there was no real difference, that people just made up those distinctions depending on the context.

What does the minister think of the Conservative leader's ignorance?

• (1150)

[*English*]

Hon. Ya'ara Saks: Mr. Speaker, this is exactly the point. The Leader of the Opposition and the party opposite create narratives that simply are not in the reality of what we need to be addressing right now. Decriminalization is about ensuring that someone who uses substances is not subject to prosecution. It does not legalize the many drugs that he listed. It means that we are opening a door for someone who is struggling to access health care, rather than stigmatizing them.

Why would we want to criminalize our loved ones? Why would we not want to get them into health care?

This is exactly why we have every tool available to us and we are working with jurisdictions to address this, because we need to meet people where they are and meet the moment to save lives.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 42,000 people have died from the toxic drug crisis, which is more than the Canadians who died in World War II. That is not meeting

the moment. Spending less than 1% of what we spent in response to COVID-19 is not meeting the moment.

Portugal had over 1,000 people die from their drug crisis. It went from 250 people to 35,000 people on morphine in two years. It engaged the military and built labs. It built treatment centres so that people can get treatment on demand, year-long treatment. It spent money on recovery. Yes, it turned it into a health-based issue because it is a health issue, and it stopped criminalizing people.

The government says that it wants to integrate it and coordinate it, with a compassionate approach. Where is the plan? Where are the timelines? Where are the resources to get behind it? Why has the government not declared a national public health emergency? Why?

Hon. Ya'ara Saks: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his continued advocacy and really collaborative work with us on this side of the House to address this moment that we are in and the toxic drug supply and the overdose crisis we are in.

We have made significant investments since 2016, a billion dollars toward this crisis. We have committed, in this budget alone, to have additional supports like the \$150-million emergency treatment fund. We have signed bilateral agreements with every province and territory, with the key component being mental health and substance use, because health care is the way out of this. That is where provinces and jurisdictions come in to scale their health care systems.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really happy that we are having this debate because, today, I am thinking of so many loved ones across this country who are grieving the loss of their family member or friend, people like Carolyn Karle in Thunder Bay, who lost her daughter Dayna almost a year into her recovery. Dayna relapsed one night with alcohol. Then she took one dose of a substance that she thought was cocaine and tragically died of an opioid overdose later that night. That devastating loss left her mother determined to help others who struggle with substance use disorder, a condition that far too many of us know is chronic and reoccurring, but treatable.

Substance use-related disorder has been with us for a very long time. Opioid overdoses have been climbing over the past two decades, but since the pandemic, deaths have risen to an alarming 22 people a day. That is 22 circles of devastated friends and families a day. The drug crisis is marked by pain and a desperate need to do something. Easy solutions that sound like they are tough on crime have been found to do nothing to reduce harm and to save lives. We cannot incarcerate our way out of this pain and loss.

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Unfortunately, today, we are debating a tired idea that has actually contributed to the ongoing crisis, an idea to starve out the problem, ignore any science and go back, way back, to a manner of talking about drugs that is harmful and ignorant, that will create more shame and disgust for substance users. The Conservative Party need not worry. I have yet to meet someone who uses substances problematically that is not already suffering from those feelings, and I have yet to meet a grieving parent who would not do anything at all to help their children see their value and reach towards recovery.

To treat substance use and reduce related harms for people and communities, there is no one silver bullet. In the early 2000s, I was the author of the Thunder Bay drug strategy. Through that work with treatment professionals, law enforcement, support workers and public health prevention experts, we came to model our strategy on the international research that says, to save lives and reduce harm to people and communities, we need to follow four pillars that work together: prevention, treatment, enforcement and harm reduction. Indeed, we added a fifth pillar of housing, as it became clear that a place to call home was the foundation of healing. I note that Conservative members have voted against housing approaches as well.

Last fall, our government launched the renewed Canada drugs and substances strategy, which offers a comprehensive, collaborative, compassionate and evidence-based drug policy. Using the advice of that strategy, informed by the cross-section of professionals, the Government of Canada announced over \$1 billion in funding, including almost \$600 million through Health Canada's substance use and addictions program. This supports frontline workers for treatment, harm reduction, prevention and to reduce stigma. That is money going directly to people and their families, so that they can heal. The money also funds research and surveillance initiatives and supports stronger law enforcement capacity to address illegal drug production and trafficking.

Substance use is a complex issue and Canadians use drugs for many reasons. Not everyone who uses drugs is suffering from an addiction. Indeed, many people who use drugs are sporadic users, which is why the toxic supply is so dangerous.

For people with addictions, the right kinds of treatment services may not be available or affordable. Barriers to treatment are often unseen. Some people face particular challenges, based on their own unique circumstances. Marginalized groups are often victims of stigmatization or prejudice, which places them at higher risk, including youth, indigenous peoples, racialized communities and LGBTQ+ people.

Putting one's hand up for help is very hard. Society still places huge judgment on people with addictions and throwing around words like "addict", a word we have heard far too frequently from the Leader of the Opposition, actually continues that pattern of shaming. Shame is toxic too. It drives solitary use, silence and withdrawal from family and community.

Recovery looks different for everyone. I ask everyone in the House if they have ever struggled with a problematic substance or behaviour. Do they eat too much? Do they shop too much? Have they ever felt out of control with gambling? The list goes on. It is helpful for us to think of those times when we have been out of bal-

ance, because it gives us a glimpse into the "why" of addiction and empathy for the struggle to regain balance.

● (1155)

I can tell members that every person I have met who has lost a loved one would do anything to have another chance to keep that individual alive. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to this crisis. We need a range of supports that help, no matter if a person is using, contemplating how to get better or ready to step into recovery.

That is why harm reduction is so important, because we cannot treat someone if he or she is dead. Harm-reduction measures, such as supervised consumption sites and in-person or virtual spotting services, take-home naloxone and drug-checking technologies, keep people connected to services so they know they matter.

In 2016, there was only one supervised consumption site in Canada, and Stephen Harper tried over and over to shut it down. Thankfully, the courts agreed that the lives of drug users matter too.

Since then, our focus on saving lives means that we have approved 41 consumption sites in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec. At these sites, workers have prevented over 53,000 overdoses, with close to 4.5 million independent visits. That is a lot of people who want to live, but this motion says they are not worthy of that support, that they do not get another chance for a healthier day.

We also support a network of 45 treatment centres and services in the majority of first nations and Inuit communities across Canada: 82 sites that provide wraparound treatment and 75 mental wellness teams that serve 385 first nations and Inuit communities.

Although the Conservative opposition will tell people otherwise, harm reduction is actually treatment. When people feel seen and supported, they make connections. When people use a clean needle or inject a substance under the watch of a nurse, it means they want to live. At supervised consumption sites in Canada, there have been more than 424,000 referrals to health and social services. Harm reduction is a bridge to a better day.

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The Leader of the Opposition wants to go back to the days of the war on drugs, but what he is actually proposing is a war on substance users, people and their families, people who suffer and people who hope for a brighter tomorrow.

Today, I say these words in defence of the families grieving the loss of their loved ones. I say it for the parents, like my dear friend Calvin Fors in Thunder Bay, who lost his young son to an accidental overdose; we remember Reilly. No more deaths like Reilly or Dayna, that has to be the focus. Compassion matters, evidence matters, connection matters and cruelty will not help people heal. It never has, and we have that evidence loud and clear.

• (1200)

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions stated that the toxic drug supply was a leading cause of death. We agree with that. As the member noted, though, one of the four pillars is enforcement.

How many charges have been laid under the Criminal Code for the trafficking of fentanyl?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, I am extremely grateful to the law enforcement officers who work every single day with people who use substances. They are the hardest working members of a community, and we can all thank them.

In fact, I had an opportunity to go on a ride-along with law enforcement members just a couple years ago, and it was at Christmastime. Out of the 14 calls for help, 12 of them were for substance use-related disorder issues, including for alcoholism. These people were in the darkest moments of their days.

The law enforcement officers helped people and they connected them to mental health services. What they said repeatedly was that they needed a range of supports for people who were struggling in this way. It is heartbreaking work and people are doing it every day. I thank those enforcement officers.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague. I was listening to her very emotional testimony. I support her and we are on the same page.

The opioid crisis is not a simple problem. This is a complex issue that deserves as much nuance as there are challenges and people having bad experiences when they use hard drugs. I think that the Conservative Party is in the habit of taking simplistic approaches to all sorts of topics. I think it is deplorable that, on this issue, they are taking such simplistic shortcuts as the ones that we are hearing.

I would like my colleague to tell us how she would respond to the public, who is anxiously waiting for us to provide all the tools available to stakeholders, so that we, in the House, can be part of the solution by voting against the motion. The motion is too simplistic and has too many Conservative shortcuts.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, far too many families and communities in this country are affected by this very sad situation.

[*English*]

I am glad the member asked what we could do. I am also glad for her call to vote against this motion. If we vote against the motion, we are telling those families that are struggling, doing anything to keep their loved ones alive to see another day, that they matter.

Every substance user in the country is connected to people. Those of us who have lived a life free of worrying about someone who uses substances are extremely blessed. It certainly is not me. There are many people in my life who I have watched suffer tremendously. Every single moment, we know that there is a brighter future if they could just hold on another day.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the opioid crisis has devastated the James Bay region. We have had states of emergency declared. We have also had states of emergency declared on the health crisis and the suicide crisis. All the pillars of good health are essential.

I want to ask the minister about her decision to walk away from the Weeneebayko hospital. There have been 20 years of negotiations to have proper integrated health care in James Bay. I have spoken with Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler. I have spoken with Grand Chief Leo Friday. I have spoken with the national chief. They are all asking how the Liberal government could walk away from this project, which has been so many years in the making, to ensure we do not have third-class health care for the Cree people of James Bay.

• (1205)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, first, it will not only be health care that will get us out of this mess. It is building up community, which is the process of reconciliation. It is about equity and education. It is about better supports for people to reach their full potential, through the many ways we have delivered as a government.

I will refer directly to the member's question and say that I am not walking away from that commitment. We will get that hospital built.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, in today's debate, we must not forget the over 42,000 people who have died. We must also not forget their families, who have suffered as they watched their loved ones get caught in a downward spiral. I want us to have a respectful debate, where we do not use people who are sick and suffering to further a political or ideological agenda.

I want us to work on solutions, while respecting frontline workers and hearing and listening to what they have to say. For some weeks now, at the Standing Committee on Health, we have been hearing from witnesses, experts, people who work with individuals who struggle with addiction. They have been telling us about the situation.

What we can say today is that substance abuse, multiple substance abuse, is not a simple problem, and it is not first and foremost a judicial problem. It is a severe and complex public health issue. I think everyone can agree, or at least I hope they can, that drug addiction is a very insidious, chronic and multifactorial illness.

At one time, it could be said of addicts that they were slowly making their way to hell. The introduction of a synthetic opioid, fentanyl, has now tragically reduced the length of that journey. That is why I think that, in 2024, we need to call it an illicit drug crisis. That is what is causing overdoses.

This is a complex issue, and simplistic solutions are not the answer. Between 50% and 70% of addictions are associated with primary mental health problems. People need better access to first-line treatment. I will get back to this later, but the lack of investments in health care is not helping. We cannot solve a problem, discuss a problem, find solutions to a problem or measure the effectiveness of these solutions without first agreeing on the concepts involved in addressing it.

I am totally stunned this morning. I always thought that the Conservatives and the Leader of the Opposition deliberately spoke in vague terms, that they wanted people to believe that all of the parties except theirs were in favour of legalizing hard drugs. That is no small thing.

If, on their criminology 101 exam, an applicant to the criminology department was asked the difference between legalization, decriminalization and diversion and they gave the answer the Conservative leader gave earlier, that they are all the same thing, that they are just synonyms, that we are using different words that mean the same thing, that person would be rejected.

How can anyone talk about a problem when they do not even understand the concepts needed to describe and discuss reality? There is no one in the House right now who thinks we should legalize hard drugs to deal with the illicit drug crisis.

• (1210)

The problem, as we will see later in the analysis of the Conservative motion put forth this morning, is that the concept of legalization is being used indiscriminately. Legalizing drugs leads to the commercial production of the substances in question. All drug-related offences are removed from the Criminal Code to allow people to use drugs. It could result in commercial production and sales and freedom of purchase and use, as was the case for cannabis. Can we agree that that is far from what we want?

Decriminalizing simple possession for personal use by an addict is not at all the same thing. Can we agree on that? If we cannot agree on that, where is this debate going? What are we talking about, exactly?

Decriminalizing drug use, and by extension avoiding making a person suffering from addiction go through the judicial process, is not the same thing as legalizing drugs. It is a way of destigmatizing the addiction and giving the addict, among other things, access to services and resources. For people to get to rehab, when that is what they want, we need to be in contact with them. If they are us-

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ing drugs in secret, if they cannot talk about their addiction for fear of being stigmatized at work, does anyone think they will openly ask for help if they can be criminally charged? If they were unfortunate enough to take a pill from an illicit laboratory, they could die.

What people need to know is that this disease involves relapses, and no one ever wants to talk about that. People think all it takes is a stint in rehab and the problem is solved. That is not true, because relapse is part of the healing process.

It is a complex problem. Let us imagine managing to convince someone to go to rehab. Relapse is part of the process. Let us then imagine that that person no longer has access to supervised drug sites, which is what the Harper Conservatives proposed in 2011. The Supreme Court refused and said it was important because it would be injurious to the safety of people suffering from drug addictions. If a person relapses and no longer has access to these sites, they will take illicit drugs and will have less tolerance to the drug because opioids create a dependency. They could die. People talk about harm reduction, and those who work in the field say that supervised drug sites play an important role in harm reduction. Why is that? Because of illicit drugs. They can be tested to see if they contain fentanyl.

Of course, we need to deal with the issues arising from sharing spaces in the community. People who do not have a drug problem should not be left holding the bag. However, that does not negate an entire strategy based first and foremost, let us not forget, on prevention. It is not simply a matter of preventing drug use. It is also a question of preventing relapses, avoiding stigmatization and fostering social reintegration.

There is an incredible new project in my riding: a refurbished Uniatox. I am a little emotional. For the first time, this organization is going to work toward preventing relapses. There are not a lot of projects like that.

• (1215)

An utterly simplistic approach would be to stay away from harm reduction altogether. Just send people to detox, and then expect them to man up or woman up and deal with their life issues. This, however, is not the way to go. People will relapse. Supervised consumption sites do help people stabilize their drug use.

Harm reduction is one of the four pillars. I also talked about prevention. In this opioid crisis, a single pill can kill a person, so re-criminalizing drugs will not solve the problem. That has absolutely nothing to do with it. I could go out on the street right now and get a black market pill. It has nothing to do with decriminalization.

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There are a lot of overdoses in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and New Brunswick. Quebec does not have quite as many, according to the statistics I saw, but we have to be careful with that. Harm reduction also means safe supply. Why? Because we need to save lives, because illicit drugs kill. As far as I know, the fourth pillar, enforcement, is still not very effective.

In fact, for 50 years the repressive war on drugs approach solved nothing. If we compare the U.S. model to Portugal's, we see that the United States is far behind. Still, is there a country more hostile to decriminalizing simple possession and more hostile to diversion? I have yet to speak about diversion, but that is what Bill C-5 called for, diversion measures.

To continue with the U.S.-Portugal comparison, Portugal had one million heroin addicts and a shocking public health problem surrounding HIV transmission. They decriminalized, but they did not put the cart before the horse. They did not simply ease their consciences by going the diversion route and standing pat. We must invest money, redouble support measures, and hire social workers, frontline workers and street workers. More controlled-supply centres are needed, and we must constantly adapt and course-correct.

I see people saying that the BC pilot project is terrible. It is indeed terrible, but is it the decriminalization that is terrible? No, it is the fact that they are facing a crisis that no one here would be able to solve with a snap of their fingers. Everyone needs to work together. Yes, the people in British Columbia need to make some changes, but decriminalization does not necessarily mean people can use wherever they want. This can be regulated. I imagine this is where they are headed. Furthermore, there can be no denying the problems of sharing spaces with the community.

I made myself a crib sheet about the legal pillar. We were taught this in criminology back in the day. At one end, there is criminalization. At the other end, there is legalization. That is a spectrum. On the criminalization side, there is the death penalty. Is there a more severe punishment than a death sentence? Then there is incarceration, followed by fines.

• (1220)

Next up, we slowly go into the diversion and decriminalization spectrum. This could involve supervised consumption, the possibility of diverting the person before the courts, targeted interventions by the police, formal cautions, administrative penalties and fines. There can be decriminalization of simple possession, which is not yet legalization. Next, there is regulation of retail sale and of commercial production, and then legalization. That is legalization. One can say that this constitutes a spectrum.

When I hear the opposition leader say it is all the same thing, I have to tell him no, it is not the same thing. There are tables available. A little reading would help. It is as though I said that the death penalty was the same as incarceration. No, there are different measures, there is differentiation within the decriminalization spectrum, including diversion measures. This is what Montreal and Quebec have gone with, diversion.

Bill C-5 contained an important provision that included a diversion measure for simple possession offences. Among other things, it led to the implementation of the pilot project in British Columbia,

which started in January 2023 and just ended. Has it really ended? The answer is yes and no, because I expect they are going to make the necessary adjustments.

For anyone who is unaware, this crisis has been growing since 2016 and spiked during the pandemic. Why? Because people were isolated then. When someone overdoses while they are alone, they cannot self-administer naloxone. Furthermore, unless people use in supervised consumption sites, they cannot get naloxone.

The motion is incorrect. Let us examine point (a).

(a) proactively reject the City of Toronto's request to the federal government to make deadly hard drugs like crack, cocaine, heroin, and meth legal;

The statement is incorrect. Last January, the City of Toronto submitted a new version of its drug decriminalization plan to Health Canada, and the city is working on decriminalization, not legalization.

(b) reject the City of Montreal's vote calling on the federal government to make deadly hard drugs legal;

Similarly, Montreal is working on diversion measures, in collaboration with police forces and public health, so that frontline workers, everyone together, can coordinate their work. There are problems, of course, but everyone needs to work together, and they will. However, we are a long way from decriminalization and even further from legalization.

(c) deny any active or future requests from provinces, territories and municipalities seeking federal approval to make deadly hard drugs legal in their jurisdiction;

Once again, this is ridiculous, utterly ridiculous. No one is talking about legalization, but rather decriminalization, and even then, not everyone is calling for decriminalization. Some jurisdictions have thought about the issue, have changed their minds and are choosing greater co-operation among stakeholders in the field, with diversion measures, to avoid clogging up the courts with people who really should not be in prison but should be getting treatment, because prisons are not therapeutic places. People are coming together to say that they will continue to work collaboratively to try to gradually resolve any issues they may have related to sharing a space in the community.

(d) end taxpayer funded narcotics and redirect this money into treatment and recovery programs for drug addiction.

This is basically saying that taxpayers are funding the opioid and overdose crisis. That is not what is happening. This program was put in place to prevent deaths, and evidence shows that safe supply is actually reducing overdoses right now. Imagine how much worse the crisis would be without it.

I have to stop there.

Business of Supply

• (1225)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate the manner and the tone in which the member speaks about what is a very serious issue in Canada today. While I was listening to him, I thought about how we need to recognize that the way we have to deal with the crisis before us today is multi-faceted. I thought about how important it is to work with health care professionals, first responders, communities and different levels of government to ensure that we get this right. Could the member provide his thoughts on how important it is that we work in consultation, in a co-operative fashion, in order to save lives, as well as anything else he might want to add to that?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I did not mention the Quebec plan, which has four pillars: more prevention, more treatment with opioid antagonists, more and better harm reduction, and enforcement to dismantle clandestine laboratories.

We want a ban on precursors, which are the substances needed to make counterfeit and deadly drugs. These labs add fentanyl and other substances to the drugs. People cannot even tolerate a single dose. We have to be able to dismantle and prohibit these labs.

The federal government should invest in the health care systems in Quebec and the provinces so that they can take care of their own residents. It is also high time to legislate in the matter of precursors.

[English]

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talks about so-called safe supply and harm reduction, saying that we need to do more of this, that we need more examples of this and that we need more programs to expand the scope, etc. I direct him to British Columbia. After barely a year, the NDP government there, which was a big supporter of this, all of a sudden pushed back and wanted to backtrack as fast as it could. It applied some common sense to say that it does not really make sense to have free drugs in public places. The irony is that the premier is facing an election. The people are filled with common sense, and with the voter protest, he had to do that.

One of the key points of so-called safe supply is the government providing free hard drugs, hydromorphone. This is what has been happening in British Columbia. We know these free drugs are being sold to young people in particular. As they end up in the hands of young people, more new addicts are created.

Does the member think it is a good plan, and does he support the federal government providing free drugs that end up in the hands of children.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, saying that we need to do more harm reduction does not necessarily involve doing more to ensure a safe supply. It means that we need to make changes to safe supply. We need more measures to ensure that these drugs do not fall into the wrong hands. Safe supply does not kill. What kills are illicit drugs on the illicit counterfeit drug market.

My colleague insinuated that safe supply drugs are making their way to schoolyards. I heard the same claims at the Standing Committee on Health, but the experts we met with said that there is no evidence for this. I invite my colleague to table an official document containing evidence about safe supply drugs being diverted and sold in schoolyards, rather than a mere newspaper article.

• (1230)

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, who actually stands behind evidence-based policy, policy that is grounded in facts. We hear the Conservatives bring this moral panic around safe supply, for example, and give disinformation about it.

This is harmful in a health crisis. We heard from the president of the BC Association of Chiefs of Police that the diversion of safe supply is nominal at best. She cited that it is actually fentanyl and toxic drugs that are killing people. She was unequivocally clear that pharmaceuticals are a small part of what is being found; actually, hydromorphone is even smaller. It is literally a fraction of what is ending up on the street. People are dying from fentanyl.

Can my colleague speak about the danger of an ideologically driven health policy based on moral panic and disinformation and how harmful that is not just to the victims but to the future of our country and our health care system?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, what I should say to add to my earlier answer is that harm reduction existed well before today's overdose crisis. When the Conservatives say that what we are seeing now is the result of harm reduction, they are wrong.

The problem is the illicit drug overdose crisis. People working on the ground told us that we needed to do something for people like the mother who came to see us, saying that if her son had had access to a safe supply program when he was going through withdrawal, he would not have died. He lost all the tolerance he had built up because he went through withdrawal and ended up taking illicit drugs. He died right away, without having the chance to become the good citizen he wanted to be.

Business of Supply

I will avoid making things worse here. I could accuse the Conservatives of many things, but I will not. I just want us to talk, to tell the truth and to discuss evidence and data without letting political ideology get in the way, and especially without blaming the people who have died, their families and those who are currently suffering from addiction.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Montcalm for his speech, which was enlightening as always, because he himself is enlightened and well versed in his files. It is a pleasure to hear him speak.

This morning, several of us tried to get the Conservatives to explain the difference between decriminalization, legalization and diversion. They were unwilling to answer the question. However, we got the beginnings of a response when I asked one of my colleagues whether we were witnessing a public health crisis and he replied that drug addiction is a chronic disease.

My question is simple: Once we start to view drug addiction as a chronic disease, how can we do anything but decriminalize addicts' behaviour if we want to ensure that they receive proper treatment instead of throwing them in jail?

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, decriminalization, British Columbia's pilot project, has nothing to do with overdoses, but it did make it possible to divert these people away from jail and the justice system.

We need to be careful, though. Yes, this is true, but drug consumption can qualify for diversion too, because in co-operation with community projects, we can ensure that police intervene, that they be authorized to intervene, but that they refrain from arresting the individual. Perhaps this is what B.C. is returning to.

The fact remains that we agree on one thing: These people must receive care, but above all, we need the resources to give them care, and we must stop feeling like we have done enough by simply diverting the individual, because we are leaving them in the street alone with their problems. We need to invest heavily in health care. The government has been miserly about investing in health care, and so have the Conservatives. Health transfers need to be increased, because the provinces and Quebec are the ones that are taking care of these people and that have to treat them, and they are crying poverty. We must not undermine all the good things that are being done to take care of these people with the inadequate means at hand. This needs to be heard in our debate.

• (1235)

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to rise today to speak about the leading health crisis, toxic drugs. Certainly in my own province, it is the leading cause of death for those under the age of 59.

This issue is not just close to me; it is close to everyone in my home province, and it is a terrible tragedy. Highly contaminated toxic drugs are raging across the country and killing people every single day. Over 20 people a day are dying. I can tell members personally, coming from Vancouver Island and my hometown, of the impact it has had on everybody in my community. Nobody where I live is untouched. I cannot count on two hands the number of my

friends' kids who have died, never mind friends. It is a terrible tragedy that is happening, and we can do better.

We hear this huge debate about harm reduction versus treatment and recovery. However, we have to do both; they go hand in hand. We cannot help people who are dead, as my good friend from Vancouver East constantly reminds me. We need to move forward with policies that are grounded on evidence or evidence-generated and supported policy.

The evidence says that what we are doing is not working. That is the evidence right across this country. We are now dealing with new substances that are highly toxic and addictive. Never before in our history have we seen such challenging times when it comes to dangerous substances. They are obviously lethal, because they are unregulated; they are manufactured, marketed and sold by organized crime.

We have had a number of expert reports on how we should respond to this crisis, including from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the Expert Task Force on Substance Use, which was created by Health Canada to inform politicians on how to move forward in responding to this terrible crisis. All of them are consistent in that we need to stop criminalizing people who use substances, as it causes more harm and is rooted in stigma. We need to create a safer supply of substances to replace the toxic street supply. We need to scale up treatment and recovery; to make sure that we are meeting people where they are, with those systems in place and ready; and to spend money on education and prevention. However, we have not done that, and I say this all the time: The Liberals are taking an incremental approach in a health crisis, which is costing lives. Conservatives are spreading disinformation, which is deadly in a health crisis. We need to move forward and listen to the experts.

I will talk a bit about what is actually happening and the facts about some of the concerns we are hearing from the Conservatives. It is their motion today, and I will speak to them primarily.

The Conservatives have created a moral panic. They are fundraising off the tragedies of families. It is absolutely unbelievable. It is so harmful. If they were truly here to try to help people, they would be bringing forward concrete solutions. However, I have not heard that from any of their speeches today.

I asked the leader of the official opposition why he would not meet with the mothers of the victims of this crisis. I sat with them and listened to them, and their stories are informed. They know better than anyone how toxic the drugs are. They know how hard it is to support someone who is going through difficult challenges when living with a substance use disorder and navigating a system that is completely broken. They know better.

We hear the Conservatives in terms of their moral panic that they have created around this issue. I will talk a little about what is actually going on in western Canada, where we are hearing primarily from Conservative MPs.

Business of Supply

Is my home province of British Columbia doing enough? No, it is absolutely not.

● (1240)

Is any province or territory in this country doing enough? No, but they require a federal partner. Vancouver, British Columbia, has been ground zero for over 100 years when it comes to high amounts of substance use. It dates back to the opioid crisis in 1908. This is not new to us in our communities, but what is new is the toxicity of the drugs. It has been challenging because we have been at ground zero facing this terrible tragedy.

When the B.C. Liberals were in government, in 2014, we went from 7.9 deaths per 100,000 people to 30.3 in just a matter of four years, a 383% increase. From 2017, we actually went up from 30.3 per 100,000, peaking at over 47 deaths per 100,000. That is absolutely brutal. After the last 11 or 12 months, we have seen an 11% decline in deaths. That is the trajectory right now for British Columbia. I am not celebrating that, but it is a relief.

This is a tragedy. Every death is preventable. Every single one of these deaths is preventable. We are breathing a sigh of relief that we are heading in the right trajectory, but it needs to go down much faster. We need to come together and work together on that. We went from 7.4 people dying a day in my own province to 6.2. Six families are going to get a call today.

I look at Alberta. The Conservative government got elected in 2019. Alberta had 15 deaths per 100,000 people; now it is at 41 deaths per 100,000. Alberta is leading the country in terms of deaths per capita. Alberta's death rate is skyrocketing. I will give some examples. In Lethbridge, which closed the safe consumption site, the death rate is 137 per 100,000. That is more than triple that of British Columbia. Medicine Hat is at 63.7 deaths, over 50% more than British Columbia. We see reports in the news about Fort McMurray having a record-breaking year. If we do not have safe consumption sites, then guess where people will go to use. They will use in public, in the back alleys and in the bathrooms of businesses, and they die at home, alone. We know that is deadly, when we have a toxic drug problem.

I could speak about Saskatchewan. We constantly hear from members, whether they be the member for Lethbridge or the member for Fort McMurray, pointing a finger at British Columbia. I am not doing that right now. I am just trying to bring some facts so that we can actually have a proper conversation. I will get to that.

In terms of Regina, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle has pointed a finger at British Columbia, instead of coming here to fight to help people in Regina. That is a failure, while people are dying in his community. The death rate in his city is 66 per 100,000. That is straight from the Regina police force.

Those two Conservative provinces are leading the nation in terms of death rates that are skyrocketing. We could look to Alaska, a Republican state, which had a 45% increase last year. There is no harm reduction, no safe supply, no decriminalization in those two provinces and that state. When members want to point fingers at safe supply and decriminalization, what is happening in their provinces, with their one-track, recovery-only model, where they failed to listen to the experts? They talk about wacko. What is

wacko is when people ignore experts, ignore evidence, ignore science and ignore the facts. That is wacko.

In the U.S., under Donald Trump, toxic drugs deaths doubled in 30 states, but they want to say it is British Columbia, an NDP thing or a Liberal thing. This is not an NDP, Liberal or Conservative thing. This is a societal issue. The problems and the solutions are not going to be based on ideology. They have to be grounded in evidence and supported by the experts, and led by the experts, not by politicians. I cannot think of another health crisis where politicians are deciding how we move forward.

● (1245)

This is an issue that we know has been chronically underfunded. The Liberals have spent less than 1% responding to the toxic drug crisis. Why? It is because of the stigma. Are the Conservatives helping contribute to the stigma? Absolutely. We need to get away from that harm. We need to make sure that we listen to the experts.

Now, we talk about safer supply. The whole concept of safer supply is that it is to be brought in to replace the toxic drug supply. This is recommended by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. The law and order party does not want to listen to the police. The police testified at the health committee. They said that 85% of poison drug deaths are from fentanyl. Cocaine was found in the bloodstream. However, they said hydromorphone, safer supply, is not what is killing people. In fact, traces of it showed up in 3% of the analyses of toxic drugs in British Columbia.

Prescribing pharmaceutical alternatives to toxic street drugs separates people from toxic street drugs and helps them stay alive so they can stabilize their lives and connect to treatment and care. There is no way to know the source of drugs purchased on the streets right now, even if a dealer claims it is from the prescribed alternatives program.

The chief coroner of B.C. has indicated that we are not seeing an increase in deaths amongst youth or an increase in diagnosis of opioid use disorder, despite the claims of the Conservatives. The goal of the prescribed alternatives program is to help people at the highest risk of death or harms from the illicit poison drug supply stabilize their lives.

Business of Supply

Safer supply has not increased the number of people with opioid disorder. In fact, we have seen reductions in all-cause mortality and overdose mortality; reductions in overdose and in the use of unregulated opioids by those on safer supply; a decline in health care costs and fewer hospital visits; an increased engagement in health care and social services; improvements in physical and mental health; improvements in social well-being and stability; reduced use of toxic drugs from the unregulated street supply; improved control over their drug use; reduced injection; reduced involvement in criminal activities. The diversion of hydromorphone is not contributing to opioid-related mortality. In fact, we heard that for those receiving safer supply through the safer supply program, the risk of dying from any of those causes was reduced by 61%, and the risk of dying from overdose was cut in half. If they received four days or more, their overdose risk was further reduced by 89%.

I want to go back to who is impacted the most. Indigenous peoples are impacted the most. The opioid epidemic and toxic drug crisis are yet another example of the large gaps in health care outcomes between indigenous and non-indigenous people. Indigenous people are disproportionately affected and multiple times more likely to die from toxic drugs. They are seven times more likely to die in Alberta, five times more likely to die in British Columbia, and in some indigenous communities that can skyrocket to as much as 36 times more likely than the general population. We just heard that at the health committee the other day.

I am going to read a quote from Dr. Judith Sayers, the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council president. She sits on the BC First Nations Justice Council. She said:

We want to work with the province in tackling the crisis and be part of a collaborative strategy.... The BCFNJC stands with our partners in healthcare and asserts that the toxic drug crisis needs to be treated and addressed as a public health issue, not a criminal justice issue. The criminal justice system is not the solution to a problem that, instead, needs to be addressed through healing.

We have to stop this colonial approach and listen to indigenous people, who are more likely to die from this crisis.

I have a quote from the police, which, again, the law and order party wants to ignore. The deputy commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said:

As noted, in some of our supervised consumption sites or overdose prevention sites, there are no inhalation rooms or there is no ability to inhale. We find that most of our overdose deaths are related to fentanyl and to inhalation, so we need to provide spaces, I think, that would allow for that, but it can't be a space where someone has to take a bus for four kilometres and go across the city to find that space. Those spaces need to be readily available.

This is against the Lethbridge model.

● (1250)

I will talk about Fiona Wilson, president of the British Columbia Association of Chiefs of Police. She is a deputy chief in the Vancouver Police Department. She said, "85% of overdose deaths are attributable to fentanyl.... [T]hat's what people are dying from according to the coroner's data. They're not dying from diverted safe supply and they're not actually dying from diverted prescription medication". She also said, "the reality is that there are seven people per day dying in British Columbia as a result of the toxic drug crisis. They are not dying as a result of prescription-diverted medication; they are dying because of the poisonous drug supply that is

on our streets." Lastly, she said, "we do not want to criminalize people by virtue of their personal drug use. Those days are gone. We want to support a health-led approach.... [W]e strongly support the notion of not trying to arrest ourselves out of this crisis. That is not going to save lives. In fact, it does quite a bit of harm". That is from the police.

I will talk about going to Portugal. I went to Portugal last summer, on my own dime, and I was very fortunate to have the Embassy of Portugal line up a deep-dive itinerary so I could go there and learn.

Why did I choose to go to Portugal? My good colleague from the Bloc talked about Portugal, and I really appreciate his insight. I went there to learn from them. They had a death rate of over 1,000 people in a population of only 10 million, primarily from intravenous drug use. Heroin, as we know, was impacting their community. They had over 100,000 chronic daily heroin users. As my colleague cited, over a million people had tried heroin. They were able to bring their numbers down to 23,000 chronic users. They brought the number of deaths from 1,000 to 60.

I thought it would be prudent for me to go and learn and listen to them. This is how they responded to their health emergency when they decided to treat it as that, instead of a criminal issue. They went from 250 people using methadone to 35,000 in two years. How did they do that? They engaged the military to build labs. They engaged the military to do that so they could reduce the price, get those labs up and running, and save lives. That is how one responds in a health emergency. They built treatment facilities right across the country so that there was no wait, no barrier to treatment, and it was covered under the universal health care system, not like the Alberta model. Good luck getting treatment in Alberta in a short period of time. It is not going to happen.

We heard loud and clear from witnesses, including Petra Schulz from Moms Stop the Harm, who talked about the gaps in the system, and there are gaps in our system.

Portugal also spent a lot of money on recovery, because we know that relapse is part of dealing with recovery. They caught people when they landed. They invested in a four-year follow-up cycle, when people came through treatment. We know that connection is a deep and important part of dealing with the underlying trauma. They made sure that people had housing, and they decriminalized drug use and treated it as a health issue.

Business of Supply

One hears my title as the NDP critic for mental health and harm reduction. We do not just see harm reduction as safe consumption sites and safe supply. Those are critical components. However, housing and all the different social determinants of health are also reducing harm. Our goal should be to reduce harm.

We hear the Liberals talk about meeting the moment. They did not respond like Portugal. They have not moved in an expedient way. We need a coordinated, integrated, compassionate approach like that of Portugal.

Portugal created an expert task force. That expert task force morphed into the oversight body for government to move forward. I will tell members why the politicians in Portugal were heroes: They got out of the way. They decided it was a health issue and they let the experts lead. They moved forward with their policy and implemented it. The politicians' role was to make sure that they had the resources to do it. That was the job of the politicians.

We are not doing that today. We need to get to that point, because we know that over 20 people are going to die today. Over 20 moms are going to get a call. It needs to stop. The disinformation, the fundraising, the moral panic need to stop. People need to meet with the moms. The Conservative leader is the only leader who refuses to meet with Moms Stop the Harm. He cannot explain himself. They are informed.

The Liberal government needs to treat this and to meet the moment, like it says. It needs to scale up resources and meet the moment.

• (1255)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his ongoing work in this field and for his obvious depth of knowledge and relationship with individuals who are working to save lives.

I am glad that he raised Moms Stop The Harm. I have met with Moms Stop The Harm and various spinoff organizations comprised of parents. "Moms" is in the name, but there are certainly dads involved in those groups, and other family members.

Have you heard from Moms Stop The Harm and other groups like it, of family members who are working hard to help provide that safety for other families. Have you heard how they feel about the conversation the Conservatives are having?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will remind the hon. member that I have not heard, as it was the hon. member who made the speech.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I wanted to learn about this issues, because it is causing so much harm in my home community and I am so deeply impacted by it as well.

I travelled the country, going to 13 different cities. I met with moms at very stop and at every stop, they said the same thing: That we needed to listen to the experts and that this needed to be grounded in evidence. They want the government to act like this is a na-

tional health emergency, to declare a public health emergency and to reinstate the expert task force.

We have not had a summit, a first ministers' meeting, on this crisis; 42,000 people have died. We have had an auto theft summit. I am not saying that is not an important issue, but clearly this is a health emergency.

Where is the emergency action from the Liberals? What did the moms say about the Conservatives? They want to meet with the Conservative leader. He is afraid to look them in the eye and hear the truth. He is afraid because he knows what he is doing is immoral, the disinformation he is spreading. He knows it is not grounded in evidence. The moms have the evidence; their kids are dead.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is hard to rise and talk to a topic like this one, as so many young people are dying across our country. There has been a 166% increase in deaths since the Prime Minister took over in 2015 to 2024. That is what we are talking about. People's loved ones have died.

The member politicized his speech and said that our leader was afraid to meet with mothers, when he has met with mothers across the country. That is actually beneath the member. I have a lot of respect for the member, but his speech was beneath him.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Warren Steinley: The House leader of the NDP can yell as much as he wants.

Madam Speaker, Dr. Nickie Mathew met with the health committee members and said that there was a 22% increase in B.C. youth with hydromorphone in their system. That comes from the safe supply. In B.C., there is a 22% increase in hydromorphone in the bloodstream of deceased B.C. youth.

How can the member possibly say that safe supply is not affecting and killing B.C. youth?

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, that member comes from Regina, where there are 66 deaths per 100,000. That is more than 50% higher than British Columbia. Kids are dying from poisoned drugs in his community by accessing unregulated street drugs. In Saskatoon, where brownies are being sold to keep the doors open of safe consumption sites, the deaths are half of what is going on in Regina.

When it comes to youth, it is extremely rare for any young person to be prescribed pharmaceutical alternatives and it is always led by physicians.

Business of Supply

To the member's question, young people can access street drugs anywhere, any time. The streets are flooded with drugs. The police have said that safe supply is not what is killing youth. That is not what is getting youth addicted to drugs. Addiction with youth has not gone up since safe supply moved forward. That is a fact; it is published data.

The Conservatives do not believe in peer-reviewed published data. They only support anecdotes. That is what they do. They push it out, and it is harmful and dangerous. It is costing us lives in our country.

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his passionate and informative speech.

With their motion, we are hearing the Conservatives trying to convince us that their proposal will solve everything, that fentanyl will disappear overnight from the illicit drugs sold in the street, that drug addiction problems will be solved overnight and that the handful of treatment procedures they are suggesting will have a 100% success rate.

This leaves me with the impression that, at best, they are engaging in magical thinking, but at worst, and this is the impression I am getting, they are approaching a social issue from a purely partisan perspective and trying to score cheap political points off people's misery.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, the evidence is in on how the Conservatives' policy is playing out. Alberta is leading the country per capita for death rates due to toxic drugs, and its rate is skyrocketing. In Saskatchewan, it is skyrocketing. Alaska has the same program of no safe supply and no decriminalization.

The Conservatives want to point the finger at British Columbia. All they need to do is go to Lethbridge where a safe consumption site was closed. Even if the federal government wants to open one, the Province of Alberta will fine it \$10,000 a day to save lives. It will be charged \$10,000 a day to open a facility to stop public use and ensure people get connected to services so they stay alive by getting their drugs tested if they are using and being connected to treatment and recovery. However, the Conservatives do not want to do that. In fact, the Premier of Alberta is even going to block research and studying the critical benefits of safer supply. It is out of control. The federal government needs to step in. This is a raging crisis in those provinces.

We know how the Conservatives will operate if they are in government and how they will deal with this crisis. They are basically saying that people can only go to treatment and recovery, where often they will wait or they will die. That is the only option.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his never-ending advocacy and support, and bringing forward the voices of experts in field and families.

Prior to becoming a member of Parliament, I worked in mental health and addictions, working directly with youth, families and

those who supported them to provide wraparound supports. It was not good enough to offer a youth-only treatment, or only housing or only mental health support. It was essential that they were provided with the wraparound, person-centred supports people require to work through what was going on with them. The other piece was culture, tradition and connections to families. We need to be looking at wraparound, person-centred supports.

Could the member please share with us the importance of having a multi-tiered approach in supporting people who are struggling with substance misuse and how that is the path forward in preventing more deaths?

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, my colleague is grounded in experience. She worked in the field, on the front line, with young people, seeing the barriers and navigating a broken system. She also understands the importance of connection, peer support, the critical investments and having an integrated, coordinated, compassionate approach. However, that has to be funded. It has to be supported by government.

Right now, people are asking why they should pay for all of the harm reduction, treatment, recovery and housing supports. I can tell the taxpayers at home who are watching that they are paying for it, and then some, much more. This is critical when we get into prevention, especially when it comes to young people. We have to scale up prevention and education. We have to support the people on the ground doing the hard work. We have to support peer support and ensure we have a coordinated, integrated and compassionate approach.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in my riding of Kingston and the Islands, there is a safe injection site. About an hour down Highway 401, in Belleville, there is not one. We know, because it made national news only a few months ago, that in a 24-hour period, Belleville had well over 12 overdoses. It was extremely alarming and very scary.

I recognize that my example is anecdotal, at best, but I cannot help but wonder why an area that does have a safe injection site does not experience the same thing that happened down Highway 401, where there is no safe injection site. Could the member speak to what he thinks about that?

• (1305)

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I can go to Lethbridge, which has a death rate of 137 per 100,000; it closed the safe consumption site. Imagine being a parent of a child in Lethbridge, where there is no safe supply, where it does not support decriminalization and where it closed safe consumption sites, or a parent in Belleville who needs safe consumption sites. Police are saying we need more, not less, safe consumption sites. They save lives.

Business of Supply

We have to listen to the experts and respond with urgency. The federal government has a role to play when it comes to safe consumption sites.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am going to split my time with the chief opposition whip, who is my favourite chief opposition whip.

I want to start with those who are suffering, the parents, brothers, sisters and families involved. Our hearts are with them. I want those who are watching to know that there is a better way.

There is carnage out there. There are bodies in the streets, their skin punctured by weapons, their veins filled with dangerous chemicals. Surrounding them are debris and unimaginable scenes of human suffering. We have seen it across the country and in no place is it more prevalent than in British Columbia today.

This is not a depiction of some horror movie; it is a depiction of what is happening in our streets. It is not because of violence, a scene curated by an award-winning director or special effects. This is what is really happening. It would make us think that we were watching the worst thing we could possibly watch on TV, the government giving away free drugs. It is, frankly, investing in street-level palliative care is what it looks like.

We do not have to look much further than the debate we are having today to know how badly the Liberals and the NDP have strayed from consensus on this topic. After nine years of the Liberal-NDP government, and after nine years of the drugs, disorder, chaos and crime, members of Parliament in this place are actively defending and promoting the legalization of hard drugs, like crack, heroin and meth, in hospitals, parks and on buses. It is clear that this is no longer our mothers' Liberal Party. It has an extremist view on this, and so many other issues.

Contrary to everything we see every day in our communities, the people who are lying face down on the sidewalks, the endless tent cities, the needles littering playgrounds and public transit, the Liberal-NDP MPs continue to press on with an ideological purity, even as evidence, advocates, their own party members, moms and dads and those in the community tell them that their extremist experiment has failed. It is not hard to find evidence why. It is everywhere. Beyond the scenes we are witnessing in parks, our communities and our own neighbourhoods, the facts and the testimony are everywhere.

After the government supported Premier Eby's socialist experiment and plot to legalize the consumption of hard drugs like heroin in public places, overdose deaths went up 380%. That is six people every day in one province. It has become so out of line in hospitals that they were soon mandated to allow drug use even next to cancer patients and newborn babies. Let us picture our grandmothers lying in bed next to a room where a guy is smoking meth. That is where we are at. Not to mention that the B.C. crime rates have gone up seven out of eight years that the Prime Minister has been in power.

The problem with the so-called safe supply is not just a British Columbia problem; it is an everywhere problem. Thanks to the government flooding the streets with opioids, powerful and dangerous drugs that used to cost 50 bucks a pill are now being sold for less than two dollars on street corners.

Those who are struggling with addiction can sell their fentanyl prescription minutes after getting it and then use the money to buy even harder and more potent drugs. As a result, more and more people are getting sucked into the violent cycle of addiction. People as young as 14 years old are dying from overdoses because they were entrapped into trying these drugs by friends, neighbours and even strangers who they met on the Internet, drugs that were easy to get, easy to sell and easy to get hooked on. It is something the minister actually said was not happening.

We can see that what those radical Liberal-NDP MPs are promoting is not a safe supply, but an unsafe supply. It is unsafe for those who use drugs, because instead of treatment they get even more drugs to keep them using for a lifetime, all the while it takes hundreds of days to find a detox bed in almost any city. It is unsafe for individuals recovering from the use of drugs, as relapses and temptations become more common thanks to the flood of fentanyl in our streets. It is unsafe for the communities at large, as kids dodge needles on playgrounds and nurses stop breastfeeding for fear of contaminating their babies after a full day of treating those who use drugs openly in their hospitals.

● (1310)

Even in the face of all of this, the Liberals and the NDP want to continue pushing forward and defending their failed record, literally to death. It is not just a hallmark of the government, which ignores and labels everyone it disagrees with while telling Canadians that left is right and up is down. It is emblematic of a government that fundamentally minimizes the value and the dignity of every human being and anybody who wants to get better. It is a government that offers medical assistance in dying to veterans who served our nation, that separated Canadians into categories of vaccinated and unvaccinated, and that called them misogynists. It is a government that would rather pump pills instead of helping people get better.

On this side of the House, we believe that every human has value and that everybody, with support, care and compassion, can turn their lives around. We never hear that conversation in the House. We never hear about the ability for somebody to get better. That is why we oppose this misguided plan to legalize free drugs. That is why a Conservative minister of health would invest in treatment and not crack, in recovery and not heroin.

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However, before there would be a common-sense, Conservative government, there is an even more pressing problem. The Liberals and the NDP want to not only defend their record on drugs but also expand it. If they did not, they would have said that. They still have not rejected requests from cities such as Montreal and Toronto to do exactly what was done in B.C., with exactly the same consequences. The Minister of Health says that the application is dormant, and I suspect that it is dormant until exactly after the next election.

As a Toronto-area MP, I know the problems that we have with illegal drugs. I know how bad they are, and I think about what making them legal would do. There would be open drug use and more violence on the TTC; more human suffering right out in the open on our streets, in our parks, in our hospitals, on our buses and on our subways; and more crime, chaos, drugs and disorder in our neighbourhoods that used to feel safe.

This has all been propagated by the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, who is from Toronto, and who is selling out her own constituents who want to go to work, raise a family and just live in peace. This is a minister who will not protect her constituents from the reckless drug use, the same minister who has failed to protect the very people who brought her here, and it is not the first time.

Even in this crazy world, I thought more people would have the guts and brains to look around at what is happening, look around at what is going on in B.C. and everywhere else, and say no to these irrational free-drug schemes that have proven not to work. Twenty-five hundred people in B.C. have been lost, which is six people a day, and there is even more evidence after nine years of this Liberal-NDP coalition.

The Liberals have absolutely lost their minds on this. Worse, if somebody, 10 years ago, accused the Prime Minister of legalizing the smoking of crack in a hospital room, I would call them crazy and say that he would never do that. However, here we are today, where it was legal up until the request, and up until the 11 days it took the government to come back on that request, and it still has not ruled it out for other cities. I would call him insane. I would call that experiment insane, yet it is true today. What is more insane, if we are going to call it for what it is, and it is the most insane policy this government has ever put forward, is that the Liberals will call us insane for saying that, which is gaslighting to the nth degree.

I look forward to a day when the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, the member for York Centre, is no longer allowed to give away free drugs; when people, in their darkest moments, can get the help they need, treatment, to bring home their loved ones drug-free; and when communities, kids and neighbourhoods are fully protected from this scourge.

The Liberals' views are extreme, and do not let anybody ever tell those who are watching that this is not anything but extreme. They have become an extremist party with extremist policies.

• (1315)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we see the same

kind of stigmatization with the language used by the member opposite. They talk about horror movies, which is invoking the fear of people who are really struggling in their circumstances, whom I feel such tremendous sadness for.

I would ask the member about her premise, which is really to return to a failed war on substance users. It has been the approach. Indeed, it was the approach of the Stephen Harper government. It certainly has been the approach of many other Conservative governments. However, we have not actually seen an alleviation, even in countries that have even a more extreme war on substance users, with up to life imprisonment for those who are struggling and, in some sad cases, even death.

Can the member tell me how this new proposal from the Conservatives would work when we have evidence from around the world that it poses a deep burden on families and substance users?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, this is exactly what I am talking about, which is the extremist view that treatment is somehow war. I want to tell the member something. Thank God my parents circled around me. Those who I worked with and my friends had faith in my own recovery. Thank God I had treatment. Thank God I did not have the safe supply.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, the minister is walking out and yelling because she knows she is wrong. She is an extremist. Thank God there was not the safe supply because I would not be sitting in the front row of Parliament today if it had been up to her.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, one thing I would like to mention and point out to the Conservative members is that dead people do not detox. I have spent probably the vast majority of my political life fighting for a four-pillars approach, which includes prevention, harm reduction, policing and treatment to deal with the opioid crisis. Right now, statistics show, and the numbers do not lie, that Alberta is the leading province in the number of drug poisoning deaths. Alberta does not have decriminalization. That is the reality.

