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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)
[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 19th report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration in relation to the motion adopted on Monday, May 6, regarding the processing times for permanent residence pathways for Hong Kong residents. Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 20th report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration in relation to the motion adopted on Monday, May 6, regarding Canadian Armed Forces' applications from permanent residents. Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

FINANCE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 19th report of the Standing Committee on Finance, presented on Monday, May 6, 2024, be concurred in.

I would like to inform the House that I will be splitting my time with the magnificent member for Victoria.

Report 19, “Excess Profit Tax on Large Grocery Companies”, was put forward by my predecessor, the former NDP finance critic, Daniel Blaikie, who said the following:

Given that the Canadian grocery sector made more than \$6 billion in profit in 2023 and that millions of Canadians have reported food insecurity in the last year, the Standing Committee on Finance call on the government to immediately take action by implementing an excess profit tax on large grocery companies that would put money back in the people's pocket with a GST rebate and establish a National School Food Program, and that this motion be reported to the House.

The Canadian grocery sector's \$6 billion in profits last year set a new record. Grocery prices are now rising at the fastest rate in more than 40 years. At the same time, Canadians are going hungry, food

insecurity is rising dramatically and demand for food banks is exceeding donations. There can be no doubt that corporate greed is resulting in higher grocery bills for Canadians.

According to Statistics Canada, food retail profits have more than doubled since prepandemic norms, and profits continue to grow. The Competition Bureau has found that the profit margins of grocery giants are increasing and that this trend predates the supply chain disruptions faced during the pandemic and the current inflationary period.

Loblaws has almost doubled its profit margin in the last five years, and Metro has the biggest profit margin of any grocer in Canada. Loblaws has even admitted to participating in an industry-wide price-fixing scam, yet there have been no meaningful consequences for these corporate criminals who ripped off Canadians for bread.

While New Democrats have fought for years to make grocery giants and other corporate giants play by the rules, pay what they owe, and put the money back in people's pockets, both the Liberals and the Conservatives have refused to tackle corporate greed. In fact, the Liberals have gifted \$26 million to Loblaws and Costco for new appliances. The Conservatives brought in \$60 billion in corporate tax giveaways when they were last in power, and both the Liberals and the Conservatives failed to get tough on corporate criminals as their successive governments presided over an industry-wide bread price-fixing scam from 2001 to 2015.

Due to this failure of leadership, Canadians have now taken matters into their own hands by boycotting big grocery chains. Instead of sitting on the sidelines while Canadians go hungry, it is time for the federal government to act.

In 2022, the Liberal government agreed to bring in a one-time 15% windfall profits tax on banks and insurance firms, known as the Canada recovery dividend. There is absolutely no reason this measure should not be extended to grocery giants.

Routine Proceedings

Forcing grocery giants to pay tax on excess profits would disincentivize price gouging and encourage lower prices. It would help recoup the tax dollars that both Liberals and Conservatives have gifted to grocery giants. It would lower food costs for Canadians through a grocery rebate and an expanded national school food program.

The finance committee report before us today is not the first time a committee has recommended an excess profits tax on grocery multinationals in this Parliament. On June 13, 2023, the Standing Committee on Agriculture presented a report to the House, which recommended the following:

...if the Competition Bureau finds evidence in its upcoming market study that large grocery chains are generating excess profits on food items, the Government of Canada should consider introducing a windfall profits tax on large, price-setting corporations to disincentivize excess hikes in their profit margins for these items.

● (1010)

On June 27, 2023, the Competition Bureau released its retail grocery market study report, which found exactly that. The report noted that the Canadian grocery industry is concentrated, and the problem is getting worse. When the Competition Act was introduced in 1986, there were at least eight large grocery chains in Canada, and each was owned by a different company. Today, most sales are happening in stores owned by five grocery giants: Loblaws, Sobeys, Metro, Costco and Walmart. Grocery prices are increasing at the fastest rate in decades, and the profits of Canada's three largest grocers, Loblaws, Metro and Sobeys, have risen significantly in recent years.

The food gross margins of grocery giants are increasing, and this trend predates the supply chain disruptions faced during the pandemic and the current inflationary period. Even small changes in margins can be meaningful. Every percentage point increase in gross margins at grocery stores adds over \$1 billion to Canadians' food bills each year. The fact that Canada's largest grocers have been able to increase these margins is a sign that there is room for more competition in Canada's grocery industry. Those were the conclusions of the Competition Bureau.

The Competition Bureau's findings contradict previous committee testimony from grocery giants, who claimed they are not increasing profit margins on food items but instead are simply passing on higher costs from suppliers. This should come as no surprise. Canadians have every right to be skeptical of the claims made by grocery giants, as well as their commitment to corporate ethics, based on their previous conduct.

We must never forget that in December 2017, Weston Foods and Loblaw Companies Limited confessed that they participated in what they described as an "industry-wide price-fixing arrangement" to inflate retail and wholesale bread prices for Canadians. The Competition Bureau has since executed search warrants against Canada Bread, Weston Foods, Loblaws, Metro, Sobeys, Walmart Canada, Giant Tiger, Overwaitea Food Group Limited, and Maple Leaf Foods Inc.

Despite this years-long investigation, there have been no meaningful consequences for the perpetrators of this criminal price-fixing scam. Loblaws received immunity from prosecution and of-

fered customers \$25 gift cards as compensation. Canada Bread also received leniency in sentencing after pleading guilty to four counts of price-fixing.

Given that we still do not have clear answers on this scheme or any real consequences for these corporate misdeeds that stole bread money out of people's pockets, Canadians have understandably run out of patience. It is time for their elected leaders to step up, and that is what New Democrats are doing today.