What is more important? Is it for Conservatives to play their political games at the expense of people who are struggling and mothers who are losing their loved ones, or is it more important for them to put the facts before them and take a four-pillars approach that includes the harm reduction that saves lives for Canadians?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, speaking of a political approach, she has an ideological opposition to the province of Alberta and is using the deaths in that province to make a political point. That is gross.

Business of Supply

If she is talking about detox and treatment, that is exactly what I spoke about. There is none of that in any of their plans, and if there were, we would not be having this conversation. Eventually families, mothers, fathers and the people she talked to could finally bring home their loved ones drug-free, if there were actually any money for treatment in this country.

• (1320)

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, the NDP-Liberal coalition has been speaking a lot about the four pillars today, but its members have said nothing about enforcement. We have asked numerous times how many arrests have been made to stop the illegal flow of fentanyl and how the Criminal Code has been used to stop illegal drugs from killing people. They cannot say a single thing about it. Why is that?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, it is because they believe in legalization. If they did not, they would have said that. If they did not, they would have said something about the applications on their desks from Toronto and Montreal.

People watching at home should know their ideological position on this. They want this to happen. The consensus is far, far gone from these Liberals. One used to not be able to smoke crack in a hospital or on a bus, or shoot up in a playground. That is a normal view. They are an extremist party that has brought this on to Canadians, and they are on the wrong side of history for it.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister, aided and abetted by the NDP, has spent nine years implementing his radical vision of Canada. He would like everyone to believe that this agenda is normal.

There is record food bank usage, out-of-control gas prices and a housing market that has priced young Canadians out of the dream of home ownership. The government is censoring the Internet by controlling what people can see or say online. There is a 39% increase in violent crime; catch-and-release bail that sees offenders arrested in the morning, out by noon, and then rearrested later that very same day; and the legalization of meth, cocaine, heroin and opioids in British Columbia. Parents are worried that their children could step on used needles in a playground. None of this is normal. These are the outcomes of the radical policies brought to us by the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister. His legacy is one of crime, chaos, drugs and disorder. The results of his hard-drug legalization experiment and taxpayer-funded narcotics policy have been tragic but entirely predictable.

Since 2015, over 42,000 Canadians have died from drug overdoses. Opioid overdose deaths have increased 186% across Canada under the Prime Minister's watch. A record 2,500 British Columbians died from drug overdoses last year. That is up 380% in nine years. That is six entirely preventable deaths, every day, of friends and colleagues, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters. Each of them had a story, and every one of these deaths is a tragedy. These are human beings.

Drug overdose is now the number one cause of death in B.C., with more fatalities than crime, accidents and disease combined. It is also the number one cause of death among kids aged 10 to 17. I

have 11-year-old twin grandsons. This is personal, and this is not normal.

The story of 14-year-old Kamilah Sword of Port Coquitlam is heartbreaking. Kamilah tragically overdosed in her bedroom in August 2022. According to her father, the coroner found three drugs in her system: MDMA, cocaine and hydromorphone. Hydromorphone is an opiate prescribed under B.C.'s so-called safe supply program.

Kamilah's friends reported that they have witnessed children as young as 11 years of age using hydromorphone. This is completely unacceptable. The street price of hydromorphone has fallen close to 90%, from \$20 to two dollars per pill. Basically, any kid can buy them.

How many more children have to die before the government reverses course? Our common-sense, Conservative motion before the House today calls on the Prime Minister to end this unsafe supply program and redirect this money into treatment and recovery programs for those addicted to drugs. This is common sense. This is compassion. The radical approach of the NDP-Liberal government is making the addiction crisis worse and does not put those struggling with addiction on a path to recovery. That should always be the goal. The government's approach only pumps more hard drugs onto our streets, killing our citizens, destroying our families and tearing our communities apart.

The over supply of these free drugs gets in the hands of organized crime, which then sells them to children. If one gets them for free, any return is a profit.

Addictions workers confirm that most users of so-called safe supply are diverting these drugs and reselling them across the country. This is government-funded drug trafficking.

How is this for insanity? In Prince George, the police ran a 10-day surveillance operation on a woman who stood outside a downtown IDA Pharmacy every morning trading her so-called safe supply drugs for harder drugs. Police reported dozens of hand-to-hand transactions. The pharmacy manager told the RCMP that patients are given up to 28 hydromorphone pills per day, equating to approximately \$480 a day if resold. He also reported that many patients are accosted by people outside the pharmacy wanting to purchase the safe supply drugs. The insanity is the brainchild of big pharma.

Business of Supply

• (1325)

The term “safe supply” is big pharma's sales jargon, its propaganda, meant to secure government contracts and pad the industry's burgeoning pockets. Let us be clear: Safe supply is a lie. There is nothing safe about fentanyl. The radical NDP-Liberal government bought the big lie, and now Canadians are paying the price in dollars and in deaths.

Canadians have the right to know how much they are paying to fuel the crisis. The government refuses to release its contracts with big pharma, covering up the huge cost of this reckless experiment. The radical government does not get it. Its policies are killing Canadians, and it clearly does not care. Despite the death, crime and carnage, the Prime Minister has not ruled out replicating B.C.'s failed drug experiment in other jurisdictions across the country.

Our motion calls on the Prime Minister to proactively reject the City of Toronto's request to legalize deadly hard drugs like crack, cocaine, heroin and meth. The motion further calls on him to deny any future requests from provinces, territories and municipalities seeking federal approval to legalize hard drugs in their jurisdiction. We do not need to export the drug chaos in B.C. to other jurisdictions.

The Prime Minister should never have granted a reckless exemption to B.C. to allow open, “in your face” hard drug use in public places. Parks, beaches, transit, sports fields, coffee shops and playgrounds in B.C. have become drug-infested nightmares. A two-year-old girl was hospitalized after putting a discarded needle in her mouth at a park. Even our hospitals, once a beacon of safety, are now lawless spaces where health care workers and patients are put at risk.

The B.C. Nurses' Union is sounding the alarm for its members. Patients and staff have been exposed to harmful hard drugs. Meth was even being smoked in a unit just hours after the birth of a newborn baby. This breaks my heart. It should break everyone's hearts. A nurse in Campbell River said she had been exposed to smoke from hard drugs six times. How in God's name is the government allowing this to happen? I cannot believe I have to say this, but hospitals should be sanctuaries of healing and care, not places of lawlessness and chaos.

After nine years, the extremist NDP-Liberal government is not worth the drugs, disorder and death. Only a common-sense Conservative government will end unsupervised and unprescribed use of hard drugs in hospitals. We will end taxpayer-funded narcotics that are killing our children and poisoning our communities. We will focus on treating Canadians struggling with addiction, providing a path to recovery so we can bring our loved ones home drug-free.

Hope must be restored. Unlike the radical NDP-Liberal government, we will not give up on people. It is compassion and common sense. The extreme, deadly drug experiment must end and never be repeated.

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, this morning, I asked the leader of the official opposition if he could explain the difference between le-

galization, decriminalization and diversion. He answered, “There really is no difference. It is just semantics”.

I know that my colleague had an illustrious career in law. She is a trained lawyer. She even served as the parliamentary secretary to the justice minister.

Can she look into the camera and tell all of her bar association colleagues and others that she agrees with what the Leader of the Opposition said about how these three legal concepts all mean the same thing and how there is no real difference between them?

If not, can she explain to her leader what the difference is? That might come in handy for someone who wants to be prime minister.

[*English*]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, my thanks to my colleague for the unexpected praise of my former legal career, which I have left far behind at this point.

I have no trouble whatsoever standing behind our leader and our position. Part of our position, which is clearly laid out in the motion, is that the extremist view on these things is what the NDP-Liberal government has put forward. We are the mainstream. We are putting forward common-sense, compassionate positions on the issue of drugs and overdose deaths that have overtaken too many communities and hurt too many families. I am very clear about where we stand on that.

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, as a Toronto member of Parliament, I feel obligated to say that I will be voting in support of the motion. That is because my community is home to or immediately adjacent to every single one of Toronto's nine injection sites. I am also the MP for parents who have had to learn what to do when their child is pierced by a needle. That is not normal. That is not something that any parent should have to go through.

I was relieved when the B.C. government decided to do a 180, but I am concerned because the Medical Officer of Health for Toronto has doubled down, and the NDP mayor of Toronto continues to power through to decriminalization. I am curious to know what my colleague thinks about why it is that they continue to do this in spite of all of the evidence about how dangerous it has become.

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Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I find it hard to believe I am actually saying these things, that I am having to explain why we should not have people smoking crack and blowing the smoke in the face of our health care workers and other patients. I find it hard to believe that I have to explain to anyone that a two-year-old's picking up a used needle on a playground could be deadly or extremely dangerous. In British Columbia, parents are locking arms and sweeping kids' playing fields before their soccer games because they are so afraid someone is going to fall on a needle or get jabbed by one.

This is common sense. This is compassion.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the number of deaths in Alberta skyrocketed to record levels last year. Could the hon. member tell us why?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I cannot speak for Alberta.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have two very simple questions for the member after having listened to her speech.

I wonder whether she could share how many more people have to die before the Conservatives start listening to health experts, step out of the way, and allow health experts to provide wraparound supports for people who need them. Also, just as important, how much more fundraising do the Conservatives have to do for it to be enough to stop raising funds off the backs of those who are tragically dying in the toxic substance crisis?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I categorically reject the premise of the member's question, and I resent the implications.

We are talking about human beings. We are talking about children. We are talking about mothers and fathers, sons and daughters who are at risk. We are talking about a crisis of opioid and other drug overdose deaths in this country. I am from a province where it is so out of control that the provincial government has had to come back to the federal Liberal government to say, "Put a circle around it because it is chaos."

• (1335)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure and an honour to rise in the House. Today I am going to speak to a very important topic that I know has affected many Canadians from coast to coast to coast, including in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Before I get to my formal remarks, I will say that as MPs, we get to meet a lot of people in our riding, and with that, unfortunately, we attend visitations and funerals. I think that in the last two weeks, I have attended seven or eight visitations. Nonetheless, there is one experience I will never forget. A few years ago, one visitation I attended was for a 25-year-old young man who passed away from an opioid overdose. That experience has left an imprint on me. What the family went through, and what this individual went through before his passing, I do not wish upon anybody; none of us does.

Our job here as legislators is to do good for our residents and to do good for all Canadians. The debate we are having today is a very serious one, because the issue is impacting families and has impacted lives.

Before I turn to my formal remarks, I will say that I will be splitting my time with my friend and colleague, the member from Vancouver Granville.

I rise to talk about an issue that is very important for Canadians, and particularly for our most vulnerable friends and family members in this country.

[*Translation*]

Canada is in the throes of an overdose crisis that causes an average of 22 deaths per day. This crisis is affecting individuals, families and communities across the country.

The Government of Canada's approach to the crisis is guided by the Canadian drugs and substances strategy, which promotes both public health and public safety. This strategy is based on the principles of compassion, equity and collaboration. It promotes a holistic approach to the crisis, recognizing that different people need different tools and supports to cope with substance use.

Our government's approach is to disrupt and dismantle the illegal drug supply while supporting a full range of integrated initiatives to lower risks and help people access the services they need, when and where they need them. This means significant investments to support provinces, territories and communities.

We know that substance use is a health issue, first and foremost. It is important to reduce stigma and remove barriers to accessing care in order to reduce the risk of overdose and other harm. Harm reduction programs and services are a critical and necessary step in the continuum of care for providing immediate and life-saving measures in the face of a toxic and illegal drug supply.

The growing toxicity of the illegal drug supply means that this supply is tainted with powerful opioids such as fentanyl and other drugs, including benzodiazepines and animal tranquilizers. This means that people who use drugs are more exposed to the risk of overdose and harm than they were just a few years ago.

It has been proven that risk reduction measures save lives. They are a lifeline for supporting people, including those who are dealing with stigmatization, housing insecurity or homelessness, or delays and other obstacles in accessing treatment. What is more, some risk reduction services, such as supervised consumption sites, help drug users make connections with other health care services and other social services, including treatment and rehabilitation.

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Our government is supporting a wide range of risk reduction measures, including naloxone programs, drug-checking services, supervised consumption sites and clean supplies.

● (1340)

Naloxone can save lives by temporarily reversing the effects of an opioid overdose. That is why we are trying so hard to make naloxone more available to Canadians.

For example, we invested \$26 million in Health Canada's substance use and addictions program, or SUAP, to enhance opioid overdose awareness training and to improve access to this life-saving drug. In December 2023, this investment funded training for two million people on how to respond to an overdose. It also made it possible to distribute more than 92,000 nasal naloxone kits across the country.

Given the increasing toxicity of the drug supply, users do not always know what they are taking. Drug checking can play a key role by providing individuals with crucial information so they can make informed choices that can reduce the risk of overdose.

In April 2024, Health Canada authorized drug checking services at 29 supervised consumption sites and six dedicated drug checking sites. Since 2018, SUAP has also financed 10 drug checking projects to help prove the effectiveness of this harm reduction measure and provide local communities with invaluable drug checking services.

Supervised consumption sites offer a safe place to use drugs with clean paraphernalia and access to care without judgment. Many of these sites offer access to drug checking and peer support services for people who want to get treatment and access other forms of support. These sites reduce the spread of infectious disease and relieve pressure on emergency rooms. Supervised consumption sites have recorded over 4.4 million visits. More than 53,000 overdoses have been treated, and more than 424,000 people have been referred to health services and social services. These referrals support individuals on the road to healing and wellness.

Everyone deserves to feel safe in their community. That is why we are working with our partners and stakeholders to ensure the safety of communities while providing these essential services. The crisis is constantly evolving, forcing us to develop and implement innovative harm reduction measures to counter the supply of toxic illicit drugs.

That is why we are funding so many innovative and evidence-informed projects through SUAP. This program has provided over \$600 million in funding for more than 400 pilot projects since 2017. With investments of \$144 million from the 2023 budget, SUAP will be able to continue to support not-for-profit and indigenous community organizations, as well as municipalities, provinces and territories, to meet Canadians' needs across the continuum of care, from prevention to treatment, including recovery and harm reduction.

[English]

Finally, the debate we are having today is very serious. This is not about quick and easy solutions or slogans. It is about the lives of the most vulnerable Canadians. It is about people who may have

issues with mental health and, of course, addiction. It is about getting them the harm reduction strategies and treatment that need to be in place, as well as the care and affection they need to overcome the obstacles they currently face in their lives.

I look forward to questions and comments from my colleagues, and I hope the questions are of substance.

● (1345)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member should be happy; this is of substance.

This has been tried before. Portland, Oregon, did safe supply decriminalization. B.C. tried it. Their overdoses skyrocketed. This is not a new phenomenon.

I know the NDP members are very upset because the NDP policies are failing Canadians, and people are dying—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the member is knowingly misleading the House. The figures are—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is a matter for debate.

I will let the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan complete his question.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, the NDP members are getting very upset because they failed Canadians. This has been tried. It has failed. There are examples of this failing.

Why are the Liberals fighting so hard to continue down a path where more Canadians are going to die from safe supply? Let us do something better for Canadians.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, the hon. member and I care about our residents. We want to make sure they live their lives to the fullest capacity. Any strategy with regard to the treatment of addiction needs to have the four pillars of prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement. We need to have a holistic approach.

Unfortunately, the hon. member and their colleagues are actually ignoring the former adviser to the former prime minister, who said that the plan put forward by the official opposition is not actually a plan. It is a plan for failure, and that is not the approach to take to such a serious issue and politicize it, much as the opposition party is doing.

Business of Supply

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, families and communities are continuing to suffer because of the toxic drug crisis. I have spoken to many mothers, fathers and friends who have lost loved ones. The Conservative rhetoric around this is not just harmful, but it will actually cost people their lives. To pretend that we have to choose between harm reduction and treatment when we are facing a national emergency is unconscionable.

Given that we are facing this national emergency, why has the Liberal Party not declared a national public health emergency on the toxic drug crisis and created a pan-Canadian response?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Victoria is absolutely correct. The Conservatives are trying to create this false choice, much as they are trying to do with the economy and the environment, when we know the two go hand in hand.

On the issue we are debating today, we need harm reduction and treatment. They need to go hand in hand, and those are the policies we have been working on. We are working with the provinces. The province of B.C. had a request, and it did not work for it. We have looked at that. We have responded to the province of British Columbia in this case, and we will continue to do that.

We will work collaboratively with all jurisdictions, with law enforcement and with individual organizations dealing with treatment and prevention. That is the Canadian way of doing things, and that is the smart and right way of doing it. That is how we will get results.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech a few moments ago and congratulate him on the quality of his French.

[English]

The member asked for a question with substance, and I will easily ask a question with substance.

The government waited more than 10 days before saying yes to the request of the provincial jurisdiction. Why wait so long?

[Translation]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his very important question. I fully understand the substance of his question.

• (1350)

[English]

When a request is made by any level of government or by any government in Canada, whether it is the province of Quebec or the province of British Columbia, that request should be acted upon expeditiously and a response given. There was a turnaround time. I am not one to be at that table to make that turnaround time, but I am glad to see a decision was made by our government in terms of the request that was made by the province of British Columbia and Premier David Eby.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is important for me, as a member of Parliament from British Columbia, to rise to speak to this issue.

I want to start by talking about the victims of the opioid crisis, and particularly those who have lost their lives to tainted drugs. They are the children of Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats, Greens and people with no party affiliation. They are family members, pillars of society, people who have had challenges in their lives, people who are struggling and people who are not struggling. They are everyday Canadians who lost their lives, or lost their loved ones, as a result of tainted drugs on the streets of our cities. From Calgary to Vancouver, Toronto and Halifax, this is a problem that plagues our communities from coast to coast to coast.

Anytime a jurisdiction wants to find a way to save lives, our government has been there, and will be there, to work with it to try to do that. In the case of the Province of British Columbia, as my friend from Vaughan—Woodbridge noted, an application was brought forward by the province. In it, there were four pillars. There were expectations around how everything would work. It did not go as well as British Columbia wanted. It came back to us and said it would like to make amendments to the application. It formalized that request on Friday of last week; by Monday, the request was granted. It is important for anyone who is watching, and members in the House, to understand that, when the formalities of the application were completed on Friday, it took the weekend to get to the answer. That is an important distinction, because it is important that we not mislead Canadians as to what happened. It was not 11 days. That is the first thing.

The second thing that is important to note is that, when we talk about this issue, it is very easy to try to politicize it, as members opposite have chosen to do. However, let us look at the facts.

In British Columbia, there was a pilot program that sought to try to save lives. Alberta and Saskatchewan had no such pilot program and, by extension, would not have met any of the criteria of concern that the Leader of the Opposition had. By that logic, they would not have had any kind of a problem at all.

In fact, Alberta has seen a 25% increase, with four people a day dying. In Saskatchewan, it is a record year for people dying. These are not records to be proud of in provinces that have been run by Conservatives, so we need to stop talking about this as an NDP problem, a Liberal problem or a Conservative problem; it is a public health challenge. This is a public health crisis.

This is not about criminalizing people with addictions. What the opposition has sought to do and continues to do is play politics with the most vulnerable in our society, knowing that they may not be able to defend themselves. We will make sure, on this side of the House, that we work hard and tirelessly to use a public health approach and a science-based approach. We will work with jurisdictions to ensure that the best possible means by which to address this crisis is there. Not every solution is going to be perfect, as the Government of British Columbia came to understand. However, it was not looking for perfection. I do not think anybody was. People are looking to save lives.

Statements by Members

I know for a fact that there are Conservatives who believe very strongly that we need to think about how we address safe supply. There are Conservatives who believe we should be taking a public health-based approach to deal with addictions and this crisis. Ben Perrin, who advised Stephen Harper for many years, is one of the strongest advocates for taking a materially different approach to what the Conservative leader would like to do.

It is important for us to listen to people from all walks of life in this conversation, to hear the stories of those who have perished and of the families who are grieving. It is impossible to put someone in treatment if they are dead. I have spoken to parents in my riding whose children have been lost to tainted drugs. They wish there had been a way for their kids to access a safe supply so they could go to treatment. Sadly, those children, young people, university students, firefighters, doctors and nurses will not be able to get that treatment.

● (1355)

It is important for us to recognize the very difference between this fanciful notion the opposition would like to believe, that somehow there are drugs being given out willy-nilly, versus a science-based, medically administered process in helping people stay alive so that they can get treatment they need.

If we believe, as Canadians, that our job and our obligation is to stand by our fellow citizens, to help them in their times of difficulty and to be innovative and creative in finding the solutions needed to address public health issues, then we have an obligation to work with jurisdictions. We have an obligation to work with provinces, territories and municipalities to find solutions.

I want people to remember that this application was first brought forth with the support of law enforcement, the Vancouver Police Department, the City of Vancouver and the Province of British Columbia. This was not something that was cooked up by one level of government. This was something that came about as a result of detailed discussion, hard work, thoughtful consideration and a sincere desire to save lives.

The fact that it has been pulled back does not negate those principles. The fact that it is pulled back does not diminish the fact that provinces and jurisdictions that did not have this pilot have seen unprecedented numbers deaths from the opioid crisis.

If we are going to have a serious discussion in the House, then we should be talking about ways to work together across politics to ask the questions. What are medical professionals telling us and what is law enforcement is looking for? How do we make sure public safety is indeed part of the conversation? Are we also doing everything necessary to be thoughtful and to be mindful of the people whose lives are at risk?

If we are serious about this conversation, then the opposition should not be saying that it is going to do this and do that in absolute terms because that is not how public policy works. That is not how serious people operate. Serious people look at the complexity of serious issues and accept that there are going to be things that work and that sometimes they do not. However, when they do not, the question should be about how we analyze it to make it better.

On this side of the House, we are always going to trust science, work with law enforcement, work with medical professionals, talk to victims to hear their points of view and their perspectives, and come together on public policy solutions that are grounded in fact not fancy.

In British Columbia, as in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Nova Scotia and across this country from coast to coast to coast, people are grieving loved ones as a result of tainted drugs. People are looking for governments to work together to address this crisis. When opposition parties or anyone chooses to use as a political football the grief and the death of others, we need to stand up as Canadians and say that it is not okay.

We should be doing the hard work of finding solutions, not pretending that slogans are going to save lives. Anywhere in the world that we look, a slogan has not saved a life. However, what has worked is people looking seriously at public health issues to actually work together to find solutions.

I am proud of the fact that I belong to a government that is serious about this issue, serious about getting people into treatment, getting people the help they need, and that is serious about doing it in a way that recognizes the reality on the ground and the reality in communities that are desperate for leaders in this country to work together on this important solution.

There are members opposite, from the New Democratic Party, who have put in time, effort and energy on this issue, and I salute them and commend them. We will continue to do that on our side. However, if we are going to solve this crisis, it is going to be done with all of us pulling together, not by playing politics with the lives of victims of a health crisis.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[*English*]

JEAN IP FOUNDATION

Mr. Wilson Miao (Richmond Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to pay tribute to the Jean Ip Foundation, a non-profit organization in Richmond, a source of hope and support for underprivileged students.

The Jean Ip Foundation's scholarship program seeks to assist in removing educational barriers and providing scholarships to help students pursue post-secondary education in Canada, achieving their academic goals without financial stress. The foundation began awarding annual scholarships through local school districts to students in British Columbia.

Today, the Jean Ip Foundation has expanded its mission with a scholarship program that reaches across Canada, offering up to \$10,000 to financially disadvantaged students. With this expansion, the Jean Ip Foundation reinforces its commitment to making higher education more accessible and affordable. I encourage all young Canadians to seize this opportunity and apply for the Jean Ip Foundation scholarship program before May 31, the end of the month, and help ease the financial burden of higher education and open doors to new possibilities.

I thank the Jean Ip Foundation for all its dedication—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake.

* * *

VYSHYVANKA DAY

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, *dobryi den*. Every third Thursday in May is Vyshyvanka Day. Today, we stand in solidarity with Ukraine and our Ukrainian Canadian community by proudly wearing vyshyvankas and Ukrainian ribbons in the chamber.

Ukrainians have proudly worn vyshyvankas for centuries, carefully crafted with colourful embroidery and time-honoured motifs, reflecting the unique heritage of each region of Ukraine. In the face of over 800 days of genocidal Russian aggression, this year's Vyshyvanka Day holds profound significance. Originating as a grassroots movement by students in Chernivtsi, this has evolved into a global holiday celebrating Ukrainian culture and heritage.

As this celebration has evolved and grown, so too has the support for Ukraine. Like every stitch is important in a vyshyvanka, every contribution, no matter how small, makes a difference in war. Here in Canada, we must provide Ukraine with the munitions we can and have produced, and send the CRV7 rockets now, which Ukraine requested over six months ago.

On behalf of Canada's Conservatives, I reaffirm our unwavering commitment to stand with Ukraine until its victory. Happy Vyshyvanka Day. *Slava Ukraini*.

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SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Ms. Lisa Hefner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today on Parliament Hill, the anti-choice lobby is marching to demand control over women's reproductive rights. Conservatives are standing with them, propping up their insidious claims, celebrating the demise of *Roe v. Wade* and vilifying the achievements of Henry Morgentaler. They do not want us to have access to abortion, and they voted against providing Canadians with contraceptive choices. They are bringing America's divisive political playbook across the border and are infecting our population.

The Liberal government is not going to reopen the abortion debate, so why do we keep seeing petitions, bills and motions by Conservative members intended to do just that? The conservative agenda is clear. The opposition leader has even said that he would use the notwithstanding clause to rip up our rights. This trampling of rights is coming from a party that pretends to champion freedom.

Statements by Members

That is not lost on me. I do not want to live in a country where my rights are restricted, and I will fight.

On this side of the House, we will all fight to keep Canada from sliding back into the dark ages.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, National Police Week is being held from May 12 to 18 under the theme “Building Understanding: the police and the public”.

This week is an opportunity to recognize the work of our police officers who work every day to protect the public and ensure that we can live safely in our communities.

Far too often, the work of law enforcement gets bad press, and certain stereotypes still cast a dark shadow over the work of our heroes who are there for us every day. They also have to face difficult situations that can have an impact on their well-being and mental health.

That is why, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to thank all police officers for their essential work and I applaud their courage and dedication.

Let us be grateful and make every effort to rebuild and improve trust between the police and the public. I invite everyone to meet their local police officers, whether they belong to the municipal or indigenous police forces, the *Sûreté du Québec* or the RCMP to make connections and build bridges.

I wish everyone a happy National Police Week.

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● (1405)

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to continue to invest in Canadians, we need a strong economy. In Canada, we have an inflation rate that has fallen to 3%, we have a AAA credit rating, and we have an unemployment rate that is staying very low. In addition, the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development predict Canada will have the strongest economic growth in the G7.

All this is why I am so proud of our government, because we have rolled out programs like the new program for persons with disabilities, the new dental care program, the new pharmacare program, the new national school food program, the new apprenticeship program for young people and, lastly, the new Canada pension plan.

That is why Canada is the best country in the world.

Statements by Members

[English]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every year, Canadians pay more for less because of this Liberal government's inflationary deficits and bone-crushing taxes. The Liberal carbon tax is devastating pensioners, working families and small businesses.

Today in New Brunswick, we pay over 62¢ more per litre for gasoline than families do in the neighbouring state of Maine. That price difference is all due to Canadian taxes.

Next year, because of the Liberal carbon tax, the New Brunswick-Maine price difference will be almost 70¢ per litre. The Liberals plan to add an additional 50¢ per litre by 2030. This will cost Canadians thousands of dollars more each year. Families are forced to pay more to live in Canada by an uncaring and ideological Prime Minister.

Just like his carbon tax, the Liberals are not worth the cost. It is time for a carbon tax election. Let us go to the people. Let us hear from the people. Let us get rid of those Liberals.

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WORLD DWARF GAMES

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House today to acknowledge six-time gold medallist and three-time bronze medallist Brooklyn Wolfrey, who is a remarkable athletic champion from Labrador.

Brooklyn is a 15-year-old athlete from Rigolet in the Nunatsiavut territory. She competed in the World Dwarf Games in 2017, where she won two gold medals for swimming and for hockey. This summer, she attended the World Dwarf Games, this time in Cologne, Germany, competing in badminton, soccer, running, table tennis, basketball and swimming.

She won four gold medals and three bronze medals for Canada, as well as the hearts of Labradorians and of Canadians, and of those around the world

She was one of 500 athletes from over 20 countries who competed at the World Dwarf Games. Brooklyn was a bright light in the competition. She is a tremendous athlete, a remarkable young person and a role model for all around her.

* * *

MARINA CLEMENS

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the name Marina Clemens is synonymous with Drouillard Road and the community of Ford City. It is where Marina founded Drouillard Place and dedicated her life to building a community that looks after its neighbours and the most vulnerable. She was a fierce advocate for affordable housing and a champion for our community's homeless.

When we celebrated the 145-unit Meadowbrook Lane project, the first housing project built in our community in 30 years, her response was to the point; she would say to build more.

Her son Jason said his mother lived her faith and always put people first, and she never asked what was in it for her. Marina Clemens passed away this week, and Windsor lost a great, great leader.

If we ever need to find our way, all we need to do is head to Ford City. There we will find her street, her Drouillard Road, renamed Marina Clemens Way. It is the way of service above self.

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LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberal government is just not worth the cost. Since they took office, Canadians are seeing record numbers of food bank usage, with nearly 60% of Canadians eating foods that have expired or spoiled.

The Prime Minister, backed by his NDP coalition, has decided to increase the carbon tax by 23%. This is disgusting. Unlike the Prime Minister, most Canadians do not have a trust fund, so this increase has not only driven more people to food banks, but also has hampered donations. With fewer donations and higher demand, food banks are being forced to close their doors.

Seniors who were hoping to see some relief from the recent budget are finding themselves waiting in long lineups at food banks just to make ends meet. Common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime so that Canadians have the dignity to eat healthy and safe food.

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● (1410)

BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to acknowledge a dedicated constituent and entrepreneur, Jerry Fishman. Jerry is celebrating his 95th birthday on May 13.

In 1956, he opened Jerry's Budget Centre on the corner of Jane and Wilson and, eventually, Jerry's for Fashion in its current location at 1625 Wilson Avenue in 1973.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize Jerry's outstanding and enduring dedication to his business and to his customers. Jerry still opens the store every morning, greets his customers and continues to serve his community. I extend my warmest wishes to Jerry as he celebrates this milestone.

May his birthday be filled with joy and the company of loved ones, as he continues to inspire all of us with his vitality, his passion and his zest for life.

Happy birthday, Jerry.

*Statements by Members***MEMBER FOR EDMONTON CENTRE**

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Employment has been throwing stones at glass houses for too long. We learned last week that the minister has failed to remove himself from his own PPE company and lobbyist firm, which is a clear conflict of interest. He remains a director of his PPE company in contravention of the code of ethics. The minister's previous lobby firm, which he gifted to his friend and colleague, successfully lobbied six federal departments, including his own department, for millions of dollars in federal grants for the Edmonton International Airport.

A man who claims to be focused only on Albertans and Canadians has now shown his true colours. We now know that he has only ever been worried about himself. How dare this minister show his face in the House every day, claiming to advocate for Albertans while putting down our premier and taking advantage of the Albertan people? Albertans knew better and now so do Canadians.

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[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this government, young Quebeckers and young Canadians can no longer make ends meet. The cost of living crisis is making it almost impossible to rent an apartment and buy groceries.

Yesterday, a young couple from Quebec had to move back in with their parents because it is impossible for them to save to buy a house while paying their rent. That is where things stand with this government, which spends money hand over fist. Two adults with full-time jobs cannot even afford their own place to live. The CMHC is even saying that three times more Canadians are putting off buying a home because interest rates are just too high.

While too many young Canadians are giving up their dreams of buying a home, the Bloc Québécois is making the situation worse by joining the Liberals in voting for a \$500-billion budget. It is exactly this type of spending on bureaucracy that got us into this inflationary crisis. Voting for the Bloc Québécois is costly, and Quebeckers understand that. The Liberals and the Bloc are not worth the cost.

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40TH ANNIVERSARY OF PAVILLON MARGUERITE DE CHAMPLAIN

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I am proud to rise to mark the 40th anniversary of the Pavillon Marguerite de Champlain women's shelter, an invaluable resource for women who are victims of domestic violence and their children on the south shore, across from Montreal.

Over the past four decades, this organization has helped more than 10,000 women and children with shelter services, a 24-7 crisis line, individual consultations, group workshops, family interventions or other services.

[English]

Pavillon Marguerite de Champlain distinguishes itself by its capacity to provide support and services to women victims of conjugal violence from Canada's two official language groups and to all cultural communities. To founder and director Deborah Pearson, and the entire team at PMC, I offer congratulations on this milestone anniversary. I am thankful for the difference they have made and continue to make in the lives of so many women and children in our community.

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● (1415)

INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats join thousands around the globe in recognition of the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, a day to raise awareness of 2SLGBTQI persons' rights and, unfortunately, the continued atrocities facing our community globally. From Stonewall to Edmonton, the queer community has and continues to contribute greatly to a better and more just society. They have shown us the strength of community resilience and remind us of our everlasting pursuit for justice and freedom for all.

The trans community has a right to joy and this joy is under threat by far right movements that seek to divide with hate, only to pursue power and tear down the rights of others. Every member of the House has a responsibility to stand up and speak out against the bigotry that is threatening the safety of our fellow citizens. Although it may be politically advantageous to punch down and divide, let me be clear: We are not going anywhere.

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[Translation]

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the anti-choice circus is back in town once again. The grotesque show intended to intimidate women, elected officials and doctors has returned.

Every year, these people show up to remind us of their contempt for women, women's bodies and women's rights. Every year, they come here with the blessing of a bunch of Conservative MPs, to whom they give their votes and their money. I want these misogynist reactionaries to know that a woman's body belongs to her and her alone. The choice is hers, period. Women do not have to rationalize, explain or apologize. Their bodies are their own, period. Let the anti-choice supporters gather by the thousands; we will not allow what is happening in multiple U.S. states to happen here. These people call themselves pro-life, but they are really just anti-women. They can strut around with pride all they like, but they are still a shameful sight to behold.

Oral Questions

[English]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leadership race is under way. Front-runner Mark Carney is first out of the gate.

He was in the Senate confirming and pledging that he would maintain the Prime Minister's punishing carbon tax. When asked about fiscal responsibility, there are no policies that he is going to change. Mark Carney will continue the Liberal legacy of higher taxes, more spending and poorer Canadians.

Canadians just do not need another random Liberal making life more expensive. Whether it is carbon tax Carney or the current Prime Minister, Canadians continue to suffer.

The more these Liberals spend, the worse things get. In contrast, common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Let us bring it home.

* * *

WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Roe v. Wade was overturned in the United States, Conservative MPs cheered and vowed to do the same here in Canada.

We see, every day, stories of the life-threatening health implications American women are facing. Last week, the Leader of the Opposition admitted that he will unilaterally override the charter for policies that Conservatives want.

Conservative MPs wasted no time in the House telling women across this country that they believe the decisions of women's health care should be decided by Conservative politicians.

Today, while Conservative MPs are marching on the front lawn to roll back women's rights, we will stand up to fight. We will fight for women to control our own bodies and fight to protect women's charter rights. We will fight to protect women's freedoms to make our own health care decisions.

Who in this place will stand here now and fight with us?

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1420)

[English]

FINANCE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, Canadians are getting poorer. His inflationary deficits are pushing up inflation and interest rates.

That is because, when the Prime Minister goes into the markets and borrows billions to fund his spending spree, that bids up the interest rates for everyone else. A new report from the Bank of Canada is shocking. Average mortgage payments will rise by more than 20% in the next couple of years.

Where the heck are Canadian families supposed to come up with an extra few hundred dollars just to pay higher mortgage payments for the homes they already own?

The Speaker: I am going to ask members just to be very conscious of the language that they use.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, given that it is my first opportunity to speak in the House today, I want to speak about a very grave threat to Canadians.

Last week, the Conservative leader said he is going to ignore our charter rights. This week, a Conservative MP stood up in the House and said he is opposed to a woman's right to choose. Now Conservative MPs are outside attacking a woman's right to choose.

Now we know the truth. Conservatives are going to attack our charter rights. They are going to attack the rights of every woman in Canada.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Colleagues, I am certain we all want to hear the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle. I will ask the member for New Brunswick Southwest, who is a respected member of the House, to please hold back until he has the floor.

The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, none of that is true. The minister is just desperate to distract from her own record. She is trying to console Canadians by saying that everything is okay because she has not quite maxed out the national credit card just yet.

However, all of that spending and borrowing is having an impact. In fact, Desjardins Financial has concluded that output per capita fell in every province last year, which is the broadest base standard of living decline in Canadian history other than the pandemic, costing Canadian families \$4,200 a month.

Will somebody over there please cut up the national credit card before more Canadians go bankrupt?

The Speaker: Again, I am going to ask all members to please wait until they take the floor. I will ask the hon. member for Orléans, who is also a respected member of the House, to only take the floor when she is addressed.

The hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was a lot of shouting, while I was speaking, from the other side of the House.

Oral Questions

That is because they are afraid that Canadians are starting to understand the Conservatives' real plan. Canadians have seen that they hang out with white supremacists and do not disavow them. Canadians have seen they are getting ready to tear up the Charter of Rights.

Now we know the first right the Conservatives are going to attack is a woman's right to choose, just like the far right has done south of the border, but we will not let them.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will take no lessons from a government that is trampling over free speech rights by trying to control the Internet and what Canadians can see and post online.

For random Liberals hoping that, when the outgoing Prime Minister finally leaves, a new Liberal leader will rescue them, they are about to be sorely disappointed. Mark “carbon tax” Carney continued his Liberal leadership campaign in the Senate yesterday, where he pushed the same radical agenda, endorsed the current Prime Minister's carbon tax and could not come up with even a penny to cut in wasteful spending.

If Mark “carbon tax” Carney will not do it and the current Prime Minister will not do it, will somebody over there axe the tax and fix the budget?

• (1425)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really delighted to hear the Conservative House leader talk about the rights of Canadians and how important they are.

I am a woman. I am a mother. The most fundamental right of every woman and girl in Canada is the right to control her own body. It is time for the Conservatives to stand up and clearly say whether they are going to defend a woman's right to choose, because what we are hearing from them is that they want to end it.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, you will be pleased to hear that the opposition and the government worked in perfect co-operation today in committee. Thanks to the member for Mégantic—L'Érable, the Minister of Housing knows that July 1 is moving day in Quebec. This has been the case for the past 50 years. The Minister of Housing knows it now, thanks to us.

Just because I am saying this with a smile does not make it pleasant, quite the contrary. July 1 can be the worst day of people's lives, as we have heard from folks who work with those who are struggling.

The Bank of Canada has confirmed today that people will be paying more for their rent or mortgage. What is the government going to do to help them?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that a member from Quebec is asking a question today.

Obviously, I am not a Quebecker, but I admire Quebec feminists and women. Quebec women still understand the importance of the right to choose for every woman across Canada. Are the Conservative members from Quebec prepared to reaffirm the right of every woman in Canada?

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every woman in Quebec, every woman in Canada, every man in Quebec and every man in Canada is suffering from this government's inflationary policies. That is what is affecting every Canadian. The reality today is that the Bank of Canada has said that the price of mortgages and rents will go up because of inflationary spending.

I have a simple question. Is there anyone in this government who will clearly explain to us how \$500 billion in Bloc Québécois-supported spending will bring inflation down?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so glad the opposition member is raising the issue of the rights of Canadians, the rights of Quebeckers.

What is affecting every woman in Canada, Quebeckers and Canadians alike, is our right to control our own bodies. This week, a Conservative member of the House said she was against this. There are members on the Hill who are saying the same thing. What are members from Quebec saying?

* * *

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us come back to the Liberal member's serious insults about defending French.

This morning we heard his forced apology to the two witnesses he intimidated. It is too little, too late. Now that we know exactly what he thinks about Quebeckers who are concerned about the decline of French, he no longer has any business chairing the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie. He has no business travelling abroad like a prince to speak on behalf of Quebeckers.

Will the Prime Minister do the only thing he can and ask the member to step down? Quebeckers no longer trust him.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the member from the Bloc Québécois who spoke a few minutes ago about the importance of women's rights in Canada. She was very eloquent and we support this.

We understand and agree that French is in decline across Canada, in Quebec and in the other provinces. That is why our government is supporting French across the country.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister went even further.

Oral Questions

He said the reason the Bloc Québécois is not taking the member's comments lying down is that we, the Bloc Québécois, do not like francophones outside Quebec. According to him, if we do not just let other people insult us, that means we are attacking linguistic minorities. In other words, Quebecers who refuse to be called extremists or worse are francophobes. People cannot go around saying such ridiculous things.

I have news for him. Quebecers will not let anyone walk all over them. That member has no business representing us internationally. It is over.

Will the Prime Minister show him the door?

• (1430)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am neither a Quebecer nor a francophone, but I really want to assure my colleague opposite that our government believes French across the country is very important.

We understand that French is in decline in Quebec and across the country, and that is why our government supports francophones in Quebec and across the country. We will continue to invest in the French language in Canada and around the world.

* * *

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, renters everywhere are struggling to make ends meet. Groceries are expensive, rent is expensive. People are drowning in credit card debt, and it is taking a toll on their mental health.

Meanwhile, both the Liberals and the Conservatives are protecting the profits of big grocery CEOs. Why? Maybe it is because they received \$150,000 in donations from Loblaws, Metro and Empire, and now they are returning the favour. Major grocery store CEOs fill Liberal and Conservative coffers, and then the Liberals and Conservatives protect the coffers of the major grocery store CEOs. If people do not have \$150,000 for these parties, too bad for them. They can go into debt to fill up their fridges.

I would like the Liberals to tell us if the wonderful life of the rich and famous is as sweet as it seems.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like a few other members of the House, we understand that we need to invest today to support Canadians. That is what we are doing.

We also understand that to do so in a fiscally responsible way, we need to ask the wealthiest to pay their fair share. That is what we are doing.

We understand that we need more competition in the grocery sector. We are doing that as well.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are taking food off the table and asking themselves why the government is not lowering food prices.

Maybe it is because the Liberals and Conservatives have gotten \$150,000 from the families and CEOs of Loblaw, Metro and Empire. Both parties know exactly who pays their bills.

Canadians deserve a government that is going to put them before big grocery CEOs. Why are the Liberals favouring CEO profits over lowering costs for Canadians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government absolutely understands that now is the time to invest in Canada and Canadians, to invest in housing, to invest in affordability and to invest in economic growth. We know we have to do it in a fiscally responsible way, which is why we are asking those at the very top to pay a little bit more through an increase in the capital gains inclusion rate.

When it comes to the grocery sector, we know that Canada needs more competition. That is why we have brought in a once-in-a-generation change to Canada's competition law.

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CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the Liberal-NDP Prime Minister, Canada has turned into a nation of renters. After the Liberals spent \$89 billion on a photo op slush fund for housing, rents and mortgages have doubled. The dream of home ownership, for an entire generation, is dead. Canadians are stretched because of higher taxes and higher rents, and the carbon tax scam increase is making it harder for Canadians to pay for rent and food.

Was it fair for the government to increase the carbon tax scam 23%, when 70% of Canadians told it not to?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if my hon. colleague is concerned about tax increases, I suggest he talk to the leader of his own party, who is proposing to increase taxes on new apartment construction by putting the GST back on apartment rentals in this country. The Conservatives' plan is to raise taxes on home construction. Their plan is to cut funding for the communities that are going to build homes. Their leader has actively promised in the media that he views the role of government as being to not participate in housing.

On our side of the House, we are going to make the investments necessary to solve the housing crisis. I hope the Conservatives will join us.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will not take any lessons from the worst immigration and housing minister in Canadian history.

Oral Questions

Now we have Mark “carbon tax” Carney preaching the same radical agenda in his Liberal leadership like the current Prime Minister. He will not denounce the Liberal carbon tax and commit to cutting one penny of Liberal waste. Whether it is Carney or the current Prime Minister, the inflation-driving deficits will continue, and just like the carbon tax scam, none of them are worth the cost.

Will any other Liberal leadership candidate stand up today, show some common sense and declare that they will finally axe the tax?

• (1435)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is understandable why Conservatives want to throw up some smokescreens. It has been a very bad couple of weeks to be a Conservative in this country. First, they cavort with white extremists. Then their leader says they are going to have an à la carte Charter of Rights and are going to take away people's rights on a whim. Now there is a female candidate for a Conservative nomination with alleged criminal content in the conduct of her nomination, such as identity fraud and false information.

When will the Conservatives stand up for law and order?

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal government has made life even more unaffordable for Canadians by raising the wacko carbon tax by 23%. Gas, groceries and everything else is more and more—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: It is actually one of the rare times when I cannot hear our colleague from York Simcoe. I will ask members to please not raise their voices and interrupt while the hon. member for York—Simcoe or any other member has the floor.

I am going to ask the hon. member for York—Simcoe to start from the top.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal government has made life even more unaffordable for Canadians by raising the wacko carbon tax by 23%. Gas, groceries and everything else is making life more and more expensive, especially for those living in rural, small-town communities, where driving farther for longer is just a fact of life. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has confirmed that Canadians would be better off without the carbon tax.

Will the Prime Minister stand today and admit to Canadians that he is just not worth the cost?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it causes me some disappointment to see an hon. colleague with whom I actually get along with very well spouting such misinformation in the House.

At the end of the day, the price on pollution is an effective way to fight climate change, but it is also a way to actually help with affordability. The PBO said that, and 300 economists across the country said that. It is a way to fight climate change but also to make life more affordable for Canadians. It is good climate policy. It is good economic policy for Canada.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that is disinformation. Canadians looking at their bank account know that the carbon tax hurts. After all, the government

continues to classify small-town and rural communities as urban, making them ineligible for the rural rebate and forcing them to pay more in carbon taxes to the out-of-touch Prime Minister.

Are the Liberals punishing rural Canadians and dividing them based on geography, or do the Liberals actually think that Pefferlaw is downtown Toronto?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would encourage my—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I know we all love York—Simcoe and all the communities therein, but I will ask members to please hold their voices so we can listen to the answer.

The hon. Minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, I would encourage my hon. colleague to actually read Bill C-59, which would double the rural top-up. I would encourage him to actually read the letter from 300 economists across the country who say that eight out of 10 Canadians get more money back. Rather than simply axing the facts, he should do his homework.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an additional 109,000 federal employees have been hired since 2015. What is more, the government awards \$21 billion a year to outside consultants. It is outrageous. We are paying double.

Hiring consultants in Ottawa is not done through voting for the budget, it is done through voting for appropriations. The Bloc Québécois supported those appropriations to the tune of \$500 billion.

Will the Prime Minister commit to firing all those consultants and relying on the expertise of his thousands of new public servants?

• (1440)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I think all members of the House can applaud the excellent work of Canada's public servants. They are among the best in the world.

Not only did the last budget present a plan for growth, investing in families and in the future of the country, but the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance also presented a plan to cut spending.

Oral Questions

We will always be rigorous and responsible with public finances. We will also take the time to thank all those who work on behalf of Canadians.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the point of my question. We have 109,000 new people who were hired; congratulations to them. Why, then, are we continuing to pay consultants to the tune of \$21 billion a year?

The question is simple: Will the government cancel the consultants' contracts totalling \$21 billion and use the professional services of its new public servants, yes or no?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives never miss an opportunity to offend, threaten, even propose vicious cuts to our public service.

The government certainly got the job done. It got the job done helping our seniors. It got the job done providing help for child care. It got the job done on dental care and it got the job done on school nutrition. It takes human resources to do all that, the same human resources that the Conservatives are proposing to devastate, cut and lay off.

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CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are not the only ones who are concerned about the plan to bring the CBC and Radio-Canada closer together.

Yesterday, the Quebec National Assembly voted unanimously in favour of a motion calling on the public broadcaster to protect the autonomy of services in French and to work to consolidate those services. We need to ensure that the CBC and Radio-Canada remain separate, not bring them closer together.

When people like Catherine Tait talk about bringing the two sectors closer together, they are talking about subjecting Radio-Canada to the CBC's vision. That does not work. That is what led Michel Bissonnette to resign.

How does the minister intend to protect Radio-Canada's independence from the CBC?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only way to protect Radio-Canada and the CBC is to support them both. That is what we, on this side of the House, are going to do.

The Conservatives, on the other hand, are planning to make cuts. Radio-Canada will be taking money away from the CBC. My question for the members of the Bloc Québécois is whether they will stand with us in supporting Radio-Canada and the CBC or whether they will align themselves with the Conservatives.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, no one with a crumb of intelligence in the Canadian broadcasting sector thinks that the Bloc Québécois is siding with the Conservatives on this issue. They need to change their tune. This is a no-go.

CBC/Radio-Canada's CEO was unequivocal when she appeared before the committee on Tuesday. Any Conservative cuts to the

CBC would cause serious harm to francophone communities and to Radio-Canada in Quebec. In fact, she agreed that the two were interconnected.

Obviously, we do not want cuts to the CBC, and, obviously, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of a strong public broadcaster.

The minister must submit her modernization plan. Will she ensure that it includes a firewall that prevents Radio-Canada from falling victim to potential cuts to the CBC?

[English]

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite raised an important point. Having a strong public broadcaster in the country is what this side of the House is going to do, is what our government has done and is what it will continue to do.

The minister is working actively on ensuring that there is a plan forward for the CBC, but what is really important is that on this side of the House, we believe in a CBC, in a Radio-Canada that is independent, that is powerful and that gives Canadians from coast to coast to coast a voice, not in what the Conservatives want to do, which is simply to say they will gut it, or worse, shut it.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, CBC/Radio-Canada CEO Catherine Tait assures us that programming and management will not be affected by a merger between CBC and Radio-Canada. On the other, it is understood that everything has already been merged, except programming and management.

Her merger plan, she says, is meant to align the sectors and find solutions together. Finding solutions together does not work. It means that CBC management is imposing its vision on Radio-Canada.

Why is the minister refusing to protect Radio-Canada's independence from CBC's anglophone management?

● (1445)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is critical. We have a public broadcaster here in Canada to sustain the French fact from coast to coast to coast. It is critical for francophone minority communities, like those in Edmonton, Peace River, and Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador.

French is an important part of our Canadian identity. The public broadcaster is there to keep the French fact alive, and it is able to communicate in French from coast to coast to coast.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, northern Canadians are getting hungry and it is getting worse because of the carbon tax.

In 2018, 57% of Nunavut families lived with food insecurity versus the national average of 12.7%. That number now is a whopping 69% and is among the worst in the developed world. Almost 70% of Nunavummiut are going hungry every single day.

The Prime Minister knows the carbon tax is making northerners go hungry. Why does he not just axe the carbon tax?

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has a lot of nerve. For the last eight years, he and his government have voted against every initiative to help middle-class families. When we brought in \$10-a-day child care, he voted against. When we brought in dental care for kids, which has served 55,000 children in his province, he voted against it. When we introduced the Canada child benefit, he voted against it. He and his team should be embarrassed.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if it takes nerve to stand up for the people of Nunavut, I will do that every single day. It is getting worse in Nunavut, not better, on the minister's watch in Nunavut, and he knows it.

I visited a grocery store in Iqaluit a few weeks ago. A can of Campbell's chicken noodle soup is over six dollars. A small can of tuna is over eight dollars. McIntosh apples are three dollars each. A litre bottle of ketchup is over \$13.

The people of Nunavut are going hungry, while the minister hikes his carbon tax. Why will he not simply axe the tax?

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two years ago, in Nunavut, I announced \$143 million of new funding for nutrition north. He voted against it. The Conservatives on the other side voted against it. In this budget, we have \$23 million for nutrition north, \$101 million for the harvesters support grant and community foods programs.

I want to know if the Conservatives are going to vote against it or if they are going to support it.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, over two million Canadians are using a food bank every single month. The CEO of Food Banks Canada says that food banks are becoming unsustainable as more food banks are closing their doors because they are out of food, yet the Prime Minister is as determined as ever to drive up the cost of food as he refuses to listen to the millions of Canadians who want to axe his extreme tax.

If the Prime Minister will not listen to us, why will he not at least listen to Food Banks Canada's CEO or maybe the millions of Canadians who are demanding that he lower the price of food by axing his extreme carbon tax.

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be part of a government that believes that every child should have access to

food while at school. That is why we announced our national school food program, ensuring that an additional 400,000 kids have access to food while at school.

I do not understand why the Conservatives would oppose such a measure. How would this be controversial, getting food into children's bellies? Children deserve to learn on a full stomach.

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WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, reproductive rights are under attack, including by Conservatives who voted against free contraceptives, have pushed back-door legislation and tabled petitions attempting to violate abortion rights.

However, the Liberals are no better. They failed to uphold access to abortion care, including in New Brunswick, where there is not a single abortion clinic.

When will the government enforce the Canada Health Act and protect the right to access a safe abortion?

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my friend from across the way that we need to protect abortion rights in our country. I saw her this morning with people on Parliament Hill who are fighting for choice, who are fighting against the people who are there to take our rights away.

I agree there is more to do. It is not perfect yet. We will get there. On this side of the House, we are committed to it.

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● (1450)

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if someone has to negotiate for dignity, then dignity is lost. That is what we heard today at Canada's first-ever air accessibility summit.

Forcing people to drag themselves off planes or to be taken out on food carts is what's happening under the Liberals. Today, the minister said he could intervene, but he prefers to leave it up to big CEOs or, as he called them, the "guys". That has not worked for the last 20 years.

Why will the Liberal minister not make sure that people with disabilities are treated with dignity?

Oral Questions

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning, my colleague and I were at the summit we convened. We had people who are living with disabilities who had bad experiences and representing other people. They were there for frank and open discussions. We also spoke to the airline companies, the airports, CATSA and CBSA, all of them. Why? Because we have to find solutions. What we have witnessed in the past cannot happen anymore. We need concrete solutions. That is what we are working on.

The Conservatives have just closed their eyes. They did nothing in the past. We will do better, much better, all of us together.

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WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, women's reproductive rights across the world are under assault, and we are hearing the same rhetoric and tactics used by anti-choice advocates in the United States, leaking into Canada and into this Parliament.

Could the Deputy Prime Minister speak to the women, the girls and all those who care about them in our country, and assure them what their federal government is doing to stand up for their bodies and for their rights?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Conservative leader bragged that he believed in an à la carte charter of rights. This week, the Conservatives have revealed which is the first right they want to abolish. First, a Conservative MP stood up in the House and said that he wanted to abolish a woman's right to choose. Then, today, Conservative MPs are standing outside saying the same thing.

The hard right in the U.S. has abolished a woman's right to choose in many states. We will not let them do that in Canada.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the crime, chaos, drugs and disorder.

B.C. families have suffered under the Liberals' wacko legalization of deadly hard drugs, like crack, cocaine, heroin and meth. This wacko hard drug experiment should be ended, not expanded to Toronto, or Montreal or anywhere else.

The Conservatives have a motion to end the legalization of deadly hard drugs and ensure that the government denies any active or further applications, and redirect money to treatment and recovery.

Will the minister support the Conservative motion to end the government's radical failed drug policy experiment?

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we need to take a moment to recognize why this issue is so important for every family that has lost a loved one to this tragic overdose crisis from an illegal toxic drug supply.

People are dying alone from fentanyl. We need policies that work, we need to meet communities where they are and we need to understand that this is public health.

The Conservatives continue to want to criminalize family members rather than getting them harm reduction, prevention and treatment. We are committed to saving lives and getting people health care.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to the most recent data, since the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister took office nine years ago, sadly, opioid overdose deaths across Canada have increased 166%. In B.C., overdose deaths are now the leading cause of death for youth aged 10 to 18.

Addiction doctors came out saying that legalized drugs were being diverted to youth. Unbelievably, today, the Minister for Children refused to answer if she was standing up for children against her government's wacko drug policies.

The Conservatives are calling to end taxpayer-funded narcotics, which are being diverted to our children. Will the Minister for Children stand up for children and vote for our Conservative motion?

• (1455)

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member across the way seems to not want to recognize that in provinces like Alberta, where they cut back on a comprehensive continuum of care, including harm reduction, people are dying at astronomical rates. Diversion is illegal, and the member well knows that.

We are committed to a full continuum of care to help those who need health care, not criminalize them, not force them into treatment but to get them the help they need. Shame.

Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the Prime Minister is not worth the crime, chaos, drugs and disorder. Thanks to his wacko drug policies that have legalized hard drugs like crack, meth and heroin, we are now seeing 22 Canadians die every single day from drug overdose. The Prime Minister has even legalized open drug use in our parks, in our playgrounds and in our schools.

Will the Prime Minister show some compassion, support our motion to ban hard drugs and support treatment so we can bring our loved ones home drug-free?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is amazing to me that across the way they continue to mislead Canadians. Addressing the overdose crisis and the tragic deaths that we are seeing from illegal fentanyl in our streets needs harm reduction, needs prevention, and needs treatment and law enforcement.

We work collaboratively with every jurisdiction to provide health care. Why do the Conservatives continue to think that it is okay to criminalize loved ones who need help?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the Prime Minister's wacko policies, overdoses have increased 166%, and the number one cause of death for kids in B.C. is opioids.

The Vancouver police told Parliament that the Liberal safe supply is ending up on the black market, which is then sold to children, creating a new generation of addicts.

The Minister of Children said earlier today that kids dying of opioids was not her problem. Therefore, whose problem is it, and who is going to protect the children and end the legalization of fentanyl, meth and crack?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is all of our grief. That is what it is. It is every single parent in the country who has lost a child. That is what it is about. It is about the people who are on the street today, hoping they are going to make it to tomorrow. Their parents who are far away from them are also hoping they will make it to tomorrow.

That is why we work with scientists and doctors, because we are focused on saving lives, even the people the Conservatives do not think are worth saving.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is no shortage of new blood in the public service. There are 109,000 more civil servants now than when the Liberals took office. There are 109,000 more public servants, an increase of 42%, and yet the use of outside consultants has exploded. There are more employees and more consultants, but people are not receiving more services. Getting a passport or processing an immigration file is more painful than ever. The only thing that is increasing is interference in Quebec's jurisdictions.

Instead of spending like crazy to encroach on Quebec's jurisdictions, can the government just do its job and make sure the federal government is efficient?

[English]

The Speaker: During the hon. member's question, there were conversations on both sides of the House. If members want to have conversations, there are many tools they can use; especially, if they want to pass a note, they can send the young pages. Please, members should not speak over everyone, because it is difficult for peo-

ple to hear the question, and it was an important question that needed to be asked.

[Translation]

The hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we stand for a strong public service and believe in the mission of a strong government that delivers for Canadians, that ensures we have programs to help our seniors and children, that oversees pharmaceutical approvals, and so on. We are never surprised to hear the Conservatives threaten to hack up the public service, nor should we be surprised when the Bloc Québécois, which does not believe in the federal state, does the same thing.

• (1500)

The Speaker: I invite the hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis to continue her discussion elsewhere. I encourage all members not to have discussions on the floor of the House of Commons.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Immigration is meeting with his counterparts tomorrow and there is no shortage of demands. Quebec is calling for the integration of asylum seekers to be shared with the provinces, a cut to temporary immigration, the approval by Quebec of its candidates, French-language training requirements in federal programs, not to mention a \$1-billion reimbursement for welcoming asylum seekers. If Quebec's demands are not met, it has promised a referendum.

Will the minister respond to these demands tomorrow, or will we find him in the no camp in a referendum on immigration in Quebec?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as nice as he is, the member across the way will not be surprised to know that he is not invited to the conference I am attending tomorrow with my provincial counterparts. Obviously, my colleagues and I need to coordinate to ensure that we act responsibly when it comes to temporary residents, access to permanent residency and Canadian citizenship, and asylum seekers. My colleague will have to hold his breath a little while longer.

*Oral Questions***HOUSING**

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this Prime Minister, Quebec is headed for the worst July 1 crisis in history. This Prime Minister's inflationary spending, supported by the Bloc Québécois, has doubled the cost of rent and is forcing people, like the woman we read about in the newspapers, to live in their minivans. In Quebec, everyone knows that July 1 is going to be a disaster, but the Minister of Housing confirmed this morning that he knows nothing about it.

Can the Prime Minister tell us how many Quebeckers will be out on the streets on July 1 because of his minister's ignorance?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our colleague is talking about ministers responsible for housing and asking a question that begins with "how many". We know that, over his entire term as minister responsible for housing, the Conservative leader created only six affordable housing units across the country.

Everyone is aware of that now. The Conservative leader and former minister responsible for housing created only six affordable housing units across the country compared to the 8,000 that were built by Quebec's municipalities. Unfortunately, the Conservative leader is insulting the municipalities of Quebec by saying that they are incompetent.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how many housing units did the housing minister's accelerator fund build in Quebec to house Quebeckers come July 1? The answer is zero.

July 1 is fast approaching, but after nine years of this Prime Minister's failures, after billions in budget allocations, which the Bloc Québécois voted in favour of so the Liberals could make announcements, the minister is unable to tell Quebeckers how many housing units will be ready by July 1. This is a serious crisis. People are even contemplating suicide because they do not have a place to live.

Will the Prime Minister admit that he failed? Will he, at long last, increase the housing stock so Quebeckers can have a place to live instead of increasing bureaucracy?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague asked a great question. How many housing units are we creating in Quebec with \$1.8 billion in funding from the governments of Canada and Quebec? The answer is 8,000 units. We are very happy to let everyone know that.

By comparison, the fact that the Conservative leader built six units during his time as minister responsible for housing looks pretty bad. That was not in one riding; that was across the country.

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FINANCE

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this Bloc-Liberal government, because the Bloc Québécois voted for \$500 billion in budget allocations and for centralizing, inflationary spending that has hiked up the price of everything, in-

cluding housing, interest rates and food, everything is more costly, even voting for the Bloc Québécois.

When will this Prime Minister, with his Bloc Québécois supporters, stop wasting money so that Quebeckers can once again have a roof over their heads, instead of living in their van?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the people watching us at home must be feeling their blood pressure rise. Now they are talking about a liberal bloc.

Canadians understand full well that we, on this side of the House, do not build housing with slogans. We are not growing an economy with ads, like we see on the other side of the House. We are not building the future by asking questions. We are building a country by investing. That is exactly what we are doing by investing in families, in housing and in economic growth.

The 21st century belongs to Canada. We should be proud.

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● (1505)

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our sisters south of the border no longer have the right to safe access to abortion. If anyone thinks Canada is immune to such attempts to control women, they are wrong.

As Simone de Beauvoir said, all it takes is an economic, political or religious crisis for women's rights to be called into question. These rights can never be taken for granted.

Can the Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec reassure us that, here in Canada, our government will always protect our rights and freedoms?

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout the world, Canada is seen as a land of promise and freedom. When I returned to Chile at the age of 18, I realized that I was pregnant, with no rights and no choice.

Canada saved my life for a second time, this time by allowing me to have a safe, legal abortion and a future of my own choosing. Then and now, for me, as for so many women, that is what Canadian freedom is all about.

Why do the Conservatives want to attack women's freedom to choose?

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[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal employment minister is the latest Liberal caught in an ethical scandal. He was secretly working the back door and being paid for lobbying his own government through numbered companies.

After nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, the Prime Minister is simply not worth the cost or the corruption of his employment minister. When he appeared at committee before, he tried to mislead Canadians about how much he was paid for his secret lobbying, but he is being hauled before committee again and is going to have to tell the truth.

How much was the minister paid?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister has already addressed all those allegations, including the ones that the member would never repeat outside the House of Commons. However, during this bad couple of weeks for the Conservative Party, with Diagon, white extremists and now the right to choose being put on the table, it is no surprise that they want to distract.

There are no answers, just slogans on housing, on child care, on so many issues.

The Conservative Party smokescreens from a very bad couple of weeks.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals would beg for a week such as the one the Conservative Party just had.

They can look at fundraising numbers, they can look at polling numbers, and, of course, they can look at newspapers. They will see that another one of their ministers is caught in an ethical scandal, such as the Prime Minister, who got caught breaking the law, or the public safety minister, who got caught breaking the law and then tried to appoint his sister-in-law to be the Ethics Commissioner.

The Liberals cannot seem to help themselves. The employment minister was illegally lobbying, cashing cheques while he put \$110 million of taxpayer money out the door. Will the Liberals support an RCMP investigation?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Campaign Life Coalition publishes a list of Conservative MPs whom they deem anti-choice and anti-LGBT enough to endorse in the election.

The member from Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes has a green light, and that makes him one of 80 Conservative MPs who would deny women the right to choose in this country and who would chop up the Charter of Rights into an à la carte menu.

When will the Leader of the Opposition get up, turn around and say that they are not putting abortion rights back on the table in the House?

* * *

● (1510)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a dangerous sexual offender was in medium security. He needed hospitalization, so he should have been escorted under guard.

Oral Questions

However, authorities did not want to pay for him to be guarded. According to the Toronto Sun, his security was changed from medium to minimum, and he received permission to be temporarily absent from jail. This person is reportedly under court order, upon release, not to be in the presence of children.

Why was a sexual offender left unsupervised at a hospital? The Liberals seem to think it is funny. Why will they not answer this?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, colleagues.

The hon. Minister of Public Safety.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend does not serve to reassure Canadians when he exaggerates and distorts a series of elements that he knows are misleading.

He knows that we have a rigorous correctional service system in which offenders are placed in appropriate, secure federal penitentiaries based on an assessment done by professional public servants. The most important criterion is, of course, the safety of the public.

We will always support public safety by ensuring that dangerous offenders are kept in appropriate, secure federal prisons.

* * *

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, around the world, we are seeing the rights of women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health, being rolled back or denied.

Canadians are proud of our rights and freedoms; women have control over their own futures, over their own bodies. It is their human right. At the same time, we also know that we cannot take this for granted, especially with the rise of anti-abortion rhetoric and threatening promises by the Conservatives.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs reaffirm our government's commitment to Canada's leadership, both at home and abroad? When it comes to advancing—

The Speaker: The hon. member has gone over time.

We are going to get back to this at the end of question period, but all members will understand, of course, that it is difficult for the Speaker to listen to several things at the same time.

The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Business of the House

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to all women in the House, to all women in this country, to all women in the world, the Liberal government will forever be there to support their right to choose. No government, no politician, no judge, no one should take that right away from women.

Members should make no mistake: The Conservative leader and his members are trying to politicize women's bodies, and they are also willing to make sure that they control women. This is to satisfy their far right base.

On this side of the House, we will always be there to support women and women's right to choose.

* * *

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the latest reports show that emissions from big oil and gas are up yet again, *quelle surprise*, and now Imperial Oil is announcing a massive increase in production, thanks to the government's \$34-billion freebie known as the TMX pipeline. That will be 900,000 barrels a day of unrefined bitumen emissions threatening coastal indigenous communities. However, the government's going to go one step further and exclude greenhouse gas emissions from environmental assessments.

Will the environment minister just admit that his promise at COP26 for an emissions cap was just a publicity stunt?

• (1515)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my hon. colleague that just last week the national inventory report came out and showed that, since before the pandemic, our emissions have gone down 44 million tonnes. It is the largest decrease in the last 25 years. It is the equivalent of removing from our roads 13 million gas-powered vehicles. Our plan is working.

However, I will agree with the member that there is more we need to do to fight climate change in this country, if only the Conservative Party of Canada could understand that.

* * *

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, protesters against Israel and the war with Hamas have set up an illegal encampment at the University of Toronto. Most of these demonstrators for hire are not even U of T students. Hate propaganda, threats and anti-Semitic slogans are being directed at legitimate students. Media state that the encampment is funded by pro-Hamas sympathizers who are directing a sham protest for a listed terrorist organization.

Is the government investigating pro-Hamas entities in Canada who are funnelling money to support anti-Semitism and illegal protests in Canada?

Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that the local authorities are engaged in their jurisdictions on this matter. On this side of the House, we will always protect the charter-guaranteed

right to freedom of speech and expression, but it must not cross the line into hate and intimidation.

At times like this, as a government, we are going to continue to do everything that we can to combat hate and to bring people together.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it being Thursday, I would like to know if the government House leader can update the House as to what we will be dealing with for the rest of this week and for the week after the constituency workweek, which is scheduled for the week of May 20.

As well, I wonder if you can inform the House of a couple of very important items. The House passed a motion ordering the Prime Minister to host a carbon tax conference within a certain time period after the motion was adopted. The government has about a week left, so can the government House leader inform Canadians as to what day the Prime Minister will hold this carbon tax conference with the premiers, what channel we can watch it on and whether he will listen to the 70% of Canadians and seven out of 10 provincial premiers who want to axe the tax?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the government is approaching that issue with all the seriousness with which the Conservatives come up with their slogans, but I will move on to the House agenda.

This evening, we will resume debate on Bill C-59, the fall economic statement implementation act, 2023. Tomorrow morning, we will call Government Business Motion No. 39, concerning the pharmacare legislation. We will go back to debate on Bill C-59 in the afternoon.

Upon our return following the constituency week, we will resume debate on Bill C-69, the budget implementation act. I would also like to inform the House that Thursday, May 23, shall be an allotted day.

[Translation]

On the extension of sitting hours, I request that the ordinary hour of daily adjournment of the next sitting be 12 midnight, pursuant to order made Wednesday, February 28.

Finally, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), I would like to designate Thursday, May 23, for consideration in committee of the whole of the main estimates for the Department of Justice. Furthermore, debate on the main estimates for the Department of Health will take place on the evening of Wednesday, May 29.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made Wednesday, February 28, the minister's request to extend the said sitting is deemed adopted.

• (1520)

[English]

The hon. member for Lethbridge has the floor.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED UNJUSTIFIED NAMING OF A MEMBER

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to add to the question of privilege I raised on May 1, concerning the removal of my words from the Hansard.

The question I submit to you today is the following: Is it appropriate for the Speaker of this place, the House of Commons, or those authorized to speak on his behalf, to comment publicly on a question of privilege that is before him for adjudication?

I would like to explain why I put forward this question. It has come to my attention that the office of the Speaker did, in fact, comment to the media regarding my question of privilege. In fact, multiple articles, including one I have here on the front page of the National Post—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I'm sorry, but the hon. member knows she is not to point to articles or hold them up because it then becomes a prop. I would ask the hon. member to just keep on with her point, please.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, multiple articles, including one on the front page of the National Post, as I just showed the House, were published using an official statement provided by the Speaker's official spokesperson, which means it required his sign-off. This is particularly concerning to me and to Canadians when the matter is before the Speaker for a decision to be made.

When the Speaker was asked to provide comment to CTV News on May 1 concerning why he kicked out the leader of the official opposition, he rightly governed himself in that moment and he said, "It would be unfair for the Speaker to comment on things that happened in the House".

However, that same day, the Speaker's official spokesperson released a statement concerning my question of privilege. It is curious to me, then, that the Speaker would deem it appropriate to comment on one matter before the House but not another. In many ways, mine is more severe, because mine is an official question of privilege requiring adjudication, while the matter the Speaker refrained from speaking to actually did not require a ruling at all.

On the front page of the National Post of May 2, the day after I moved my question of privilege, the following statement was issued by the Speaker's office, again signed off by the Speaker. It says, "The blues are unofficial and it is not unusual for changes to be made during the editing and revision process. Sometimes comments are left out when there is a lot of noise, and it is not clear what was said". This is from the Speaker's office spokesperson, Mathieu Gravel.

In the Speaker's own words, and I will repeat them, he said it is "unfair for the Speaker to comment on things that happened in the House," yet his office released an official statement.

Privilege

The question I leave with the Speaker for consideration today is this: Why was an official statement concerning my question of privilege issued to the media?

I look forward to receiving an answer when the Speaker makes his official ruling concerning my question of privilege.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the additional information that the hon. member for Lethbridge has brought forward. We will certainly take that into consideration as we continue to deliberate on that.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I was really disappointed with the use of the word "addicts" to describe people who are struggling with substance use. In her question to the House, the member for Peterborough—Kawartha used this pejorative term again, as her leader has many times, to undermine the value and worth of people who use substances. I would ask that she withdraw it and apologize to the House.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The hon. minister has had an opportunity to raise her point. I would just ask that she wait. Unfortunately, at this point, I cannot ask the hon. member to withdraw, but certainly we can do that at the next sitting.

Give me one second here.

The point of order that was brought up was to ask the hon. member to withdraw. After further consideration and discussions with the Table, at this point I would rather wait to look at the blues to see what was said and whether there is a need to ask the member to withdraw. We will come back to the House if need be.

The hon. official opposition House leader.

• (1525)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to add a couple of points to the comments made by my colleague for Lethbridge.

In trying to get to the bottom of who altered the transcript of the Hansard on the day that the member for Lethbridge was kicked out by the Speaker, certain questions were posed to the aspect of the House administration that is responsible for the transcripts for Hansard. Those questions included who gave the order to alter the official record, what guidelines were in place at the time that decision was made and other related points. I will not go into all the questions that were posed, but the answer came back from the Hansard department saying that, since this was raised as a question of privilege in the House, they would refrain from answering those questions from my colleague and instead leave it to the Speaker.

Therefore, I just want to ensure that, when the Speaker does come back on that ruling, those questions that were put to the House administration are addressed by the Speaker.

Business of Supply

The material change of the official record is a serious matter. The deletion of the two words “I withdraw” are substantial because the Speaker, on that day, kicked out the member for Lethbridge and deprived her of the ability to exercise her parliamentary duties and rights for the rest of that day. To keep a member of Parliament from participating in debate and being able to vote in potential votes and other types of related parliamentary functions is no small matter. Even though these are just two small words, the matter itself is very serious.

Therefore, I would like to signal to the Chair that we are expecting that the questions that were put directly to the House of Commons administration are addressed in that Speaker's ruling.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the additional information. We will certainly take that into consideration as well as we continue to deliberate on that question.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—LEGALIZATION OF HARD DRUGS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague and friend, the member for Bay of Quinte.

After nine years, the Prime Minister and his NDP coalition are not worth the drugs, disorder, death and destruction. There is crime and chaos on the streets, and dangerous, extreme drug policies pushed forward by the NDP-Liberal government have made things so much worse.

Since the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister took office, opiate overdoses across Canada have increased by 166%. In British Columbia, drug deaths were up 380% between 2015 and 2023, from 529 to 2,546. Those are people: loved ones, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, cousins, friends, family and neighbours. Every single life lost is tragic. However, it is important to note that the 380% increase since the Prime Minister started implementing his dangerous and extreme drug policies in B.C. absolutely must be called out.

In British Columbia, more people are dying as taxpayer-funded drugs flood the streets. We see playgrounds littered with crack pipes, dirty needles and drug paraphernalia that abound. All the while, the Liberals have handcuffed law enforcement, making it nearly impossible for the police to just do their job and keep communities safe. We have clearly heard that the Liberals' failed legalization in British Columbia removed tools from police officers, making our streets more dangerous.

Nurses have to deal with plumes of smoke from meth in the hospitals they work in. In fact, one nurse was forced to make a tough choice to end breastfeeding her twins earlier than she wanted to, as a direct result of being exposed to dangerous and deadly drugs in the workplace and her concern about this potentially harming her precious little babies.

In the year after the Prime Minister made it legal to possess crack, heroin, meth, fentanyl and other hard drugs, a record 2,500 British Columbians lost their lives to overdose. Last year, the former Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Carolyn Bennett, assured Canadians that the Liberals would end their experiment if public health and public safety indicators were not met. Fifteen months in, it is clear that we are failing at both, and B.C.'s NDP premier had to plead with the federal government to grant its request and rescue them from the failed policy. It took 11 days before the NDP-Liberal government acted on the pleading request from the B.C. NDP, effectively gutting its extreme policy and admitting that it was a failure.

Now, common-sense Conservatives are calling on the Prime Minister to listen to our common-sense letter and fully reject Toronto's request to legalize hard drugs, and to prevent another tragedy like we have so clearly seen in British Columbia. The Prime Minister must show leadership, completely reject the failed policy and state clearly on the record that he will not allow the dangerous policy to legalize hard drugs in any community across the country. He absolutely needs to not export the failed policy to communities such as Montreal, Toronto or others.

It is so concerning, as many communities across the country have passed resolutions calling for legalization. It is worth noting that this happened after the extremist NDP-Liberal government funded an organization called Moms Stop the Harm, which then quickly launched a national campaign lobbying municipalities and indigenous communities to call on the federal government to develop a plan that includes “legal regulation of illicit drugs to ensure safe supply of pharmaceutical alternatives to toxic street drugs, and decriminalization for personal use.”

● (1530)

Effectively, the federal government funded an advocacy organization to do its dirty work for it, giving it cover to further the dangerous policy. To make matters worse, we have heard many leading addiction physicians, right across the country, state that the Liberal-NDP so-called safe supply continues to fuel new addictions. Courageous physicians from across the country have come forward and demanded an immediate end to programs that were flooding the street with taxpayer-funded high-potency narcotics.

However, what confuses me is that when we start looking into the so-called safe supply and we get to the bottom of it, it is clear that someone must be making money from it. Where is all the money coming from? Where are the activists getting the money to push forward with this? It turns out that there probably is a lot of money being made.

I am going to describe a few people. The first is Dr. Perry Kendall. He was British Columbia's public health officer from 1999 to 2018. In 2017, while still in his role as the public health officer, Dr. Kendall appears to have leveraged his influence to shape Health Canada's regulations to approve diacetylmorphine, that is, heroin, for treatment of opiate use disorder. In 2020, after retiring as public health officer, Dr. Kendall then co-founded a company called Fair Price Pharma to provide diacetylmorphine, that is, heroin, to those at risk of overdose.

In 2021, Fair Price Pharma then imported 15 kilograms of diacetylmorphine that it bought from a licensed European supplier. Fair Price Pharma then contracted a federally licensed dealer's permit to import the heroin. From the time that Dr. Kendall was in office, Fair Price Pharma got upset because there were not enough people using the drug. A headline from one article reads, "BC's first provincial health officer fighting for safe supply of heroin".

Then there is Dr. Martin Schechter. Dr. Schechter played a leading role in two Canadian studies that were completed in Vancouver, the NAOMI and SALOME studies, which were the basis for the arguments made to bring forward the so-called safe supply. Ironically, Dr. Schechter is the other co-founder of none other than Fair Price Pharma.

To recap, Martin Schechter and Dr. Kendall co-founded a company that led to profit from so-called safe supply. Dr. Tyndall is also involved. He is a former executive medical director of the B.C. Centre for Disease Control and former deputy provincial health minister under Dr. Kendall. Dr. Tyndall then started MySafe Society, which provides so-called safe supply hydromorphone from vending machines.

In July 2023, MySafe received \$1.3 million in Health Canada's SUAP funding, in addition to \$3.5 million it had previously received. At this point, another article came out in British Columbia, with the headline, "BC doctors upset their 'safe supply' of heroin going unprescribed during overdose crisis". It is exceptionally troubling that there are doctors pushing for safe supply and then potentially profiting from it after having created companies to solve the problem.

It is important to share that Conservatives will listen to the experts and shut down the government-supplied drug programs. We will bring hope and a common-sense plan for treatment and recovery. Conservatives believe recovery is possible and that it should be the goal. We believe that every Canadian with an addiction deserves the opportunity to pursue recovery. If the Prime Minister allows Toronto, Montreal or any other community to legalize hard drugs as he did in British Columbia, the only outcome will be leading more vulnerable Canadians to a life of misery and despair.

We need to restore hope to all Canadians. Common-sense Conservatives will stop funding the dangerous taxpayer-funded, so-called safe supply drugs. We will ban hard drugs. We will invest in detox, treatment and recovery services. We will bring our loved ones home drug-free.

• (1535)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I hardly know where to start in this debate. It is so

Business of Supply

distressing to hear the Conservatives deliberately distorting and falsifying the information about what is happening in British Columbia and about the role of groups like Moms Stop The Harm.

Overdose deaths have actually dropped in British Columbia over the last three months. They are now 11% lower than they were last year. We are seeing the positive impacts of the programs introduced in British Columbia. Yes, the B.C. government asked for an adjustment on public use of drugs. It did not say this was a failed program. It is not abandoning the program. It did not beg for it to stop.

In fact, groups like Moms Stop The Harm and other people who have lost loved ones want to know what the Conservatives are proposing in provinces like Alberta, which now actually has a higher death rate from overdoses than British Columbia does.

What are the Conservatives proposing to keep people safe in Alberta?

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, it is interesting that more people have died of overdose in British Columbia in the first three months of 2024 than in all of 2015. More than six people die in British Columbia every day due to an overdose. It is absolutely incumbent on each and every one of us legislators to adopt a recovery-oriented system of care, providing hope for people who are struggling with addiction, and offer them off-ramps so they can pursue recovery.

British Columbia did not just tweak the program; it effectively gutted it, admitting it was an abject failure and demanding the federal government rescue the province from this failure. Unfortunately, I am not going to take any lessons from the Government of B.C. on how to handle the addiction crisis.

• (1540)

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business and to the Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have to agree with my colleague from the NDP. There is a lot to unpack in that speech, for which, frankly, we do not have nearly enough time. The member talked about, essentially, a conspiracy theory about officials benefiting financially from the horrible crisis.

Would the member speak to her leader about the fundraising that the Conservatives are doing right now on the issue and whether that is appropriate?

Business of Supply

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, the tragic overdose crisis that is gripping our country, and the addiction crisis, are very serious issues. There are some very stark differences with the approaches on how to handle this serious, tragic issue.

Conservatives believe that people have the capacity to recover from addiction. We believe we need to support people in pursuing recovery through detox, treatment and a recovery-oriented system of care. It is very obvious that the NDP-Liberal coalition does not believe in supporting people in those endeavours. Unfortunately, people's lives are lost as a direct result.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, the situation is extremely serious, but today's motion paints a distorted and alarmist picture of it, and that is deplorable.

The facts matter when we are dealing with crisis situations. When MPs say that Toronto and Montreal want to legalize drugs, they are not being truthful.

I would like to give my colleague the opportunity to clarify her thoughts. Perhaps I can offer some guidance. What is the purpose of this motion? Does she really understand the difference between legalization, decriminalization and diversion? Does she agree that those three terms are very different?

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, I think my colleague pointed out something that is really inconvenient for the Bloc Québécois, a party that seems to support the legalization of hard drugs in Canada.

The Conservative Party is very clear. We do not support the legalization of hard drugs, such as crack, heroin and morphine. We will continue to be clear about that.

I hope the Bloc Québécois will support our motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the Liberal government, we are seeing chaos, crime and destruction across this country, and we have a series of crises in this country. Housing is a crisis. For the first time in many generations, housing, which should be a fundamental right in Canada, is unattainable for so many. We talk about poverty levels and the ability to have nutritious food. Many Canadians right now talk about the inability to go to the grocery store to buy the food they need. They are buying less food right now.

There is a drug problem across Canada. It is very stark in B.C., and there has been mention of Alberta. I come from Belleville, Ontario, which is a rural town about two hours east of Toronto and two and a half hours west of Montreal. It has been hit hard by the drug problem that is affecting all of Canada.

Right now, the Belleville Sens AHL team, the farm team of the Ottawa Senators, have done what Toronto could not do this year, and certainly what Ottawa could not do even to get to the playoffs. They are in their second round of the playoffs in the AHL and are doing well. They are playing the Cleveland Monsters. Procter & Gamble is in Belleville, as well as Kellogg. For everyone who is a Cheezies fan, Hawkins Cheezies is in my riding. There are some in my office and they do not last very long. They go well with pinball.

I was born in Belleville, and so were Avril Lavigne and Bobby Hull. We are very proud of the city and all its accomplishments. One of the prime ministers, Sir Mackenzie Bowell, "the accidental prime minister", was from Belleville, Ontario.

Belleville was rocked by overdoses in February. There were 13 overdoses in only two hours, 23 overdoses in just over 24 hours, 90 overdoses in one week and 240 overdoses in 11 weeks, or 3.5 overdoses a day. The mayor of Belleville, the former Liberal member for Bay of Quinte, declared an emergency. There is drug addiction, mental health and homelessness. As much as Belleville has good health care and a great hospital, there are zero treatment beds. There are zero detox beds. When it comes to mental health and addiction, there is a waiting list that is over 500 people long. The emergency crisis was called because rural Ontario and rural cities across Canada, much like Belleville, are finding it too hard to deal with this crisis, which is becoming far too common in all of Canada.

When we look at the resources that are needed in this country, I give full credit to what the community does in my region. When we look at homelessness and poverty and how they affect mental health and drug use, they are all related. When we do not take care of the top layers, they affect the bottom layers. We do not have detox beds or facilities. The only ones we have are an hour east, in Kingston, for men or women, and another one an hour west. Hospital beds are full. With the overdose and mental health crises, all available beds in all hospitals are filling up. A councillor in my region could not even go to Belleville. He had to go Picton, almost 40 minutes away, because hospitals are filled to the brim.

Paramedics feel helpless when, in one week, they responded to 90 overdose deaths. They suffer from burnout when the resources are depleted. Police are the first responders. There is a great mental health program called Impact. It consists of medical health first responders, and they feel depleted and helpless. They pick up people who need help and bring them to the hospital. There is nowhere to put them, so they are back on the street and the cycle begins again.

Most importantly, when we look at what we need to fix this crisis, aside from detox facilities and beds, it comes down to the fact that drug dealers are allowed to roam free and put illicit drugs on the street. The Belleville police chief has been very vocal about this. Mike Callaghan just retired and Chris Barry is in the role now.

• (1545)

I make it a habit every year to go on a ride-along with local police. On that ride-along, I talk to the officers, the first responders, those heroes who are dealing with the crisis, the mental health professionals, and this is what they tell me. They know who the drug dealers are. They know where the drugs are coming in from. There are four sources in the town that bring them in from Toronto, down the 401. They pick up these drug dealers, and they are out on bail the very same day. The next morning, they will pick up another drug dealer and, again, it is the same process. Police call themselves “recyclers” because, in effect, they pick up people who are then back on the street, and around and around we go.

This affects a very small community, but it also affects Canada. When we look at this and what is happening across all of our nation, it is not just something happening in B.C. or in Alberta. It is happening in small communities and rural communities like Belleville and Monkton. It is happening in Peterborough, and it is happening in Kenora. It is happening in Thunder Bay. It is happening in Kingston. At the end of the day, we have failed, and the government has failed, to take care of this drug problem. It is affecting not only every family in this country; it is affecting all of our communities and all of this country that we call home and that we love.

It is squarely put onto the government and how it is handling this: the fact that we are not taking care of these crises, the homelessness and the housing crisis, ensuring that we look at mental health and addiction, our health care crisis as a whole, and, of course, the fact that we cannot even get drug dealers off the streets.

When we look at this and how it affects the small town of Belleville, Ontario, and when we look at the ideology of how we are approaching this problem and how we are going to solve it, it comes down to one thing: Drugs are bad. I remember growing up as a teenager in the 1980s, and we would see commercials on TV. One commercial said, “This is your brain, and this is your brain on drugs.” What are the commercials that we see right now? “Do drugs with a friend.”

I went on a tour with our critic, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. We went to a maximum-security prison last weekend: Millhaven, by Kingston, where some of the most ruthless monsters that we have in society are put away and are serving their time behind bars. When we were there touring the facility, three of the criminals were high on drugs, in maximum security, in their cells. I went with the officer because I could not believe it. We walked into the cell block, and we were having a conversation face to face with a criminal whose eyes were like this, and who was locked on drugs. They are getting these drugs because drones are flying in and dropping them in the yard. They are finding ways to get in.

Drug use is far too easy in this country. We are not treating it how we should, as something that is lethal to Canadians and to our children, something that should be outlawed in terms of dealing it and getting access to it, and then treating the ones who are addicted to it with compassion and humanity and making sure that we are getting them treatment and detox.

Business of Supply

This motion tackles two things. It ensures that common-sense Conservatives will ban hard drugs, stop taxpayer-funded drugs and put the money into detox and recovery.

For all the arguments we have heard today that this is not compassionate and this is not care, this is exactly what these people need. They need to be treated. The fact is that everything they have in terms of an addiction or mental health is treatable. The fact is that the municipalities, the paramedics, the police and the community groups that are looking after these individuals have no resources. They are at a loss. The fact is that the people who fall into disarray do not have housing. They do not have the pharmaceutical care and they are being treated like consumers by the pharmaceutical companies that are putting these drugs on the street.

This motion does two things only. It would ensure that we look at drugs as bad, that we treat those drugs as substances that should be banned and taken off the streets. We would ensure that we put the drug dealers, those putting the drugs on the street, behind bars. We would ensure that those people who are addicted and need mental health support get the support they need, in terms of detox, recovery and, most importantly, affordable housing that gets them off the street. Then, of course, looking to the fact that we help people, we would bring our loved ones home, drug-free, and help Canadians for once.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, this morning, something rather unusual happened, and we in the Bloc Québécois are taking it very seriously.

When we asked the Leader of the Conservative Party about the difference between decriminalization and diversion, he said that they meant the same thing, that it was just semantics. In this debate, words matter. There is too much room for exaggeration.

Does my colleague agree with his leader that there is no difference between these two terms?

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, I stand by our leader when we talk about banning hard drugs.

We are talking about deviation. When pharmaceutical companies are giving a prescribed opioid to a consumer, deviation means that that drug is finding its way into the market. That is happening. When we talk about decriminalization, that is exactly what has happened in Vancouver and what the Toronto mayor wants to do, which is to allow hard drugs on the streets.

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We are against all of that. We want drugs off the street. We want treatment and recovery for Canadians. Semantics matter. The fact is that we are the only party that I am hearing in the House today saying that we want to ban hard drugs, and then focus all of that money on detox and recovery. We are the only party saying it. That is semantics.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's speech, and he has taken a very complex problem and narrowed it down to very simple slogans, as I would have expected.

I have a simple question. I would like to know this: How many people with addictions, in this opioid crisis, has the member spoken to, and what has he learned from their experience?

• (1555)

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, if the member listened to my speech, I have spoken to those individuals. I have talked to hundreds of them, but also, most importantly, the people on the front lines: the police, the mental health responders, and those who are running the community groups. We have a group from the Bridge Street United Church that is actually in the middle of this opioid epidemic and the overdose situation. They watched seven people in line collapse from drug use.

The bigger thing that is happening, when we look at what is happening with drugs, is that when we give criminals an inch, they take a mile, and now they are lacing drugs with horse tranquilizer. When I am talking to the individuals on the front lines, they are saying the drugs are getting worse.

All we are saying is, let us give a mile to the people suffering from it and to the frontline responders, and let us give only an inch to the criminals. That is not a slogan; it is just common sense.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, when I read the motion, I do not read it the same way that the member just read it. What I am seeing from this motion is that the Conservatives are asking the Prime Minister not to listen to the City of Toronto. They are asking the Prime Minister not to listen to the City of Montreal. They are asking provinces, territories and municipalities, who are asking for help, not to be heard.

I find this quite distressing and contradictory to what the member has just been sharing. I wonder if he read his own motion from his party, to see that actually they are not encouraging municipalities, provinces and territories to work together to make sure that the people who need care get the care they deserve.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, this started from asking the government to listen to the Province of B.C.

We have been adamant in our ask, which is to ban hard drugs. We are just reacting, and this motion is reacting to statements made by the City of Toronto's mayor and the City of Montreal, who are asking to make hard drugs legal.

What we are asking for is to listen to the provinces. The Province of Ontario has asked to ensure that those hard drugs are illegal. I have not heard from Quebec or anyone else.

At the end of the day, we are listening to Canadians who are on the front line and those who are suffering in small towns across this whole country.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the very hon. member for Don Valley West.

It is a real honour, as always, for me to be speaking on behalf of the amazing residents of my riding of Davenport. I am speaking to today's Conservative opposition day motion on the opioid crisis we have in this country.

We have an opioid crisis. There are far too many deaths, and we have completely different approaches to handling this opioid crisis. The Liberal government has a very science-based approach. We also have an approach of treating this opioid crisis as a health issue and not a criminal issue.

I will start off by highlighting some comments from an article that I found very helpful to put things into perspective on the different approaches of our two governments. I will then go into a prepared speech, which will focus on the over \$200 million in research dollars that have been invested by our Liberal government related to substance abuse and the various attempts to try to wrestle this opioid crisis, which is killing far too many Canadians here in this country.

As described in a Globe and Mail article from late 2022, the Conservative leader had released a video, and a "former public safety and justice adviser to the [former] Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper...condemned [the Leader of the Opposition's]...video on Vancouver's toxic drug crisis." He described the opposition leader's comments on safe supply as "unsubstantiated".

Here is what that adviser said: "I was really disgusted by it. I honestly was so disturbed to see [the leader of the Conservatives] using people's really desperate situation here in the city I live in as a backdrop for a political propaganda ad." This is from former public safety and justice adviser Benjamin Perrin. He is currently a law professor at the University of British Columbia. He also said, "It was a five-minute long diatribe that's not informed by any research, evidence or expertise. It's just [the leader of the Conservatives] rehashing Conservative, war-on-drug tropes that have been long since discredited and have been found to be not only ineffective but costly and deadly."

As described in the article, Mr. Perrin also took issue with the leader of the Conservatives "posting the footage without meeting the media to talk about his policy." He said, "Politicians should be courageous enough to answer questions when they are going to propose that they have got solutions to a problem as complex and diverse as the opioid crisis instead of just posting a video on their social-media channels and just walking away without being responsible for what they said."

In a further response to this video, which outlined the federal Conservative views on the Vancouver toxic crisis issue, the B.C. mental health and addictions minister said that the leader of the Conservatives was "spreading a 'dangerous' message with his video."

The article describes how, in the statement, the B.C. minister of mental health and addictions “cited the finding from the...BC Coroner’s Service that the vast majority of toxic drug deaths in the province are due to people using illicit substances alone.” She said, “One of the most important ways to save lives from toxic drugs is to separate people from toxic drugs - that’s why B.C. prescribes safer supply and is the first province in Canada to do this. It is toxic, illicit drugs that are killing people - not the province’s prescribed safer supply program.”

I will go back to Mr. Perrin, who then further “criticized [the leader of the federal Conservatives’] suggestion that the crisis is caused by taxpayer-supported drugs as false, attributing the problem instead to street drugs contaminated with the potent opioid fentanyl and carfentanyl.” Mr. Perrin said:

There is no indication that prescribed safe supply is contributing to illicit drug deaths...

Safer supply has been tested and found to be beneficial for people who have been unable to have treatment for whatever reason, and are long-term substance-abuse users.

We’re talking about essentially substituting a contaminated street drug with a drug that has known contents and potency to help people stay alive, first of all, and also to be able to stabilize.

This is before they can get treatment and find a way off of an opioid.

• (1600)

I will now talk about some of the big investments we have made on substance use research.

Last fall, we introduced a renewed Canadian drugs and substances strategy, which has guided our approach to substance use policy since 2017. This is Canada’s model. It is a comprehensive framework guiding our efforts to address the toxic drug and overdose crisis, centred on promoting public health and protecting public safety. The strategy supports a comprehensive, compassionate and evidence-based approach informed by the four pillars of prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement.

A strong evidence base is foundational to our federal approach to addressing the overdose crisis in Canada, and our government recognizes the crucial role of research in tackling this crisis. We have invested more than \$200 million in research related to substance use. These scientific endeavours are increasing our understanding of substance use and mobilizing knowledge to improve health outcomes and ultimately save lives.

Let us talk about how investing in research is helping inform policies and programs that would effectively address the toxic drug crisis in our country. Through the Canadian research initiative in substance matters, or CRISM, we are connecting more than 1,000 researchers, service providers, decision-makers and people with lived experience of substance use. Its objective is to translate evidence-based interventions for substance use into clinical practice, community-based prevention, harm prevention, and advice to deciders and health care.

Since its creation almost a decade ago, CRISM has become a national asset with critical infrastructure and expertise for conducting clinical trials, producing national guidelines, developing and scaling evidence-based intervention, and guiding decision makers and

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health care providers as they respond to the overdose crisis. CRISM researchers have also recently published an important guidance document regarding take-home naloxone, which is a key emergency measure and targeted tool to reverse opioid overdose and prevent mortality.

This document offers evidence-based policy guidance for federal, provincial and territorial programs distributing take-home naloxone kits. The guidance was developed in collaboration with people with lived and living experience; frontline overdose, response and harm reduction workers; public health professionals; and clinicians, among others. This work is being widely disseminated to ensure broad uptake and was recently published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal.

In 2022, the government announced the renewal of CRISM with an investment of \$17 million to build and expand on the successes of its first phase. This expansion would enhance CRISM’s geographic coverage to a total of five regional nodes.

We have also launched a new funding opportunity that commits up to \$8 million over four years for a new Canada-wide study on controlled substances starting in summer 2024. That is this summer. The study would generate much-needed baseline data, including estimates of the use of controlled substances across Canada. It would support decision-making and the evaluation of interventions, clinical guidelines and policies.

Together with this program, CRISM would further expand through the creation of an indigenous engagement platform to expand the reach and impact of CRISM’s engagement with first nations, Inuit and Métis people, including urban indigenous communities. We have a number of programs in place to continue to fund research and find scientific, evidence-based solutions to the opioid crisis, which is killing far too many Canadians every day.

It is an honour and a pleasure to speak on behalf of the residents of Davenport. I look forward to the questions members of the House will have.

• (1605)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member is the chair of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, and she knows very well that the drugs coming into Canada are part of a hybrid warfare being conducted by the communists who control China.

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How are the member and her government going to genuinely care for these casualties of war and stop the weapons, which are the drugs, from coming in, let alone their providing more to the people who are already casualties?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her participation and leadership on the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association. With respect to her question, there is indeed an issue with illegal and toxic substances crossing our border.

We have put in over a billion dollars to reinforce officials at the border, the CBSA, and we have had to put in far more money because the Conservatives, when they were in power, not only reduced the amount of officials and funding at the border but also cut the programs to address the opioid crisis at the time in half. We are left to deal with the problem here, and the problem has become even worse.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to know my colleague's opinion on the impact of the Conservatives' rhetoric, demagoguery and lies and the lack of scientific content in the opioid file.

I would like my colleague to tell me what impact this could have on drug users.

• (1610)

[English]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, my riding is in downtown west Toronto, and I am an avid walker. I walk the streets all the time, and when I notice things, I raise the issues with the local superintendent of police. One of the key things we have talked about was whether there were discussions or any knowledge of the City of Toronto being interested in a similar program as to what is existing in Vancouver.

One of the things I find very problematic in the House is the fact there are no active discussions at all from the City of Toronto to put in a similar program to what Vancouver has right now. It is awful to be spreading that incorrect information and those lies, and it takes away our energy and our efforts from addressing the issue that is at hand. We need to do it from a medical perspective and from an evidence-based and fact-based perspective.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the member has responded partly to what I was going to ask her regarding whether she thinks the opioid crisis is a health issue or a criminal justice issue, specifically because the NDP did introduce a bill that would treat the toxic drug crisis as a health issue. I wonder if the member could instead explain, if this is a health issue, why the Liberal government is spending 60% of the budget on law enforcement.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I did mention in my speech that it absolutely is a health issue. I do not think it is a criminal issue.

One of the things I did not get a chance to mention when I was giving my prepared speech is that a lot of our \$200 million of funding is also going into expanding the indigenous engagement platform to engage with first nations, Inuit and Métis people, including urban and indigenous communities. We know indigenous peoples

continue to be disproportionately impacted by the overdose crisis, and it is essential that we have partnership with indigenous leaders to address this issue in indigenous communities across our country.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House.

I want to take a moment just before I begin my formal speech to recognize and honour a young friend of mine. I met him as an infant, and I performed his funeral last summer. He was 22 years of age, and his name is Marek Seamus Henderson Pekarik. He died as a victim, as a person who was addicted to opioids and other drugs. He died, really, in the prime of his very young life.

Marek came from a fine family. He was very close to both his parents and has a wonderful sister. He was really able to light up a room every time he walked in, with his imagination and his fun. However, there was always an insecurity there, and there was always something that led him to want to be part of a group. That part of the group that he got into led him onto a pathway that led to an addiction. Part of that addiction may have been hereditary; one never knows about addiction. Ultimately, a tainted drug supply led to his death just over a year ago.

His family is still grieving. His friends are still grieving. I am still grieving. I wanted to raise his name in the House today because this is not just about giving family and friends a nod to say that we acknowledge their grief or their pain. This pain and grief in this opioid crisis is very real for many people.

No pain or grief should ever be politicized. This is one of those issues where we should learn how to work together. We should find a way to look outside our political differences and to look at a crisis that is affecting people every day in our provinces, our communities and our cities. We need to open up a door to look at the fact that there is no silver bullet in this battle. There needs to be a multi-pronged approach in a way that we get best evidence and that we find a way to ensure that we use that best evidence to get a plethora of treatments, options and ideas to attack the problem, because one size does not fit all.

Let me be very clear. The ever-changing, illegal, toxic drug supply is a primary factor driving this crisis, and too many people are losing their lives as a result of it. That is why Marek died.

Of course, there are underlying issues all the time. Of course, there are easy and facile answers that are going to be offered to people. The reality is that we have to get bad drugs off our streets and away from Canadians, as 22 Canadians lose their lives every day in this unrelenting, tragic crisis. These are sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, nieces and nephews, and aunts and uncles. They are grandparents. It is being driven by the increasingly toxic and unpredictable, illegal drug supply in Canada, which is killing, on average, 22 Canadians a day.

We have to use every tool at our disposal. That means we will not have perfection on any one tool. We have to find ways to do prevention, to find ways to address addiction in the very early stages, to understand that this is a health crisis and to help people as human beings. It means that we need to provide treatment.

That needs to be on-demand treatment, and we are not there yet. The federal government continues to supply money to provinces, to communities, to have more and better treatment. We are not there yet, but treatment is a critical part of this. Harm reduction is also part of it. We simply do not want people to die.

This is not a moral issue, and it is not primarily a legal issue. It is a health crisis, and people are dying. It is the same as people dying of cancer, of heart disease, of obesity and of so many factors in our world where people are dying. We need to have a medical approach that does not further stigmatize people who are already suffering in their lives.

This debate is doing nothing to further that issue. It is doing nothing to help the people who are the victims in this horrendous case. We need to focus on prevention. We need to focus on treatment, harm reduction and enforcement. All four factors are the central pillars of our government's approach. They need to be based on reason and on evidence. They need to develop best practices. We need to have an international lens to see what works and what does not work. We will make mistakes in things that work. We will honestly do that, but we will continue to learn every day as we try to solve this crisis together.

- (1615)

We need to look at emerging practices and solutions from around the globe, and we need to listen to the professionals who are engaged. That does mean law enforcement officers, but more than that, it means physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners and therapists. It needs to engage psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and street workers, the people who are listening, and it needs to involve the families of victims, people who love their children, who love their parents and who see the day-to-day destruction in their lives.

Our policies are not driving this problem. Anyone who says that does not understand the problem and has not spent time on the streets, in hospitals, in treatment centres or in prisons, where we see the effects of this horrible overdose crisis. It means they have not been at the funerals where I have been and that I have performed to actually deal with the outcomes of this horrendous problem.

To say our policies are contributing to it is simply incorrect. We know what the factors are, not all the factors, but most of the factors of addictions, and we are addressing them as root causes. We understand the complex issue around police enforcement, and we are working around the clock, and around the world, on enforcement. We also want best practices in understanding how it is that we are to get to the victims to make sure they are not further stigmatized and further hurt. We want to help, not to hurt. We know, primarily, that we want to stop deaths. The first way to do that is to stop toxic, illegal drug supply, the kinds of drugs that are getting to people and that are killing people.

According to the latest national data, 82% of overdose deaths involved illegal fentanyl. This percentage has increased by 44% since

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2016. That was when national surveillance actually began. I note that because it was just after the Liberal government took office. We were not getting the data we needed before the government took office. Now, we are getting better data to surveil this situation and to understand best practices. It is the illegal drug supply that is contaminated with toxic levels of illegal opioids, other drugs, that is at the root cause of the overdose crisis in Canada.

To suggest that our programs simply hand out prescription drugs to anyone, including youth, is simply not true. It is not a fact. It is wrong. The clients of those programs are already using drugs and are struggling with addictions. They need care. They need help. They need the ability to fight their disease and to be given time so that compassionate, hopeful people can embrace them in love and can work with them in a medical way to ensure that they combat their addictions.

It means we need roads to recovery as well. We need pathways to recovery and need treatment on demand, but it does not matter that treatment on demand is available if people are dead. They are dying from toxic drug supply. They have been marginalized in the medical system. They need to be brought home. They need to be recognized as part of the medical system in our country, where professionals are able to meet them with no judgment, no stigma and certainly not with the political jargon or rhetoric that we hear today from across the other side of the House. It means absolute training for primary caregivers and primary medical service providers to ensure that they have the best tools and the time to do their work.

We hear a concern from the other side that there is a diversion of drugs from these programs. That is simply not true. Diversion is illegal, and steps are always being taken to stop it. We take those concerns seriously. We take them very seriously, and we encourage law enforcement officers to do best practices to counter that at every opportunity.

The Conservatives are portraying a fiction that our streets are flooded by prescribed alternative medications. There is no data to say that. What we need to do is to continue to ensure that diversion does not happen and that people have a span of time in their lives to get the treatment they need, to work on the healthy lives they want to live, to make sure that people like young Marek do not meet their deaths without options for treatment.

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• (1620)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I agree with the member that we need multiple tools, from prevention to recovery, to solve this issue. I also agree that we need to learn from our mistakes. Clearly, the decriminalization of hard drugs in B.C. tripled the death rate and the premier has asked the federal government to reverse the decision; it was a deadly mistake.

Can the member explain why the Prime Minister will not emphatically state that he will not repeat that deadly mistake elsewhere in Canada?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, we actually believe in provincial jurisdiction, and we actually believe in the Constitution, which gives provinces rights and responsibilities.

This government listens to provinces. This government listens to best practices, and it will engage in pilot projects. Pilot projects are like an experiment; those are important things to be done. Safeguards are put around them. We listen to the provinces. The provinces invited us to engage in a pilot project. The government engaged in it. An evaluation took place.

We will continue to listen to provinces, to cities, to municipalities and to professional caregivers. We will not necessarily listen to rhetoric and ideology that is counterproductive and that only hurts people.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I want to thank the member for his excellent intervention.

Does the member agree that what needs to happen is for the Liberal government to declare a national emergency on the toxic drug crisis so that there is a pan-Canadian response to addressing it?

• (1625)

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, I always have time to listen to the member for Nunavut. I am very glad she was able to ask a question.

There is a national crisis. It is clear. It is coast to coast to coast. It is hitting cities, communities, small towns, remote cities and remote villages. It is hitting everyone. It hits both rural and urban people. I will absolutely commit to working on best practices to ensure every part of this country, north, south, east and west, has an opportunity to engage in everything needed.

I do not really know what a national emergency means. I know it is a personal emergency. It has hit my family. It has hit other families in the House. We need to work on it.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke passionately on the matter; obviously, it has affected him personally, as it has so many Canadians. I wonder if he could expand on his point about stigma. He talked about how we have to address this as a health care issue, and then he talked about how unfortunate it is when it is politicized.

Can he talk more about stigma and about how we should not politicize these matters? We should look at it, first and foremost, as an issue of health care when responding.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, that comment gives me a chance to give a shout-out to an organization in my riding called Families for Addiction Recovery, FAR. It is made up of parents whose kids have been in engaged in illegal drugs and often had addictions. This group particularly has talked about this as a medical crisis. As long as we do not see it as a medical crisis and do medical interventions, but see it as a legal crisis, we will never get ahead.

That further stigmatizes and pushes people away from getting the care they want. It excludes people from society. It pushes them away, and we need to bring them home. We need to bring them love. We need to bring them compassion. Stigma will never do that. What we need to do is to ensure that groups, like Families for Addiction Recovery, have the tools they need to be a community-based group, and we will do that work. I am proud to support them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

[*English*]

Today is my son's 22nd birthday and, oddly enough, my mother's 91st birthday. I say happy birthday to Zac and Zetta.

This is obviously a very contentious topic, and I certainly do not mean to be inflammatory in my remarks, because I do understand the nature of this illness and that it is a health care issue. However, we need to think of three different things: decriminalization, safe supply and banning precursor chemicals.

We studied the opioid epidemic in HESA, where the member for Yukon referred to the Liberal government's policy of delivering drugs to vulnerable Canadians as an "experiment", and that is the study that we continue to undertake at the Standing Committee on Health. According to the *Collins English Dictionary*, one definition of "experiment" is "a scientific test which is done in order to discover what happens to something in particular conditions." The natural conclusion is that, when something is shown to work in certain conditions, one should expand on it. The obvious converse point is related to the fact that, if it has a potentially harmful outcome, then one should bring it to an end. That is how experiments work. In the health committee, we very clearly heard the deputy chief from Vancouver telling us that the police officers believed that the decriminalization experiment needed to be curtailed, and then people actually began to stand up and take notice.

One of the difficulties we know of is that decriminalization has led to a lack of safety in downtowns across this country. I remember, perhaps a month ago, when I visited Sydney, Nova Scotia, that people were afraid to go into their downtowns. Of course, that goes all the way to Sidney, British Columbia, as well. Residents are scared. The police do not have the opportunity to attempt to make the areas around soccer fields, playgrounds, businesses or sidewalks safe for residents to use. I think that is certainly something to consider.

Brad West, the mayor of Port Coquitlam, was quoted during an interview with the BBC on March 29. The article is entitled “Success or failure? Canada’s drug decriminalization test faces scrutiny”. The article goes on to say:

It is a debate felt not just in the bigger cities like Vancouver, but in places like Port Coquitlam, a suburb of 60,000 people east of Vancouver rich in walking trails, public parks and single-family homes.

There, it was an altercation during a child’s birthday party that was “the last straw” for Mayor Brad West.

Mr. West told the BBC he had heard from a family who had spotted a person using drugs near the party, held in a local park. Confronted, the person refused to leave, he said.

“That to me is unacceptable,” he said, adding that police had the right to intervene in that situation.

Therefore, we know that this is a very difficult topic.

Greg Shea, adjunct professor of management and senior fellow at the Wharton School’s Center for Leadership and Change Management, wrote an article dated September 5, 2023, entitled “Is Portugal’s Drug Decriminalization a Failure or Success? The Answer Isn’t So Simple.” The article goes on to say:

evidence of a fragmenting, even breaking, system abounds: Demoralized police no longer cite addicts to get them into treatment and at least some NGOs view the effort as less about treatment and more about framing lifetime drug use as a right.

The number of Portuguese adults who reported prior use of illicit adult drugs rose from 7.8% in 2001 to 12.8% in 2022 — still below European averages but a significant rise nonetheless. Overdose rates now stand at a 12-year high and have doubled in Lisbon since 2019. Crime, often seen as at least loosely related to illegal drug addiction, rose 14% just from 2021 to 2022. Sewage samples of cocaine and ketamine rank among the highest in Europe [strangely enough] (with weekend spikes) and drug encampments have appeared along with a European rarity: private security forces.

The decriminalization experiment is not working. Fortunately, I believe, for Canadians in British Columbia, that government has asked the NDP-Liberal government to reverse it, and that change appears to be coming.

• (1630)

On safe supply, where did this all begin? It began with Purdue Pharma, as we hear in the vernacular, supercharging the sales of OxyContin. That, of course, is evidenced by the family that owned Purdue Pharma being sued successfully for \$6 billion to help pay for that crisis. We know that street prices of hydromorphone have plummeted all over Canada.

Around Ottawa, it has often been reported that the original street price for an eight-milligram hydromorphone pill was around \$20; now it is around two dollars. In the last couple of days, we heard clearly in health committee from Dr. Sharon Koivu, an addiction medicine expert from London. She told us that safe supply has

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caused horrific suffering in her community. She also went on to talk about the plummeting price of hydromorphone. She believed that safe supply was diverting patients away from opioid agonist treatment, which we know has significant scientific evidence. We know that this therapy needs to be undertaken in this country as part of the suite of services to treat this terrible epidemic.

The former minister of addictions said in June last year, “It is hugely important, I think, to understand that the people using Dilaudid or hydromorphone have been known to be able to share it with their family and friends, which is a safe supply.” That is nonsensical, I am afraid to say. The sharing of prescription drugs is illegal.

We also know there has been significant diversion of Dilaudid or hydromorphone from so-called safe supply programs. For instance, in Prince George, police seized more than 10,000 pills, including hydromorphone, diverted from safe supply. In Campbell River, 3,500 government-issued hydromorphone pills were seized by the local RCMP, all of which were diverted from so-called safe supply; the pills had been in the possession of a “well-organized drug trafficking operation”.

We know that these things are happening. We have also heard, again from Prince George, that organized crime groups are actively involved in the redistribution of safe supply and prescription drugs. In Prince George, we have seen people taking prescribed medications, some of which are dedicated as safe supply prescription drugs, and selling them to organized crime groups in exchange for more potent illicit drugs.

The deputy chief of the Vancouver Police Department told HESA that half of the hydromorphone seizures in B.C. were diverted from safe supply. When we look at all these facts, we can clearly understand that safe supply is not working toward its intended consequence.

We know that substance use disorder is a very difficult problem; people who suffer with substance use disorder want the most potent medication or drug out there. It is difficult for an average Canadian to understand that, if I were an addict and someone over here had a near-death experience with a particular substance, then I would want that. I would be willing to do almost anything to get that same experience. It is very difficult to understand.

We know that precursor chemicals are the raw materials that are used to manufacture fentanyl and the like, and they are usually imported from abroad, often from the PRC. That is creating a significant problem. These precursors are difficult to seize, but banning them is something that we need to be mindful of.

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In October 2023, the U.S. DEA added 28 substances to its special surveillance list. Sadly, in Canada, only four of those 28 substances are on our banned list.

This is a very difficult topic, but to paraphrase the great John F. Kennedy, we do not do things here because they are easy; we do them because they are hard. This is hard.

Clearly, some of the ideas put forward by the NDP-Liberal government are not working. On the Conservative side of the House, we have some excellent ideas. These include opioid agonist therapy, bringing people back to safer communities, bringing those who suffer with substance use disorder into treatment programs and, as the parliamentary secretary alluded to, bringing them home in a drug-free state.

On this side of the House, we do not believe that anybody was born hoping they would be addicted to substances. That is not what we want to see for the citizens of Canada in the future.

● (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was at the Standing Committee on Health this morning, and I was very disappointed to hear my colleague from Cumberland—Colchester adjourn the meeting rather than debate women's reproductive rights. His leader intends to attack Canadians' right to access the health care that they or their doctors deem necessary.

Do the Conservatives believe that they are in a better position than doctors or Canadians themselves to decide on their reproductive rights or health services? Would he, as a physician, have liked to be told what to do?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do not think that question is relevant to the debate currently before the House. Since the hon. member is rising to respond, I will give him the opportunity to do so.

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, oddly enough, there was disorder and chaos at the Standing Committee on Health today, much as there is on the streets in many parts of Canada because of the careless NDP-Liberal drug policies. Certainly, the NDP-Liberal coalition decided it wanted to be disruptive, and that is not the type of committee my colleagues and I wish to participate in. Of course, that is not the kind of room the Speaker wishes to run here either.

Again, on this side of the House, we believe the problem with substance use disorder is a medical problem. We will continue to put forth important and meaningful solutions based in science to help all Canadian citizens.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I noted that the member, in his speech, talked about London. Of course, that is my constituency, and I am so incredibly proud to represent it.

One thing, though, that might be of note is that, in London, we do have safer supply programs. There is actually an organization,

called the temporary overdose prevention site, that has been operating quite successfully for several years now. It did a survey, which is something it has to continue to do in order to meet Ontario Ministry of Health regulations, and 89% of clients who use this site responded they agreed that “staff have talked to them and helped them access other health and social services.”

The survey continues to say that examples of referrals included wound care at clinics or hospitals, primary care, addiction counselling, recovery and addiction treatment services, mental health services, pain management clinics, housing supports and testing and treatment for hep C and HIV.

In the qualitative feedback, many respondents highlighted the value of incorporating wraparound services at this site, as well as the benefits of having medical staff on site and building trusting relationships with officials at TOPS who help facilitate linkage and referrals to multiple health and social services.

These are the services the Conservatives are talking about destroying right now with this motion. Could the member respond to that?

● (1640)

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, I am taken aback; the member for London—Fanshawe spoke in a very angry fashion, and I do not know why. I do not feel angry about this topic. Substance use disorder and opioid use disorder are very serious topics. They require significant resources and, in her terminology, wraparound services. I do not have an argument with any of that.

What I do have a problem with is how they want to go about it. They have an experiment, decriminalization, that has failed. It is over, it needs to be over, and it cannot be expanded.

I also have a significant problem with the member for London—Fanshawe supporting the Liberal government, which also committed to a \$4.5-billion Canada mental health transfer. This would have been an excellent way to provide many of those services she discussed. However, to this day, not one penny has been allocated. It is a shame.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments. He is a man I very much like and respect. He gave a nuanced and thoughtful speech with a few constructive aspects, which helps counterbalance a bit the speeches of many of his Conservative colleagues, who are firmly on the other end of the spectrum.

My question is very simple. Does he make a distinction between the concept of decriminalization and that of diversion?

Business of Supply

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, that is very complicated issue. There are many things we can do for Canadians. There are many other actions that are necessary for the future. On this side of the House, we want to take action and we will do so for the good of all Canadians.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam, Persons with Disabilities.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Cumberland—Colchester for his great speech. Knowing his background, I think he has a lot of credibility. Even the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles confirmed this when he asked his question just now.

I would also like to thank my colleague from Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, the Conservative Party's shadow minister for addictions, for her work on this issue, which, let us not forget, has left ruined lives in its wake. The result of this experiment in legalizing hard drugs has been death and destruction, chaos and carnage in Canada's hospitals, playgrounds, parks and public transit.

This is an important issue that troubles me and many Canadians. We see it on our streets, in the Montreal metro, in our public places, and even in front of our local community service centres. It is front-page news from coast to coast to coast.

To make things very clear “for those watching at home”, as the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry would say, I would like to reread today's motion. Our opposition day is dedicated to this request:

That, given that since the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister took office, opioid overdose deaths across Canada have increased by 166% according to the most recent data available, the House call on the Prime Minister to:

- (a) proactively reject the City of Toronto's request to the federal government to make deadly hard drugs like crack, cocaine, heroin, and meth legal;
- (b) reject the City of Montreal's vote calling on the federal government to make deadly hard drugs legal;
- (c) deny any active or future requests from provinces, territories and municipalities seeking federal approval to make deadly hard drugs legal in their jurisdiction; and
- (d) end taxpayer funded narcotics and redirect this money into treatment and recovery programs for drug addiction.

The reality is that drugs exist, and we need to find solutions to help people who are addicted to them. I am no specialist; I do not pretend to be. I was listening to my colleague, who is a doctor, and I think we have to respect his credibility. I listened to the questions that were put to him, and it is clear that our colleague's comments are very relevant.

As I said, I am not an expert. However, I will provide some numbers. I am a family man and a father, but I will present a few facts about drugs. Drug-related deaths increased in British Columbia by 380% between 2015 and 2023, going from 529 to 2,546 deaths a year. More people in British Columbia died in the first three months of 2024 than in all of 2015. Deaths in British Columbia currently amount to 6.2 people a day. Right now, in British Columbia, more than six people die every day from these drugs. It is unbelievable. Why is this government not doing something?

According to the RCMP, nearly two-thirds of their detachments serve communities that have no rehabilitation or addiction treatment programs. That is exactly what the Conservative Party of Canada wants to fix. It wants to help people in need, to work for real people, who need the help. We need rehabilitation and support programs to get them out of a dark place.

According to one news report, local addicts are reselling up to 90% of their government-supplied drugs on the black market. Pardon the expression, but the government is now a pusher, a drug dealer. This is serious. The going price on the street for hydromorphone has reached rock bottom, making the market more affordable. That is a problem. When harmful things become more affordable, society suffers the consequences. Hydromorphone now costs just \$2.

• (1645)

Here is another example. Fatal overdoses from opioids and other illicit drugs are now the leading cause of death for children aged 10 to 18 in British Columbia. Children are our future. They are the ones who will eventually be here in the House of Commons to make our country a better place. I hope that they will be Conservative Party members. That would give me more hope.

I could continue to give statistics, but I have some other things I want to mention. As I said, I am not an expert, but I have plenty of newspaper articles. One headline reads, “Horror stories continue to come out of Montreal's crack alley”. That story was published on TVA Nouvelles on May 8. The Conservatives are not the ones saying this. The Liberals need to step out of their bubble and go out on the streets to see what is really happening. We saw how things went in British Columbia and we are asking that the same mistake not be made again in Toronto, in Montreal, or in the other provinces and territories. Let us work to prevent that from happening.

Here is the headline of another article from the Journal de Montréal, dated May 7, “Presence of a homeless shelter near an early childhood centre is troubling”. I hope so. There are needles on the ground on soccer pitches, in public parks, in hospitals, everywhere the public goes.

Here is the headline of another article, “Crack in a CHSLD”. It says, “Residents of a long-term care facility are selling and using crack in their own institution, even at the front entrance, say occupants of the Paul-Émile-Léger care centre”.

The Montreal police have their hands full. Let us take preventive measures to block this expansion, this offer for a pilot project that would give Montreal and Toronto the opportunity to experience what British Columbia has gone through. We are not the ones who decided this. We noted something. Even the Premier of British Columbia, who is a member of the New Democratic Party of British Columbia, made this request. He saw that the situation was problematic and simply wanted to protect his community.

Business of Supply

“Decriminalizing hard drugs: in Montreal, no thank you”. Do you know who said that? It was Régine Laurent. Who is Régine Laurent? Ms. Laurent is a woman who is a force in Quebec society. She was the president of the Special Commission on the Rights of the Child and Youth Protection. I think she has quite a bit of credibility.

I will stop there to give my colleagues a chance to speak. I am ready to answer questions. In closing, I would say that I think this is just common sense. I urge my colleagues to be open and to support our motion.

● (1650)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague made an observation, noting that drugs do exist. I would add a second part to that observation: Diversion will always exist as well, for all substances, whether they are used for pain, anxiety or ADHD.

I would like to know whether the member thinks it is still better to have access to these substances. Does he think that doctors are well positioned to make these decisions? What does he see as the threshold for diversion? Would it be zero?

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I am not an expert, as I mentioned in my speech. I trust the experts, the professionals and the doctors.

The debate is not about what level is tolerable. We need to aim for zero, but that would be hard to achieve. However, if pilot projects are set up, if markets are expanded, if hard drugs are normalized in Toronto and Montreal, then we have a social problem. British Columbia was a test case. Let us learn from it.

This is a no-brainer. I urge the government to reflect on this before voting, and to vote with us in favour of this motion.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague is urging us to vote in favour of the Conservative motion. The problem is that the motion muddies the waters. Legalization is not decriminalization. Only Vancouver tried decriminalization. Toronto and Montreal have not done it, nor have they decided to do it. They are trying to set up diversion measures instead.

Here is the problem. My colleague may not be an expert, but he should at least be able to define these three concepts, these three tools, so that everyone understands what is happening and what measures are being implemented. I see why my colleague cannot do that: Even his own leader cannot do it. They member's colleague may well be a doctor, but that does not give the member the authority to say that his colleague's comments were accurate when they were not. That is my comment.

Is my colleague saying that Montreal wants to legalize hard drugs? Is that what he is saying?

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, we are clouding the issue. What we are saying is that we have to be realistic. There is a societal problem when it comes to drugs. We have to take the necessary measures to protect the big cities, Toronto and Montreal, and there is a major test case in British Columbia. This test case has taught us

a few things. Yes, doctors have many opinions, but they are specialists and scientists. I think we should leave it to them. Beyond that, we need to protect our big cities, and that is simply what I am calling for today.

● (1655)

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I appreciate the responses the member gave regarding the need to listen to experts.

I understand that Canadian chiefs of police support the use of safe supply, as do medical practitioners, because we all know the toll this toxic drug crisis takes.

I wonder if the member agrees that we do need to listen to experts like the Canadian chiefs of police, as well as the medical practitioners who are calling for the continued use of safe supply.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, yes, we need to trust the experts, but that is prevention. They took a position based on the information they had. Now, if we step back and take the necessary steps to protect our big cities, society will be better off. We need to work toward that. Yes, rehabilitation is important. Yes, we need to work with the experts, but let us open up possibilities and explore our options to make our society a better place.

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Vancouver Kingsway.

I am using my time this evening to focus on the men in this country who have disproportionately been affected by an inadequate drug policy. They deserve better than what Conservatives have tabled in the House.

New Democrats care about getting people the help they need and supporting families and communities that have been hurt by the toxic drug crisis. We know the devastating effects of opioid addiction, and we know it is disproportionately affecting men, men in trades who build our housing and infrastructure, who maintain and fix critical assets for cities, provinces and our federal government, and who drive the economic prosperity of Canada for private resource extraction right across the country.

In my home province of B.C., where the economy has been booming for years because of construction, we can see the effects this is having through the life expectancy rate of men. As life expectancy in B.C. is on the rise for women, it is on the decline for men. This is the first time in recent history. It is shocking, as it is the result of increased deaths among younger men related to the illegal toxic drug supply. The men in this country deserve better. They deserve an immediate and national public health response, not a criminal one.

Business of Supply

Men who work in trades are dying alone. Managing pain and addiction alone is a reality in this country. The construction boom, although necessary and good for the economy, continues to put more stress on these workers, often making them work excessive hours, go long periods without breaks and work remotely, away from family and other supports. This can mean these workers become isolated and exhausted. They can suffer from chronic injury pain for which they cannot take time off to heal and turn to drugs to get relief. We need to do better for these men who are giving their lives to and for the economy.

When we think of the men who work in the trades, we often have images of hard-working, stoic, strong men. This is a well-earned reputation, but behind this strength, many of these men are fighting a silent battle against addiction with nowhere to turn for help. Half of all workers dying of drug overdoses work in the trades. The lack of destigmatizing education on these drugs and the lack of supports offered to these men is heartbreaking, but worse, it is killing them. Conservatives do not acknowledge this. They call these workers criminals. They did it today.

I recently heard a tragic story about a young plumber who died of an overdose alone in the basement of his parents' home. His family chose not to have a celebration of life because of the stigma that comes with addiction. This is not an isolated story. New Democrats know that we must treat the toxic drug crisis as a public health emergency rather than a crime, and all of us here in the House have the responsibility to reduce the stigma so that we can end this tragedy. I cannot imagine a family who cannot mourn their son in public because of the stigma.

I would say this directly to the Conservatives: This is why New Democrats support expert-led advice to include a safer supply of substances of known potency and quality to keep people alive until they are ready to seek or have access to treatment.

In Alberta, the situation is even worse. Three out of four people dying in Alberta of drug overdoses are men, and the majority of them are in the trades. These men are isolated in camps and work the oil fields in northern Alberta, such as in the town of Wood Buffalo, where 2023 was a record year for opioid deaths and the deadliest year on record for Alberta, with 1,666 deaths attributed to non-pharmaceutical opioids like fentanyl. The tough-on-crime approach of Conservatives has further pushed these men into isolation and hopelessness.

- (1700)

In Alberta, to make matters worse, when found out that they are using drugs, these men lose their jobs. Those companies that are making billions of dollars are firing these men and not offering help. They are even at risk of being arrested so that the UCP can show that it is tough on crime.

Of course, the Conservatives do not want to talk about the failures of the Conservative premiers across the country, as they jail people who need help and help rich CEOs force more workers into addiction. Families and communities continue to suffer because of the toxic drug crisis. The Conservatives are here to make it worse.

I want to say that there is hope. There is great work being done. In B.C., there are programs like "Tailgate Toolkit", which aim to

educate tradespeople working in construction by ensuring that they have access to harm reduction services and support, the same services the Conservatives want to cut, leaving these workers without any help. We now learn that the Leader of the Opposition wants to put these men in jail with no rights after denying them access to help.

The Conservatives in the House are more than happy to give a free pass to premiers like Danielle Smith when she lets overdoses kill hundreds of tradespeople working in the oil fields in Alberta.

The NDP, as can be seen in B.C., are working hard to find solutions. It wants solutions.

I close by saying that there are many great people working toward solutions all over the country. In my riding, Chloe Goodison has been doing incredible work through the non-profit she founded in 2021, called NaloxHome. She is a first-year student at SFU and her non-profit has picked up widespread notoriety now. She is based in Port Moody and delivers free destigmatizing drug education, an education that would benefit these Conservatives, I think.

Harm reduction saves lives, and I raise my hands to Chloe and the great work that she and her team do.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member's speech. I was disappointed at one point, when she was talking about skilled workers dying in the oil patch from addiction, and there was laughter from the Conservative Party, from one particular member.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chris Bittle: It was the same member who is heckling right now, the same member who is continuing to heckle me—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members to please be respectful to each other within the House. If they do not have the floor, then they should be waiting until that opportunity comes. I also want to ask the hon. member to please just pose his question.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

- (1705)

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I was wondering, having listened to the debate from the Conservatives today, if the hon. member saw what we are seeing here today as repackaged war-on-drugs rhetoric, and if she could explain what the consequences of that were back then and what they will be today.

Business of Supply

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, I was just talking to one of my colleagues earlier today about how history is repeating itself in many areas. We were out on the Hill today, taking a stand against those who want to take away the rights of women, anti-choice groups, out on the Hill. We seem to be seeing a “back to the future” return and this is just a reoccurring theme with the Conservatives. They want to take us back in time. We need to focus on lives, saving lives.

I would just say to the member from the Liberals that the Liberals, too, must address this crisis at the scale it requires and move faster to make sure that we can save more lives.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member from Coquitlam failed to mention, in her speech, that what brought us here today was the 180° from the Premier of British Columbia, who realized that he was going to lose the next election because of the crime, chaos and complete anger in British Columbia over what has happened to our downtown cores and people who are, indeed, suffering from drug addiction.

Will the member agree that the B.C. New Democrats are taking this position because they are afraid of losing the election and that they did not actually follow the four principles, which include enforcement, that have been talked about today?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, the story I shared earlier in my speech about the young man who passed away in his basement and was not able to have a funeral was shared with me by someone in the trades who asked the member who just asked me the question to come visit them at their facility in the Lower Mainland. The member has not taken the time yet to make the trip to go speak with them. Maybe if he did, he could hear the stories and bring some humanity to his party today.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, one of the pillars of the strategy is harm reduction. This includes, among other measures, supervised consumption sites and safe supply.

Often what we hear from the critics of harm reduction are the negative impacts of these programs.

Could my colleague tell us about the positive effects of these programs?

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, I am going to take the opportunity to talk about all of the not-for-profits, and I am sure there are many in his riding as well, that do this work around harm reduction, especially with youth.

In my riding of Port Moody—Coquitlam, we have an organization called Access Youth. Every single Friday and Saturday night, every weekend for years and years, it is out offering harm reduction to youth. It is educating and offering harm reduction to youth, things like naloxone kits. This is important work. We are talking about young lives, sometimes as young as 12 and 13 years old, who need safe supply and need to be protected from harm.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise with a great deal of empathy and sadness about the issue under debate here, because what we are talking about is an issue

that brings and reflects great pain in every family in every corner of the country.

The thing about addiction is that no family is untouched. It does not respect income. It does not respect culture. It does not respect class. It does not respect geography. It hits every family. I do not believe there is a family in this country that is untouched by addiction. Everybody has a mother, father, brother, sister, cousin, aunt, uncle, child, friend or neighbour who has suffered from substance abuse disorder. Therefore I think this is one of those policies that is particularly unfortunate when it is politicized, when people seek to make partisan gain and when we do not seek to find common ground by getting established facts before us so we can make the best policy for this country moving forward.

I have heard a lot of words from the Conservatives, because the motion today is theirs, and they have used the word “extreme” a lot. I will tell them what I think is an extreme policy: the war on drugs. The funny thing about it, though, is that we have a century of evidence, a hundred years of the war on drugs, the criminalized approach to addiction. If it has proven anything, it has proven that we cannot jail our way out of addiction. It has proven that it does not work.

If the war on drugs did work, North America would be relatively addiction-free today. We have wasted billions of dollars in North America over the last hundred years, and we have hurt millions of addicts and their families. The result is that addiction is as big a part of our society today as it ever was.

It is said in recovery circles that the definition of “insanity” is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. What do the Conservatives bring to the debate today, a day when 20 families will lose a family member, and they will lose a family member tomorrow and the day after? The Conservatives think the answer here is “Let us recriminalize addiction.”

If we get right to the bottom of it, the problem is actually relatively easy to state. People are dying from illicit substances. They are dying from the use of drugs, primarily fentanyl and sometimes carfentanyl, and the reason they are dying is that there is a toxic, poisoned street supply that is provided by organized criminals in Canada and abroad who do not care one bit about the quality, the dosage or the purity of their product or about who buys it.

Business of Supply

Also, because the drugs happen to be supplied largely by organized crime, the price is astronomically increased, meaning that a person who is dependent on these drugs and who is suffering from late-stage addiction has to engage in break and enters, or in some cases in selling their bodies, in order to get the amount of money they need every day to satisfy their habit. The answer to this is obviously that we need to make sure that people who have a chronic compulsion to use these drugs because of their health issue and addiction have access to a regulated supply of the substances they need that is in known dosage, known titration and known purity.

● (1710)

There are 35 problems with addiction. Making sure that people have access to a safe, regulated supply will solve only two of them. The other 33 problems will still be there. The first problem that will be solved is that a person would not have to buy their drugs from a street criminal in an alley in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver at two in the morning and not know what they are getting.

A story that happens every day in Vancouver is that a person uses a substance that has been contaminated because it has been made in an illegal pill mill by people who have no concern about whether half of the pill had half of the fentanyl in it. If someone splits the pill in half and accidentally takes the half that has two-thirds of the fentanyl in it, they will overdose.

Thus, the first problem that would be solved is that people would no longer have to go to organized crime to get their drugs. In my view, they should be able to go to a pharmacy, which is a place in our society where dangerous regulated drugs are sold. They should be able to go to a professional dispenser, which is a pharmacist, and they should be able at least to access the drugs that they need with their own money through the pharmacy, if they are going to get them at all. In my view, that is a more sensible way to dispense a dangerous drug than to leave it to organized crime.

The second problem that safe supply solves is that if it were sold at a reasonable price, the person probably would not have to break into garages or cars, sell their body or shoplift in order to make the \$200 a day that the average person in Vancouver often needs in order to get drugs in the illicit market.

Every other problem would still exist, the plurality of health problems. I agree with the Conservatives in part. I think we all agree, and I believe strongly in investing in treatment. However, this brings me to a very important point that I think marks a cleavage in the House between us and the Conservatives. We believe that substance use disorder is a health issue, not a criminal issue. It is not an issue of morality. It is not an issue of character. It does not mean that a person who uses drugs is a bad person; it means they have a complex biopsychosocial condition that requires treatment.

One thing I will agree with the Conservatives about is that we have not created the health architecture in this country that actually mirrors that belief. I believe that there should be treatment on demand for anybody who is ready to get treatment through our public health care system.

I challenge my Conservative colleagues: If and when they are in government at some point, I want them to invest billions of dollars into our public health care system so when a person seeks treat-

ment, they can walk into a facility and get it right then. We know that if someone does not access treatment right away, they probably will not do it at all.

I want to just say quickly a few words about Moms Stop the Harm because I was actually horrified to hear some of the Conservatives disparage Moms Stop the Harm. It is a group of mothers who lost children to drug overdose. There was an aspersion cast, suggesting that it was somehow falsely created as a Liberal-NDP front group. Not only is that 100%, demonstrably, completely, categorically false, but what a disgusting insult it is to parents in this country who have mobilized because they lost a child to drug addiction. The Conservatives owe an apology to Moms Stop the Harm and to every parent in this country who has lost a child to drug addiction.

I have never said this before in the House. I lost my father in 1983 on December 6. I was 20 years old when my 15-year-old sister found him dead in the bathroom from a methadone overdose. I lost a parent, and my family has been wracked with addiction and substance use issues.

We should never play politics with any parent or other family member who is advocating policy they think is better and who has suffered the death of a loved one.

I would like to move “That the motion be amended by replacing the words ‘the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister took office’ with ‘2015’, and replacing all the words after ‘call on the Prime Minister to:’ with the following: (a) declare the toxic drug crisis a national public health emergency; (b) take steps to hold pharmaceutical companies responsible for their role in contributing to Canada’s toxic drug crisis; (c) provide additional funding to help provinces provide supports for treatment and recovery programs, targeting provinces where drug toxicity deaths are increases fastest, such as Saskatchewan and Alberta; and (d) work with cities including Toronto and Montreal to ensure that they have all the tools they need to tackle this crisis and to protect public safety.”

● (1715)

Let us put politics aside and try to create drug policy in this country that would save lives.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I must inform the hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion can only be proposed with the consent of the mover. In the event that he is not present, the House leader, deputy House leader, whip or deputy whip of the mover’s party may give or refuse consent in the mover’s place.

● (1720)

[*English*]

Since the sponsor is not present in the chamber, I am asking the acting opposition whip whether he consents to the amendment’s being moved.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I think we are pursuing the same objective as my colleague, but we are going about it differently. We are not playing politics with such a sensitive and important subject. We reject the proposal.

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

[English]

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, with whom I had the privilege of sitting on the health committee for a number of years. I just want to tell him that I am very sorry to hear about his dad. I have lost both of my parents, not to overdose, but I understand the profound pain that comes from losing one's parents. I also understand the profound pain that comes from having family members with addiction.

Addiction is something that is incredibly challenging for each and every one of us. A mom wrote to me, and I shared this today in the health committee. She said, “Hi. Sorry it's been so long. I've been in survival mode, fighting to save my daughter. Her 13-year-old friend just died yesterday, here in rural British Columbia, from an overdose after the local hospital released her from an overdose on Friday. Please help us here. I can't bear going to another child's funeral. These kids deserve so much more than this ignorant system. Doctors should have held her, under the Mental Health Act, until they could have gone to detox. Another family ruined, many who loved her, traumatized, and more deaths to follow if something does not change.”

Does the member agree that there should be an expansion of detox in his home province of British Columbia?

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, yes, I do.

My hon. colleague's words were kind. It was a privilege for me as well to serve with her on the health committee.

I do not ever agree that anybody should be held until treatment is available, but I think what we share is that nobody should have to be held until treatment. The short answer to her question is, absolutely, every community in this country should have detoxification facilities so that when a person is ready and willing to seek help, they could go immediately and access the help they need.

Then there should be myriad treatment options available to them, because no one system works for everybody. Sometimes it is a 12-step program. Sometimes it is an abstinence-based program, and sometimes it is not. There should be programs for women and for indigenous people, and programs depending on the substance, whether it is opioids, cannabis or alcohol. All of those options should be available, and right now in this country they are not, unless someone has money. There is a two-tiered system in this country for access to treatment. It is wrong and we should change it.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am sorry for the member's loss.

The member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake said that funding for Moms Stop the Harm was to create a lobby group. The funding is actually to create a grief support group. Why would someone oppose grief support? Could the member comment on how distasteful this allegation was and on how dangerous spreading misinformation is?

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for raising that issue because I was quite shocked when I heard those words in the House. I cannot be any stronger than I was in my initial remarks when I said that it is categorically untrue. The aspersions and the insinuation that Moms Stop The Harm is anything but a grassroots independent group of people who have come together, united in their sharing of the horrible experience of losing a child to addiction, is frankly, disgraceful. It is not worthy of anybody in the House to say that.

Any money that is given to that group simply helps it to spread its message, and its message is that they know that their children often used alone after accessing street-level toxic drugs and that is why they died. That is why Moms Stop The Harm is advocating for sensible, evidence-based drug policy in this country, which means that people, as one of the pillars, must be able get access to a safe, regulated supply.

I would ask this question of my Conservative friends: What is the alternative to safe supply? A dangerous supply—

● (1725)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to allow time for another question.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Montcalm for a brief question.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his thoughtful speech, which also proposed a solution to today's debate. Unfortunately, it was rejected and I am very disappointed.

My colleague was talking about the fact that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I must interrupt the hon. member because there is no interpretation.

The interpretation is working now.

The hon. member for Montcalm can ask his brief question again. There is not a lot of time left.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I hope that my colleague understood what I said.

He talked about the fact that the war on drugs, criminalization, is a model that does not work. We can compare the model used in the United States, where overdoses increased by 100%, to the one used in Portugal.

Can my colleague elaborate on that?

[English]

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, that is exactly it. If the war on drugs were working in the United States, it would be leading the world in sobriety and recovery, and it is not.

We can fight over policy and ideology, but facts count. Which provinces in this country have the worst record, the highest number of deaths and the worst trends for overdose addictions? They are Alberta and Saskatchewan, where they take a criminalized approach. Those are the facts.

We know that, after decades and decades of evidence, criminalizing people with health issues does not work. It is time to dispense with that policy, not only because it is wrong and it wastes money, but also because it destroys lives.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, when we look up at the screen, we see how this is dictated by the House. It talks about the legalizing of hard drugs, but that is not what we are talking about here. This is not about legalizing hard drugs. This is about the role of government, as well as the Public Health Agency of Canada, to educate and protect the people of this country. This includes health care, and while the provinces and territories play the leading role, they are given guidance and oversight by the federal Minister of Health, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada.

The federal government must work with and listen to its provincial counterparts, which it is not doing. When it comes to health care policy, it needs to respect provincial jurisdiction. When the Province of B.C. came to the federal government to say that its experiment was failing, the government failed to respond quickly to that aspect. It is shocking that we sit here and listen to the government and members talk about how they believe it is important to be providing free drugs to Canadians when they are finding out from B.C.'s example that it does not exist.

At the Health committee, we heard from Ms. Fiona Wilson, president of the British Columbia Association of Chiefs of Police and deputy chief of the Vancouver Police Department, on April 15th. Ms. Fiona Wilson stated, "As police leaders, we were unequivocal about the need to prevent unintended impacts on community safety and well-being, especially for youth." Again, they were not provided with the information.

Ultimately, when we talk about things, what we need to be aware of is that 21,824 Canadians suffer from hypoxic brain injury. With two to three minutes of no oxygen to the brain, the damage to brain cells is extensive. With just one shot of naloxone, either nasally or by injection, to resuscitate, the risk of brain injury is exponentially greater.

Private Members' Business

• (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 5:30, pursuant to an order made Wednesday, February 28, 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 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.

[Translation]

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded division.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Tuesday, May 21, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

PROHIBITION OF THE EXPORT OF HORSES BY AIR FOR SLAUGHTER ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-355, An Act to prohibit the export by air of horses for slaughter and to make related amendments to certain Acts, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The mover of the motion has indicated to the Chair that he does not wish to proceed with the motions.

As a result, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

[English]

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Tim Louis moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Madam Speaker, I proudly stand here to discuss my private member's bill, Bill C-355. This legislation seeks to prohibit the export of live horses for slaughter by air, and I firmly believe that it is our duty to protect these magnificent creatures from unnecessary suffering.

Private Members' Business

Our relationship with horses runs deep in Canada. Throughout history, and with the Mennonite community in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga to this very day, we have relied on horses for transportation and for labour. From the iconic imagery of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to the draft horse pull at our New Hamburg Fall Fair every year in my community, horses have been our steadfast companions. They symbolize strength, grace and resilience, which is a testament to their significance in our culture.

However, let us be clear that Bill C-355 is not driven by emotions alone. This bill is grounded in science and facts. We have consulted experts and examined the conditions faced by horses during transportation. We have heard from veterinarians and other expert witnesses. The evidence supports the need for this legislation, and our duty as lawmakers is to make informed decisions based on empirical evidence. That is what we are doing.

Some argue that existing provisions in the Criminal Code already address this issue. It is true that the Health of Animals Act provides for the protection of animal health, but those provisions do not specifically target the practice of the export of live horses for slaughter by air.

Bill C-355 would address this gap. It recognizes that horses endure unique risks during air transportation, including confined spaces, stress and harsh conditions. By banning this practice, we would send a clear message, a message that Canadians are asking for, which is to put an end to the export of live horses from Canada by air to other countries to be slaughtered for raw consumption as a delicacy.

I will explain the reality for horses exported by air for slaughter. They endure stress, dehydration and exhaustion. It is our responsibility to protect them from such cruelty, and here are some of the risks associated with the conditions these horses endure. Draft horses bred for export often endure life in open feedlots without shelter or protection from the elements in some of Canada's harshest weather conditions. During transportation, horses experience intense audio distress due to their acute hearing. Confined in crates, they endure the roar of engine aircraft, which can subject them to deafening sounds exceeding 140 decibels. They are subject to injury and discomfort. Horses have a high centre of gravity, which makes them vulnerable during a plane's ascent and descent. With multiple horses crammed in each crate, they risk injury because of balance loss.

There is a lack of oversight and transparency once the plane's doors are closed and it takes off for the horse to be flown halfway across the world. At that point, there is no oversight or accountability. There are those who claim that these horses that are sent for slaughter by air are treated similarly to those flown for recreation, sport or competitions, but let us dispel any misconceptions. Contrary to the conditions I mentioned about live horses exported for slaughter by air, horses for sporting events and recreation are trained and habituated to travel. Race horses and equestrian event horses are given access to food and water and are also given more space to move and correct their balance during takeoff and landing. They are also not confined with other unfamiliar animals, and they are attended to and transported with supervision. In short, there is no comparison.

We addressed concerns about this legislation and its effect on horse-breeders. The bill focuses on banning export only. The breeding, raising and selling of horses in Canada would be untouched by this legislation. Bill C-355 would allow breeders to continue raising and selling horses within Canada, but this bill would ensure that these horses would not be subjected to the horrors of long-distance air travel for slaughter. It is the export that would be banned.

● (1735)

This bill proposes an 18-month period for coming into force. It would allow industry stakeholders time to adjust, while at the same time signalling our resolve. This time frame strikes a balance between practical considerations and the commitment to ending this practice as soon as possible. It would give time to prepare and adjust, while moving forward quickly and responsibly, as Canadians want us to do.

Seven out of 10 Canadians want an end to live horse exports by air for slaughter. Once people hear about this practice, they do not want Canada to be any part of it. By passing this bill, we would align ourselves with their voices and demonstrate our commitment to the humane treatment of horses.

When I mention to people that I have been working on this legislation protecting horses, they often share amazing personal stories and fond memories related to these companion animals.

Last week, I spoke with a woman and she shared with me her favourite picture of her father. It was an old black and white photo of him as a young man standing with his horse. She said she could see the pride of ownership in her dad's eyes. It is one of her favourite pictures. With the unique relationship we have with horses, we need to remind ourselves of the responsibility that comes with it.

I want to thank the many stakeholders who took the time to meet, discuss and give their opinions. I want to thank my committee colleagues for their thoroughness, and I want to thank the law clerks and all those who helped shape this bill. I want to thank our team and staff in Kitchener—Conestoga for being there every step of the way.

I also want to thank the Canadians who wrote, emailed, called and signed petitions, including one sponsored by the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, who has been a champion for this cause.

In closing, let us recognize that by passing Bill C-355, we affirm our commitment to compassion and to the well-being of our horse companions. Let us stand united in our resolve to end this practice of live horse exports by air for slaughter. Our legacy will be one of empathy, progress and justice. It is a legacy worthy of Canadians.

● (1740)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, as I am a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, we had questions for the member who brought this bill forward during committee.

A lot of livelihoods would get destroyed if this bill passes, and a lot of them are indigenous businesses that raise these horses. It is one of their major forms of income in running their farms. We had witnesses come to the committee to talk about just that. It could cost a lot of money if this industry goes out of business and they have loans through Farm Credit Canada.

I wonder if the member has received advice as to whether this private member's bill would cost the treasury money. If so, could it still be passed and would it still be in order?

Mr. Tim Louis: Madam Speaker, I also sit on the agriculture committee and we have been working together well for years. I am glad this bill went right through that committee.

As I mentioned, this bill proposes an 18-month period for coming into force. This would allow industry stakeholders the time they need to make those adjustments. We heard from the exporters, we heard from breeders and we heard from stakeholders on all sides. This would only affect the export of horses. It would not affect the breeding, the raising or the selling of horses in Canada. Those things would still be untouched in the legislation.

This is what Canadians have asked for, and we worked together to make this happen. As a matter of fact, we even strengthened the bill in committee by adding some amendments that cut the red tape to ensure this could happen and would not affect other sectors, such as racehorses and Equestrian Canada.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, my office has received a tremendous amount of correspondence on this particular bill, and I am pleased to be supporting it as we send it off on its journey to the Senate.

I want to ask a question of my hon. colleague. I, too, sit on the agriculture committee and during our deliberations, in testimony from witnesses, briefs that we received and even in general correspondence, there was an allusion to this being the start of a slippery slope.

I hope my colleague could address that concern, because it is my understanding that people can still continue to breed horses in Canada. Horses can still be slaughtered in Canada. This bill is really just focusing on one small niche area. Could he clarify anything in that regard?

Mr. Tim Louis: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for his advocacy, for carrying the torch. It was his petition that garnered tens of thousands of signatures across Canada. I do appreciate the work that he has done.

Private Members' Business

Yes, there were easier ways to do the bill. It could have been written by slightly amending other legislation. That might have been easier to write, but it would have been possible to widen that scope. This bill was written very specifically as a stand-alone piece of legislation. That is why the title says that it is banning the export of live horses by air for slaughter. It is a very specific practice that is being banned.

That way, the legislation makes sure that there will not be unintended consequences. I have met with the Beef Farmers of Ontario and the Canadian Cattle Association. I let them know that this bill is very narrow in its scope. It will not have those unintended consequences.

● (1745)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I rise in the House to speak on an important issue and raise attention to the grave harms that Bill C-355 would have for our hard-working Canadian producers, farm families and countless industries.

Bill C-355 intends to prohibit the export by air of horses for slaughter and would restrict trade with some of our closest international allies. This bill has been tabled by the Liberal MP for Kitchener—Conestoga with no consultation with affected stakeholders and an appalling disregard for the unintended consequences of this bill.

Although my colleagues across the aisle have attempted to downplay both the importance of our Canadian industries and the detrimental effects of this bill, I would like to restate some actual facts.

Canada has approximately 347 breeders who are providing purpose-bred horses for consumption to nations such as Japan. The majority of horses exported for this purpose are from Ontario, Manitoba and my home province of Alberta. Since 2013, 41,000 horses have been exported for the purpose of consumption, and the mortality rates at all stages of transport, including stock trailers and so on to the airport, have been 0.012%.

I would also like to correct the record. The regulations for transporting horses by air for equestrian competitions such as the Olympics are identical to those transport standards for horses for slaughter and consumption. Additionally, Canada has some of the highest standards and regulations for transport in the entire world.

Many other exporting countries include the U.K., Argentina, Belgium, Poland, France and the Netherlands. Over one billion people, or 16% of the world's population, eat horsemeat, making this industry an incredibly important part of our food supply and food security globally. Countless agriculture producers and stakeholder groups have reached out to me and my Conservative colleagues to show their disapproval of this bill and important concerns about the future of Canadian agriculture and equine welfare.

Private Members' Business

The bill would have catastrophic consequences for a number of industries in our beautiful nation, one being the indigenous populations and incredible breeders that make up this country. In Canada, 25% of breeders are indigenous, yet they produce about 40% of the horses exported for consumption. Indigenous farmers and producers play an important role in our country and demonstrate incredible practices and efficiency in providing food to feed the world.

Conservatives believe in prioritizing the needs of indigenous populations and empowering them to provide the world with Canada's sustainable and abundant resources, such as energy, agriculture and other natural resources. This bill is yet another example of the Liberal government and the Prime Minister threatening the industries and livelihoods of indigenous people in Canada.

Members of the Métis nation of Alberta and first nations groups have expressed their disappointment with this damaging bill and the Liberal government's disdain and disregard for their work as producers, as well as the sponsor's failure to hold important consultations before tabling this piece of legislation.

After tabling this bill, the work of the Liberal government has led indigenous producers, primarily women, to fear the consequences of publicly speaking out against it. They fear verbal and physical harassment and have received an influx of hate for their generational businesses both online and in person.

On March 21, as Bill C-355 was referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, members heard from a Métis horse producer from western Canada. This witness cited the staggering amount of ignorance about horse culture in regard to the care and respect of indigenous-owned horses. The witness described the importance of horses for survival in Métis culture and their use in farming, transportation, trapping and other traditional practices.

The producer stated:

Just like most Métis, we are not in a position financially to keep horses only for recreational use. Our farm is not sustainable without the meat...industry. Raising and owning horses involves a lot of hard work, and it's very expensive, but we think it's worth it. Selling draft foals to our exporter allows us to keep and maintain horses for farming, to feed livestock, to handle cattle, to trap, to train and to connect with Métis and first nations communities through horse trading and rallies.

They continued:

The Canadian government is ignoring the impact that banning meat [for] exports will have on many Métis and first nations producers.

After tabling this bill, Canadian horse producers have been faced with horrible threats on social media and horrific protests across western Canada, some of whom have even received death threats. This impactful indigenous witness appeared at committee at risk to their family and their business and spoke on behalf of this important industry anonymously for fear of violent protests by a radical minority of woke animal rights activists.

In this place, each and every one of us understand the importance of parliamentary privilege and the same should be afforded to witnesses speaking on important issues such as this bill. Out of fear, many producers directly impacted by this bill wanted no part of the study at committee, even though they could lose their livelihood if this bill is ever passed. It is unacceptable that this bill has driven such hatred and our own Canadian farm families have been intimi-

dated to a point where they feel too frightened to have their voices heard at committee.

● (1750)

After this bill, Bill C-355, was passed at committee and was referred back to the House, my Conservative colleague presented a motion asking the clerk to compile a report on the instances of harassment described by potential witnesses. I would have to agree that we must stand with Canadians across this country who have been harassed and intimidated as part of this bill, and I look forward to the ruling on this clear breach of privilege for horse producers and the agricultural community.

I would ask my colleagues in the House to take a long, hard look at this bill and tell me that good and sound legislation would need the harassment and intimidation of witnesses and stakeholders in order to garner its support. It is shameful that this bill passed through committee simply through the silencing of critical voices and those of indigenous communities, producers and interest groups from coast to coast to coast.

Looking at Bill C-355 from a procedural angle, we can see, yet again, that it is a prime example of shoddy Liberal policy-making, so much so that even the sponsor of the bill was forced to amend it at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. This bill would require an unreasonable regulatory process to be undertaken prior to any flight being allowed to depart with a horse on board. This would include a signed declaration that the horses are not being exported for slaughter to be approved by the Minister of Agriculture for every single flight. This bill would directly restrict the air transportation of horses in and out of Canada for all purposes, and would add onerous and unnecessary burdens to the process for fear of incredible monetary fines, even imprisonment.

Canada competes internationally in some of the most renowned horse shows, which includes the Olympics, the Pan American Games, along with some world-class events held right here, which attract an impressive group of competitors from across the globe. Bill C-355 not only would affect every Canadian competitor exiting or re-entering our nation and transporting a horse by air, but also would require competitors coming to Canada for events, such as the Calgary Stampede or Spruce Meadows, to receive an approved declaration of transport from the minister. The time and energy this ridiculous policy would require would be astronomical to every individual involved with transporting a horse, for any purpose whatsoever.

Private Members' Business

This bill demonstrates, yet again, the lack of knowledge the Liberal Party and this bill's sponsor have about the importance of Canadian agriculture and agri-food and about the scientific evidence proven time and again by respected members of our veterinarian community. The Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, which is the professional regulatory organization responsible for regulating and supporting the profession of veterinary medicine in Alberta, has expressed serious concerns for this piece of legislation. The ABVMA includes oversight and advocacy for both Alberta's nearly 5,000 veterinarians and veterinary technologists. The renowned group believes Bill C-355 was not made based on scientific evidence or with balanced consultation and strongly opposes this bill on behalf of a number of valued producers, some of which are in my riding.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has developed some of the highest regulations for animal transport based on scientific research and evidence and has safely been transporting horses for slaughter and other purposes for many years. Regardless of the end purpose, all livestock deserves the same level of animal welfare, which Canada already meets. Horses transported by air for equine competitions and shows are transported exactly the same as those transported to Japan and to other nations for slaughter. It is clear that the purpose of this bill, Bill C-355, is not to prioritize the safety of animal transport regulations, but wishes to push the ideological views of a minority group and eventually to end animal agriculture.

Although many members may have misconceptions about the purpose-bred horse production industry, Dr. Jennifer Woods, an expert in this field, has made it incredibly clear, as this bill has been brought forward, that it is simply based on incorrect rhetoric and falsehoods being made based on emotion rather than facts. Our legal system in Canada is built on fact rather than on emotion, yet the sponsor of Bill C-355 has used the word "cramped" many times when discussing the bill and has relied on a very niche activist agenda, rather than on the opinions of experts and of affected groups.

Dr. Woods is a long-time veterinarian and has inspected the conditions in which horses are transported by air and has performed animal welfare audits, both in Canada and in Japan. Jennifer has stated that, based on her decades of knowledge and experience in this industry and her knowledge of those animals, the current regulations and high standards allow for the welfare of the animals to be considered and to be upheld in every step of this carefully coordinated process.

More than a billion people around the world rely on that meat for a major part of the protein in their diets, including in Japan, Mexico, Italy, Russia, China and even right here in Canada. This type of meat, in many cases, is healthier than others and is enjoyed across our nation, and significantly in Quebec. Horsemeat has 20% more protein than beef cuts, 25% less fat, 20% less sodium and double the amount of iron in beef sirloin.

It would be my sincere wish that members of the House would have never brought forward this bill, Bill C-355, in the first place. It is just another attack by a Liberal ideological government that was motivated to form government to stop everything it hates,

rather than loving and cherishing everything that Canada has to offer.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to this bill tonight. I will be fairly brief.

The work we have to do here, as elected representatives of the people, is very serious. We have to do it rigorously. Unfortunately, these days, that rigour is not always there. We had a great example of that for a good part of the day. I will now get back to the bill.

Bill C-355 deals with a sensitive issue, and we have asked a great many questions about it. I think we were right to ask those questions. In particular, we wondered why a bill dealing with an issue in a minister's mandate letter had to be a private member's bill. That did raise some questions. We wondered about the process. We also wondered whether it was not better to take action on the Health of Animals Act, on animal welfare. The Bloc Québécois has always been a champion of animal welfare. That is one of our fundamental values. We have always defended this principle.

We have before us a bill seeking to fully prohibit a specific practice. We questioned various witnesses. I somewhat agree with my colleagues who spoke about the testimonies. A good number of the many testimonies we heard were contradictory. At times like these, as parliamentarians, we must recognize that. We have to consider where it is coming from, weigh the pros and cons, look at the sources. It was very demanding work.

We wondered about the precedent this sets, and we asked ourselves whether this was the first step towards something else. My NDP colleague actually posed this question to the bill's sponsor. That is one of the questions that was addressed. We also wondered why the bill covered just one species. Why not prohibit this kind of practice for various species? That is a question we had tackle in a comprehensive, rigorous way.

A number of witnesses also expressed concerns, including people from the pilots' association, who were concerned about being forced to deal with more forms. I think that was resolved with the amendments we adopted. We have heard from so many groups.

We really focused on transportation. How are they being transported? Basically, the purpose of the bill is to put an end not to slaughter, but to air transportation. There were lots of questions about the terms and conditions of carriage. We were told that the conditions were not appropriate.

There was some interesting testimony, including from Canadian Veterinary Medical Association representatives, who shared scientific facts about livestock welfare and how they are transported. My Conservative Party colleague mentioned that the animals are transported several to a cage-like box. We looked at how this species functions. They are herd animals, a prey species, so it is reassuring for them to be with others.

Private Members' Business

As it was also mentioned earlier, we made comparisons with horses transported by air for different reasons. Many were transported to be in competitions, to be put up for sale, to be raised elsewhere, and so on. My goodness, it was quite an interesting study. It generated a lot of debate. The evidence shows that transportation has improved. I believe it was back in 2020 that transportation conditions were changed for the better.

In the end, one thing stood out. It was mentioned by the bill's sponsor: Horses have a status unlike that of any other animal in Canada and Quebec. Although they are used for food in Quebec, many people think of them more as a companion animal. There is a kind of overlap.

• (1800)

As elected members, our job in the House of Commons is to examine scientific facts, to assess the pros and cons, but also to consider the values of Canadians, where we stand as a society and, ultimately, to vote on this bill. That is our job, and that is what we did to the best of our ability.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to offer my thoughts on Bill C-355. I too am a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, and it has been my privilege to be a member of that committee now for six and a half years. It is a great committee, probably the best one in the House of Commons. Those on the committee treat each other with a lot of respect, even though we have differing opinions on many matters, but it is a committee that typically arrives at its decisions with consensus.

I congratulate the member for Kitchener—Conestoga. Not many private members' bills get to the stage where they are reported back to the House after making it through committee, so he has succeeded where many have failed, and I congratulate him on that.

I gave a more in-depth analysis of the bill, Bill C-355, during second reading in the House, so I do not want to spend too much time on it. Essentially, I would remind people watching this debate that this bill seeks to prohibit the export, by air, from Canada, of live horses for the purpose of being slaughtered or being fattened for slaughter. That is a very important point to underline in this. Certainly, from what I have heard in the debate today, there is a bit of hyperbole, thinking that this is going to be the end of the entire horse industry in Canada, which is simply not true. We have to look at the bill and read the wording of it. It is a very specific surgical instrument, which looks at one specific type of practice for one type of animal.

I am proud to be a member of a party that, since 2010, has introduced three private members' bills on this subject. I want to reference former member of Parliament Alex Atamanenko, who used to represent the riding of British Columbia Southern Interior. He introduced Bill C-544 in the 40th Parliament, Bill C-571 in the 41st Parliament, as well as Bill C-322. This is an issue that first came to light in Parliament in 2021 in the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food's mandate letter. The mandate letter directed the minister to deliver on a commitment to ban the export of live horses for slaughter. That took shape in the legislative form through Bill C-355.

Like the member for Kitchener—Conestoga, I have been involved in this conversation in other ways. I got to sponsor e-petition 4190 in the House of Commons that received over 36,000 signatures. I know that on this particular issue, as the agriculture critic, I have received well over 34,000 individual emails on this subject, many directly from my riding. This is a topic that galvanizes a lot of people in Canada, and they take a very real interest in this subject. Many people are happy to see this bill come forward.

I will talk a little about the committee work. When we look at the committee work we did for a private member's bill, I would argue that we did a pretty thorough job. This one private member's bill involved five meetings, 23 briefs were submitted, and there were 31 witnesses. I would say, given the length of this bill, we did our job. We heard from a wide range of people. Did everyone agree with the bill? No. That is impossible to find in a democracy. We have to balance out the differing points of view and try to find a way forward.

I did find, though, that the witness testimony helped inform the committee to make Bill C-355 a better bill. We did our job, and based on witness testimony, we made some amendments to it. We could compare the version of the bill we are debating now in the House to the version that was introduced at first reading. Based on some testimony, we removed the onerous declaration requirements that were spelled out in great detail. We certainly heard from some stakeholders that it was far too onerous, so we deleted that offending section, and the reception was quite positive. The committee did its job and listened to the witnesses, who gave helpful advice on which amendments to pass. It did, in fact, do that.

• (1805)

I want to spend a bit of time talking about two particular witnesses.

Racetracks of Canada sent us a written brief in support of this bill on March 18. I just want to quote from that brief. It states:

We consider the practice of exporting horses by air for slaughter to be abhorrent, and our industry has long taken extensive measures to ensure that horses exiting their time in horse racing find caring and quality ownership in Canada.

That comes from an industry that deals in horses, loves horses and is very much involved in animal agriculture. I think that really blows out of the water the Conservative narrative that this bill is attacking animal agriculture, when in fact we have witnesses involved in the horse industry who absolutely support this bill.

On April 9, Barbara Cartwright, the CEO of Humane Canada, said the following:

There are always varying types of animal welfare science. We do see that at the National Farm Animal Care Council. However, when you look at the testimony that focuses on the experience of the animals and not on the experience of the farmer or the agriculture business, you will see very clearly that the experience of the animal, which is what should be considered here, is a lot of tension, anxiety, fear and pain, all the way up to death.

I would implore Parliament to look at the horse, not the farmer.

Private Members' Business

I was very encouraged to have people like Ms. Cartwright, among others, come before our committee to give us their view on this bill.

Another person I wanted to mention is Captain Tim Perry from the Air Line Pilots Association. I asked him about a typical flight from Winnipeg to Japan. Let us just underline the fact that Japan is the key market for live horses. They are used for a delicacy that is served in Japanese restaurants. For the travel of live horses from Winnipeg to Japan, there are some variances, but one flight can burn anywhere from 50,000 to 70,000 kilograms of jet fuel. This is just to export live horses. That is an incredible amount of fossil fuels to be burned to export live animals that are eventually going to be slaughtered.

I want to underline the fact that this bill is not going to prevent horses from being raised in Canada for meat; it is not. It is black and white, period. Horsemeat is found on grocery shelves throughout Quebec. It is eaten in Canada. It is on the menus of high-end restaurants across Canada as well. More than 25,000 horses are slaughtered in Canada for food each year, and those products are exported mainly to Japan, France and the United States.

Far from this bill being the end of animal agriculture, I implore people to look at the facts, read the bill and look at the statistics of the industry. This bill is not going to end animal agriculture. It is going to stop a very niche practice of exporting live horses, which are going off to be slaughtered.

This is an incredibly popular measure. A survey from April 2024, just last month, said 78% of Albertans are in support of this measure, and when it comes to indigenous communities, 71% are in support.

Given that the House of Commons is the natural democratic outlet of the will of the people, I am pleased to stand with the majority of Canadians to see this bill pass through the House of Commons and make its way to the Senate.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour to be able to stand and debate important issues in this place, and specifically this issue. It has been interesting as I have listened to the discussion that has taken place today, followed the committee work and heard from many constituents.

It is important to understand the full context of the talking points related to what the sponsor of this bill and those who are supporting it say it is about, and then the reality and how those on the ground are affected.

Specifically, I would like to thank a number of constituents who have reached out to me and shared their deep concern about this bill and the chill that it has placed not only on the specifics around raising horses but across agricultural sectors, in how we are allowing activism and activist talking points to define government policy. It is regrettable that this is in fact the case, because I think that Canadians have every right to and should ask difficult questions about a whole host of issues surrounding animal husbandry, which is the raising of animals.

I come from ranch country. Many of my neighbours are ranchers, and I fully understand the work, the pain, the blood, sweat and tears that go into caring for livestock on the farm, on the ranch and at every step of the food supply chain.

When we allow activism to inform the conversation, it does not result in better public policy. In fact, it often has the opposite effect. We see that in a whole host of issues. It is an illustration of exactly how the Liberals, supported by their coalition partners, their confidence and supply partners in the NDP, are quick to listen to activists yet refuse to listen to those on the ground.

As I spoke with constituents, they talked about how their operations will be devastated by this. They do not know what to do with their herds of horses, not even at the conclusion of this bill passing, but with the uncertainty it has created. I have spoken to many involved with the transportation of these animals, and while there is a narrative that is being expressed by many who have come out in support of this bill, it is simply not factually accurate. It is fair to ask difficult questions and to demand accountability around the transportation of livestock, regardless of the context, whether that be horses by air transport, any other animal by air transport or various other mechanisms that transport livestock across the agricultural sector.

However, that is not what this bill has allowed to happen, which is why I find it fascinating that we have a long list of agriculture stakeholders who have shared how devastating of a message this will send to Canada's agriculture sector if it passes. It is not about protecting animals. It is about listening to a small cohort of voices that do not represent the facts.

I would also like to share how this bill will have a damaging effect on reconciliation. Some in this room may be asking what the deal with that is, but here are the facts: A significant portion or a significant number of the farms and ranches that raise horses are indigenous-owned. They were not consulted by that member, nor by the organizations that are pushing for this agenda.

What is effectively happening is that the process, and it is not even about the bill being passed, has sent a chill through the market and a chill to the customers. It has created uncertainty in the market, and anybody who understands basic economics knows that uncertainty in a market can have a devastating effect on the ability of that market to function properly.

• (1810)

There are indigenous ranches, reserves and those who have invested generations and have earned their livelihood off a sector that the member and the activist groups promoting these causes have ignored. It is fair to have a debate on policy, and we need to have that in this country, but what is disappointing is that it is not the voices of those who understand the sector that are being heard. It is a vocal few who seem bent on pursuing their ideological means at any cost, and the result is that many are going to suffer devastating consequences. Indigenous livelihoods are being taken away by the activism of the Liberals. Some of my constituents would have their livelihoods taken away by the activism of the Liberals.

Government Orders

My plea would be this. Let us look at the facts. As somebody who has been involved in agriculture my entire life, as somebody who has had animals on my family farm, I understand very clearly the care that one can have for animals. However, let us understand the consequences of a policy that does not take into account the facts.

When I heard the sponsor of the bill initially talk, there were many voices that were not acknowledged. When I have heard the debate take place, both at the committee and since, many voices in this conversation have not been acknowledged. When it comes to agriculture stakeholders, we are not talking about well-paid lobbyists that exist here in the nation's capital; we are talking about regular folks who work hard and volunteer for their industry organizations.

It is interesting, and it shows their absolute disdain, when members like the member from Kingston would suggest that somehow those Canadians' voices do not matter. The reality is this. Many of the organizations that have shared their concerns are doing so because they know the impact that bad public policy has on the livelihoods of those involved in this sector.

I urge all members of this place to look at the facts. Let us not make rash decisions based on a vocal group of activists who are unwilling to have reasonable conversations about agriculture in general and specifically related to the horse sector here in Canada. Let us make sure that we are informed by those facts, because if we do not, there are consequences. I cannot highlight this enough. I believe close to half of those involved in this sector are indigenous. That means that, effectively, that member and the Liberals would be stealing away their livelihoods because they listened to a vocal few, as opposed to the common sense of those who understand and know well what the reality on the ground is.

Now, when it comes to what the future of animal husbandry in Canada should be, we have, for many generations, demonstrated expertise that is looked the world over as being a pinnacle of what can be done to find the right balance, whether it comes to large-scale protein production across the spectrum, whether it be in oilseed and other grown proteins, or whether it be in milk, dairy and the feathered side of our sector. We have a lot to be proud of.

I will conclude with this. The bill before us attacks the agriculture industry, without question. If we start listening to these vocal few voices, it will have a devastating impact not only on those involved. Attacking the agriculture sector and saying, through the passing of a bill like this, that it cannot be trusted, which is what it is saying, will have the impact of increasing costs, decreasing trust and ultimately making it so that Canadians are unable to feed themselves through this amazing sector.

• (1815)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I recognize the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga for his right of reply.

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in closing, I want to thank my colleagues from all parties for getting together. I sit on the agriculture committee as well. We did this in a thoughtful process. We heard from everyone concerned. We responded to concerns.

This bill is very specific in its nature in that it focuses on exporting horses only, not domestic products for horses. Canadians sent us here to represent them and to work together. I believe this is an example of working together across party lines.

Over seven out of 10 Canadians want this practice to end. That is what we are doing together. I appreciate it. I look forward to the bill moving through the House and into the Senate. I thank everyone for their co-operation. It is a proud day.

• (1820)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): 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.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Madam Speaker, I would ask that the bill be carried on division.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Madam Speaker, I think that if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:30 p.m.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023

BILL C-59—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-59, An Act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 21, 2023 and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023, not more than five further hours shall be allotted to the consideration of the report stage and five hours shall be allotted to the consideration at the third reading stage of the bill; and

That, at the expiry of the five hours provided for the consideration at report stage and the five hours provided for the consideration at the third reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

Government Orders

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise or use the “raise hand” function so that the Chair can have some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in the question period.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Bay of Quinte.

• (1825)

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and talk about the budget. The fall economic statement seems like a long time ago.

Of course, when we talk to the hon. member, we are talking about housing and the fact that we are in a crisis right now. In my region, waterfront houses in Prince Edward County used to be \$350,000. They are now selling for well over \$2 million, but it goes down the road from that. Affordable rentals in our region were around \$1,400 four to six years ago. That has doubled to \$3,000. There are people in my region who cannot afford their rent.

I am going to go down a different path. CFB Trenton, in my riding, was promised housing in a budget two years ago. I know that the member for Kingston and the Islands loves this, because he loves to talk about housing and military bases. CFB Trenton was promised 50 homes two years ago. Until today, we have built zero homes on the base, no matter what was promised in past budgets.

My question for the housing minister is this: I know we need homes in general in the Quinte region, but when are we going to get homes on our bases that were promised in budgets two years ago?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague led off by pointing out that the fall economic statement feels like a very long time ago, hence the need to move forward with time allocation to actually implement the measures included in the fall economic statement now that we are into the following spring. He mentioned the home ownership prices and the rental challenges a lot of families are having in his community. We know that these circumstances are very challenging in regions right across the entire country.

The reality is that, when we look at the plan the Conservatives are putting forward, they do not have a single measure that is designed to help actually build more homes. They want to raise taxes when it comes to the GST on apartment construction. They have no measures in their housing plan that are designed to help more people get into homes. The member talks about homes for members of the Canadian Armed Forces, and I would actually point him to the recent plan put forward by the Minister of National Defence, who has included specific, short-term budgeting opportunities to build more homes for the men and women who wear the uniform.

It is essential that we look at all the different opportunities to advance measures to build more homes. I am disappointed that the Conservative plan provides precisely zero.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, Abbotsford, British Columbia, suffered devastat-

ing floods in 2021. I was informed by the Minister of Emergency Preparedness that some of the money from the disaster financial assistance program would be used to help reconstruct our community. The City of Abbotsford has also applied to a climate adaptation fund to help rebuild the waterways, Highway No. 1 and the train routes through this area.

Will the government help Abbotsford access that money as quickly as possible so our national trade corridors are not cut off again?

Hon. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, one thing that the hon. member and I have in common is that we both come from communities that have seen devastating impacts from severe weather events. That is part of the reason that we need to do everything we can from both a mitigation and an adaptation point of view; we need to ensure that we are there for communities that been impacted.

With respect to the disaster financial assistance arrangement, I expect the hon. member is well aware that it operates in the form of a reimbursement to cover some of the costs that were incurred and covered initially by provincial governments.

With respect to the specific application that may be before departments, I am happy to do an inquiry to figure out the current status of any applications when it comes to disaster mitigation and adaptation, to ensure that we keep those trade corridors flowing. I do not have the specific details on the unique project the member has just raised before me. I would be happy to take part in a follow-up conversation to chase down the information he is looking for.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, it is good to see the Minister of Housing here.

For the last two years, the Nunavut government has been asking for investments in housing. Understanding that the Government of Nunavut is not an indigenous government and is not eligible to apply to the urban, rural and northern housing initiative, can the minister update the House on what investments they will be providing directly to the Government of Nunavut so that they can help alleviate the housing crisis up north?

Hon. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I had an opportunity to visit my hon. colleague's community, where she graciously hosted me to meet with certain stakeholders there. She is a fierce advocate for more housing in Canada's north.

Government Orders

In addition to some of the programs that will operate through non-profits or directly support rights holders who represent distinctions-based communities in Canada's north and across the country, there are opportunities to work directly with provincial and territorial governments as well. I would point to the Canada builds program as an example, where we are seeking to enter bilateral agreements directly to finance housing that will be offered in rental markets. There are further opportunities to enter bilateral agreements to put forward the housing-enabling infrastructure and, of course, through the announcement that we made jointly in Nunavut with respect to the housing accelerator fund, there can be local communities that can partner with provincial governments to advance their shared goals.

There is not a single throughput for the federal government to co-operate with the territorial government in Nunavut, but there are a range of programs that create opportunities to work directly with housing providers and with different levels of government, including the territorial government in her constituency.

• (1830)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is another embarrassing admission by the government that it has completely failed in its role. We have already had one vote on budget 2024, and yet the fall economic statement is before us tonight. Of course, the government is going to time allocate it. It has been months since it was brought up for debate. This is an admission of failure on the government's part.

Why is it so bad at managing the calendar and getting things done?

Hon. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, with respect, when one is faced with an opposition that will obstruct and delay the process in the chamber, it can make it difficult to get legislation passed, but that will not stop us.

The member is right to point out that we are going to use time allocation. I am glad he sees common sense in that approach, given that the fall economic statement was in the fall of last year. Since then, we have seen winter and now spring. We have to move forward with the legislation that is going to implement the measures. The opposition's delay tactics are preventing additional support through the rural top-up to the Canada carbon rebate and a number of other measures that are important when it comes to building housing and saving people money.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the over 20 hours of witness testimony that was heard at the Standing Committee on Finance, we heard from industry about the importance of the investment tax credits that our government is launching, two of which are rolled out in Bill C-59.

Could the minister speak to the importance of those investment tax credits, in particular, the carbon capture, utilization and storage and the clean technology investment tax credits, in terms of their ability to mobilize capital to build a clean economy here in Canada?

Hon. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I want to draw attention to the efforts of my colleague, not only for his question today, but also

for his extraordinary work when it comes to leveraging opportunities in the clean economy, particularly when it comes to social finance.

We have decided to move forward with a unique approach, introducing investment tax credits to generate economic activity that will help provide climate solutions. We have already seen cleantech opportunities coming to Canada as a result, including the recent announcement by Honda that it will make one of the largest private sector investments in Canada's history. I believe it is the largest in the auto sector. The opportunity to generate new economic opportunities, not only in auto manufacturing but also in carbon capture, utilization and storage and other clean tech, is extraordinary.

I think about some of the opportunities for companies in my home province that are leading the way. CarbonCure Technologies is sequestering carbon and strengthening concrete to provide solutions. RJ MacIsaac has developed opportunities to generate clean steel by recycling scrap metal from ships at the end of their life. It recently received one of the highest certifications globally and became the second port in North America to be able to provide these services.

Opportunities abound; we just have to seize the moment to take them.

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a community that relies on hospitality and tourism: Revelstoke. It just applied for \$50 million in accelerator funding for new housing in a very busy area, but it was told it was too far advanced. It has done too much, and the money will go to communities that are not ready yet. I always tell communities to be shovel-ready. If the funding comes, they should be ready to use it.

I am sure the minister knows where Revelstoke is. Can he explain to me how a community like Revelstoke could be refused funding for building homes that are so needed, especially in hospitality and tourism areas?

Hon. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I will acknowledge that I know where Revelstoke is located. I have been there a number of different times, and it is a beautiful part of the country. I would encourage anyone who has not had the privilege of visiting to take the opportunity and support the local tourism sector in Revelstoke.

With respect to the housing accelerator fund, we move forward on agreements with the most ambitious communities. A number of communities have been doing good work, for a number of years, when it comes to housing. However, we made a policy decision at the outset of that fund not to reward communities for past behaviour; instead, we will incentivize new measures that would allow more homes to be built.

This program was not designed to give money out without demanding actual action that will result in more homes being constructed. This is paying for performance. There is money being put on the table to incentivize changes that will increase housing output in communities. We have now seen 179 agreements that our partner communities are projecting will lead to 750,000 new building permits over the next decade.

These are meaningful opportunities, but I would encourage the hon. member to have Revelstoke reach out. We do have a \$400-million top-up to the housing accelerator fund, and I am pleased to see that he seemingly supports that program, unlike the leader of his party.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to debate an issue when you are smiling down at us from the chair.

I would like to ask my colleague a question. The Liberals will probably not be surprised if I tell them that we in the Bloc Québécois hate time allocation, because we like to debate and we are here to work seriously. Fortunately for the assembly, we show it every day.

There is one file that I find tiresome. I hope my colleague will be able to provide me with a semblance of an answer. We have a request. If we can impose time allocation on bills, can we impose time allocation on assistance offered to agricultural producers? Quebec asked that the AgriRecovery program be launched in November. Today is May 9, and it has not been launched. I know that some calculations had to be made and documents obtained, but given the time that has elapsed between November and May, it seems that someone, somewhere, is taking their sweet time.

Can the assistance be made available to producers who need it? Among other things, they have already paid their expenses for this season. I have heard from companies that have decided to stop producing this year because they have no money. It is sad.

Can my colleague answer that question?

Hon. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague for his question and for giving me the opportunity to practise my French.

Normally, we do not want to use time allocation for debates in the House, but under the circumstances, it is very important because the bill was introduced last fall, and now it is spring. There was winter and then spring. It is essential that we adopt these measures to support communities across the country.

[*English*]

With respect to the member's question about agriculture, I think it is essential we continue to support those who produce the food that our communities rely on in order to drive economic opportunities and ensure we enhance food security across our communities. With respect to the timing of the specific fund, I would be happy to have a conversation with my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, to insist that we continue to move forward expeditiously to support our farmers in every part of the country.

Government Orders

I come from rural Nova Scotia. There are many farms that dot the communities that surround the place I call home. I would be pleased to work with members from all parties in the House to support the agricultural sector, because it is in the national interest to do so.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, a point in this piece of legislation is actually something that I have been pushing for, for a long time. It is the removal of the GST from psychotherapy and counselling services. It is something that tens of thousands of counsellors and psychotherapists have been asking for, from the government, for a very long time. Moving this forward is a small but good step to ensure fairness in those industries and fairness for people who are seeking mental health supports.

Can the minister talk about the importance of that as part of this piece of legislation, moving forward?

Hon. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her advocacy. There are a number of members in the chamber who were pushing for that same change, and I congratulate them on the effectiveness of their advocacy. Here we are advancing that change through federal legislation that is being debated at this very moment.

The removal of the GST for psychotherapy is essential. Mental health services are not as widely accessible as they ought to be in a country that is as advanced as Canada and that is as wealthy as Canada. Mental health care is health care. No one should be denied access to mental health supports or community services, which should be more widely available, because they cannot afford access to those services.

This is going to enhance the quality and access of care that people are able to receive, including in communities that are traditionally underserved. It is important that we do everything we can to ensure people are able to receive the care they need, when they need it. The cost should never be prohibitive for someone who is seeking the care they desperately deserve.

• (1840)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister about affordable housing and what Bill C-59 offers on affordable housing. My community in London, Ontario, is challenged with homelessness, as are many communities across the country.

What is also interesting, and I would love to hear commentary on this too, is that I never hear anything from the Conservatives about a plan to address homelessness or a plan to address the challenges we see on Canadian streets. This is something, if the Conservatives want to put themselves up as the official opposition, they have a responsibility to speak to, but they never talk about it.

Government Orders

Hon. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet my hon. colleague, the parliamentary secretary, in his community and to meet with some of the service providers who are providing solutions when it comes to affordable and supportive housing on the ground in London. It is very clear the member makes it a priority and has meaningful relationships with those who are advancing housing solutions for vulnerable persons.

The specific bill before the House includes a number of measures, including removing the GST for co-operative housing and building on the GST rebate for apartment construction more broadly. It includes additional measures. In fact, the fall economic statement had a \$1-billion top-up to the affordable housing fund that can go toward some of the projects that we have learned about in his community.

In addition, the member raised the important contrast between the different plans the parties have put forward. We have seen the Conservatives put forward a plan. The subject of the legislation is something their leader now seems afraid to move forward with, because it has been largely ridiculed by those who know what they are talking about when it comes to providing housing solutions. It has no mention of homelessness. It has no mention of affordable housing. His public statements indicate he has a belief that governments do not have a role in housing. I think that is unacceptable.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister a question from Mayor Kletke of the town of Trochu, a small community in my constituency.

The Trochu Housing Corporation, 118 units of senior and care-provided living, has applied a number of times to CMHC, but has not always received the best communication from it. Therefore, I would like to ask the minister if he could provide an update to Mayor Kletke and the Trochu Housing Corporation, because this is a project that, had it been able to proceed three years ago, would have cost about 20% to 25% less than it would cost to build that same project today, even with a few less units. I would also ask the minister to make sure that rural areas are not forgotten about in some of the conversations surrounding housing.

Hon. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I think it is important that we work together across party lines to advance solutions when it comes to affordable housing, including the programs that are run through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. I would be happy to dig into the specifics of the application that the Trochu Housing Corporation made to understand where it may sit and, if it is in the application process or if there was a challenge, how we can seek to overcome that together.

It sounds like it is an excellent project designed to support affordable housing solutions for people in the community of Trochu. I would be pleased to plug the hon. member into a member of my team, who is responsible for some of the projects in his region of Canada, to identify what a path forward may look like. There is absolutely a desire to work across the aisle with members who are seeking to advance affordable housing solutions in every region of this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the minister.

Bill C-59 provides for more than \$30 billion for the oil industry. For example, there is the \$12.5-billion credit for carbon capture, utilization and storage. I would like to quote what his former colleague, Catherine McKenna, said about it and then have him share his comments with us.

It should never have happened, but clearly the oil and gas lobbyists pushed for that... We are giving special access to companies that are making historic profits, that are not investing those profits into the transition and clean solutions. They are returning those profits to their shareholders, who for the most part are not Canadian, and then they ask to be subsidized for the pollution they cause, while Canadians have to pay more for oil and gas for heating.

What does the hon. minister think?

Hon. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I think it is very important to use every measure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the energy sector. It is very important to reduce these emissions to protect the entire world.

I have had conversations with people in the energy sector and companies that have the skills to create technologies to reduce emissions. It is possible to use programs in the bill to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in this sector. It is also very important to eliminate subsidies for traditional energy producers. At the same time, we need to develop solutions to reduce emissions.

• (1845)

[*English*]

I believe we can advance technologies that will help reduce emissions in the oil and gas sector. At the same time, we seek to reduce emissions through every possible means. We are in a climate crisis. It is essential that we advance solutions that will reduce emissions as quickly as possible.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, as we know, indigenous people across Canada are disproportionately impacted by the housing crisis. I know my colleagues, the MP for Nunavut and the MP for Vancouver East, have done tremendous work pushing for funding in the for indigenous, by indigenous housing strategy.

I wonder if the minister can provide an update as to when we will see the necessary funding going toward indigenous people to ensure they have access to not only affordable housing but adequate housing to meet their needs.

Hon. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, my colleague is quite right to point out the members for Vancouver East and Nunavut for their advocacy, alongside a number of members from different parties in the House. She is also correct to point out the disproportionate impact of homelessness on indigenous peoples across Canada, both the housing needs in indigenous communities and those of indigenous people who have had that connection severed. It is extremely important to address.

Government Orders

In addition to indigenous communities and indigenous-led projects being eligible in our programs of general application, we have specific programs that we have developed, with billions of dollars behind them, to advance solutions. There is a \$4-billion distinctions-based fund to provide housing solutions directly in community for rights holders through a distinctions-based program. In addition, there is a \$4.3-billion fund, and I believe this is what she was referring to, to meet the needs of indigenous peoples in urban, rural and northern environments.

We are working to finalize some of the program design to ensure we are supporting both distinctions-based organizations and non-profit housing providers to meet the needs of indigenous peoples in urban, rural and northern environments. We expect, in the very short term, to be advancing opportunities to set up the organization nationally that will help run some of these programs as we continue to fund distinctions-based organizations that are supporting members of their community who may no longer be in community.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs and to the Minister of National Defence (Northern Defence), Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the minister for the tremendous contribution that he makes to so many programs and services in the country.

I represent a very large rural indigenous riding in this country, a riding that is very much connected to the land and to the ocean, and we depend upon the natural environment for food. However, climate change is impacting the culture of the people I represent and impacting food security, which is why we know that, without an environmental plan, we do not have a plan for the economy, we do not have a plan for workers and we do not have a plan for the future of Canada.

I would ask the minister how this bill would help fight climate change and what it would mean to rural Canadians who, right now, do not have the option to switch to clean energy like many other Canadians can across Canada.

Hon. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, there are a number of specific elements over and above the emissions reduction plan that we have put forward over the past number of years to advance a world-leading plan to reduce emissions, particularly in an energy-producing country like Canada. An example in this specific piece of legislation is the new investment tax credits to support the advancement of green technology, which will help reduce pollution and at the same time create economic opportunities. Another example is the creation of the Canada water agency.

However, I expect what my hon. colleague is getting at in her question is the doubling of the rural rebate for the price on pollution. Moving forward with the plan that makes sure that pollution is not free is essential in Canada. We cannot allow it to be free to pollute, and we should not make pollution free again. At the same time, we have to recognize that people who live in communities like mine, who do not have an opportunity necessarily to ride public transit and have to endure longer commutes to the office or to their work site, should not be faced with higher costs unnecessarily.

The delays that we have seen from the Conservatives on this bill are denying access to the doubling of that rural top-up. However, I was pleased to see as well, in the recent federal budget, that

changes are being made to ensure that rural communities that may fall within larger municipalities will have the challenge around the rural rebate addressed.

● (1850)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very glad that the minister just mentioned the supposed delays that the Conservatives are causing on the bill. Technically, this government has had a majority for the last year and a half. It has a supply and confidence agreement with the NDP. It has a majority on committee and a majority in the House of Commons, which would allow the Liberals to pass any bill they want during government business. The fact that he lays out an argument that we are the problem is quite interesting.

The minister sat here for the last 20 minutes bragging about how much money the Liberals are going to spend in the fall economic statement. I do not think there is a Canadian who disagrees that Liberals can spend money. I think they know the Liberals are not worth the cost anymore and that they are not getting the value for money that they deserve.

My question to the minister is this: How can the Conservative opposition be delaying the bill before us, which is what the Liberals are telling Canadians, when they have a majority and they can bring this up any time they want. The bill has been tabled since November 30, so it is basically their incompetence that has not got the job done.

Hon. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, there are a number of pieces of misinformation included in my colleague's question.

First, I do not know if he appreciates this, but this is actually a minority Parliament and he seems to have described it differently.

Second, the member talks about the investments that we have been making, which are helping communities across Canada, as a negative thing. The reality is that, if he wants to examine the fiscal position of the Government of Canada, he will see that the federal government actually has the healthiest balance sheet in the G7. He will see that we are the third-largest economy in the world that maintains a AAA credit rating, and Moody's recently demonstrated that we have a stable outlook, stronger than the United States. The International Monetary Fund is projecting Canada to be the fastest growing economy in the G7, and we continue to see, time after time, compared to other advanced economies in the world, that Canada is among the healthiest, or the healthiest, when it comes to the fiscal projections for the Government of Canada.

Government Orders

It is essential that we continue to move forward with a downward trending debt-to-GDP ratio, and we have seen the impact of the responsible fiscal management with the rate of inflation coming down now to within the target range, despite the extraordinary headwinds we have faced as a global economy. Canada is leading the charge when it comes to fiscal responsibility and economic growth projections.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-59 creates a federal department of municipal affairs, which will bring with it more interference, bickering and delays, when the housing crisis requires fast action.

Members will recall that Pierre Elliott Trudeau attempted something similar in 1971, when he created the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs, which was an abject failure. The Ministry of State for Urban Affairs was a source of contention with the provinces for its entire existence and never managed to play a useful role. It was finally disbanded in 1979.

Why is the government trying to do the same thing again when it was such a failure the first time around?

Hon. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, with all due respect, I disagree with my colleague. It is very important to recognize that there is a Department of Infrastructure as well as organizations, such as the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, that implement housing policies and manage programs to support housing across the country.

The purpose of the bill is not to create a new entity but to give ourselves the ability to work together on the two portfolios within a single department. That is common sense. This is about making sure that the housing program runs smoothly while moving forward with the infrastructure program. It is simple.

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will just say that last night we spent five and a half hours in the chamber debating a Conservative amendment to delete the short title of a bill, yet we hear the Conservatives stand up and say they have not done anything to slow down the House of Commons. I also was in the finance committee when I watched them delay by forcing recorded votes on clause-by-clause for the fall economic statement, so they have absolutely tried to delay the bill before us.

My question to my hon. colleague is this: What does he think is the impact of slowing the bill down and delaying its provisions, in terms of the impact on Canadians and maybe on the businesses that are counting on the bill's to be passed to give them the relief they need?

Hon. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, there are a number of people who watch politics and there are a number of people who count on us to do our jobs who do not watch it that closely. I think Canadians would be disappointed to see some of the games that are played to slow down progress.

If a member disagrees with the measures being put forward by the government, they have an opportunity to debate and they have an opportunity to vote against. There is a bill that is particularly important to my part of the world that is focused on sustainable jobs

and offshore energy, and there were 20,000 amendments that I believe were generated by ChatGPT, not by somebody who actually cares.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

[*English*]

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.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I request recorded division, please.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Call in the members.

• (1940)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 759*)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Aldag | Alghabra |
| Ali | Anand |
| Anandasangaree | Angus |
| Arseneault | Arya |
| Ashton | Atwin |
| Bachrach | Badaway |
| Bains | Baker |
| Barron | Battiste |
| Beech | Bibeau |
| Bittle | Blair |
| Blaney | Blois |
| Boissonnault | Boulerice |
| Bradford | Brière |
| Carr | Casey |
| Chagger | Chahal |
| Champagne | Chatel |
| Chen | Chiang |
| Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek) | Collins (Victoria) |
| Cormier | Coteau |
| Dabrusin | Damoff |
| Davies | Desjarlais |
| Dhaliwal | Dhillon |
| Diab | Dong |
| Drouin | Dubourg |
| Duclos | Duguid |
| Dzerowicz | Ehsassi |
| El-Khoury | Erskine-Smith |
| Fillmore | Fisher |
| Fonseca | Fortier |
| Fragiskatos | Fraser |
| Freeland | Fry |
| Gaheer | Gainey |
| Garrison | Gerretsen |
| Gould | Green |
| Guilbeault | Hajdu |

Government Orders

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|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Hardie | Hepfner | Findlay | Fortin |
| Holland | Housefather | Gallant | Garon |
| Hughes | Hutchings | Gaudreau | Généreux |
| Iacono | Idlout | Genuis | Gill |
| Ien | Jaczek | Gladu | Godin |
| Joly | Jones | Goodridge | Gourde |
| Jowhari | Kayabaga | Gray | Hallan |
| Kelloway | Khalid | Hoback | Jeneroux |
| Khera | Koutrakis | Jivani | Kelly |
| Kusmierczyk | Lalonde | Khanna | Kitchen |
| Lambropoulos | Lamoureux | Kmiec | Kram |
| Lapointe | Lattanzio | Kramp-Neuman | Kurek |
| Lauzon | LeBlanc | Lake | Lantsman |
| Lebouthillier | Lightbound | Larouche | Lawrence |
| Long | Longfield | Lehoux | Lemire |
| Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) | MacAtulay (Cardigan) | Lewis (Essex) | Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk) |
| MacDonald (Malpeque) | MacGregor | Liepert | Lloyd |
| MacKinnon (Gatineau) | Maloney | Lobb | Majumdar |
| Martinez Ferrada | Masse | Martel | McCaughey (Edmonton West) |
| Mathysen | May (Cambridge) | McLean | Melillo |
| May (Saarich—Gulf Islands) | McGuinty | Michaud | Moore |
| McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) | McLeod | Morantz | Morrison |
| McPherson | Mendicino | Motz | Muys |
| Miao | Miller | Nater | Normandin |
| Morrice | Morrissey | Patzer | Paul-Hus |
| Murray | Naqvi | Pauzé | Perkins |
| Ng | Noormohamed | Perron | Poilievre |
| O'Connell | Oliphant | Redekopp | Reid |
| O'Regan | Petitpas Taylor | Rempel Garner | Richards |
| Powlowski | Qualtrough | Roberts | Rood |
| Robillard | Rodriguez | Ruff | Savard-Tremblay |
| Rogers | Romanado | Scheer | Schmale |
| Rota | Sahota | Seeback | Shields |
| Saks | Samson | Shipley | Simard |
| Sarai | Scarpaleggia | Small | Soroka |
| Schiefke | Serré | Steinley | Ste-Marie |
| Sgro | Shanahan | Stewart | Strahl |
| Sheehan | Sidhu (Brampton East) | Stubbs | Thériault |
| Sidhu (Brampton South) | Singh | Therrien | Thomas |
| Sorbara | Sousa | Tochor | Trudel |
| St-Onge | Sudds | Uppal | Van Popta |
| Tassi | Taylor Roy | Vecchio | Vidal |
| Thompson | Turnbull | Vien | Viersen |
| Valdez | Van Bynen | Vignola | Villemure |
| van Koeverden | Vandal | Vis | Wagantall |
| Vandenbeld | Wilkinson | Warkentin | Waugh |
| Yip | Zahid | Webber | Williams |
| Zarrillo | Zuberi— 166 | Williamson— 137 | |

NAYS*Members*

| | |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Aboultouf | Aitchison |
| Albas | Allison |
| Arnold | Baldinelli |
| Barlow | Barrett |
| Barsalou-Duval | Beaulieu |
| Bergeron | Berthold |
| Bérubé | Blanchet |
| Blanchette-Joncas | Block |
| Bragdon | Brassard |
| Brock | Brunelle-Duceppe |
| Calkins | Carrie |
| Chabot | Chambers |
| Champoux | Cooper |
| Dalton | Dancho |
| Davidson | DeBellefeuille |
| Deltell | d'Entremont |
| Desbiens | Desilets |
| Doherty | Dowdall |
| Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) | Ellis |
| Epp | Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) |
| Fast | Ferreri |

PAIRED*Members*

| | |
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| Sinclair-Desgagné | Virani— 2 |
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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I declare the motion carried.

*Government Orders**[English]*

REPORT STAGE

The House resumed from May 8 consideration of Bill C-59, An Act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 21, 2023 and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of Motion No. 1.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, last November, the government introduced Bill C-59, the fall economic statement implementation act. Among other measures, Bill C-59 proposed significant amendments to our Competition Act.

I am proud to share that the Standing Committee on Finance has recently completed its review of the bill and has made several amendments to further strengthen existing proposals. Before I get into some of the key details of this critical piece of legislation, I feel it is important to highlight the economic context in which this legislation is being introduced.

Countries around the world are dealing with higher inflation due to a global pandemic, further exacerbated by geopolitical uncertainty. Despite the fearmongering of the Conservative members opposite, Canada's economy is remarkably strong and resilient. That is truly due to the hard work of Canadians themselves. A few proof points demonstrate this: Canada's net debt-to-GDP ratio is well below that of our G7 peers; our deficit is declining; and we are one of the only two G7 countries with an AAA credit rating from independent experts. Something that we can all be quite proud of is that Canada received the highest per capita foreign direct investment in the G7 in the first three quarters of 2023. Some may ask why those facts matter. These proof points show that Canada is in an enviable position when it comes to fiscal management. That position is exactly the reason our government can afford to make transformative investments in improving housing affordability and making life cost less.

Unlike Conservatives, who cut support for Canadians, we believe in supporting the middle class through growth and investment. I hear from my constituents often that their top concerns are being able to find an affordable place to live and wanting to find ways to make their day-to-day expenses cost less. This legislation addresses these two core issues head on.

For many years, Canada's markets have been described as overly concentrated and not competitive enough. In fact, a landmark Competition Bureau study last year, based on Statistics Canada data and analysis from a University of Toronto professor, made critical findings in this respect, showing that competitive intensity has been on the decline over the past two decades, reflected in a number of important indicators.

Bill C-59 was introduced to help build a stronger domestic economy through more competition and contestable markets, to bring lower prices, more choice and better product quality for consumers across all sectors. The measures in this bill include strengthening provisions with respect to merger review, enhancing protections for consumers, workers and the environment, and broadening opportunities for private enforcement.

We should not underestimate just how critical these reforms are for modernizing our law and promoting competitive markets. The Commissioner of Competition has stated on multiple occasions that the amendments in Bill C-56, the affordable housing and groceries act, which was ultimately passed by this Parliament in December 2023, and Bill C-59, are generational. I would therefore like to highlight some important reforms that have been proposed.

To begin with, anti-competitive collaborations between competitors will be under increased scrutiny, as the bureau will be able to examine and, if necessary, seek penalties against coordinated conduct that lessens competition. The expansion of private enforcement and the ability for the Competition Tribunal to issue monetary payment orders in cases initiated by private parties is also a significant change to our existing enforcement approach.

More competition is always beneficial to consumers, but the bill also takes some more direct approaches to protect consumers. These include strengthening provisions on deceptive marketing so that vendors must present the full cost of a product or service upfront, without holding back mandatory fees, which is known as drip pricing. Businesses making environmental claims about their products will be required to have undertaken adequate and proper testing before advertising those benefits. Together, these changes would ensure that consumers have accurate and complete information about products and services to make informed purchasing decisions.

● (1945)

We have also made strides on the right to repair. Thanks to the bill, a wider variety of service providers would be able to offer more options to consumers when they are choosing where to repair their products. These reforms, along with various administrative changes aimed at facilitating efficient enforcement of the act, are crucial to ensuring that Canadian markets remain competitive and in line with international best practices.

It has been acknowledged by all members of the House that our competition framework requires reform, and my colleagues have engaged in thoughtful discussion on ways to modernize the existing marketplace framework. The committee members were notably quite interested in enhancing protections for consumers and the environment, and I would like to draw attention to some now.

First, clarifications were made to ensure that in the Competition Act's various provisions on drip pricing, the only amounts that can be excluded from the upfront price, are those imposed by law directly on the purchaser of the products, such as sales taxes.

Government Orders

Next, with the committee's amendment, sellers advertising reduced prices would be required to be able to prove that the regular price is authentic to publicize discounts. On the topic of doubtful environmental claims, or so-called greenwashing, the law would also require that those who make environmental claims about their business or business activities, not only specific products, have adequate and proper substantiation in hand to support such claims.

This bill goes beyond making generational changes to competition in Canada. It also takes concrete action to build more homes faster, including new rental housing. Bill C-59 proposes to eliminate GST on eligible new housing co-operatives built for long-term rental, as outlined in the fall economic statement. This is just one of many measures our government is proposing to ensure that more people across all provinces and territories find the housing they need, at a price that they can afford.

Amidst a period of inflation and growing affordability concerns, it is crucial that our markets remain resilient and open to competition. Bill C-59 would reform Canada's competitive landscape, encourage greater innovation and improve affordability for Canadians. It would also get more rental housing built faster so that we can ensure housing is affordable for every generation.

I would urge my colleagues from all sides of the House to work together to expeditiously pass this crucial piece of legislation, instead of doing what we have seen in committee, which is to slow the bill down. We continue to see the Conservatives try to obstruct key pieces of legislation that are helping Canadians in their time of need, and that is not what we have been put here to do.

● (1950)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the member mentioned a bit about housing, and I will ask him a similar question that I have asked other Liberal MPs about the fall economic statement and the lack of investments going to the territorial governments to help alleviate the housing crisis in the north.

Does the member agree, for example, that we should have heard the three territorial premiers when they asked for \$600 million in the budget? Continuing to ignore those kinds of calls shows a lack of supporting the economy's needs, which could be generated by supporting housing in the north.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, I have the utmost respect for the member opposite, having worked with her on several committees, heard her testimony, and seen her great advocacy for her community.

I know the particular bill we are debating tonight, Bill C-59, has a measure to waive GST on new co-operative rental housing construction. That is obviously one measure of many in a package of measures that are included in this year's budget, which would make a difference.

I note that the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities had a great intervention earlier with the member opposite. He detailed specific investments that are quite sizable in northern, rural and remote indigenous communities. I know my work on the HUMA committee years ago was part of those studies, and I am glad to see that our government is following through with significant investments.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, this fiscal economic statement has led to a budget where the debt servicing costs \$54.1 billion, which is more than the federal government transfers to provinces for health care. We all know health care is very important.

How did the member find his way to supporting a fiscal economic statement that led to a budget that spends more on debt each and every year than this whole country spends on health care transfers to provinces?

● (1955)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, I can relate to the member's commitment to having a strong health care system in Canada today. That is exactly why our government, through the health transfer, has increased funding to provinces and territories.

I would note that the amount is approximately \$200 billion over the next 10 years. We have also followed that up with bilateral agreements that add to those investments and identify key priorities across the country. A stronger health care system is essential.

It strikes me as a bit rich that the member opposite is talking about health care, when the Conservative Party, and many Conservative premiers, seem to struggle to utilize those dollars to truly strengthen our health care system. My family members and people in my community cannot even get a \$3-million planning grant to move forward on building a local hospital.

Our government has invested in health care, and we look forward to seeing those investments land on the ground for families.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I salute my colleague from Whitby, who I work with at the Standing Committee on Science and Research.

My question for my colleague is on the effectiveness of implementing, creating a new department of housing. Quebec already has the ministry of municipal affairs and housing and the Société d'habitation du Québec.

The last projects that were funded in Quebec, in my region in particular, were funded from money in budget 2022. It took two years to budget the money, transfer it and come to an agreement with the Government of Quebec. I would like my colleague to explain what Ottawa will be able to do better than Quebec. I would like to know what Quebec cannot do with its current expertise.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, I have great respect for the member, having worked with him on the science and research committee. I know him to be a productive member of Parliament who advocates for his community well. It was great to see, in our current budget, the great investments in research that we both advocated for.

With regard to housing investments, our government is working collaboratively with Quebec, and all other provinces and territories. It does take time to design programs and roll them out at the national level, but we look forward to the strongest possible collaborative relationship with the Government of Quebec in ensuring that Quebecers get the housing they need, just like all other Canadians.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a great privilege to stand this evening and speak on behalf of the constituents of Lethbridge and, of course, representing those across the nation as well.

I have the privilege of speaking to the budget implementation act concerning the 2024 Liberal budget, which was put forward on April 16. These are some headlines that came out in newspapers across the country following the dropping of the budget: “Liberal hike to job-killing capital gains tax is inexcusable”; “Capital gains tax change draws ire from some Canadian entrepreneurs worried it will worsen the brain drain”; “David Dodge wasn't wrong, this federal budget is 'one of the worst in decades'”.

Here is the next one: “The Liberals move from borrow and spend, to tax and spend”. Another one is, “Canada's budget 2024: More spending, higher capital gains taxes, and bigger deficits”. This one mentions that the federal budget is “the worst in decades”. These are the types of headlines that came out following the Liberal budget, and they are not wrong.

I am not sure if members have heard of an oil salesman. It is a term that originated in the 1900s from an infamous imposter who sold snake oil as a miracle medicine. It turns out that this snake oil was just a concoction of mineral oil, beef fat, red pepper and turpentine, but he would go around and he would claim that it had magical healing properties, so people would spend a whole lot of money on it in hopes that it would deliver the results that were promised to them. Eventually, this con artist was found out, was exposed for what he was doing, and he actually became a very powerful symbol used throughout the land to warn against false advertising.

When I look at the Liberals' budget of 2024, I see a snake-oil salesman, a commitment to doing something but actually achieving the opposite, and a commitment to helping Canadians but actually thwarting their success, which is why we get the types of headlines that I just read into the record.

On April 16, the Liberals announced that they would be strapping an additional \$14 billion in new deficit spending to the backs of Canadians. This makes it the ninth year in a row that the Prime Minister has run deficits, while claiming that the budget would balance itself. We all know that is ridiculous; budgets do not balance themselves. He also said that we would change the economy from the heart out. We also know that this is ridiculous. Hard-working

people change the economy in a positive way. A blind or ignorant prime minister changes the economy in a negative way, and unfortunately, what we see is a whole bunch of negative.

The Prime Minister continues to promise that Canadians are better off with his budget, but at the end of the day, we know that families are actually worse off. In fact, the National Post just came out with an article this week, saying that if the economy had stayed where it was in 2015, when Stephen Harper was the prime minister, we would all be earning \$4,200 more per year, which means that under the Liberal government, every single Canadian is \$4,200 per year worse off.

In other words, the Liberal government is not actually helping Canadians; the Liberal government is hurting Canadians to the tune of \$4,200 per year. That is alarming. That is a lot of money. That is a good chunk toward the down payment of a house. That is a good chunk towards maybe a new vehicle, maybe toward putting one's child in sports or just being able to pay household bills and to make ends meet.

This year, Canadians will have to pay over \$54 billion just to cover the interest that has been incurred because of the government's out-of-control spending. That is a whole lot of money, \$54 billion, and we lose sight of what exactly that means, so let me spell that out. That is more than what the government collects in GST paid toward just the interest payment.

● (2000)

That is double what this government has committed to our Canadian Armed Forces, the men and women who serve this country, who unfortunately are going without proper food, care and equipment because the government refuses to fund them adequately. Meanwhile, double the amount that is spent for the Canadian Armed Forces is being paid just to substantiate our interest payments.

Further to that, it is the same amount as what this government transfers to provinces for health care. Imagine the hospitals we could build. Imagine the doctors that could be hired. Imagine the types of care that Canadians could enjoy if we did not have to put that money toward just maintaining our debt.

This is the result of a government without vision for its people. It lands us in this place where things are broken. People are desperate. I hosted a town hall just over a week ago, and the room was filled. People were eager to come and share their concerns with me. Overwhelmingly, the things they talked about were housing, the cost of groceries, fuel and other essentials in life. They were desperate for me to offer them hope and, unfortunately, under the current government, I could not do that. All I could do was ask them to hold on for the day that a new government is coming. The way that the Liberal government has ruled and the decisions that it has made, as can be seen in the 2024 budget, simply bring us down.

Government Orders

People in my riding have been sending me their carbon tax bills. One shows that the cost of the carbon tax bill for a household is \$4 more than their actual consumption. They are spending more on the tax than they are on the consumption. Another shows that this family is spending \$18 more on the carbon tax than they are on their consumption. Another bill was double. Their actual gas cost was \$33.11, and their carbon tax cost was \$63.41. They are paying double on the tax versus consumption. There was another bill where they actually only spent \$20 on consumption, and they spent \$34 on their tax.

There is a business that is spending \$600 more every single month just to cover their tax. Imagine that. Another business is spending nearly \$1,000 more every single month just to cover the carbon tax.

Imagine the impact that it would have for Canadian families if the punitive carbon tax were to be scrapped. We know the Liberal government is not accomplishing any of its environmental objectives. It has failed on every single one of them, so we know the carbon tax is not about that. There is no metric to point at to show success. We are led to believe that it is for no other reason than simply to be punitive in nature. The government has accomplished its goal. Canadians are paying far more for the carbon tax than they are for the actual consumption of natural gas. Canadians are punished. Well done, Liberals.

At the end of the day, it means that Canadians are paying that carbon tax not just on their natural gas bills, but also on the fuel they put in their vehicles, the home heating, as well as the groceries and the necessities they require for their households. Folks are struggling. Two million people are lining up at food banks. In my riding, food bank use has increased by 75%. That is a problem.

The government could do something about that, should it wish to. However, the 2024 budget shows that it does not. It is the same failed policies that have led this government for the last nine years. Unfortunately, Canadians are caught in the middle of that. Conservatives will do better. That is our commitment to Canadians. We look forward to forming government very shortly.

● (2005)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite must know about the challenges that many Canadians have faced in terms of postpandemic recovery, with mental health issues on the rise and with many Canadians stressed out about an uncertain future. Bill C-59 proposes to waive GST on accessing psychotherapy. I think that is a great measure for ensuring that Canadians can get access to the mental health care they need, when they need it.

Can the member opposite tell me whether she supports that measure?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, the hon. member asked me to comment with regards to the mental health of Canadians. There is plenty of evidence to show that mental health is directly affiliated with an individual's economic well-being. When they cannot pay their mortgage, when they cannot pay their rent, and they are lining up at a food bank in order to survive, when they

are sending their kids to school without getting the proper nutrition in the morning, yes, that does weigh on them.

I am so sorry, you are laughing—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the hon. member that she is to address questions and comments through the chair and not directly to members.

Order, on both sides.

Again, I just want to remind the hon. member that she is to address questions and comments through the Chair.

I would urge the hon. parliamentary secretary not to egg her on. If he has other questions and comments, he should wait until the appropriate time.

The hon. member for Lethbridge.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, it is really unfortunate that the hon. member across from me is laughing at that. The mental health of Canadians and the economic well-being of Canadians are not laughing matters. I wish the Liberals would treat this with some sobriety.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lethbridge for her speech. Unsurprisingly, she spent a lot of time talking about the carbon tax.

Now it is important to look at the objective of pollution pricing. The aim is to get people to change their habits. When too much greenhouse gas is generated, it has an impact on the climate and on health, and it puts the financial system at risk too. I always use the example of cigarettes. When we wanted young people to change their habits and smoke less, we raised the price of cigarettes and we also stopped advertising cigarettes.

Given the climate challenges we are facing, what does the member propose to ensure that people change their habits and try to adopt behaviours that are more in line with environmental protection?

● (2010)

[*English*]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, the hon. member just compared the carbon tax to advertising against cigarettes. In the same way advertising against cigarettes helped bring down the usage rate, I believe the argument she is making is that a carbon tax would also bring down the usage rate of fuels.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

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

I want to remind the hon. deputy House leader to keep his thoughts to himself, and if he wants to try to get up on a question and comment, he should try to do so. Again, I would ask him not to talk out loud and to maybe jot his comments down.

The hon. member for Lethbridge.

Government Orders

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, this way of thinking put forward by the Liberal government is absurd. We have folks across Canada, about 96% of them, who are dependent on natural gas for heating, which is not exactly an option in this country.

I come from Alberta, and we need to heat our homes in the winter. I think most other places, if not all other places in this country, need to heat their homes in the middle of winter. I think that is just a basic necessity of human life. Further to that, I come from a riding that is largely rural. Getting on a city bus or transit train is not really an option, so they depend on being able to drive a vehicle in order to provide for themselves or to get from point A to point B. Further to that, the transportation of goods in this nation is reliant on transportation units, such as semis and trains.

If we continue to attach a carbon tax to these necessities, these things that are just a part of our way of life, it is not going to bring down carbon emissions; it has been in place for eight years now. It clearly—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to allow for one more question.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member for Lethbridge is correct when she is talking about the increase in oil prices, diesel prices and gas prices. However, that has coincided with a massive profit increase in the oil and gas industry. Since 2019, their net profits have gone up by over 1,000%.

I am curious as to why the Conservatives keep ignoring the elephant in the room. Is it willful ignorance, or are they that afraid of confronting their political masters in the oil and gas lobby?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, again, I am not sure what fictitious world the hon. member comes from.

In Canada, we very much rely on natural gas to heat our homes, and the Liberal government has attached a carbon tax to that. We rely on using transportation in order to get our goods to market, and the Liberal government has attached a carbon tax to that. Farmers do tremendous good to actually take carbon from the environment and use it to produce food, and yet they are penalized with a carbon tax. Further to that, grocery stores have a carbon tax applied to them just for simply hosting the goods that we need to purchase.

Then all of that lands on the backs of Canadians. A carbon tax is an absolute farce.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-59 today. As tabled, the federal budget proposes a series of measures that will impact all of Canada. However, it is critical that we consider the unique impact these measures will have on Quebec, a distinct society within the Canadian federation. I believe that budgets should always reflect the general needs of Canada, as well as respect Quebec's specific needs and its jurisdiction.

The bill in question is a key document, as it outlines both the financial overview and specific allocations for various government programs and initiatives. It is sort of like setting political promises to a musical score. The main objective for the Bloc Québécois will always be to ensure that budgets consistently reflect the specific values, needs and aspirations of Quebeckers.

Bill C-59 is a nearly 550-page omnibus bill that contains 60 different measures, about half of which are tax measures, and amends or creates 31 acts and regulations. Naturally, Bill C-59 is made up of good and bad elements, but there are two measures preventing the Bloc Québécois from voting in favour of Bill C-59.

Indeed, the bill contains two measures that could be described as very bad. There is \$30.3 billion in subsidies to oil companies in the form of tax credits, meaning that taxpayers will pay oil companies to pollute less when they do not need that money, which seems very sarcastic. That \$30 billion could have been used to help families, who are struggling more and more every day. I think everyone agrees that families are currently in greater financial trouble than oil companies. Instead of greasing the wheels of oil companies, the government could have used that \$30 billion to fight against homelessness and increase access to housing.

The government could have taken that \$30 billion and done some of the good things the Bloc Québécois suggested. For example, it could renew the rapid housing initiative and make it permanent; create a program to acquire and renovate existing rental buildings for non-profit housing organizations; set aside a specific portion of funding in all housing programs to ensure that Quebeckers receive their fair share; increase the transfer for rent subsidies; transfer the affordable housing innovation fund and the new co-op housing program to Quebec; increase funding for renovation of the existing social housing stock currently under contract; support community rental housing projects by providing ultra-low-rate loans; offer lower-rate loans to first-time buyers to give young people access to home ownership again; relax the prohibition on the purchase of a home by non-Canadians for people who live here and intend to stay here, regardless of their status; significantly increase the envelope for indigenous housing to address the housing shortage on reserves by 2030; and tackle homelessness by increasing and renewing the Reaching Home program for five years.

We have a lot of homelessness back in Val-d'Or. There is no money. There is no support administered by the federal government or transferred to the provinces. The government could have set up an emergency fund to help cities and municipalities support the homeless in their communities, and could have given them the resources to do it.

As we can see, this \$30 billion could have been used effectively to make a big difference in the lives of Quebec families. This \$30 billion could have been transferred to the provinces and territories so that governments could better support and fund food banks.

I would rather see children going to school with full bellies and in good health than give money to oil companies with deep pockets and healthy finances. I also think that our seniors could have benefited from this money, because they deserve a lot more than what the federal government is offering them. They worked hard, very hard, their entire lives and they deserve to live with more dignity today. I am sure they would have been very happy to get that extra money. This \$30 billion could have been used to increase old age security starting at age 65 or to implement measures for our seniors.

● (2015)

The fact is that the Bloc Québécois made some good proposals to the government. We asked the government to implement an action plan to encourage the retention and hiring of experienced workers, including an increase in the employment income that can be earned without affecting the GIS. The government could have provided a tax credit to encourage experienced workers to stay on the job. It could have continued to pay the deceased's OAS and GIS to the surviving spouse for three months. It could have enhanced the caregiver tax credit and made it refundable so that everyone could benefit, including people with modest incomes.

No, none of that was done. This government thought it would be better to help rich oil companies than our seniors. In my riding of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou and elsewhere in Quebec, there is also the forestry sector that could really use a helping hand. Since last summer's forest fires, the forestry industry has taken a beating. Hundreds of people have been laid off at various mills in Quebec. In my riding, for example, Resolute Forest Products announced to its 50 employees on March 26 that it was suspending operations at its sawmill in Comtois, near Lebel-sur-Quévillon, for an indefinite period. The Béarn sawmill in Témiscamingue, owned by Chantiers Chibougamau, closed its doors indefinitely on April 25. A total of 120 workers were laid off. In just over a month, nearly 600 workers have been affected by this wave of layoffs across Quebec.

The money for oil companies could have been used to help the forestry industry. We do not know what will happen this summer. Are we going to have to live through the same hell we experienced last summer? How much forest area will burn? The forestry industry in my region is an important player in our regional economy. Is it or will it be in jeopardy? One really has to wonder. I also think that it would have been a good idea to use the money for rich oil companies to increase the health transfers to the provinces thus guaranteeing equitable access to care for everyone, particularly after the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In short, there are many examples of how those billions of dollars could be put to better use.

The second bad measure in this bill is the creation of a federal department of municipal affairs. Yes, Bill C-59 creates the department of housing, infrastructure and communities. There is already a minister, but unfortunately, there is no department and we cannot count on an army of civil servants to interfere in provincial jurisdictions, which is the Prime Minister's favourite activity. By creating a full department, Bill C-59 gives the minister the organizational capacity to interfere more, to impose more conditions on the provinces and municipalities, and to intensify disputes and delays. I wonder who in the House likes to pick fights. This bill definitively

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answers that question. What about the massive amount of money it will take to run this new department? That is money that could have been used elsewhere, to make life better for everyone. One thing is very clear. Housing, local infrastructure, land use planning and municipal affairs are not federal jurisdictions.

In closing, although the budget implementation bill also contains some good things, it remains essential that these proposals be adjusted to more specifically meet the needs of Quebec. The Bloc Québécois will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that Quebec is not just a partner, but a key player in designing policies that affect its constituents. We are at a decisive crossroads. Before us is the chance to shape a stronger, fairer and more sustainable Quebec. In the future, we see an innovative, green and prosperous Quebec, a Quebec that thrives and inspires not only within Canada, but around the world. Quebec has to be master of its domain, and its jurisdiction has to be respected. We do not accept a budget that would treat Quebec as just another province, without taking into consideration its specific realities. We are advocating for a strong Quebec in a just Canada. Accordingly, because of the measures cited, we will be voting against Bill C-59.

● (2020)

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know, and the member most certainly knows better than I do, as I live in British Columbia, that many people in Quebec cannot afford groceries, while the grocery giants and CEOs continue to bring in billions of dollars in profits. It is a very unfair situation.

We know that the NDP, the leader of the NDP and my colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford have done a lot of work to make changes to the Competition Act that are included in the fall economic statement, which includes stricter prices for companies involved in price-fixing.

I wonder if the member feels that we should continue to allow rich CEOs to reap extraordinary profits off the backs of people who are struggling to keep food in their fridge.

● (2025)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, the \$30 billion could have been allocated differently. Oil companies do not need money. Our families do. People are trying to find housing and there is none. Why wait until after 2025 to provide money for housing?

It makes no sense. The government is not taking action.

I think that families and children are what is most important.

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Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are many good measures in the 2024 budget that resonate with the people in my riding of Sherbrooke, including the school food program, money for housing, money for the New Horizons program and money for homelessness. However, what I am hearing the most is that students are very happy to see that the grants for post-secondary education have been increased.

I am wondering if my colleague is also hearing positive things about that measure in her riding and if, as a result, she will vote with us in favour of the budget.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, we must keep in mind that it has been 20 years since students have seen an increase. Thanks to my colleague who has worked very hard on this file, the government is taking action.

The important thing is that the government stop shelling out billions of dollars to oil companies. It is very important to help families and people in need. There are a lot of homeless people everywhere. We are seeing it in Val-d'Or. We need to help these people too.

The money must be transferred to the provinces, and Quebec in particular, because there are needs and this is essential.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, this bill talks a lot about the middle class. However, in my riding, the middle class is poorer because of rising taxes and the rising cost of housing and food.

What is the situation like in Quebec? Is it the same there?

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, yes, the situation is the same pretty much everywhere, in Quebec as in the rest of Canada. Everyone knows that. I am still talking about families and parents who need a home or a place to live for their family. There are children going to school who do not even have enough to eat. Food insecurity is becoming more and more of a problem pretty much everywhere, so we need to help these people.

The government needs to do something about this, and fast.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague gave a very down-to-earth presentation describing what the Bloc Québécois had proposed to really help people.

When she talked about the billions of dollars going to oil companies compared to what could have been done, she listed a lot of things. She was full of ideas.

I would like to know which of these ideas she would prioritize if money could be diverted from the oil companies to something else. What would be her priority?

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, who does great work.

I would like to see the environment prioritized more. Not enough money is being spent on the environment. We have had forest fires and we expect more. Other places have had floods. What is the government doing?

The government cannot wait. It must act now.

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to take to my feet today to talk about the fall economic statement.

First, if I have some latitude, I want to say that Canada just lost a national treasure not too long ago. It came out in the National Post that Rex Murphy passed away this evening, at the age of 77, after his battle with cancer. I hope that I will be able to read some of Rex's best quotes into the record. I am sure that we will recognize him later on, but I thought it would be fitting. He was, I think, an iconic writer in our country for years. I think he has the respect of all sides. He was a great, proud Maritimer as well. I googled some of his best quotes. I am going to read a couple here.

Rex Murphy said, "Everything written, if it has anything in it, will offend someone, and if the mere taking of an offence were to amount to a license to kill the offender, well the world will be sadly underpopulated of novelists, columnists, bloggers and the writers of editorials."

He also said, "Not every article in every magazine [or] newspaper is meant to be a valentine card addressed to every reader's self-esteem."

This is a personal favourite of mine: "Stay away from philosophy kids. It'll ruin your mind."

He also said, "Hollywood is a narcotic, not a stimulant. It wants to sell you something. Literature wants to tell you something."

This is another personal favourite. I am a country music singer, so this is the last one. He said that Shania Twain has done more for country and western than heartbreak and whisky combined.

To Rex Murphy, may he rest in peace.

The fall economic statement was a disappointment from our point of view. It really did not address some of the major concerns and issues we had. It did not fix the budget, stop the crime, build the houses or axe the tax. We know that Canadians from coast to coast are continuing to find it harder and harder to put food on the table. That is something that sorely needs to be addressed in this country. As of last year, two million people used a food bank across this country. It is now expected, from food bank data, that three million people will do so in 2024. This is not the Canada that I want my children to grow up in, and I think most people would agree with that.

I had a great opportunity this week to attend the Food, Fuel, and Fertilizer Global Summit, held in Regina, Saskatchewan. They had some of the most forward-looking thinkers in the industry when it comes to prudent agriculture, energy and resources. One of the speakers was Tim Gitzel from Cameco, a company located in northern Saskatchewan. They said an agreement was made among 24 nations, and in the next couple of decades, they want to triple the amount of nuclear energy to fight climate change. That is a big commitment from nations across this world. That means they can go from 400 to 1,200 nuclear reactors.

That was not addressed in the fiscal update or even in the budget at all. Canada can be a world-leading nuclear power, but it is falling by the wayside because the government has an ideological philosophy that is not in favour of nuclear power.

Another speaker at the summit was Bruce Bodine. He is the CEO for Mosaic, which has its head office in Regina, Saskatchewan. They are one of the leading producers and exporters of fertilizer in the world. That is so important; a speaker said at this summit that, in the next couple of decades, we are going to have to produce as much food to feed the world as we have in the past 10,000 years.

That means we are going to have to grow our agriculture sector. In the fall economic statement, there is nothing that looks at growing our agriculture sector. In fact, the government has had policy after policy that continues to kneecap this sector. By 2030, the carbon tax will cost ag producers \$1 billion a year; this will come out of the pockets of our agriculture producers across the country. Can one imagine the innovations that they could have if they kept that money themselves and put it into new technology and new machinery?

• (2030)

I was able to go to Ag in Motion in Saskatoon. It is one of the leading agricultural shows in North America, where they actually have on-site demonstrations. I was able to go to a Yara plot. The person who took me from Yara said to scan some leaves. I had a little instrument. I scanned 20 leaves in a plot, and it gave, to the decimal point, how much fertilizer one is supposed to put on that plot.

A lot of people in the chamber and in the ag community do not realize how advanced agriculture has become. While fertilizing in a field, that changes the amount of fertilizer one puts in real time. Lower spots have a bit more moisture, so one puts less fertilizer. Higher spots on the hill are drier, so one puts a little bit more. We do not need the government to tell agriculture producers how much fertilizer they need to use; they are already doing it.

Another great technology that has come out of, not government but the private sector for agriculture, is GPS and field mapping. I remember 10, 15, 20 years ago, on our farm, we had a disk, and we would over-seed 10 feet all the time just to make sure we had enough seed. Now, with GPS and field mapping, there is no over-seeding; there is no going back and forth over a field. That is saving emissions when it comes to the machinery, which is not going back and forth over the field as much.

However, we did not see anything in the fall economic statement to promote agriculture. In fact, we always hear the opposite from

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the NDP-Liberal coalition. We see that agriculture is a bit like a person the Liberals do not want to talk about. They like it because it brings in some money, but they do not promote it on the world stage. They always ask, "How can agriculture in Canada lower emissions?" However, according to the ECCC, they are not even tracking them. Actually, the environment commissioner just came out with a report on the agriculture strategy of the Government of Canada, and there is no strategic plan in the Department of Agriculture to lower emissions. That is straight from the environment commissioner's report.

The Liberals have been in government for nine long years, and they talk about climate change every day, but there is no strategic plan to lower emissions. That is exactly what the non-partisan environment commissioner said in the report. It is actually a condemnation of how little the Liberals have planned. They will throw a bunch of programs at the wall, but none of them have stuck, because they actually do not have a plan to lower emissions.

The carbon tax is not a plan. It is not an environment plan; it is a wealth distribution plan, and we see that time and time again. When we are talking about how the Prime Minister is not worth the cost, he is not worth the cost of food, because people now cannot afford to put food on the table. He is not worth the cost of housing, because, despite the fall economic plan and the budget, housing costs will continue to increase. They have doubled since the Liberals took government. The Liberals have doubled the cost of mortgages, and they have doubled the cost of home properties.

The amazing part is that, 10 years ago, it took 25 years to pay off a mortgage in Canada. Now, under the NDP-Liberal government, it takes 25 years to save for a down payment to get a home. It is no wonder now that eight out of 10 young Canadians believe that they will never own a home. That has happened over the nine long years that the government has been in power. It is no wonder that the Liberals' polling is the worst it has ever been with younger Canadians. They have lost faith, because they do not believe this is the country where they can get ahead.

I had the pleasure to serve with Premier Wall in the Saskatchewan government. On his last day, when he gave his final speech in the Legislative Assembly, he ended with this, and I'll end with this as well. This is about how a person should always be judged after they leave politics or when they are done: "Did you leave things better than you found them?" The unequivocal answer for the Liberal government is absolutely not.

I know the Liberals are fans of slogans, so I will leave them with this: Instead of build back better, they should put it back the way they found it.

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• (2035)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that great speech. I know that he always represents his constituents greatly in this place, and I want to thank him for all the experience that he brings, particularly from Saskatchewan.

It has been coming up more and more in this place, and I am not sure who came up with it first, but someone is proposing that we change the GST to the DST, or the debt servicing tax. Could the member make some comments around that?

• (2040)

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I know that the member represents his constituents well also.

I would say it is a scary point in Canadian history when the federal government, the NDP-Liberal coalition, is spending more money on debt servicing than on health care. My friend is right. The amount of GST the government is bringing in is equivalent to what it is paying in debt. There is so much more that we could be if we had our fiscal house in order. That is something we will deliver as a common-sense Conservative government, and we will make sure we give Canadians the government they deserve.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague ended his speech by suggesting that the government put things back the way they found them.

I have a suggestion for him, and that is to put things back the way they were in the 1960s, 1970s or earlier, before we started seeing rising temperatures and the damage that was causing.

Does my colleague have any idea how much climate inaction costs?

[*English*]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, a lot of people continuously talk about the inaction on climate, but that is not the point I was talking about. I was talking about all the innovations we have made in agriculture and in our energy sector to lower our emissions. We should be a guiding light for innovation and technology in those sectors. The last barrel of oil on earth should be drilled in Canada because we have environmental standards, labour standards and human rights standards that are better than those of other oil-producing countries.

Canada produces 1.5% of the world's emissions, and of Canada's 1.5% of emissions, agriculture accounts for 10%. We are leading the world. There is a great study by the Global Institute for Food Security that I wish all of my colleagues would read because, compared to all other jurisdictions that produce what we do, we have the lowest emissions per bushel on earth.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I love the narrative by Conservatives about the total emissions of Canada compared to globally. Now I would encourage the member to tell the House what the per capita emissions of Canadians are, because they are a lot higher than those of the vast majority of other countries in the world.

While the member is at it, perhaps he could inform the House what the Conservative plan is when it comes to addressing climate change, because we hear nothing. All we hear is the Leader of the Opposition say is that they believe in technology, but that means nothing.

What is the Conservative plan?

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I am proud to talk about what we have contributed to the world.

What the member fails to understand is that we also produce a lot that helps feed the world. We produce the wheat, barley, peas, lentils and other crops that feed millions of people around the world, and we have to export them around the world. The fact that the member cannot comprehend that we are an exporting economy and thus that our emissions would be a little higher is, quite frankly, not surprising.

Second, we have the natural gas that could displace Russian gas for our partners so they would not continue to feed a war machine. That would also increase our emissions a bit, but it would lower global emissions. Third, if he wants to find out about our environmental plan, call an election and we will run on it.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

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

[*Translation*]

I would ask people who want to have conversations to go out into the antechamber so that the House can continue its work.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is good to be a New Democrat today and every day, as we stand in the House firmly on the side of the right to choose, and to treat the illegal toxic drug crisis with compassion and facts. This is the complete opposite of the Conservatives' ideologies that are harmful and their arguments that are lacking in facts and compassion.

Tonight as we discuss the fall economic statement, I am proud to stand here as a new Democrat with a leader, the member for Burnaby South, who is willing to name corporate greed in the House of Commons while the Liberals and the Conservatives continue to protect big corporations that are gouging Canadians at the cash register. That is a major driver of inflation and hardship for Canadians.

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The Conservative opposition frames itself as an alternative to the Liberals, but the corporate-controlled Conservatives are no better than the sitting Liberals. They too believe the market will fix every problem, even though it is a fact that unbridled corporate greed is driving up the cost of food, housing and gas. When it comes to housing, this market-driven ideology has resulted in record displacements and homelessness across Canada, even among seniors who should be safely retired in their home.

There is no way to solve the housing crisis with market solutions alone. The federal government, in the mid-1990s, stepped away from producing non-market housing, and it has created a crisis that is accelerating and getting worse. Simply freeing up Crown land and handing it off to developers to do what they will is not going to solve the problem.

The finance committee heard from home developers, financiers and real estate people that the market is not going to solve the problem. That is not to say that we do not need more market housing, but it is to say that we want to see the government focus specifically on non-market housing, which has been neglected for years and absolutely must return in a significant way. We must do this; the government must do this in order for us to solve the housing crisis.

It is a problem with the current government and will be a problem with any future Conservative government because the parties share the same market-driven ideology. The Liberals must address corporate greed. The leader of the NDP has given them the road map through his bill, the lower prices for Canadians act. The Liberals need to act on it immediately.

Another thing the government must do is legislate corporations that want to invest in Canada and create jobs in Canada, particularly in the natural resource sector. The natural resource sector is experiencing a rebirth, and there is an expectation by New Democrats that it is going to be creating good union jobs in that rebirth. That is why I am very proud of the labour conditions that are attached to the investment tax credits in the fall economic statement. The legislation would implement those labour conditions for companies investing in Canada. This generation of young Canadians needs good union jobs. New Democrats want investments in Canada from companies that respect their employees and are prepared to pay their workers well.

Too often in Canada, the governments, both Conservative and Liberal, have accepted a situation where they are happy to have companies come in and compete on the cost of labour, have a competition about who can pay the least to do a job. I am very proud to say that with the legislation in the fall economic statement, we would be implementing for the first time ever, because of the NDP, conditions on an investment tax break that centres workers in the middle of it and has an apprenticeship requirement. In the long term, employers with foresight see the value of passing on training and knowledge and of creating a workforce they can avail themselves of, but we know there are employers that do not have that strategy, and that is why we need legislation.

● (2045)

I want to come back to housing because it is an important topic. In the fall economic statement, the recapitalization that was much touted by the government as its action on the urgent housing crisis

was back-loaded, meaning it will not be coming for another two years. This is particularly shameful when we consider that the territory of Nunavut alone has been asking on an urgent basis for \$250 million to address the housing crisis.

Since the economic statement was first tabled, the AFN has estimated that the infrastructure gap for the first nations, Métis and Inuit communities has reached over \$400 billion. Alongside that, it was rumoured before the recent budget was tabled that the government was contemplating deep cuts at Indigenous Services Canada. New Democrats fought hard to prevent that, but investments by the government continue to fail indigenous peoples.

I want to come back to the question of the role large corporations are playing in driving up the cost of living in Canada. A report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer as recently as December 2021 said that 1% of Canada's population owns and controls 25% of all the wealth in this country, and the bottom 40% of income earners in Canada share just 1% of all of the wealth that is produced in Canada. This is not fair.

What has happened since the year 2000 is that the proportion of wealth controlled by the top 1% has increased exponentially. That needs to change. The big hole in government revenue comes from the people in the top 1%, who are walking away with much more of Canada's overall wealth than they used to because they pay significantly less tax than they used to. Their tax rates are unrealistically low. Successive Liberal and Conservative governments have let the people at the top off the hook from having to pay their fair share. That inequity needs to be fixed.

I will close by saying Canadians are working hard, playing by the rules and doing everything right, but life is getting harder. It does not have to be this way. New Democrats are working for the people. In the bill, there are stricter competition rules that would lower food prices, investment tax credits that would drive higher-paying jobs and measures that would lower rents, with a \$16 billion investment in affordable housing funds and apartment construction loans.

It is not as strong as the investment the NDP would make, but so much much better than what the Liberals would have done on their own, and the Conservatives have shown over and over again that they side with their wealthy donors and give them the tax breaks they lobby for.

● (2050)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the way the member started off her speech today, by talking about the right of a woman to choose what to do with her body.

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Unfortunately the House has been under assault over the last few days, with the member for Peace River—Westlock talking about preborn children. He and the member for Yorkton—Melville today spoke on the front lawn to an anti-abortion rally, where the member for Yorkton—Melville said, “The truth is not being told in the general media, or in our House of Commons, about what abortion really does to your heart and mind and your soul and your body, let alone to that life that is lost.” She went on to say, “We in the House [of Commons], as Conservatives, stand for equality between women and men from the instant of conception.”

I am wondering whether my NDP colleague has had an opportunity to reflect on what has happened over the last week, from the Leader of the Opposition's comments about using the notwithstanding clause to the member for Peace River—Westlock's comment and to now what is being said on the front lawn of Parliament.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, I just want to echo the comment that was made by my colleague from Winnipeg Centre today: “Keep your hands off our uterus.”

Just before my speech in the House today, a Conservative stood up and asked us to roll back the clock. I am very concerned about how far back the Conservatives are willing to roll back that clock.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, a little while ago, the member put up on social media an idea that in order to fight climate change, all the indoor hockey rinks in Canada should be shut down. Not only is that extremely un-Canadian, but it also is a radical proposal that would just destroy the heart of what it means to be Canadian. What other radical and extreme ideas does she have for fighting climate change that would be extremely un-Canadian and would destroy the way of life of people?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, I am so glad this question came up because the Conservatives have a really hard time with facts, and what the member said is unequivocally untrue. I have never said anything about hockey.

I think what is important is how much time Conservatives spend on social media, making ridiculous memes and lowering the tone in this House. We are talking about the fact that they want to roll back rights for people who have a uterus. That will happen if the Conservatives ever become government in this country.

• (2055)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have been paying keen attention to gas prices in my riding. From February to March of this year, the price jumped by 30¢ a litre, from \$1.59 to \$1.89. When the British Columbia carbon tax came into effect on April 1, it jumped up by only three cents. Only a week later, it jumped up a further 10¢.

I wonder if my colleague could talk about the extreme disconnect the Conservatives have over their obsession with the carbon tax and completely ignoring their political masters, the oil and gas lobby. They will not say a single word on behalf of their constituents to confront their real masters in this place.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, the oil and gas corporations and their CEOs are double-dipping. Not only are they taking

subsidies from taxpayers, but they are gouging them at the pumps, and the Conservatives are letting it happen.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with the member on many of the things she said. I know that in our discussions on Bill C-59, the Competition Act reforms, there was much collaboration between the Liberals and the NDP at committee. We took some of the NDP's suggestions and further strengthened the measures. I would ask her if she knows what is left to do on the Competition Act reforms as per her leader's bill.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, what I will say, since the Liberals are asking, is that it is time to break up the monopolies. It is time to break up the monopolies that are driving up cellphone bills and food prices in this country. They are not allowed in the United States. The Liberals, and the Conservatives before them, have let this flourish in Canada.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, we have been talking about Bill C-59 for a long time, so I will get straight to the point.

There are both good things and bad things in the bill. The Bloc Québécois is opposed to it. I think that has been said. I have very strong feelings about one of the reasons we oppose it. The government is once again giving gifts to the oil industry.

For the umpteenth time, the government is kowtowing to this sector, giving it \$30.3 billion in oil subsidies in the form of tax credits. As a result, taxpayers will be paying oil companies to pollute less, even though they do not need that money. What is more, the companies have no intention of cutting production or undertaking projects that will help Canada meet its climate and environmental protection commitments. Quite the contrary.

Oil companies do not need this money, but they keep asking for it, and the government gives it to them. They have the most powerful and influential lobby, so the government always gives them whatever they want. From pandemic-era asks to arguments in favour of technologies that do not work and increasing deregulation, oil companies always end up with plenty of money.

In recent years, as the pandemic wound down, the oil extraction industry was posting record profits. It raked in \$38 billion in 2022, and 2023 promises to be just as lucrative, though the figures are not yet available. Who benefits from these returns? It is the shareholders, 70% of whom are foreign. That is a lot of capital leaving Canada.

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The current government's budgets are loaded with goodies for this sector, with plans to introduce no fewer than six tax credits largely intended for oil companies and totalling no less than \$83 billion by 2035. The industry is thrilled. Two of the tax credits are tailor-made for the industry: a clean technology investment credit and a carbon capture and storage credit.

Let us start with clean technology. How are the oil companies going to get their hands on the lion's share of the \$17.8-billion pot of money earmarked for clean technology? Let me try to make this simple, but by no means simplistic. It takes a lot of energy to extract the molasses-like substance known as bitumen from the Alberta sands. Right now, the sector uses gas. Selling the gas is a lot more profitable, however, and that is what the oil companies would prefer. The good news is that after punching through Wet'suwet'en territory for the Coastal GasLink project, a new Shell and LNG Canada methane port will make the dream of exporting gas a reality within about a year. This is where the genius of clean technology comes in. Everyone supports it. Everyone believes in it. Just tack on the word "clean", "green" or "sustainable" and problem solved, the Government of Canada will mind its own business.

With this subsidy to enable the extraction of this toxic molasses to continue and even increase, Bill C-59 will pay oil companies to buy small modular reactors or SMRs. These are nuclear reactors. The energy from the SMRs will replace the gas that oil companies are currently using, so that they can extract more bitumen and make more gas available for export at taxpayers' expense and especially for their own profit. I am not making this up. It is really well thought out. We still do not know all of the characteristics of the radioactive waste that these SMRs produce, and yet oil companies will be using them in a context where Canada still has no control over the governance of such waste. It is a real model of cleanliness on all counts. Excuse me if I laugh.

For the fervent soldiers across the aisle who might try to tell me that we know that the clean technology tax credit will also benefit renewable energy, no, that is not true. First, there is no qualifying limit for this tax credit. In other words, the astronomical costs of the SMRs are going to drain the allotted budget, leaving very little for the other manufacturing sectors. This is expected to cost the public treasury \$17.8 billion by 2035, according to estimates from the Department of Finance. Despite the repeated requests from my esteemed colleague, the member for Joliette, the government has not seen fit to provide the Standing Committee on Finance with a breakdown of the numbers to help us calculate how much of the money would go to the oil companies.

• (2100)

So much for Canada the champion, the leader of leaders, and its much-touted transparency.

What can I say about the carbon capture and storage investment tax credit? There is a lot to say. I talk about it often, but I will reiterate a few points.

I will begin with the fact that the government says that the \$13-billion carbon capture and storage investment tax credit will be available to every major emitter, such as cement plants and steel mills, but that is not true. It is pretty obvious that it is available only to oil and gas producers. There is nothing for Quebec's major

emitters, unless the intended message is that Quebec should just produce oil and gas. No thanks. Legislation was voted on for this.

A 2022 Pembina Institute report entitled "Waiting to Launch" shows that, despite making record profits, the oil sands industry is not investing in decarbonization efforts in accordance with its climate commitments. The infamous Pathways Alliance is publicly calling for easily available measures such as process improvement, energy efficiency and electrification. Again, the oil and gas industry has more than enough money to put these measures in place. However, its priority is buying back shares and paying dividends.

The federal government fell into the industry's trap. In my opinion, the government saw it coming, but fell for it anyway. Pathways Alliance's game plan depends entirely on major investments by the federal government. Essentially, it sees consumers as the ones responsible for their greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, it makes the federal government responsible for the costs of carbon capture projects. This is an industry that is transferring all the risks and costs of the transition to the public. It is putting the burden on the shoulders of taxpayers and consumers.

The United States is not always a good model, far from it. However, our southern neighbours seem to be wising up to the truth a bit faster. In fact, just last month, the U.S. Senate Committee on the Budget and the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Accountability published a joint report stating that "[t]he companies' massive public-facing campaigns portray [carbon capture and storage] as a viable and available solution to increasing greenhouse gas emissions, but the companies acknowledge internally that they are not planning to deploy the technology at the scale needed to solve the warming crisis". Clearly, these companies know what they are doing. The report also states, "The industry's true goal is to prolong, perhaps indefinitely, the unabated use of fossil fuels".

There is something deeply disturbing about the federal government's fiscal trajectory. Bill C-59 and Bill C-69 share a connection. I will briefly explain.

Bill C-69 creates a clean hydrogen investment tax credit and sets out the terms and conditions. When the government announced it in 2023, it estimated that it would total \$17.7 billion by 2035. It is a refundable tax credit. Even if the company pays no tax, it is entitled to the refund.

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With Bill C-69, the government will cover between 15% and 40% of the investment costs required to produce hydrogen. We are talking about green hydrogen, a net-zero energy source. Costs are still prohibitive. Right now, hydrogen is made from natural gas. It is good for the companies, because it creates another market for their gas. As a result, even if gas consumption were to stagnate, they could continue to increase production if they converted their gas into hydrogen.

The oil and gas industry's agenda is well crafted, Machiavellian even, because it covers all the angles. Still, one would have to be deaf or blind, or both, to not notice and take action. Either the government is drinking the Kool-Aid the industry has been serving at the hundreds of lobbying meetings they have had, or it is collaborating with the industry.

I will close by saying that if oil companies dip into the first pot, Bill C-59, for carbon storage in gas extraction, they can then get even more out of the second pot for converting that same gas at taxpayers' expense. That is bad for the energy transition, but it is a dream come true for freeloaders.

• (2105)

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know there has been a lot of rhetoric in this House from the Conservatives about declining productivity. That is of no surprise when the oil and gas industry in Canada, one of the largest contributors to the economy, is not reinvesting in R and D, is not reinvesting in innovation, but instead is skimming profits and redistributing them to wealthy shareholders.

I am wondering what the member thinks about that.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, indeed, as I said in my speech, they have no intention of meeting their greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. They say they do, but look at what the United States found out.

It seems clear to me that oil and gas companies in Canada definitely do not want to stop production. The money is for their shareholders, and most of those shareholders are foreign companies. Wonderful. Capital is leaving the country, yet we kowtow to oil companies, promising them billions of dollars.

[English]

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wanted to ask the member about the greenwashing provisions in the Competition Act. The government worked collaboratively and very closely with Bloc and NDP members to strengthen the provisions within the Competition Act that deal with products that claim to be sustainable and also general claims that companies may make. I think those provisions in the Competition Act really prevent against greenwashing and ensure that companies have to substantiate and have evidence for the claims they make.

Could the member opposite speak to whether she supports that and whether she will be supporting Bill C-59 as a result?

• (2110)

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, the member knows the Bloc Québécois's position on that. Yes, there have been improvements and we are not saying that we need to start from scratch. We never said that. What we are saying is that it does not make sense to be giving oil companies billions of dollars, like we are doing now.

It is funny because we were talking about greenwashing recently at the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. The commissioner gave a really good definition of it in one of his reports. It is a shame that I do not have it here with me, but I will give an example of greenwashing. Whether we are talking about carbon capture and storage for oil companies or the much-talked-about SMRs, it is ridiculous to think that nuclear energy is clean energy. That is absolutely ridiculous. Nuclear energy has never been clean energy. The more elected members buy into that idea, the further we will sink into another form of greenwashing.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her wonderful speech on the environment. It was very clear and straightforward.

I would like to ask her the following question. Does she see any interference in Bill C-59 and does she see even more of it in Bill C-69?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. She also made a good speech, in which she spoke about the billions of dollars going to oil companies.

We need to look at the root of government interference, which is fiscal imbalance. What does that mean? First, Ottawa takes in more revenue than it needs. Second, Ottawa uses that financial leeway to interfere in areas outside its jurisdiction. That is exactly what the government is doing with Bill C-59 and Bill C-69.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer said it himself: If the trend continues, eventually the provincial governments, including Quebec, will be virtually bankrupt, while the federal government will see its revenues increase.

What will the result be? The federal government will be able to intervene in areas of provincial jurisdiction. It is an unprecedented centralization of power in Ottawa's hands. That is one of the many reasons why we will be voting against these two bills.

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, there seems to be so little interest in the fall economic statement, that I do not think there is quorum.

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member knows full well there are no quorum calls at this point. If he would like, I can send him the document so he does not have to raise the point of order again.

[*Translation*]

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette-Témiscouata-Les Basques.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, a leopard cannot change its spots.

Once again, it is clear that the Liberal government is trying to interfere in Quebec's affairs and fantasizing about taking over jurisdictions that do not belong to it and in which it has no expertise. Why? Maybe it is trying to justify its existence and appear relevant. Budget 2024 and this bill are perfect examples of that. That is why the Bloc Québécois will vote against Bill C-59. Let me say this loud and clear: The federal government's unabashed assault on Quebec's jurisdictions is scandalous.

By choosing to create a federal department of municipal affairs, which it calls the department of housing, infrastructure and communities, Ottawa is announcing yet more interference in how Quebec runs its internal affairs. The size of the public service has jumped by 42%, or 109,000 public servants, and the tax burden has increased by \$20 billion, but the Liberal government wants to make the public service even bigger, doubling its army of highly paid public servants, whose thankless task it will be to interfere in areas under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces, and who will give the federal government the organizational capacity to impose even more conditions on Quebec and municipalities.

It is readily apparent that this massive public servant hiring campaign will make it easier to coordinate the centralization of power and decision-making in Ottawa. The father of the current Prime Minister, the member for Papineau, tried a similar approach when he created the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs in 1971. The experiment was a dismal failure. As the saying goes, like father, like son. We need the humility to learn from our past mistakes in order to avoid repeating them.

As a proud regionalist and elected official in a riding that includes 39 municipalities and three regional county municipalities, commonly known as RCMs, I know what I am talking about. Many of them are already having a hard time getting what they are owed from the federal government, because of funding that never arrives on time or cuts in financial support for the cultural sector, for example. Why complicate the process with more delays, costs, disputes and even more delays? Municipalities need fast, effective and direct action to address the various issues. They are the ones that deliver services most directly to the public. The federal government, however, is doing the exact opposite by adding more layers of red tape that will only increase costs and lengthen delays.

I should also point out that the Parliamentary Budget Officer recently said, about federal services, “public services themselves appear to have deteriorated. Not all of them are at the level one would expect from the public service.” Do my fellow citizens really want the federal government to manage more things? Well, no.

The really sad thing about this part of Bill C-59 is that the Liberals are offering a solution that no one asked for instead of meeting expectations within their own areas of jurisdiction, and that is really detrimental. I feel like I am repeating myself, but the housing crisis we are currently experiencing, which is dragging on because of half measures that do not solve the problem, must be addressed quickly. People are suffering. Social housing in particular has been chronically underfunded since the 1990s, yet the federal government is not stepping up. Instead, it is trying to take even more responsibility despite its ineffectiveness and incompetence in other matters.

The vacancy rate in Rimouski is 0.6%. A balanced market sits at 3%. That means it is almost impossible to find housing. Families are living in motels. It is disgraceful. It is not just in my riding, either. My colleagues and neighbours throughout the Lower St. Lawrence are in similar situations, with a rate of 0.7% in Rivière-du-Loup and 1.2% in Matane. The answer is simple. We are asking the federal government to stop trying to manage everything, to stop micromanaging, and to simply do what is expected of it, which is to transfer the money to the Quebec government, unconditionally. Then we can tackle the crisis and try to resolve it. The Bloc Québécois is not going to make concessions. We will stand firm.

● (2115)

Let us now talk about the second major concern that we have with this bill. While we want to do away with fossil fuels, the Liberals are reminding us that they are great allies of the oil companies by adding a \$30.3-billion subsidy in the form of tax credits paid for by taxpayers. I am talking about the taxpayers who are watching us at home this evening. That \$30.3 billion belongs to them. This is not really surprising. We know that Suncor had a hand in drafting the government's policy. The image that comes to mind is that of a firefighter arsonist.

In Rimouski, these same super wealthy companies are increasing the cost of gas for residents, sometimes by up to 20¢ overnight. They have a virtual monopoly and yet they are putting a huge burden on the shoulders of those who depend on their vehicles to get around, make a living and get to work. I already know that some members will tell me that those individuals can just use public transit to get around. They are right, but when the federal government abandons the regions to focus on large urban centres, then public transit in the regions is obviously not sufficient to offer a real alternative to vehicle use.

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The Lower St. Lawrence has practically no trains or buses anymore. The number of weekly private bus departures has gone from 6,000 to 882 since 1981. That is an 85% drop. I met the heads of Via Rail recently. They told me that the trains that go to Rimouski have been in service since the 1950s or 1960s, that the rail cars are at the end of their useful life and that these lines will have to be shut down in a few years if the federal government does not invest in them soon. That means we are going to lose one of our last links to the rest of Quebec if the government continues to do nothing. This situation has been going on for too long. Budget 2024 was not the boost we were looking for to save the regional connections.

I get the impression that we are going backward. Our ancestors who built the railway must be rolling over in their graves looking at their descendants shutting it down, when we do not even have an alternative in place. Is the federal government waiting to swoop in at the last minute like a hero at the risk of further isolating the regions?

I will not get into the fact that there are virtually no flights in the regions. The wonderful corporate citizens at Air Canada took advantage of the public health crisis to cease their operations in June 2020 and they never came back to our region, or to the Mont-Joli regional airport, more specifically.

As a result of all of these transportation problems, some of my constituents now even have to take a taxi to Quebec City to get hospital services. I hold the federal government responsible for that, because it is refusing to abide by its agreement to cover 50% of Quebec's health care costs, which compromises access to health care and the development of these kinds of services in the regions.

Now, if the billions of dollars earmarked for oil companies had instead been allocated to transportation, imagine how much the government could have actually improved the situation. We see that the government's priorities are not always in the right place and that the regions still do not matter to the Liberals. They basically never do.

Consequently, the Bloc Québécois will be voting against Bill C-59, which both encroaches on Quebec's areas of jurisdiction and demonstrates the full extent of the Liberal government's hypocrisy. There has never been a more centralizing government. I get the impression that it wants to revise the definition of a confederation. We are no longer in a confederation; we are under a central government that wants to appropriate all the powers and change the rules of the game without consulting the players. I would even go so far as to say that the rules of the game are constitutional agreements. We cannot take it lightly when agreements with partners are not being upheld. The government claims to want meaningful collaboration with its partners, yet it does not even respect its own agreements with its so-called partners.

Moreover, we will not support the creation of a department whose main task will be to interfere more aggressively in Quebec's jurisdictions and double the government's army of public servants. Nor will we support the \$30.3 billion subsidy to ultrarich oil companies that will undoubtedly compromise our ecosystems and slow down the energy transition that Quebec is spearheading.

That concludes my speech. I welcome questions and comments from my colleagues.

• (2120)

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the fall economic statement is supposed to build an economy that works for all Canadians, but I can tell from the member's comments that clearly it is not working for the economy in Quebec. I wonder what the member thinks the government should have put forward in order to promote the economy in Quebec.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Speaker, there is a saying that goes, "If you want something done right, do it yourself". That is good, because the Bloc Québécois is a separatist party. It is in favour of independence. It wants to take care of its own business by itself, for itself, without needing anything from a federal government that does not always share Quebec's priorities.

As my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton just said, this is clearly a direct attack on Quebec's jurisdictions. The government no longer wants to let us make decisions for ourselves, by ourselves, for the well-being of our people and in accordance with our priorities.

There is no way we can vote in favour of something that is not in line with our constituents' priorities. Our autonomy is being compromised. There was not even any consultation. That is completely unacceptable. We are therefore well within our rights to vote against this bill, another brazen attack on Quebec's areas of jurisdiction.

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, when we talk about the importance of people being able to make ends meet, there are two things in this bill that stand out for me. One is around the pregnancy loss leave, which would establish a new paid leave for workers in federally regulated sectors who experience loss of pregnancy. When talking to constituents in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, this is something that comes up often.

Another piece that stands out is the adoption benefit for employment insurance, which introduces a 15-week EI benefit for adoptive parents. I really appreciate seeing items like this being included to make sure that caregivers and those who have experienced the loss of a child are able to take the time necessary either to be with their loved ones or to grieve the loss of a loved one.

I am wondering if the member can share if he feels that those are important items that we have in place for Canadians across the country.

• (2125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is obviously in favour of this measure, which finally recognizes how distressing such situations can be for parents.

We did not wait for the federal government to create our child care system. It has been around for 25 years. The same goes for our other social programs, such as the Quebec parental insurance plan, which has been around for many years. Quebec has a strong social safety net. Again, we did not wait for help from the federal government.

The Quebec parental insurance plan provides between 15 and 18 weeks of benefits after the type of situation my colleague mentioned, whether it was a spontaneous miscarriage or a planned termination. There is an adjustment that varies depending on the situation, but all that is to say that this is a good measure.

However, just because there is one small measure in a sea of bad measures does not mean that we are going to support this budget. When things are good, we have to say so. When they are not so good, we should not be shy about saying so either.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about the regions, which we know have needs with regard to transportation and airports. I would like him to explain the needs we have in the regions.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques has one minute to answer.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Speaker, it will take me a lot longer than a minute to make the federal government understand that the regions exist and that they have specific needs, just like Quebec, which is also distinguished by its nationhood and its own specific needs.

Air transportation is practically non-existent in the regions. When its pals at Air Canada ask for millions or billions of dollars in wage subsidies, the government is there to help. However, when it comes to providing services to regular folks and putting planes on the tarmac, the government is nowhere to be seen.

As for rail transportation, our friends at Via Rail want financial support to renew their rolling stock, which is so old it cannot run any longer. It requires constant patch-ups and repairs. In the near future, what will happen? How will the trains keep running?

Once again, the government is abandoning public transit, especially in the regions of Quebec. That is completely unacceptable. It compromises life in the regions, including the empowerment and growth of rural residents.

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to the fall economic statement for the constituents of Kootenay—Columbia and for Canadians.

After nine years, the Prime Minister has repeatedly demonstrated a concerning lack of regard for the best interests of Canadians. The pattern is unmistakable and is underscored by a persistent tendency toward overspending that has become all too familiar.

Instead of prioritizing the needs and concerns of Canadian citizens, the Prime Minister has consistently favoured overspending, disregarding a balanced budget essential for economic growth. The irresponsible approach not only undermines the trust and confi-

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dence of Canadians, but also jeopardizes the long-term economic stability and prosperity of our nation.

It is our duty, as representatives of the people, to hold our leaders to account and to demand accountability for their actions. We must ensure the government's spending is aligned with priorities and the values of Canadians, promoting transparency, efficiency, effectiveness and accountability at every turn.

The Prime Minister's track record of overspending serves as a stark reminder that he refuses to acknowledge the role in Canada's massive debt, which has grown to a staggering \$1.2 trillion. It is an absolutely unfathomable amount. Along with that debt comes interest. The interest is \$54 billion. To put this into perspective, \$54 billion is more than what we spend on a Canada health transfer to support provinces and territorial health care.

It is deeply disturbing and downright offensive to Canadians that the NDP-Liberal government treats our constituents' hard-earned money this way. The level of management is unacceptable and undermines the fundamental trust between constituents and elected officials. We owe it to our constituents, frankly, to do better.

It is not just about fulfilling our duties as elected representatives, but also about honouring the trust and confidence our citizens have placed in us to steward our nation's resources wisely and responsibly. There is a profound expectation for us to make decisions that will foster prosperity and progress for our country, to build a Canada that Canadian citizens are proud to call home.

Regrettably, what I am hearing from my constituents paints a different picture. The country's debt has a ripple effect that touches every aspect of our society.

One area where we see this impact is in housing. The cost of housing has skyrocketed to the point where many young families in their thirties are realizing that their dream of owning a home may never become a reality. They have resorted to renting from homeowners who are also experiencing record-breaking interest rates on their mortgages, which is forcing higher rent increases.

At the same time, our population is growing rapidly, but we are not building enough homes to accommodate everyone. The imbalance between supply and demand is inflaming the housing crisis and is making it more difficult for people to afford housing.

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Those who try to help are denied. Stephen from Revelstoke reached out to me regarding his grant application, which is approximately \$15 million over the course of a few years to a housing accelerator fund that he and his organization had been denied. Realizing that the lack of housing and affordability is the number one issue in Revelstoke, the same as in many other communities, especially those in the hospitality and tourism industry, Stephen was curious how the communities would keep up with demand. They were shovel-ready, yet they were told they were too organized, so they would not be getting the funding.

Another area where we see increases is with taxes. Allan from Kimberley wrote to me quoting the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance saying that the budget is “to help Canadians.” However, in his words, he said that it would not help his granddaughters, aged 3 and 14, and that they would be the ones to pay for the federal debt when they start work.

Brenda from Creston is frustrated and wrote to say that surely it is understood that burdening the already overly burdened public with yet more taxes is unfair, while those in office take liberties with how they spend money. She said that she was adding her voice to those who have already asked that steps be taken to reduce spending and that the Government of Canada identify with its citizens during these expensive times. In other words, they are asking that the Government of Canada be accountable to the taxpayers.

Rick from Cranbrook said that he just wanted to drop a quick email to state his opposition to the budget. He said that it does nothing and provides no benefit for Canadians other than the privilege of paying a rapidly increasing proportion of their taxes to service ballooning debt. Again, it is \$53 billion.

My constituents are fed up. They are fed up with the financial stress, the limited financial flexibility due to higher interest payments, the lack of economic growth and the certain intergenerational burden the government has brought upon us.

A question asked by many is about how such a resource-rich country is in so much debt. With the minerals, forestry and energy, we should be global leaders and well into the black.

● (2130)

The lengthy permitting process for new mines in Canada can take up to 25 years to get approval. This is a significant challenge for the mining industry and hinders the timely development and export of critical minerals. To address these challenges, it is essential for the government to allocate the necessary resources to expedite environmental reviews and permitting processes. The government has to recognize the need to accelerate the permitting processes and the production of the critical minerals that are essential for a variety of industries, including technology, renewable energy and defence. However, these permitting policies continue to undermine Canada's attractiveness to mining, investments and others.

Trail has critical minerals, and the Elk Valley has steel coal, a critical mineral for steel. Yesterday, KC Recycling came to Ottawa to talk about how it recycles 95% of lead-acid batteries, yet we are still shipping batteries from Canada to third-world countries instead of recycling them here.

The ongoing U.S.-Canada softwood dispute has placed Canadian manufacturers in a prolonged period of uncertainty with no negotiated settlement in sight. The extended period of instability has a significant impact on the forest industry, limiting its ability to generate revenue and to contribute to the economic growth of our country. Canadian lumber producers are burdened with punitive tariffs that impede their competitiveness and that hinder their ability to thrive in the global market. The imposition of tariffs has not only undermined the profitability of Canadian lumber exports, but also exasperates the existing challenges faced by manufacturers, including the rising production costs, supply chain interruptions and market unrest. Furthermore, the uncertainty surrounding softwood lumber stifles innovation within the industry, hindering long-term capability.

Canada has an abundance of natural gas, especially in British Columbia and Alberta. Exporting liquefied natural gas to the EU presents a fantastic opportunity to tap into a new market and potentially to boost our economy. Selling LNG to the EU could play a critical role in diversifying Canada's energy exports. Right now, we rely on the U.S. market for energy exports, which leaves us vulnerable to shifts in its energy policies and market conditions. By expanding our reach to the EU, we could spread out our risk and could ensure a more stable income stream for our natural gas industry.

Moreover, exporting LNG to the EU aligns with global efforts in the transition to cleaner or more sustainable energy sources. Natural gas is a cleaner alternative to coal and oil, and supplying LNG to the EU could help it reduce its carbon emissions and meet its energy needs in a more environmentally friendly way. This can strengthen Canada's reputation as a responsible energy producer. Additionally, fostering strong economic ties with the EU through energy trade can enhance our diplomatic relations and co-operation with other countries. It is a win-win situation that benefits both Canada and the EU.

With the basic examples provided, it is absolutely a disservice to Canadians for the NDP-Liberal government to not try harder to keep the debt down and balance the budget. Every family knows that if they spend more than they bring in, they go into debt. The main difference is they realize they have to pay back their debt, while the Prime Minister tries to pay back his debt by increasing taxes on Canadians.

When will the Prime Minister own up to his financial failings, admit we need to do better and balance the budget?

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• (2135)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I pose my question to the hon. member, I too want to express my sincere condolences on the passing of a Canadian icon and a Canadian treasure this evening, Rex Murphy. The Speaker seems surprised. Obviously, this is news to him.

On the reverse of that, I want to wish Lillian Vaughan, a Barrie—Innisfil resident, a happy 105th birthday today. I know that she is a big supporter of the Barrie Colts. She is at home this evening with Bryan and Jennifer. Happy birthday to Lillian.

Rural Canada is obviously a big part of the member's riding. I wonder if he can talk about the fall economic statement, the latest budget and their impact on rural Canada. I represent half a rural constituency in Innisfil, and I find there is a disproportionate negative impact on rural Canada. I wonder if he could speak about that.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for informing the House of the passing of a great Canadian.

I also wish a happy birthday to Lillian.

The hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia,.

Mr. Rob Morrison: Mr. Speaker, the thing about rural Canada is that we have to drive. We have to drive our families to events, whether it is for school events or whether it is for a hockey game, and some of our driving is 300 kilometres, sometimes further. Our seniors have to drive to go to medical appointments, which could be in hospitals that are 200 to 300 kilometres away. Where it gets difficult is with the rising price of the carbon tax for our people who use vehicles. We do not have transit systems like downtown Toronto. It is very disproportionate, and it makes it very hard for those on a limited budget, like seniors, to be able to afford to go get the help that they need.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the tail end of the member's speech, he was talking about LNG. Let us call it what it is: It is methane, CH₄. No one here will argue that, when burned, it is cleaner than coal. That is a scientific fact. I do not think people have a problem with the burning of it; it is the unburned methane that is a very real problem. When that escapes into the atmosphere, it is a much more powerful greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide is.

I think the real problem is that Canada has many abandoned and leaky wells. Often, the companies that have exploited that gas have left it to the people of Canada and our tax dollars to clean up. I want to hear a serious response from the Conservatives on how they address that problem. We are not disputing the fact that it is cleaner-burning than coal, but what do we do with the leaky wells that we have often had to pick up the tab for?

Mr. Rob Morrison: Mr. Speaker, the member and I have travelled together, and I have a lot of respect for him.

With natural gas, I do believe that the government already had some funding to fix the leaky wells. I believe it was in budget 2017, 2018, 2019, somewhere in there.

The thing is that there is a lot of money to be made by selling our LNG to places like the EU, which is just a start. If we start doing that and start getting the tax dollars, because the government has no

money and the only money it has is what it gets from taxes, that will, in turn, help us to be able to fund, like the member said, leaky wells and other issues that we need to fund, because we do not have any income coming in, and it would help our GDP.

• (2140)

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to respond to the NDP member who spoke earlier with regard to leakage from abandoned wells.

I would just observe that Canada can adopt regulations and rules that will be a world standard. We talk about doing the same thing with our carbon pricing. Therefore, if we believe we can be a world standard with rules that are adopted with regard to carbon pricing, surely we can be a world standard with regard to leaky wells, and if that is so, then gas produced in Canada will be a superior substitute and better for climate change, producing less climate change due to less leaking methane, than in other countries. That is a very good reason to expand our industry here in Canada rather than to shut it down.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to be able to speak on behalf of the people of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook in Nova Scotia, and I am pleased to speak to Bill C-59, the fall economic statement implementation act, 2023.

When I say “fall...2023”, I know that those listening to me must be perking up their ears. It is because the Conservatives have been dragging their feet, as they often do, to slow down the process and delay the passage of bills that will help and support Canadians.

The bill is really our government's economic plan for making life more affordable and ensuring that we continue to invest in housing and create an economy that works for all Canadians. Over the past few years, our government has introduced a number of measures to help Canadian families. We know that many families are struggling right now because of the cost of living. That is why we are introducing direct measures to help Canadians in difficult situations.

Government Orders

For example, the Canada-wide early learning and child care system that we are implementing from coast to coast to coast is saving many families a lot of money. When I say “a lot”, I do mean a lot. Thanks to this new national system, families across the country are saving between \$2,000 and \$14,000. My colleagues can imagine what that means to these families. I can say that my daughter used to pay nearly \$2,000 a month for child care for her three children, and now she pays \$800. Now she can invest the remaining \$1,200 in something else to help her family. There is no doubt that this is making a big difference for families and their budgets.

Furthermore, our government's enhancements to old age security, the Canada pension plan and the guaranteed income supplement allow more retired people to live comfortably in dignity. It is very important that the benefits increase every year so that they do not fall behind.

We are well aware that groceries cost more. My children remind me often, and when I go to the grocery store, I also notice that the prices are too high and that something needs to be done. In June last year, we distributed a grocery rebate worth hundreds of dollars to 11 million Canadians to help them out.

We also made college and university more affordable. We helped young people by permanently eliminating interest on student loans and Canada apprentice loans. To help students, we increased grants from \$3,000 to \$4,200.

Our government fully understands that better competition means lower prices, more choice and more innovative products and services for Canadians. That is why, with Bill C-59, we are proposing to amend the Competition Act and the Competition Tribunal Act to ensure that Canadians have more choice when it comes to the companies that they do business with. With these changes, we will be able to strengthen the Competition Bureau's tools and powers. We will be able to further modernize merger reviews, which is always an important issue. We will be able to strengthen consumer and worker protection. We will give the competition commissioner the means to examine more types of anti-competitive collaborations and find solutions that work.

• (2145)

These measures will help us increase competition. This will enable Canada to align itself with international, not just domestic, best practices, to ensure that the domestic marketplace promotes fairness, affordability and innovation.

Our government also understands that psychotherapy and counselling services play a key role in the lives and mental health of millions of Canadians. With Bill C-59, we are making essential services more accessible by eliminating the GST and HST on professional services provided by psychotherapists and counselling specialists.

On another matter, our government wants to help adoptive parents through Bill C-59. While EI maternity and parental benefits provide essential support for new parents, adoptive parents are currently entitled to EI parental benefits but not the 15 weeks of maternity benefits. We are therefore introducing a new 15-week EI benefit for adoption that both parents can share.

As members can see, our government has already implemented several measures to make life more affordable. We are continuing our work with Bill C-59.

In conclusion, I think it is clear that the government wants to make life more affordable for Canadians. We have already implemented a number of measures over the past few years to help take the strain off Canadians. We will continue in the same direction to support Canadians. Obviously, we are making sure that the measures we propose fall within our ability to pay. Fortunately, we are in a very strong economic position to invest in Canadians. We continue to make those investments.

I invite all my colleagues in the House to vote for Bill C-59 so that we can continue to make life more affordable for Canadians.

• (2150)

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would note that my hon. colleague comes from northern Canada, as do I. Where we come from, the distances are large and the climate is cold, and the carbon tax is costing all of our constituents a lot of money just to live.

Would the hon. member agree with us that it is time to axe the carbon tax, so that our constituents can afford to live?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the hon. member that when he talks about axing the tax, he is talking about axing the rebates.

I would like to remind him that eight out of 10 Canadians are getting more money back in their pockets than what it is costing them up front. He should know, as his constituents are receiving over \$1,500 per year, and he is talking about making those cuts. Those cuts would be the beginning of the process, because we know that the Conservatives would cut a lot deeper. They would cut the dental plan, which is, of course, major for seniors, with over nine million people receiving it. The Conservatives would be making cuts after cuts, like they did to veterans in 2014.

We are investing, and the Conservatives are looking at making cuts.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the federal housing advocate has called out the government for failing to uphold Inuits' right to housing. For the people in Nunavut especially, and my colleague has done an incredible job of representing them, there have been significant failures to address the significant housing shortage there now.

Government Orders

We were pushing for the federal government to provide Nunavut's request of \$250 million in housing in this fall economic statement. Could he explain why that did not happen and when the federal government will meet its obligations to people in Nunavut?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for all the hard work she has done on the veterans affairs committee. I appreciate that we have been able to work together on a number of projects.

I would like to remind my colleague that the big reason we have a housing crisis is because, when the former Conservative government was in power, it did not see any responsibility in contributing toward housing. Whereas, our government brought forward the first national housing strategy ever in the country, and we have put some major projects on the table.

As well, we have just invested, in budget 2024, a continuation of rapid housing with the accelerator fund and the use of modular homes, which is a new innovative approach, and taking the tax off the construction of rentals. We are doing this right across the country, and we will focus on every part of the country. I am sure Nunavut will be at least part of that process.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do believe the member is an honourable member, but when he stands up in this place and he says that more Canadians are getting back more from the carbon tax than what they are paying, nobody believes it.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer says that is not true and that more Canadians are paying more in the carbon tax. In the province of Ontario, it is \$600 more. Canadians are paying more for gas and to heat their homes, and businesses are paying more in the carbon tax. How can he stand up here and say that to Canadians when the information out there is contrary to what he says?

• (2155)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague is an honourable member as well, but he is taking pieces of the report and trying to apply them to the whole. We know that eight out of 10 Canadians are getting more money back, and the people in his riding are receiving more money back as well. One cannot just cut little pieces to make them look like something else.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to debate Bill C-59, an act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 21, 2023, and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023.

What a difference four months can make. Indigenous peoples, leaders, advocates and Canadians were shocked and angered at the cuts announced by the Liberals to Indigenous Services Canada in the fall economic statement. How could the government, in the face of a \$350-billion infrastructure gap for first nations, be proposing cuts to the services indigenous peoples and communities rely upon?

The Liberals said it would not affect services, but never in the history of cuts this big has that been the case. While they will never admit it, the Liberals reversing some of those cuts is a tacit admission that it would have been the case.

Let us be real about what a \$350-billion infrastructure gap looks like. It is a lack of a hospital for the Island Lake region here in northern Manitoba, a region the same size population-wise as Thompson. Communities, such as Shamattawa, are having to deal with a tuberculosis outbreak because the housing crisis is so bad.

First nations on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, such as Poplar River, St. Theresa Point, Garden Hill, Wasagamack, Red Sucker Lake, Oxford House, God's Lake Narrows and God's River, have to live in enforced isolation by the federal government because of the lack of an all-weather road, and the devastating impact of climate change that is rendering its ice roads less and less dependable.

Communities such as Peguis have recently announced that they are taking the federal government to court because of the lack of support they received during the devastating floods of 2022. It has crumbling roads, a housing crises, and a lack of care homes, day cares, youth drop-in centres and recreation centres.

How could the government show this kind of disdain when it comes to its most important relationship? The Liberals say this gap will be closed by 2030, but we know that is not true. Department officials have made it clear that this will be another Liberal broken promise. The AFN has estimated the gap will not close until 2040. The ministers in charge of indigenous services, northern affairs, infrastructure and Crown-indigenous relations refused to meet with the Assembly of First Nations representative to discuss the government's failure on infrastructure and housing.

Ultimately, this failure rests with the Prime Minister, who always says the right thing when it comes to first nations, but pathologically refuses to deliver. He is now refusing to release the quarter billion dollars on housing. The federal government shortchanged first nations in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta because the federal government was using outdated census data. For a Prime Minister who says he is committed to first nations and reconciliation, it seems his preferred method for delivery of services is court ordered.

Government Orders

First nations were clear that the cuts to Indigenous Services Canada for key programs, such as Jordan's Principle, could not stand. The sunseting of programs related to mental health or the harmful legacy of residential schools was a non-starter. The NDP was clear on this too. I am proud of the work of our team has done, in solidarity with first nations, Métis and Inuit communities, to roll back these cuts. We were clear with the government that it had to reverse these cuts if it wanted NDP support because it is that important.

However, it is clear the Liberals still do not get it, or they do, but they simply do not care. What other conclusions can one draw when the Liberals are investing less than 1% of what is needed to end the housing crisis facing first nations? It is a housing crisis so severe that we could double the amount of homes for first nations and people would still be living in overcrowded conditions.

It is no wonder the Minister of Finance did not mention the word "reconciliation" once in her speech on the budget. Why would she? This year's budget highlighted the \$57 billion the government is spending that is court ordered. It is clear the government only helps first nations when either the NDP pressures it to or the courts order it to do so.

● (2200)

I know many of the people across the country are sick and tired of the harmful and divisive partisan bickering that takes place in this chamber every day and of how nothing is done here the way it should, but the NDP showed what principled politics can look like. We held firm on our demands. The Liberals folded, and we reversed the cuts. We did that with 25 MPs. While the Conservatives were happy to spend their days arguing and fighting for the best clip to use for fundraising, we in the NDP got to work to make a difference for people who in many cases need it the most.

Imagine what we could do with 35 MPs or 50 MPs, or even as the official opposition or government. An NDP government would not give away hundreds of millions of dollars to billionaire CEOs so that they can pay dividend checks. We certainly would not have bought fridges for Galen Weston. We definitely would not have spent less than 1% of what is needed to end the housing crisis on first nations.

With 25 MPs, we reversed the cuts to indigenous services, forced the Liberals on dental care and pharmacare, and brought in a capital gains tax. We did not point fingers. We did not plug our fingers into our ears. We just got to work to deliver for indigenous communities, for working people and for Canadians, because for every failure in the budget, there is an important win to be found.

While there is no wealth tax, we did force the Liberals to bring in a capital gains tax on gains above \$250,000. While the Liberals refused to reverse the Conservative \$60-billion corporate giveaway they have ignored for almost a decade, we forced them to deliver so that kids would not go to school hungry. We also know that 3.7 million Canadians will now have access to diabetes medication and 9 million Canadians will have access to free birth control, all due to NDP pressure.

Meanwhile, we have a Conservative Party, led by a hyperpartisan Conservative leader, that seems hell-bent on bringing back a war on

women. Shamefully, we also saw at least one Conservative MP stand with anti-choicers, who were standing against a woman's right to choose and against women's human rights on Parliament Hill today.

Looking at this budget, and looking at the wins for working-class people, how could one make their signature opposition to it be access to free birth control in 2024? Why is the Conservative Party so bereft of ideas that it is forced to recycle their worst ones from yesterday, a few decades ago or maybe even a few centuries ago, when it comes to women?

It is no surprise they are single-mindedly focused on making Parliament fail for people. For a leader who likes to cosplay as a defender of the working class, he sure is happy to echo the message of the well-heeled lobbyists he pretends not to meet. He may say he will not meet lobbyists, unless you include his chief strategist. He may say he will not connect with billionaire CEOs, but he will fundraise off them. He may say he will not speak with the wealthiest corporations in the country, but he will echo their every message. I want to point to the recent work of The Breach in uncovering the extent to which so many people connected to Loblaw, Metro and others are big donors for both the Liberals and Conservatives.

It is ironic that the Conservatives, a party whose slogan is "bring it home", are so fundamentally opposed to housing solutions in the country. What homes are they "bringing it" to? They are consistently opposing funding for housing for first nations living in overcrowded and mouldy homes, and their approach to housing would mostly help rich investors make more money off the housing market and leave Canadian families behind.

Our message to Canadians is clear. If they want more cosplay and stunts, if they want more coddling of billionaires and if they want to watch their tax dollars go to the wealthiest people in the country, they should vote Liberal or Conservative, but if Canadians want a country where indigenous justice is a priority, where no one is left behind, where we can have a health care system that is truly there for our needs, and where the wealthy pay their fair share to fund the services and the society we need, the NDP is the party for them.

Government Orders

• (2205)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it certainly sounds like Conservatives are living in this member's head with the constant attacks. I recall when I was House leader and the costly coalition was formed, the unholy alliance between the NDP and the Liberal Party, I referred to that situation as the NDP heading to an abyss of irrelevance. Certainly, if I check out the latest polls, the NDP has not gained any status at all among Canadians. In fact, many Canadians feel like the New Democrats have sold their collective soul to the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party. As such, I am wondering how the member can reconcile that, given the status of the party in the polls.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I find it curious that the member is hyperfocused on what I said about his own party. Perhaps he is feeling a bit defensive. If he had heard my speech, he would have heard the wins that we in the NDP pushed for, as I mentioned, such as the reverse of the major cuts that were being planned to Indigenous Services Canada.

I know that the Conservative Party does not care much about investing in indigenous communities, so maybe that was not heard or cared for. Also, we talked about what we have delivered on pharmacare and on dental care, particularly around diabetes medication and birth control.

Again, these are priorities that the Conservatives are actively fighting against. I think that speaks more about them. Our wins speak to our work and our values.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, whenever the NDP asks questions about the lack of investments that the Liberal government and the previous Conservative government have made to indigenous housing, we are always told about how much more the Liberals have been investing. I wonder if the member can tell us what the impacts of those statements are on indigenous peoples who live in overcrowded housing conditions and who live in mouldy conditions.

Meanwhile, children are going to school without the sleep that they need to get the good grades that they need.

Can the member explain what happens when those promises are being broken?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I want to say how proud I am to be able to work alongside the member in fighting for indigenous communities, for Inuit communities, for first nations. Of course, we share a common border. It is a privilege to work with such a fierce advocate, and I want to acknowledge all of the work she has done, particularly on housing.

To the question of broken promises, I cannot help thinking of the statement that every child matters, which we know is so much tied into the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Every time Conservatives and Liberals break promises when it comes to housing, indigenous health, infrastructure and education, the signal that they are sending is the opposite of every child matters. It is that indigenous children do not matter and that their futures do not matter, certainly not the way that non-indigenous children's futures matter. Racism runs deep in our country and in the practice of government, and nowhere is that more evident than in

the lack of funding and the broken promises that we have seen from Liberals and Conservatives alike.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I really struggle with, and I think this member spoke about it, is the hypercritical nature of what we seem to get for everything that this government brings forward in support when working with the NDP, whether it is related to climate change, whether it is related to supports for children or whether it is related to making sure that we are building housing.

All we ever get from Conservatives are slogans and they do not actually give solutions. I am wondering what her comments would be on that.

• (2210)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, certainly, many of my constituents remember the way in which the Harper government cut us off at the knees in working-class communities and in indigenous communities. The leader of the official opposition was part of that government.

Actions speak louder than words, and I am proud of the actions that we have delivered as the NDP. Certainly, I think we all know the Conservative track record, which is the opposite of what they are committing to Canadians.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to speak to the fall economic statement.

Here we are. We had to time allocate the fall economic statement. For those that might not clue in, including some of those who are heckling me already in my preamble to my speech, the fall economic statement, believe it or not, was tabled in the fall. However, here we are, as we approach June, and we still have not had an opportunity to vote on this because the Conservatives relentlessly prevent us from bringing forward an opportunity to vote. Those are the tactics that they use.

When I think about the measures that the government has brought in to support Canadians, notwithstanding the endless rhetoric that I hear from Conservatives about those measures, I am extremely proud to be part of a government that has made meaningful efforts to support communities and individuals and to give people the chances they need.

Around everything that the government has been doing, in particular the budget that we are debating concurrently with this one, the main theme is fairness. I would say the theme of fairness applies to the fall economic statement that we are debating now as well.

Government Orders

It is hard for me to really debate anything this week without reflecting on the comments I have heard from Conservatives in the House. The Leader of the Opposition started a discussion by saying that, if he becomes prime minister, he would use the notwithstanding clause to invoke the laws that he sees fit. He wants to live in a country where one man gets to decide what the laws are of the land. He does not care about the judiciary. He not care about the processes or the systems that are in place. That is all that the Leader of the Opposition wants, and that is what he is demonstrating when he talks about using the notwithstanding clause.

After that, we saw the member for Peace River—Westlock start to talk about the “preborn”, protecting the preborn and encouraging the government to bring in policies that would protect the preborn. It cannot be a coincidence that the Leader of the Opposition starts to talk about using the notwithstanding clause, and then Conservative members bring up the issue of abortion and outlawing abortion in Canada. It cannot be a coincidence that these people assembled on the front lawn of Parliament Hill today to cheer on the member for Peace River—Westlock and the member for Yorkton—Melville.

This is what the member for Yorkton—Melville said on the front lawn of Parliament Hill, and this is not the 1960s. It was today. She said that the truth is not being told in the media or in our House of Commons about what abortion really does to one's heart and mind, soul and body, let alone that lost life. The member then went on to speak on behalf of all Conservatives when she said, “We in the House, as Conservatives, stand for equality between men and women from the instant of conception.”

The member for Barrie—Innisfil also believes in equality from the moment of conception. I appreciate his saying that. Now we know where Conservatives stand.

People are probably wondering how this all ties into the fall economic statement. That is where I am going with this. I wish that the member for Peace River—Westlock, the member from Barrie—Innisfil and the member for Yorkton—Melville cared just a little about that child when it is an actual child.

If they did, they would vote in favour of things and support initiatives such as the national school food program that would actually put food into the bellies of children. They would support initiatives such as the Canada child benefit that actually supports children while they are growing up. They would support initiatives like \$10-a-day child care to help families, and in particular mothers, who more often than not are the parent that stays at home to take care of children, and to help them when they need help.

● (2215)

I am aghast at how much Conservatives, including those heckling me right now, are so preoccupied with the preborn, to use the words of the member for Peace River—Westlock, and have no regard whatsoever, or at least do not acknowledge any regard, for children that need to be taken care of right now in our communities. One has to ask oneself why that is. Is it because they somehow have this passion for the preborn? No, it is not. They are not interested in children or the preborn. What they are interested in is controlling a woman's body. That is what they care about. That is the Conservatives' angle on this.

That is why 80 of the current sitting Conservative members of Parliament, I am sure more than half of them in this room right now, are endorsed by anti-abortion organizations. They have given the Conservatives the green light. Can anyone imagine an organization that gives a different colour light based on one's willingness to support its anti-choice objectives? People get a green light if they are considered really anti-choice. They get an orange light if the organization is somewhat cautious about whether it can trust that they will be anti-choice enough, and then they get a red light if they are pro-choice, meaning the organization does not support those individuals.

In 2024, this is the world we live in. I know Conservative members, in particular, female Conservative members, have challenged me, such as the member for Peterborough—Kawartha, saying how dare I talk about this issue, as though I cannot talk about this issue because I am a man. I have news for her and the Conservatives who are heckling me now. I have an obligation to ensure that my five-year-old daughter has the same rights that her mother had when she was growing up. I have an obligation to ensure that the rights that my mother's generation fought for and the rights that my wife enjoyed continue for my five-year-old daughter as she grows up. That is why I am speaking up about it, despite the Conservative heckles and despite what is happening on Parliament Hill in this chamber over the last couple of weeks.

It is extremely unfortunate that Conservatives have decided that they feel emboldened to start having these discussions once again, because their leader is giving them the authority to be the worst versions of themselves that they can possibly be. Unfortunately, that is where we are right now. The leader of the Conservative Party is encouraging members to act in the way they are acting, to say what they are saying and encouraging the members for Peace River—Westlock and Yorkton—Melville to go out on the front lawn of this place and start talking about restricting a woman's right to choose what to do with her body.

As long as I am here, I will not let it happen. I will stand up to it, and I genuinely believe that a majority of the members of the House will continue to do the same.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is misinformation and disinformation that the member has just laid out to the House. The Conservative leader has been clear that he will uphold the party position, which is that it will not support any abortion legislation. However, the level of desperation that exists across the aisle is interesting. Liberals must know how far down they are in the polls because every time they get that far down, they go there again.

With respect to the fall economic statement, the member thinks so highly of the programs that have been introduced. However, the food program for schoolchildren has no food in it. It is a plan to interfere in provincial jurisdiction. The dental plan has no dentists signed up in the Northwest Territories, Yukon, P.E.I. or Nunavut, and I could continue. It is a fiasco. Does he not recognize that?

Government Orders

• (2220)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition actually feels that way, what he needs to do is stand up, turn and face the 80 Conservatives who have been endorsed by anti-choice organizations throughout this country.

In terms of the member's question about dentists, I know that over 70% of the dentists in my riding have signed up. There are thousands of dentists that have signed up for the program in Ontario. There are thousands of dentists in British Columbia and Quebec, so—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Some of the heckling is getting a little loud. It was quiet and pretty good before. I am just going to ask members to please allow the hon. member to speak. The person who should have the floor is the person who has been recognized by the Speaker. We do allow a little bit of flexibility, but I am just asking members to keep it down.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, to conclude, I have never before witnessed a Conservative Party that not only objects to policies but also actively roots for their failure. That is what the Conservatives are doing. We are trying to provide pharmacare and dental care, and they are not only against them but are also actively rooting for the programs to fail.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just looked myself up on Campaign Life Coalition's website, and I got a giant red light too, so I think I am doing well. One of the things, interestingly, is that not only am I listed as pro-choice and a defender of human rights, but also that it lists my ideology as pro-LGBT. I think that is interesting to note in terms of the coalition and defending human rights. However, maybe I am crazy and maybe I should be condemned for being in favour of paper tops for cups at Tim Hortons as well.

The Leader of the Opposition has often gone after pensions, calling them “payroll taxes”. Could the hon. member explain why that is a problem as well?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I would wear that red light as a badge of honour. I think it is absolutely shameful that people focus so much of their time on trying to figure out how they can try to correct other people because they do not fit into the mould that they see as being ideal for them. They really need to stop paying so much attention to other people and start reflecting on themselves to figure out what is wrong with themselves.

With regard to the member's question about pensions, of course the Leader of the Opposition would refer to the CPP as a payroll tax. It is not a payroll tax; it is something that people pay into. It is something that the employee pays into, as does the employer.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I feel it is unacceptable that we are discussing abortion rights today. Women have the right to choose what they do with their bodies. I therefore feel it is inappropriate that we should engage in such discussions today. This is what the right to freedom is all about.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. It is up to women to choose.

Maybe the member for Peace River—Westlock should step aside and let women choose what they want to do with their bodies, rather than trying to take his ideology and his ideas and impose them on other people. Maybe it is time for him to self-reflect a little bit to figure out how he can make himself a better person, rather than trying to control what other people are doing with their bodies.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is quite a fiery debate this evening. It is an honour for me to rise on behalf of the constituents of Oshawa and speak about the CBC, or the communist budget of Canada. I know that when members hear “CBC”, we think of the propaganda arm of the Liberal government, but, no, that is not what we are talking about today; that is a whole other speech. Today I am actually focusing on the latest budget boondoggle from the current Liberal-NDP government.

When we talk about communism these days, we have to make sure that we also acknowledge the modern terminology being used to describe the ideology that the Prime Minister said he admires. Liberals use the term “globalism”, but it is the same centralized income redistribution government that has been promoted by socialists and communists for over a century.

Do members remember a few years ago when the Prime Minister was asked which country he admired the most? His response stunned many Canadians. He could have said it was Canada, the U.S., France or the U.K. Do members remember what he clearly said? He said he admired the basic dictatorship of China, because it allows for getting things done, and wow, what horrible things it has done. Do Canadians really want the same things to happen in Canada?

The disastrous budget bill, the fall economic statement implementation act, would make the likes of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin truly proud. With its inflationary spending and planned higher taxes, the bill would just continue to fuel the fire of the NDP-Liberal government's soaring national debt while in turn making the lives of hard-working Canadians in my community far worse.

The NDP-Liberal government's huge commitment to and enthusiasm for raising taxes, especially carbon taxes, has intentionally caused pain and suffering for Canadians. The MP for Whitby actually said here in the House that Canadians should be prepared for a painful transition to net zero. What government or oppressive ideology intentionally wants to cause pain for its population? Like I said earlier, the Liberals call it globalism, the redistribution of wealth and resources. I call it communism.

I remember that Margaret Thatcher said that the problem with the never-ending spending spiral is that eventually the government runs out of other people's money. We have reached that point. The credit card is maxed out, the cupboard is bare and the effects are disastrous. The NDP-Liberal government this year will spend \$54.1 billion to service the debt, which is the same amount we collect for HST. It is more than the Liberals transfer to provinces for health care. It is shameful.

Government Orders

With the communist budget of Canada, the government continues its tradition of throwing the money of hard-working, everyday Canadians at Liberal priorities while having no actual comprehensive plan, and, of course, no plan to ever balance the budget. It has no plan for success.

Here are some examples. Under the current government, the cost of rent has surged, leaving many Canadians homeless, while, in the process, also destroying the dream of younger generations of ever owning a home. In Oshawa, when I grew up, the dream of home ownership was always within reach. Most of my friends' dads worked at GM, and with one salary, my friends could afford a home, get married and have three or four kids. They always had a better car than we did, and many had a cottage to go to on the weekends. That was with one salary.

Last week I spoke to a young couple. Combined, they were making around \$200,000, and they were finding it hard to save for a home and get approved for a mortgage. It used to take 25 years to pay off a mortgage, and now it takes 25 years to save for just a down payment. Now, sadly, young Canadians are giving up on home ownership. Rent inflation has increased 10%, and the budget would do nothing to stop it.

Core inflation is up 2.9% and shelter inflation is up 6.5%. Per capita GDP shows Canada is being left behind with numbers the same as they were in 2015 when the current government took control, while the United States is up 23 points. R and D spending in Canada is at the bottom of the OECD, around 1.5%, while countries such as Israel and South Korea are at more than 5% of GDP.

Our economy is predicted to be the worst-performing in the OECD until 2060. In 2015, when the Liberals took over, Canadian business investment, GDP private gross fixed capital expenditure, real, rebased, was higher than in the U.S. and in Mexico. Now, Canada is down 49 points compared to Mexico, and a staggering 81 points behind the U.S. according to Stats Can, BEA and data from Bloomberg.

• (2225)

Mining investment is down and refining is down. There is nothing in the budget to help increase the exports of clean Canadian natural gas to a desperate world that needs it. Canada is being left out.

More and more Canadians are now turning to food banks as they cannot afford the cost of groceries to feed themselves and their families. In Oshawa, our food banks, for the first time, are running out of food before noon. It has never been like that before.

I was told of one household in Oshawa where 16 seniors are sharing one home. Is this what the Liberals mean when they say their policies are going to hurt, be "painful"? I guess so. However, this is not a success they should be celebrating.

Conversely, Canadians are tragically having to choose. Must they force themselves to freeze since they cannot afford the cost of heating the homes they already cannot afford to own? Do they eat or do they heat? What would Lenin have said about this? Perhaps this quote makes sense if one admires basic dictatorships, "The best way to destroy the capitalist system [is] to debauch the currency." The Liberals are doing a great job of that. In the Financial Post,

Jean-François Tardif said the "Canadian dollar could sink to 50 cents" in a decade.

Lenin said that about a century ago, and this generation is witnessing this policy being implemented as the NDP-Liberal government budget does nothing to return strength and confidence to our system.

In addition to this, the communist budget of Canada will include nearly \$40 billion in new inflationary spending while forcing Canadians to spend \$54.1 billion to service a debt of the NDP-Liberal government. As I said earlier, and it is worth repeating, it is more money than what the federal government currently gives to the provinces for health care.

Many notably, Liberals have already spoken out against the CBC. We could talk about David Dodge, former finance minister Bill Morneau and former Liberal finance minister John Manley. He warned that this is a problem, and it is going to continue.

It was the notable Communist leader Vladimir Lenin who put forward the ideas that the best "way to crush the bourgeoisie is to grind them between the millstones of taxation and inflation". That is exactly what this communist, globalist budget would do.

The Prime Minister has constantly ignored the concerns of the budget from senior Liberals, and now continues to cause pain by crushing struggling Canadian families who cannot afford higher taxes and more inflationary spending, which drives up the cost of everything and keeps interest rates high. In my community, the carbon tax is the big enemy, but what is their environment plan?

The Prime Minister and his socialist environment minister announced an electric vehicle mandate. All sales of passenger cars, SUVs, crossovers and light trucks must be hybrid electric, and 100% of new vehicles sold would have to be electric vehicles. However, there is no detailed plan on how to make this happen. Oshawa is a great promoter of clean, green nuclear energy and there is nothing to help it in the budget. It could be a leader in the world.

Our grid cannot handle the increase in demand due to EV mandates. Apartment buildings and homeowners will need to pay a fortune for retrofits. Provincial governments would be forced to handle the costs. Auto dealers and companies would face huge challenges and expenses. Who will they be competing with?

Government Orders

• (2230)

I want to remind Canadians that the number one battery producer is not Canada, and the announced battery plants will not be producing Canadian batteries for many years. How difficult is it to open new mines in Canada? Our mineral exploration investment is at an all-time low this year.

Whose economy does the EV mandate policy benefit the most? Members should take a guess. Yes, it is China, the country whose greenhouse gas emissions are leading the world. Why would a Canadian government implement policies that support an economy in China? Yes, I forgot. That is the system of government the Liberals are trying to aspire toward.

No would-be globalist government would be complete without trampling on fundamental human rights. We will remember the lockdown. It was the destruction of small Canadian businesses and vaccine mandates, the Prime Minister gleefully and enthusiastically creating an identifiable minority group and then proceeding to dehumanize, isolate and bankrupt it. He used all government powers to restrict its participation in Canadian life. There was no travel, no restaurants and no church. We had to sign up for vaccine passports. We were told to do what he said.

To close, I just want to say the budget needs to be defeated, and we have to elect a new Conservative government that will axe the tax, build more homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

• (2235)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Oshawa should know that the rapid housing initiative has created hundreds of housing units across Durham region, including in his riding of Oshawa. I was at the announcements. I am sorry that he did not make it.

The federal government also invested \$259 million through the strategic innovation fund in General Motors Oshawa, along with the Ontario government, to produce electric vehicles. After an over \$2-billion transformation, General Motors Oshawa is now producing electric vehicles.

How can the member opposite deny the workers in our region the major employment opportunities that General Motors Oshawa has created and that our government has helped invest in?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I am proud that our government invested in General Motors to create more jobs than these announcements will create. The sad part about it is this: If we look at the investments the Liberals are bragging about, the foreign direct investments, the numbers are true; however, the only way they could get these companies to invest in Canada was through huge subsidization.

The worry that I have here, and why this budget is so bad, is that we need to become more competitive; our productivity needs to work. The member for Whitby needs to understand that, and this budget and these announcements are doing absolutely nothing to help our future competitiveness.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, what I appreciate about Bill C-59 is that, inserted into it, because of the great work of the NDP, are measures to lower bills for Canadians, as well as to end the free ride that has been given to CEOs for too long. Some of these measures include better protections for Canadian consumers in the areas of prohibiting drip pricing, deterring greenwashing and moving toward a right to repair.

Could the member respond to how he would communicate the protections we are creating for consumers in his riding?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for that question, because our government previously worked on a right to repair bill. We actually worked with members from the NDP to implement that. I can say that, with this moving forward, it is always a good idea that people have a choice.

However, when the member brings up that her New Democratic Party is helping lower bills for Canadians, I have to say that I get people sending me their bills every single week with respect to the carbon tax. One senior, who is a wonderful 82-year-old lady from Scotland, has an apartment and just cannot afford it anymore. How is she supposed to live? This crushing of the bourgeoisie between the millstone of inflation and higher taxes has to stop. It is not what Canadians want.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a two-part question.

The first part is that Ford just announced that, in its first quarter, its EV department lost \$1.3 billion. It has delayed a bunch of its EV products.

The second part, and we have not talked about this near enough when we talk about the economy, is that Mexico has surpassed Canada as the largest trading partner to the U.S.A.

Could the member reflect on those two things?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, the member brings up something extremely serious. Ford and the other automakers are having challenges because of how these mandates are being forced upon the auto companies.

My big concern, as I stated in my speech, is that these battery and electric vehicle mandates are supporting the Chinese economy. With the announcements the Liberals are making, again, the batteries will not be coming out of these plants for a long period of time.

Yes, I want us to have a successful auto sector. The auto action plan that we put in as a Conservative government did help that, but what is in the statement and the budget does absolutely nothing.

Government Orders

With respect to what the member brought forward in regard to Mexico, Mexico has been investing in productivity and competitiveness. It has outstripped us. We were ahead of it in 2015. Now we are 45 points behind Mexico and 81 points behind the Americans, because the current government is not investing in productivity in Canada. That is what we need: We need to unleash Canada. Our best days are ahead of us; we just need to get rid of this tired old Liberal government.

● (2240)

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise today to speak to Bill C-59, which delivers on key measures from our 2023 fall economic statement. It is designed to make life more affordable, to build more homes faster and to forge a stronger economy.

This is a key part of our government's economic plan; since 2015, our plan has been squarely focused on improving life for the middle class and those who want to join it. From enhancing the Canada workers benefit to creating the Canadian dental care plan; delivering regulated child care for \$10 a day, on average, in eight provinces and territories so far; and providing 11 million individuals and families with targeted inflation relief through a one-time grocery rebate in July 2023, our actions have strengthened the social safety net that millions of Canadians depend on.

In fact, since 2015, our government has lowered the poverty rate by 4.6%, thanks to direct income supports and a strong economy that benefits all Canadians, all the while ensuring that we maintain the lowest deficit and net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7.

Compared with before the pandemic, we can proudly say that, today, over one million more Canadians are employed. However, we cannot refute that still-elevated consumer prices and looming mortgage renewals continue to put pressure on many Canadian families or say that there is not more important work ahead of us to address affordability.

When it comes to housing affordability, supply is at the heart of the major challenges facing Canadians. That is why we are taking real, concrete action to build more homes faster, including new rental housing. Bill C-56 proposed to eliminate the GST on new rental projects, such as apartment buildings, student housing and senior residences, built specifically for long-term rental accommodations. Bill C-59 goes even further by proposing to eliminate the GST on eligible new housing co-operatives built for long-term rental, as outlined in the fall economic statement.

Swift passage of the bill would enable more people in every province and territory to find the types of rental housing they need at a price they can afford. The legislation would also help protect tenants from renovictions, which statistics show are displacing individuals and families, as well as increasing the rate of homelessness.

Our federal government also recognizes the clear link between housing and infrastructure, which is why the fall economic statement proposes to establish the department of housing, infrastructure and communities, currently, Infrastructure Canada. Bill C-59 would formally establish this new department and clarify its powers and duties as the federal lead on improving public infrastructure and

housing, so our communities would have the infrastructure they need to grow and remain resilient.

Another important housing measure in the fall economic statement includes cutting the red tape that prevents construction workers from moving across the country to build homes, as well as cracking down on non-compliant short-term rentals, which are keeping far too many homes in our communities off the market.

Our government is also providing \$15 billion in new loans through the apartment construction loan program, which accelerates the construction of rental housing by providing low-cost financing to builders and developers. As recently announced by my colleague, the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, we will be broadening this program by including student residences to help more students find housing across the country. This crucial change would relieve pressure on the housing market by freeing up housing supply that already exists in communities. Budget 2024 delivered a top-up to support the construction of even more units.

● (2245)

In addition, we have launched the Canadian mortgage charter, which “details the tailored mortgage relief that the government expects lenders to provide to Canadians facing a challenging financial situation with the mortgage on their principal residence. It also reaffirms that insured mortgage holders are not required under the regulations to requalify under the minimum qualifying rate when switching lenders at mortgage renewal.” Our goal is to protect Canadians by ensuring they have the support they need to afford their homes.

On a similar topic, I would be remiss if I did not also mention the new first-time homebuyer tax-free savings account, which allows Canadians to save up to \$40,000 tax-free towards the purchase of their first home. We launched this account in April 2023, and to date, it has helped more than 750,000 Canadians, and counting, reach their first home savings goals.

Government Orders

A more competitive economy benefits all Canadians by offering more choice and greater affordability for consumers and businesses alike. Building on changes proposed in Bill C-56, Bill C-59 would amend both the Competition Act and the Competition Tribunal Act to modernize competition in Canada, thereby helping to stabilize prices across the entire economy. This includes supporting Canadians' right to repair by preventing manufacturers from refusing to provide the means of repair of devices and products in an anti-competitive manner. It also includes modernizing merger reviews, enhancing protections for consumers, workers and the environment, including improving the focus on worker impacts in competition analysis and empowering the commissioner of competition to review and crack down on a wide selection of anti-competitive collaborations. Finally, it includes broadening the reach of the law by enabling more private parties to bring cases before the Competition Tribunal and receive payment if they are successful. These truly generational changes would drive lower prices and innovation, while fuelling economic growth, helping to further counteract inflationary pressures.

Today, I outlined just a few examples of how Bill C-59 makes targeted, responsible investments to improve affordability, build more homes and build an economy that works for everyone, all while taking care not to feed inflation. These are real solutions that, when combined with new measures announced in our recent budget and Canada's housing plan, will help us tackle Canada's housing challenge while improving affordability across the board. That is why I urge my fellow parliamentarians to continue to support this important piece of legislation.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talked about the Infrastructure Bank and using that for housing. I will make some allowances for the member, because I do not think he was here when the Liberals took \$35 billion away from municipalities, money that was supposed to build infrastructure there, and put it into the bank. The idea was supposed to be that it was going to attract private investment and build large projects, but in five years, it built no projects. It also did not attract any private investment.

After all the Liberal insiders who were in there and after no projects were built, how should Canadians have any confidence that the Infrastructure Bank can build houses?

• (2250)

Mr. George Chahal: Mr. Speaker, I talked about Infrastructure Canada and housing. I spoke a lot about housing with regard to the importance of eliminating the GST on rental apartments and student housing to build more rentals across Canada. We have also included \$15 billion for apartment construction loans. This low-cost financing is essential to build more housing across the country. Colleagues can ask builders and developers in their communities who use these programs how essential that low-cost financing is to make sure rental housing gets built.

When the member from Carleton was the housing minister, I think only six apartments were built after a decade in government—

An hon. member: Six units.

The Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member from London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things about this economic update that I am particularly happy with, of course, is something that I have been pushing for for a long time. It is the removal of the GST on psychotherapy and counselling services.

While I was frustrated that the current government and previous governments did not do anything about it and that it took a long time to do it, this is something that makes a lot of sense. If the member could talk about the importance of this measure within Bill C-59, that would be great.

Mr. George Chahal: Mr. Speaker, psychotherapy and counselling services are extremely important to the mental health of Canadians. My wife is a counselling psychologist, and I know how important the work she does is, as well as the work of many other folks across the country who help provide the support that Canadians need. The elimination of the GST will help reduce the cost for so many Canadians who need these essential supports. I think it is so important, and I am so grateful that the member across and other members of her party have supported this initiative.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know we hear, every day, the misleading statements of Conservatives when it comes to climate change. They do not acknowledge that climate change is real. They do not want to fight climate change. They do not believe in the economic prosperity that comes with it. The fall economic statement bill offers investment tax credits for carbon capture, utilization and storage, as well as clean technology. It also doubles the rural top-up for the Canada carbon rebate, which puts more money in Canadians' pockets. I wonder if my colleague could speak to the importance of those measures for his region of the country.

Mr. George Chahal: Mr. Speaker, my constituency was hit with a large storm a number of years ago, and \$1.5 billion of damage was done by a hailstorm. Our city was faced with a flood that devastated our downtown core. This year, we are faced with another wildfire season and also drought throughout our province. While our government has brought forward ITCs for important initiatives and CCUS and clean tech, we have seen Premier Danielle Smith and her Conservative counterparts prevent renewable energy in the province of Alberta, preventing \$33 billion of investment and thousands of jobs.

Government Orders

It is so unfortunate. We have a great opportunity to work together. That is why our government has doubled the rural Canada carbon rebate. In my riding, I know that the \$1,800 that we get for constituents is a tremendous amount over the year to help support constituents in my community.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to say it seems a bit surreal to be here tonight debating Bill C-59.

In a way, it reminds me of the movie *Back to the Future*, because we are going back to the Liberals' fall mini-budget of last year with the hindsight of knowing what we know today because of the Liberals' recently introduced and massively failed budget 2024 document.

What did they call that budget again? Was it "Fairness for Every Generation"? I am still floored by that. Imagine leaving future generations of Canadians massive amounts of debt with zero plan whatsoever on how that debt will ever get paid. Only to the Liberals could this concept of leaving behind your bills for someone else to pay be considered some sort of generational fairness. Fortunately, everyday Canadians see the budget document for what it truly is, and they know that it is anything but fair to leave today's bills behind for our kids and grandkids to try to pay.

I realize we are here tonight to debate last fall's mini-budget and not the spring's latest budget failure, so I will focus my comments on the so-called mini-budget, also known as the fall economic statement.

There is one very fascinating thing about that mini-budget that caught my attention. Prior to it, the Liberals had forecast total debt would be \$35 billion for the 2024-25 fiscal year and \$26.8 billion for the 2025-26 fiscal year. This was comical. They actually forecast that the debt would go down in 2025-26. The sheer fallacy that this always-be-spending Liberal-speNDP partnership would ever spend less borrowed money is completely nonsensical, yet that is exactly what they tried to pass off to Canadians.

In this mini-budget, of course, the debt forecasts were revised and to the surprise of absolutely no one, except for possibly a certain CBC analyst, the debt forecast increased. The revised debt forecasts were now increased for 2024-25 and 2025-26 to \$38.4 billion and \$38.3 billion, respectively. However, it is all pointless, because we know the total debt proposed for this year is now up to \$40 billion. Next year is an election year, so we can only speculate how much more debt will again increase as the desperate Prime Minister once again attempts to shovel as much money as he can out the door, hoping to buy Canadians' votes.

We are now in a position where we spend more money servicing debt than we are spending on the Canadian health care transfer. Keep in mind that this is just servicing the debt, not actually paying any off, because that is what "fairness" means to the Liberal-speNDP partnership: Leave today's bills behind for someone else to pay.

Going on nine years now, the Prime Minister has never honoured any such fiscal guardrail he has promised. The Prime Minister has never once tried to live within the fiscal framework he has established for his own government. Every year, the Liberal-speNDP

partnership can pick a number they say the total debt will be, and every year, no matter how large that total debt number is, they still totally blow it off and come in higher. It is like they do not even try to live within their own means, let alone what is affordable for taxpayers.

Here is one really wacko thing about that mini-budget. The budget update mentions more housing multiple times, but the most significant parts of those housing promises, even though they were announced in the fall update, in reality are for programs that are still years away.

A few examples of this include \$15 billion in new loan funding for an apartment construction program, mentioned by the member for Calgary Skyview. However, that program will not be available until fiscal year 2025-26. Similarly, there is an additional commitment to allocate \$1 billion over three years for what the Liberals call an affordable housing fund for non-profit, co-op and public housing. However, this funding would not begin until the fiscal year of 2025-26.

Of course, we have an election that will occur no later than October of 2025. So devoid are the Liberals of ideas that they are now actually making promises today, or I should say last fall, on behalf of a future government that is yet to be decided on by voters. No matter how I look at it, the fall fiscal update was yet another very expensive failure in a long line of expensive Liberal failures.

● (2255)

Now, remember, despite all this massive Liberal deficit spending, things are so bad that even the Prime Minister himself now openly admits that young people feel like they cannot get ahead in the same way as their parents or grandparents could.

Another point, which I raised recently in my budget speech and I will make here again tonight, is that when it comes to total spending and debt, the Prime Minister has failed in every single budget to do what he promised he would do in the previous year. Let us ask this question: If the Prime Minister, who, if we ask him, thinks he is pretty awesome, in nine years has massively and completely failed to come even close to balancing a budget, what is he expecting future generations of Canadians to do that he has never done himself, because they are the ones who will be inheriting all of this?

Government Orders

Of course, on that side of the House, the question is never asked, is it? Why is that? Every member on that side of the House knows that bills need to be paid, and this is why so many Canadians are struggling right now. At the end of the month, when they pay their bills, for a growing number of Canadians, there is no longer enough left to live on. For some, each month, the line of credit or credit card debt only grows larger. Many tell me that they realize their financial situation is just not sustainable, and that is why there is such a growing disconnect. They see a Prime Minister, propped up by the NDP, who will literally spend any amount of borrowed money. It is not helping the average family in the least, and they are frustrated.

I am certain there are members on the other side of the House who absolutely understand and know this. I am also certain that there are a few members on the other side who are probably frustrated, because we all know that much of this mess is made behind closed doors from that inner circle inside the Prime Minister's Office without much input from them. I have been reliably informed that, at least in one caucus, some matters are even decided upon without a vote.

I realize that there is an expectation that the official opposition will oppose the government's fall fiscal update. It is, after all, the opposition's job to oppose and to hold the government to account. That was for the NDP. However, in this case, it is not like the Liberal government even tries to live within the fiscal limits it proposes for itself. That is why I mentioned in my opening comments that it is somewhat surreal to be here debating this.

We all know that the recently released budget, much of it, is just a sham, much as budget 2024 will also go down as a sham. Next fall, there will be another fall fiscal update, which will have an even bigger debt than what was proposed here today, and record spending deficits will once again be through the roof. Is there any person in this room who does not doubt that? What will they call the next budget? Would it be the "even more fairness budget", as it will leave more unpaid debt? It is obviously pointless to speculate on whatever ridiculous title the Liberals will try to use to sell their next budget.

Getting back to the fall economic statement, we could summarize it as Liberals saying, "Yes, we spent even more than we promised, but don't worry, our expensive new programs are coming soon." That is really, to me, what the update says. It is pretty much what happens with every single Liberal budget and budget update. The bottom line is that I will oppose this latest debt-and-deficit bill from the Liberals, brought to us by their speNDP partners.

I would like to thank all members of this place for hearing my comments at what is a very late hour, and to the Canadians who are at home, particularly those in Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, I thank them for sticking it through this far.

• (2300)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just last week, the Governor of the Bank of Canada appeared before committee. He gave very compelling testimony, answering questions from the Conservative Party, and said that the government, com-

pared to the fall economic statement in this year's budget, has stuck to its fiscal guardrails and that there would be no impact on inflation. We also had the International Monetary Fund, which recently rated Canada number one in the world in terms of budget balance.

What I want to know from the member opposite is this. His party leader has said that he would fire the Governor of the Bank of Canada. Is that because he does not like the truth?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, the Bank of Canada put this out yesterday: "Higher debt-servicing costs reduce a household's financial flexibility, making them more financially vulnerable if their income declines or they face an unexpected material expense."

I have talked about all the billions of dollars that the government does not have and that it has been borrowing and spending. Could the member opposite please explain how what the Bank of Canada is warning for personal households and their inability to handle that much mortgage is any different for a Prime Minister who has doubled the debt and has spent more than all prime ministers combined?

• (2305)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, before 2013, there was a food mail program that was to help alleviate the prices of groceries.

During the former Conservative government, the food mail program that was going directly to consumers was changed to nutrition north. Nutrition north was changed so that the price of groceries was supposed to be reduced, but instead it has become a subsidy to protect corporate greed. For example, the North West Company had \$200 million in profits, \$67 million of that was subsidies from the federal government through the nutrition north program.

I wonder if the member could explain to the House what the Conservatives would do to make food more affordable, rather than protecting corporate greed. How would they help alleviate poverty in the communities?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I certainly commend that member for continually getting up on the issue of affordability.

In fact, when I was on the finance committee, we had a former premier of Nunavut come and discuss concerns around the carbon tax, specifically how, in Nunavut, the Nunavut government was essentially subsidizing much of the diesel that supplied power for people to keep themselves warm during the winter, 90%.

The question I asked the premier at the time was how it worked, if they were subsidizing the fuel that people use, when the federal government put on a carbon tax. He said it just means they have to subsidize more, and they will use less to support people on low incomes with new housing and other supports. Since then, the Liberal government has said it will triple the carbon tax. No region in the country will feel it as acutely as Nunavut. If there are things that we can do to make food more accessible, I will certainly be looking to support those things.

Government Orders

Let us start with the most basic of fundamental things. Let us stop the federal government from making life impossible in northern Canada.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke about young people. Young people do not just feel lied to or let down by the Prime Minister; they are actually despondent now. They feel like they do not have any hope. Many of them cannot afford a home. Many of them are living in their parents' homes, and these are kids who are 35 years old.

What would the hon. member say to them?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member's contribution tonight. Barrie—Innisfil is very lucky to have him.

What I would say is that we had the member from Calgary Skyview specifically talk about two areas. Number one was the tax-free savings program for young people. When I speak to young people, they have no savings. They do not have \$8,000 to tuck away for a home some day. When they hear this particular member start talking about \$15 billion in new loan funding for an apartment construction program, that program would not be available until fiscal year 2025-26.

Those young people need help and support, not a sham of a fiscal update and not the heckles of a member who should probably give it a break.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here tonight to discuss Bill C-59, the fall economic statement, for which we have been waiting for some time. Unfortunately, Conservatives have blocked debate on it and therefore its passage, but they came along tonight, and that is a great thing to see.

Hopefully we will see less obstruction on key legislation going forward, and the bill before us is key legislation. It includes within it items that are fundamental to this country's future, items that my constituents and constituents throughout the country really care about, like mental health, for example.

Through the years, and especially during the pandemic, I have talked to many mental health practitioners in my community of London, and I know I speak for many colleagues on this side of the House and on the other side of the House as well who made the case that the GST and HST should be removed from the cost of psychotherapy and counselling services. I think that is absolutely critical. We have seen that the government has moved on that. That is a testament to the government's commitment on mental health. Of course there are other things we have done to advance mental health, but this was something that previous governments had not recognized. I want to thank constituents again for raising the issue, because without their advocacy in the first place, I do not think we would have seen that change.

With respect to the environment, I am not going to talk about carbon emissions. I could, because there is a lot in the economic statement that addresses the issue of carbon emissions. However, our fresh water is a source of pride for Canadians. Canada has 20% of the world's total freshwater resources. What the economic statement opens the door to is the establishment of the Canada water

agency that would be headquartered in Winnipeg. Here, all orders of government, indigenous peoples and researchers would collaborate on ensuring the management of this country's freshwater resources.

Again, that speaks to a fundamental concern that Canadians have. They want clean air and clean water. They want to ensure that we have sustainable resources going forward for current and future generations. I have a two-year-old little girl. I want her to grow up in a country that values all of these things. When we talk about the future, we cannot talk about Canada without talking about—

● (2310)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tony Baldinelli): The member for Barrie—Innisfil is rising on a point of order.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I will just call for relevance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tony Baldinelli): That is not a point of order.

The parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, the member is an experienced member, and his comment just shows he has not read the bill, which contains within it the establishment of the Canada water agency through an act. He should read the bill. My advice to all my colleagues across the way is to just read the bill. If they are going to raise a point of order on relevance, they should make sure that they know what they are talking about. As I was saying, the collaboration that we would see in Winnipeg at the agency is something that we should all be very proud of and look forward to.

Housing is a fundamental concern. I have the honour of working as the parliamentary secretary responsible for housing. We have seen, through the economic statement, GST lifted from the construction of co-operative housing. There are 250,000 Canadians who live in co-ops across the country. We would see many more living in co-ops as a result of this measure, which would lead to many more co-ops being built.

In this fiscal environment, with high interest rates, we have to provide incentives to the private sector to respond, and this measure would be exactly that: an incentive on the table for the private sector. I am glad that we have seen collaboration on this in working with agencies, with advocates and with members of the opposition, but not with the Conservatives.

In fact I was stunned a few months ago when, let us not forget, the Leader of the Opposition said that co-op housing amounts to Soviet-style housing. What an absurd statement. This is from someone who aspires to be Prime Minister of this country. What would he tell the 250,000 Canadians who live in co-op housing? Would he say they live in Soviet-style housing? That is not serious. If we want to have a serious debate on the issues of the day, and housing is really at the top of that agenda in terms of the challenges the country faces, let us be serious about what we are facing and let us have a constructive debate to that end.

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On that note, earlier tonight, I will not say I was surprised, but I was disappointed to hear the member for Oshawa equate the government's policies with Marxism and to Leninism. That is not how we advance a genuine dialogue in Canada. Yes, the country's problems are significant. We are living through very challenging times. We have just come through a once-in-a-hundred-years pandemic that has impacted this country's social, political and economic fabric in ways that we are only beginning to fathom.

Let us not forget comments such as the one by the member for Oshawa, who just a little while back, about a year ago, sat down, with other Conservative colleagues, with far right politicians from Europe. It is no surprise that the Leader of the Opposition recently sat down with, met with and talked with adherents, those who espouse the message of far right groups like Diagonol. That is the absurdity of the moment we are in.

If the Conservatives think that they are going to win the day on social media by advancing these kinds of populist tactics, they might get some clicks, and they certainly do, and they might fundraise off these things, but democracy matters. That is no way to advance an agenda that is constructive and that is going to help rebuild this country. That is what I would say to my colleagues on the other side.

I know that my colleague from Oshawa apparently wants to equate our policies with communism; however, they are anything but. Let us look at what Moody's, not a communist organization at all, said. It is a very important organization because it, among others, helps set the ratings for this country. The fundamental fact that we have an AAA credit rating is the result of ratings agencies like Moody's that have recognized that. Its recent report states that the Canadian government's history and continued focus on maintaining a prudent fiscal stance stands out, as does the high rate of competitiveness in the Canadian economy.

Things like that stand out. An AAA credit rating is something this country has. We will continue to have it, along with the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio and one of the highest rates of foreign direct investment.

The country is going through a tough time. That is true, but we have a lot to look forward to. I will end on that note, and I look forward to questions from friends across the way.

● (2315)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague across the way is my constituency neighbour in London. I also have to admit that his daughter is ridiculously adorable.

We were at an event a few months ago, and the hon. member was talking about some of the different innovations within housing. He was talking about mobile units potentially being built. I think he was in Alberta to visit a plant there. I had conversations about those mobile units with members of a firefighters union when they were here in Ottawa, and a concern was raised. We spoke about the construction of the units and how the firefighters are maybe not being consulted with respect to codes and so on.

Could the member talk about that? Innovation in housing is very important, but so is safety.

The Speaker: I am certain that all members can agree that his daughter is indeed adorable.

The hon. member for London North Centre.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: She gets all her looks from her mother, actually, Mr. Speaker, but I appreciate those kind remarks.

I have talked about the importance of modular home construction. I think it is fundamental to dealing with the housing crisis that is at hand. I have said that. The minister has said that. Advocates across the country have said that. I applaud the member for meeting with advocates, along with firefighters, in the work they are doing in union advocacy. Certainly, the Conservatives would not sit down with unions, or maybe they would but it would not be serious.

Regardless, there is a national building code that ensures certain standards of safety are maintained. On my end, I will continue to work with those advocates who want to ensure that. There are many provisions in our national building code, which, of course, is interpreted at the provincial level by governments as well, to ensure safety in the way that the member advocates. I think that she and I are on the same page in that regard.

Let us move forward on these things together.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting conversation about modular homes. They are being built in a way right now that far exceeds any normal building standards. They are an option for the housing crisis in this country. The challenge with modular home builders right now is that, although they could scale up and actually build two or three times more than what they are building right now, they have a problem with cash flow. Oftentimes, they are required to pay out the development, which causes problems in terms of their ability to put these modular homes on developed spaces.

I just visited a modular home builder and cash flow is critical, so finding some way of advancing or eliminating the cash flow crisis that exists can actually help build these homes and scale them up in a much greater capacity. However, this budget does not address that.

● (2320)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, I have enormous respect for my hon. colleague, because I know he cares about his community. We may have certain fundamental disagreements on matters of policy, but I know he cares about his community. I have heard how passionately over the years he has raised the issues facing his community.

While modular homes are not the focus of the fall economic statement, they certainly have been given attention in the recent budget of 2024. If the member wants to see businesses, perhaps in his community, receive loan support, which is in budget 2024, among other supports, I would advise him to get behind budget 2024, read it and support it, along with the housing accelerator fund, which the Conservative Party has voted against.

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The member talked about lifting certain restrictions at local levels. I think it is fundamental that Conservatives get onside with a better way of doing things.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every day, Conservatives stand up in the House and cite food bank lineups, as if they care. They are also clear that they are going to vote against the national school food program. One of the other measures that we have taken, of course, in Bill C-59 is competition reform.

I wonder if my colleague could speak to the importance of having more competition.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, we do need more competition. In fact, I was very encouraged to hear the Minister of Industry confirm that he is looking at making sure that we have more competition in the grocery sector. It is something I have advocated for, for a very long time locally in London. This is something that we need to see across the country.

Whether it is the measures my colleague talked about specifically in terms of the Competition Act, or looking beyond our borders to bring in more competition, this would be a great thing.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise, as always, to speak in the House. Tonight, we are talking about the fall economic statement. Yes, members heard me right. We are talking about the economic statement from fall 2023.

It is worth pointing out that the Liberals have an arrangement with the NDP to support them, so they actually have a majority. How badly does one have to mismanage the House schedule to not have finished passing the fall economic statement by the time one actually has introduced a new budget in 2024?

It is what it is. The reality is that it does not matter which budget or economic statement the Liberals bring forward, because their elements are all the same. The first thing that one will see in every budget or economic statement that comes from the Liberals is huge government overspending, a huge deficit.

The fall economic statement did not disappoint in that respect. We see, again, that they continue to pour deficit spending on the inflationary fire. The Governor of the Bank of Canada has said that this makes it very difficult for him to lower interest rates, something that is hurting Canadians. We know that affordability is an issue, and this large deficit spending is just not helpful.

The second feature and benefit that one can always see in an economic statement or a budget from the Liberals is increased taxes. Once again, we see that they are increasing taxes in the bill.

The other thing one can count on is that there will be all kinds of programs, but the execution of the programs will not actually benefit anybody in the country. Those are really the main elements in the fall economic statement.

Interestingly, I have a new intern in my office. She is 20. She is very interested in getting involved in the political process. I gave her an exercise to go and write a speech about the budget. Without any of the usual talking points or anything, this is what she wrote,

and I think it applies, to illustrate my point, equally well to the fall economic statement.

She wrote, “After nine years of this Prime Minister and this Liberal-NDP government, Canadians are worse off than ever. Housing costs have doubled, interest rates have skyrocketed, and food banks can't keep up with the demand. Instead of helping Canadians, this new budget proposes billions of dollars in inflationary spending...which will only increase the cost of living and make life harder for Canadians!

“To briefly outline some of the main aspects of the budget, this coalition government promises to create economic prosperity within Canada, as well as building more homes and making them affordable. However, these promises are not new. Rather, they are almost identical to the promises made over the past nine years, promises that the Liberals failed to deliver time and time again. It seems this Liberal government believes that if they try the same thing over and over, it will lead to different results. That's the definition of insanity.”

That is what a 20-year-old thinks about the budgets and the economic statements that the Liberals are bringing forward. It is no wonder, because, in 2015, when I got elected, the Liberals promised to make housing more affordable. They have promised it and promised it; here we are, nine years up the road, and they are still promising to make housing more affordable.

The reality is that housing costs, mortgages, rents and down payments have doubled; the average Canadian is now spending 61% of their disposable income on housing. The Liberals have not made housing more affordable, and I do not see anything in the economic statement that is going to do the trick.

In fact, what I would say is that some of the ideas in here are unbelievable. They talk about leveraging the Infrastructure Bank to build housing. The Infrastructure Bank took \$35 billion from municipalities, money that was supposed to build infrastructure in those municipalities, and put it into this bank with the idea that they would be able to attract private investment and leverage money to build projects. They loaded up with all the Liberal insider friends to run the thing and never built any projects.

Here we are, five years up the road, and now they think they are going to use that bank, which attracted no private investment, to build houses. It is ludicrous. It is not going to happen.

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• (2325)

What I would say is that the Liberals have taken some of our Conservative leader's good ideas and they have put them in here. Taking the GST off new houses is one, which is a great idea, and there are a couple of other ideas that our Conservative colleagues had. I see a number of ideas from private members' bills that talked about maternity benefits and adoptive parent benefits, things like that, which were adopted in here, so it is good that the Liberals could learn from the good ideas that Conservatives have. Using federal lands and freeing up federal lands to build housing on is another great idea from the Conservatives.

Those are the highlights of the economic update, but one of the titles in the economic update is "Making Life More Affordable". I already talked about the housing part of it. Let us talk about the rest of it. The Liberals have jacked up the carbon tax, and the carbon tax has driven the cost of everything up. It has added 17¢ a litre to gasoline. It is a multiplier on the increased cost of food. If I think about the Parliamentary Budget Officer, he was saying that every year food prices have increased. The average person is paying \$1,400 more for food than they used to pay. I add that to the carbon tax, which, depending on the province one is in could be \$1,800 a year, and then I will talk about some of the other things.

I have a staffer who just got her insurance premium update, and it went up \$1,000 a year. They said the reason that it was going up was inflation and car theft. Again, it is these Liberal policies that are driving inflation and not addressing the catch and release of criminals who are stealing vehicles. It is unbelievable.

Before the pandemic, 50% of Canadians were within \$200 of not being able to pay their bills. With all the things I just quoted, if I add those up, it is an extra \$500 a month. Everybody is in the red. The Liberals have taken the middle class and they have turned it into the poor hoping to join back to the middle class. It is unacceptable.

We see that the Liberals, at the same time, have piled on with increased CPP and EI premium taxes, tax increases at a time when Canadians can least afford it, and they intend to quadruple the carbon tax. They also have increased the tax on alcohol and beer. This is something that is an every-year measure without any parliamentary oversight. It was put in a budget a few years ago, and Canadians are feeling the pinch.

Another title in the budget is "Making Groceries More Affordable". Have the the Liberals been to the grocery store and seen how expensive it is? It is ridiculous. They offer support for Canadians in their energy bills. In addition to the carbon tax, we have brought forward some great ideas like Bill C-234 to take the carbon tax off farmers to make food more affordable, but the government is keeping that from going forward. It has done nothing to help keep food more affordable.

What about supporting small businesses? The government would not let them extend their CEBA loan repayments, even with the hard-pressed small business environment from the pandemic, and now they are getting squeezed with a capital gains tax, even though these small business owners were told that this is how they would accumulate money for their retirement because they do not have

pensions as they are entrepreneurs. Now the government has changed the rules, and it has changed them retroactively. Instead of saying going forward it is going to change them, now it is punishing small business owners.

There are all these programs, and I do not have enough time to go into all of them, but the school food program has no food in it. It is provincial jurisdiction, so that is a waste of time. The dental program has no dentists signed up in most of the provinces. In P.E.I., Northwest Territories and Yukon there are none there. If I look, it is 25% or less in some of the other provinces, and people are left with the impression it is going to be free. It is not free. The government only covers 70%. People who cannot afford dental care cannot pay that other 30%, so it failed. That is my conclusion

• (2330)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly got a lot out of that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I know it is late at night. People are tired, and perhaps they do not have as much restraint as they normally do. I will ask all members to let us take it on in. There are only about 28 minutes left in this debate, so let us try to keep it together.

The hon. member from Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I would be lying if I said that I do not have a bit of FOMO for not being invited to the party in the back room.

In any event, I found it very interesting when the member said that the Liberals took all the Conservatives' great ideas and put them into the fall economic statement, yet she still will not vote for it. What is going on here? Does she not like the initiatives that she claims the Liberals took from the Conservatives?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, the problem is not the great ideas the Liberals took from the Conservatives, but the huge, over-spending deficits and the ballooning taxes that are going to hurt and punish Canadians, and are going to increase the misery that the Liberals have already caused.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker I will say, right off the bat, that it is troubling to hear the dismissal of the dental care program, the importance of the school food program and the infrastructure investments that we have seen, and much of that is the result of the push by the NDP.

My question to the member is this. Her party claims to defend working people and to want fairness for working people. We know that working people are paying more than their fair share when it comes to taxes, but who is not paying their fair share are the rich. I am wonder why the Conservatives are not coming out in support of the increase in the capital gains tax, recognizing it is a way of getting the richest in our country to pay more than what they are paying now, which is not quite their fair share. That would be revenue that could be reinvested in the needs that Canadians have across the country.

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Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I would say if the member really cares about the working class, she would quit propping up the Liberal government to increase the carbon tax on people, increase their CPP and EI premiums, increase the cost of groceries and all the things that are being propped up by the NDP's support of the Liberal government.

• (2335)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a quick question for my colleague. Did she ever think that Canada would pay more in debt-servicing than it does in health care transfers to the provinces? That is something I never thought I would see, \$54.1 billion in debt repayment, which is more than what we are going to give to the provinces for health care. What do you have to say about that, and what do you think your constituents would say about that?

The Speaker: I am certain that question was through the Chair to the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, health care is super important to Canadians. Our health care system is ailing. We do not have enough doctors as it is. What drives me crazy is not just that we are going to pay \$56 billion of interest on the debt, but also the fact that we have turned down \$59 billion for LNG from Germany, \$59 billion of revenue from Japan for LNG, another \$60 billion from the Netherlands for LNG. Those are all things the Liberal government has turned down. That money could help pay off the debt and help our health care system.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Through you, Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask this. The member opposite was blaming the insurance premium going up on, I believe, her staffer or somebody at her house. I wonder if it was from a car accident or repairs or if it was from a flood to a house or whatnot. How can the government be responsible for insurance premiums? I would really like to know how the budget was responsible for the insurance premium hike of \$1,000.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, I can be very concise, because the insurance company told my staffer that the reason for the \$1,000 increase in premiums was inflation and car theft. The Liberal government, with Bill C-75, made car theft go up 100% across the country, and it is driving inflation by pouring deficits on the inflationary fire.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last November, the government introduced Bill C-59, the fall economic statement implementation act of 2023. Among other measures, Bill C-59 proposed significant amendments to our Competition Act. I am proud to share that the Standing Committee on Finance has recently completed its review of the bill and has made several amendments to further strengthen existing proposals.

For many years, Canada's markets have been described as overly concentrated and not competitive enough. In fact, the landmark Competition Bureau study last year, based on Statistics Canada data and analysis from a University of Toronto professor, made critical findings in this respect, showing that competitive intensity has been on the decline over the past two decades, which is reflected in a

number of important indicators. These trends have been exacerbated by the inflationary pressures our country is facing following a global pandemic and increasing geopolitical uncertainty.

Bill C-59 was introduced to help build a stronger domestic economy through more competition and contestable markets to bring lower prices, more choice and better product quality for consumers across all sectors. The proposed amendments to the Competition Act in Bill C-59 arose out of a comprehensive public consultation conducted from November 2022 to March 2023.

Having heard from stakeholders, the government introduced Bill C-56, the Affordable Housing and Groceries Act, which was ultimately passed by this Parliament in December 2023.

Completing its response to the consultation, the government then presented a more extensive set of reforms by way of Bill C-59. The measures in this bill include strengthening provisions with respect to merger review, enhancing protections for consumers, workers and the environment, and broadening opportunities for private enforcement.

We should not underestimate just how critical these reforms are for modernizing our laws and promoting competitive markets. The commissioner of competition has stated on multiple occasions that the amendments in Bill C-56 and Bill C-59 are “generational.” I would therefore like to highlight some important reforms that have been proposed.

To begin with, anti-competitive collaborations between competitors would be under increased scrutiny as the bureau would be able to examine and, if necessary, seek penalties against coordinated conduct that lessens competition. Up until now, at worst the participants would be told to stop what they are doing. The expansion of private enforcement and the ability of the Competition Tribunal to issue monetary payment orders in cases initiated by private parties are also significant changes to our existing enforcement approach. By relaxing the requirements to bring a case and providing an incentive to bring matters directly to the Competition Tribunal, there would be greater accountability throughout the marketplace and more action on cases that the Competition Bureau may not be able to take.

More competition is always beneficial to consumers, but the bill also takes some direct approaches to protect consumers. These include strengthening provisions on deceptive marketing, such as applying requirements more broadly so vendors must present the full cost of a product or service up front without holding back mandatory fees, known as “drip pricing.” The law is further being refined to make it easier to ensure that advertised rebates are authentic when compared to a vendor's past prices. Businesses making environmental claims about their products would be required to have undertaken adequate and proper testing before advertising their benefits. Together, these changes would ensure that consumers have accurate and complete information about products and services in order to make informed purchasing decisions.

I would also like to highlight barriers to repair, which have been an issue of great importance in recent years. Where manufacturers refuse to provide the means of diagnosis or repair in a way that harms competition, remedial orders would be available to require them to furnish what is necessary. This could help a wider variety of service providers offer more options to consumers when choosing where to repair their products.

On top of everything I have mentioned so far, anti-reprisal provisions would also ensure that the system can function. These are included to ensure that workers and small businesses are protected from potential retaliation when they work with the authorities to address anti-competitive behaviour and violations of the act by other parties.

● (2340)

These reforms, along with various administrative changes, aimed at facilitating efficient enforcement of the act, are crucial to ensuring that Canadian markets remain competitive and in line with international practices.

It has been acknowledged by all members of the House that our competition framework requires reform. My colleagues have engaged in thoughtful discussion on ways to modernize the existing marketplace framework. Nothing exemplifies this better than the enthusiasm shown by members of all parties to strengthen these provisions of Bill C-59 once it reaches the Standing Committee on Finance, especially in light of recommendations made by the commissioner of competition.

The amendments adopted in committee notably relate to merger review, deceptive marketing, and refusal to repair. The committee members were quite interested in enhancing protections for consumers and the environment, and these are the ones that I would like to draw attention to now.

First, clarifications were made to ensure that in the Competition Act's various provisions on drip pricing, the only amounts that could be excluded from the upfront price are those imposed by law directly on the purchaser of the product, such as sales tax. Next, with the committee's amendment, sellers advertising reduced prices would now be required to be able to prove that regular price is authentic in order to publicize their discounts.

On the topic of doubtful environmental claims, or so-called greenwashing, the law would also require that those who make environmental claims about their businesses or business activities, not

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only specific products, must have adequate and proper substantiation in hand to support such claims. On refusal to repair, the committee added some helpful clarifications to ensure that the scope of provision was broad enough.

In sum, amidst the period of inflation and growing affordability concerns, it is crucial that our markets remain resilient and open to competition. Bill C-59 would reform Canada's competitive landscape, encourage greater innovation, and improve affordability for Canadians.

Therefore, I would like to urge my colleagues from all sides of the House to work together to expeditiously pass this crucial piece of legislation.

● (2345)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talked about the importance of increasing competition, and I do agree with that.

However, it does not seem consistent with the actions of the government that approved the Shaw merger with Rogers and the acquisition of the HSBC bank by RBC. These things are definitely not increasing competition.

Could the member explain how that is consistent with the Liberal government's direction?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question.

Whenever any banks or any major telecoms merge, the scrutiny is very strict. There is always a review under the Competition Act. Banking regulators and public opinions are even brought into the question. It is only after thorough commitments and signs from such parties do they actually agree in these cases. Many have been rejected or have been pushed back before. In this case, they are being cautious.

Currently, in the competition world, our grocery sector is the one that everyone is monitoring very strongly and carefully. In that case, I think we will see the addition of more competition rather than any mergers or reductions.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, there are parts of the fall economic statement that I did appreciate, but other parts did not go far enough, including addressing corporate greed.

Just yesterday, I summoned to the indigenous and northern affairs committee, the CEO of The North West Company and asked him about his salary. His annual salary is \$3.91 million. I asked him what the salary of a cashier in his stores are. The salary of the cashiers, in Iqaluit, where the cost of living is much higher, is \$37,000 a year.

I wonder if the member could tell the House what the Conservatives are claiming causes inflation, which are things like carbon tax. Could the member maybe correct the record about what is causing the price increases in Canada?

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Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, no more is it a testament than in places like Nunavut and Iqaluit, where one is seeing this discrepancy between the person actually selling the groceries and feeding a family, and the elite at the top. That is why we put measures, including the capital gains changes, where a lot of corporate executives were able to discount some of the tax rates that would normally be applicable if they paid that in a salary format as opposed to stock options. These are some of the ways that the playing field becomes level.

However, there is more work to do. That is absolutely right. The right to organize is something we have guaranteed in the House as well. The Liberals have committed to that. This government has committed to that. We have reversed measures the Conservative government had imposed prior, and that will strengthen the right to organize and get better wages for those members.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a brief question. I find the last intervention about grocery prices to be very fascinating because the reality is that in Canada, 42% of the retail grocery sector is controlled by Loblaw, whereas the largest sector in the United States is Walmart, with 11%.

However, the Conservatives will never be heard talking about the massive profits that are being made by oil giants or by the grocery retailers. I am wondering what the member's comments on that would be.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Speaker, it would be very difficult for them to say because the chief adviser in their Conservative caucus was considered, currently, before or after, by a side company, a sister company, I do not know exactly, but she is paid as a formal lobbyist for that very dominating grocer in the House. It becomes difficult for them to challenge when they are paid and supported by that particular organization.

I will leave it at that.

• (2350)

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see that, even at this late hour, we still have people here intending and trying to learn from the incompetence that the present government is showing.

With the holiday season upon us once again, oh, we need to hang on a sec; I wrote this speech back in December, and the holiday season was upon us at that point in time. However, it shows the incompetence we see from the government that it has taken six months to get to this stage. It is interesting that when we look at things where things are being tabled, I guess we consider the holidays. In some ways, I am not being wrong when I say the holidays, because we do have Victoria Day coming up within a week, or as they say here in Ontario, May Two-Four day. It is a holiday that is coming, so I guess I am not being incorrect in that statement.

Now, Canadians all across the country are feeling the financial pinch, and many of them are trying to save money in any way they can. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the Liberal government, which continues to increase spending and taxes on the backs of middle-class people, as outlined in the fall economic statement. After nine years under the Prime Minister, Canadians are struggling

while the government just keeps getting richer. We see this struggle in many different areas. Food bank usage is up across the country, with a record two million visits occurring in a single month, and that is projected to be increasing by another million.

First of all, I would like to thank the Salvation Army, which does a tremendous job in helping our Canadians with raising food for the food banks, helping to feed Canadians and stepping forward and stepping up. I know the Salvation Army was here this past week. I would also like to thank all Canadians who step up and contribute to these food drives and assist Canadians, because what we need is showing where Canadians are working for Canadians.

Unfortunately, as I said, we cannot say where the government can continue to increase spending and taxes on the backs of these middle-class people, and this is outlined in the Liberals' fall economic statement. After nine years of the government, we have seen that the cost of groceries continues to go up, and over 50% of Canadians are \$200 or less away from going broke. The situation is alarming, and one would expect that a responsible government would introduce measures to address this, but no. Instead, the Prime Minister has announced more than \$20 billion in new inflationary spending in the fall economic statement, and this will continue to keep inflation and interest rates higher than Canadians can afford.

Sadly, this does not come as a surprise to anyone who has been paying attention to the government's dismal history when it comes to managing the finances of this country. I will read from an article from *The Globe and Mail*, which says, "Every time the Liberals update the country on the state of its finances, it is accompanied by pages of prose [141 pages, to be exact, in this situation] trumpeting the government's devotion to fiscal restraint. And yet, every time, spending somehow ratchets higher." One need only glance at the projected deficits to see that this is true.

Let us go back in time to touch on budget 2023, where the finance minister said that the deficits for the next four years would be as follows: \$35 billion, \$26.9 billion, \$15.7 billion and, finally, \$14 billion in 2027-28. Let us keep in mind that those projections were made over a year ago, and not much has changed with respect to Canada's fiscal landscape since then. Now, let us take a look at the new deficit projections from the fall economic statement. It states that we will have a \$38.4 billion deficit in 2024-25, then \$38.3 billion, then \$27.1 billion and, finally, \$23.8 billion in 2027-28. This is an average of about \$9 billion more per year. In what world is that considered fiscally responsible or showing restraint, as the Liberals would like us to believe? How is that possible?

• (2355)

In fact, with the BIA, which we are debating right now, we now have a better idea of what the national debt numbers will be. Remember that the national debt, back in 2015, when the Liberal government came into power, was just over \$600 billion. In 2023, the government showed it to be \$1.1 trillion. That 0.1 is \$100 billion. When we put it in that perspective and look at this, people need to finally wake up to what those costs are. According to the statement in the fall economic statement, it will be \$1.2 trillion.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (2400)

[English]

As for this budget that came forward just now, the 2024 budget, which was supposed to be there to help generation Z and the millennials, when one looks at what that projects the national debt will be for 2025-26, is projecting it to be \$1.5 trillion. That is a \$200-billion to \$300-billion increase. How is that helping generation Z and millennials? That is adding \$300 billion-plus onto the debt, which they are going to have to pay at some time. How is it going to happen?

As for what this government is doing, it is upping the credit limit, and it is increasing it to \$2 trillion, more than we have, and continuing. How is that teaching gen Z and millennials, or even anybody, how to save money? How can they afford to survive? We are not teaching them a thing, and this from a government that campaigned back in 2015 on having just two \$10-billion deficits. That is simple math. It is not hard to figure out, but when it was \$600 billion, assuming that they had two \$10-billion deficits, our deficit should only be \$620 billion. Those numbers do not seem to add up.

Furthermore, while the annual government revenue projections are to be \$6 billion higher because of their inability to control Canada's debt, interest costs have skyrocketed and will have doubled in the last two years. Here are the budget projections for interest charges on the federal debt of budget 2023: \$46 billion for 2024-25, \$46.6 billion for 2025-26, \$48.3 billion for 2026-27 and \$50.3 billion in 2027-28.

Let us compare those interest figures with the new updated projections from the fall economic statement, where we have \$52.4 billion in 2024-25, \$53.3 billion and then \$55.1 billion, ending with \$58.4 billion in 2027-28. Interest costs are now the highest they have been in a decade, and the Liberals have no plan whatsoever to remedy this. This eats up and consumes the \$6 billion in increased revenue I previously mentioned. That is net-zero increases.

To put this into perspective, the Prime Minister has allowed the interest costs for the federal government to run so high that the amount is now double what it spent on national defence, and it will be more than the federal government spends on health care next year, which is evident in our 2024 budget, where the interest rates that are being paid are higher than the total amount we would spend on health care.

This means that, instead of taxpayer money going toward our doctors and nurses, it will be spent on servicing a debt that should never have been this high in the first place. The government cannot be trusted to do what is in the best interests of Canadians, and it is time for a new Conservative government that truly understands what responsible fiscal management means.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I had the pleasure to go to the first-ever National Air Accessibility Summit and hear from advocates and organizations on how we can better serve people with disabilities on our airlines.

The summit is a historic step towards improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in this country. Attendees heard first-hand experiences of navigating air services with different accessibility needs and barriers that exist in the current system, and ideas on how to solve them. What matters is whether the government was listening.

The government failed to listen to disability advocates and organizations, like its own advisory council, while it was developing the Canada disability benefit. In the consultation on that, the Liberals heard about the barriers that the disability tax credit posed and about how many low-income people with disabilities were unable to access it. They were told about the problem of potential provincial clawbacks and so much more. However, they acted on none of it. The current government does a great job of announcing that there are problems, but if the Canada disability benefit is any sign, it is not listening to the answers.

In February I asked the Prime Minister when he would get serious about holding airline CEOs to account to protect Canadians. While the Liberals will point to the summit today, there was nothing binding and we have seen nothing on the accountability for the corporations that were perpetrating human rights abuses. The Liberal government repeatedly makes bold announcements but does little. In fact today, the Minister of Transport said that he would leave it to the guys to solve this problem, instead of legislating it here in the House.

It reminds me of the previous Conservative government. It is the very same one that the Prime Minister campaigned against as not being transparent enough, yet he now seems to want to do nothing more than emulate it. Just like the Conservatives before him, the Prime Minister continues to have open arms and deep pockets for corporations and CEOs not following rules.

However, when it comes to people with disabilities who need support, following the law is not something that the government cares about. This is not right. Like I said to the Prime Minister in the past, the government's lack of action on holding airline CEOs to account is a failure. I ask again, when will the Prime Minister get serious about holding CEOs to account to protect persons with disabilities in this country?

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business and to the Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians have the right to travel, and this is especially important to the more than eight million Canadians who have a disability and expect a barrier-free travel experience.

We know that barriers in the transportation system often result in unacceptable impacts for passengers with disabilities, including to their health, independence and dignity. That is why we convened a national air accessibility summit today, to bring together partners from the community of persons with disabilities, the air transportation sector, government and its agencies to engage on this important issue. The summit led to productive and engaging discussions to find solutions for a more consistent and seamless travel experience for all Canadians.

We have also put in place safeguards for the rights of passengers with disabilities, including regulations. The Canadian Transportation Agency created the accessible transportation for persons with disabilities regulations. These regulations guide transportation service providers like airlines on how to communicate with passengers with disabilities, offer assistance, ensure that planes, ferries, trains and buses are accessible, and train workers to assist travellers with disabilities. The Canadian Transportation Agency has the mandate to ensure that airlines follow these rules and treat passengers with disabilities fairly.

Recently, the agency fined Air Canada \$97,500 for violating parts of these regulations. Also, if a passenger with a disability experiences physical or psychological harm due to an airline breaking the rules on purpose or through negligence, the agency can order compensation for their pain and suffering.

While regulations set the basics for making travel accessible, we know that airlines need to go beyond just following the rules.

Air Canada also announced new measures to improve its services for passengers with disabilities. This includes the formation of an advisory group of persons with disabilities to provide lived experience to improve its services and training. It is also accelerating the timeline of its accessibility plan required under the Accessible Canada Act. This is in addition to measures it took in November of last year.

Transport Canada and other stakeholders recently partnered with the International Air Transport Association to create guidelines for safely and efficiently transporting mobility aids by airline staff and contractors.

The Government of Canada also introduced Bill C-52, the enhancing transparency and accountability in the transportation system act, which includes a proposal for collecting and publishing accessibility complaints data. This addresses a need to get better complaint data regarding accessible transportation for passengers with disabilities. In fact, this was a recurring topic of discussion at the summit today. We know this will also allow the Government of Canada to gain insights into systemic issues and act appropriately to provide necessary accountability for air carriers.

The Government of Canada remains steadfast in its commitment to forging a barrier-free Canada and holding airlines accountable for providing services to passengers with disabilities.

• (2405)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Mr. Speaker, I hear the member talk about regulations and that a few fines have been put forward, but it is not consistent. Enforcement is not happening. We heard that today, and I want the government to get better.

I also want to talk about the airports capital assistance program. One of the other things we learned is that the airports capital assistance program ranks accessibility of airports as the last priority on its list, actually below sprinklers. The result of accessibility being the last priority for the government is that there has been no funding for small airports in over 20 years.

My ask of the government today is this: Will the government immediately move accessibility up to the number one priority for the airports capital assistance program? It should move it up to priority one. It does not cost anything and it is a human rights need.

Mr. Bryan May: Mr. Speaker, let me first say it is unacceptable that anyone, regardless of their abilities, should experience the treatment that we have seen in some cases in the media recently. Today, at the national air accessibility summit, we convened a diverse group of participants from across Canada, including representatives from the community of persons with disabilities and the air travel sector, to ensure that all service providers in the air travel ecosystem uphold their responsibilities to help make travel a seamless experience for all.

Rest assured that we are also taking steps, like the introduction of Bill C-52 and new proposed provisions for accessibility related data to address these issues, and to reduce barriers and the risk of such incidents from happening again. We will continue to work tirelessly to create a more inclusive and barrier-free Canada for all.

Mr. Speaker, I wish you a good evening on this late night and a good week in your constituency.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (2410)

(The House adjourned at 12:10 a.m.)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member. I wish all members who are present and who are participating online the same thing.

[*Translation*]

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until later today at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

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