An excess profits tax would not only discourage price gouging; it would also provide significant revenue to address growing rates of food insecurity and child hunger across Canada.

Today, nearly one in four Canadian children does not get enough to eat, and more than one-third of food bank users are children. According to Children First Canada, there has been a 29% increase in food insecurity in children in the last year alone. However, Canada remains the only G7 country that does not have some form of a national school food program or national standards. This is a critical gap felt strongly in a time of skyrocketing food prices.

After years of NDP pressure, including a bill I introduced in this House almost five years ago, the Liberals finally agreed to bring in a national school food program in budget 2024. This urgently needed program will be in place as early as the 2024-25 school year and help 400,000 children access the food they need to grow up healthy. By the way, that is nowhere near what is needed. There are over two million Canadians attending school from grades 1 to 6 in this country, and every one of them deserves a hot, nutritious meal every day they attend school.

This is an important first step. While there are over two million children in grades 1 to 6 alone in Canada, and 2.6 million in grades 1 to 8, clearly the scale of this program is far from sufficient to reach all Canadian children. Revenues from an excess profits tax on grocery giants could be strategically used to provide more nutritious meals to more Canadian children. Based on the latest data from Statistics Canada's Canadian income survey, 8.7 million Canadians lived in food-insecure households in 2023.

● (1015)

As a targeted income support, a grocery rebate would also be an important tool for addressing household food insecurity. It would recognize that inadequate income and high prices lie at the root of the challenges faced by Canadians who are unable to afford the food they need.

Routine Proceedings

In light of the record profits made by the Canadian grocery sector, coupled with the alarming rise in food insecurity among millions of Canadians, I call on all members of the House to support the concurrence motion before us. Corporate greed cannot be allowed to drive up grocery bills while Canadians go hungry. It is time for the federal government to act decisively for Canadians and ensure fairness for all.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is very concerned about the price of groceries. It is one of the reasons we called the grocery giants to the table to demand better from them. It is why we brought in legislation to make changes to the Competition Act; this is something the NDP supported, which I appreciate.

The member referred to providing food for children. Just this last week, the Prime Minister was in The Maples, announcing and amplifying that particular program. Children cannot learn or participate on an empty stomach. I would suggest to the member that the government is very much aware of the situation and is taking action where it can. Could he be a bit more precise about what, specifically, he would like to see take place outside the one tax he is talking about that we need to put in?

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, there is a huge difference between making a demand of an industry and making a request. The Liberal government has requested that the grocery industry make changes in this country. It has asked that it do that.

This industry has proved itself to be gouging Canadians and making record profits. The NDP is talking about compelling it to pay more.

I just want to say that the Liberals and the NDP campaigned in the 2021 federal election on devoting a billion dollars to a national school nutrition program. The government has been in power now for an additional three and a half years. It took three and a half years for the government to bring in this program that the NDP has been pushing for; in that time period, millions of Canadian children have gone hungry. This should have been one of the first measures brought in by the government, not one that it waited to bring in until near the end of its term and that may not even be in place until 2025.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, the NDP persistently ignores the role of inflation and the carbon tax in driving up the price of food and other everyday essentials for Canadians.

Conservatives recognize that greed is a common part of the human condition, and this includes government greed. Bizarrely, the New Democrats think that it is only the private sector and that the government is totally immune to greed. They ignore the role that government greed plays with respect to higher taxes, higher spending, the pursuit of ever-greater government control and how that is making life more unaffordable under the NDP-Liberal coalition.

We hear a lot about specific grocery companies but almost nothing about Metro, which is one major grocery company in this country. Does the NDP member think the lack of mention of Metro by the NDP has anything to do with the fact that its leader's brother is a lobbyist for Metro?

• (1020)

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, no. The only lack here is a lack of listening by my fellow colleague, because I did mention Metro several times in my speech, so I do not know what he is talking about.

What is interesting when we talk about greed is that the one difference between New Democrats and Conservatives is this: When we are in power, we are not going to give the corporate sector \$60 billion in gifts as the last Conservative government did.

With respect to government greed and taxation, maybe my hon. colleague needs to explain to all the seniors who are currently going to dentists in this country why Conservatives would take away dental care from seniors and pharmacare from diabetics. I do not call that greed; I call it a lack of compassion and poor public policy.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is amazing to watch Conservatives, yet again, go to bat for their corporate friends. They are country club Conservatives indeed.

I take issue with the parliamentary secretary, because he was making an intervention about the Liberals. The Liberals set up a grocery task force, which has completed no tasks and is not much of a force. Members will forgive me if I need to take the Liberal promises with a grain of salt, because we have been waiting for forceful action for over two years. They have all the tools of government at their disposal, and they are wondering what more can be done.

Could my hon. colleague expand a bit on the Liberals' failure to take this issue with the seriousness it deserves and really recognize the hurt that so many Canadians are going through?

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague hit the nail on the head: The Liberals have gone cap in hand to the grocery sector and asked them to act. That is not what is required in these situations.

What is required is strong governmental action. They did it with the banks. They brought in a windfall profits tax on the banks. There is no reason they should not do it in the grocery sector.

At the end of the day, the NDP is interested in making sure that Canadians can afford to have nutritious food for everybody and their family. It is not happening now, and it is unacceptable in a G7 country and in one as wealthy as Canada.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, corporate greed is driving up costs.

At a time when Canadians are struggling, it is unacceptable to see a government fail to tackle a key driver of inflation. It is one key reason that families are having a hard time putting food on the table, paying rent, paying their mortgages and paying for essential medication.

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So many Canadians are struggling right now. They have been doing everything right, yet they still cannot get ahead. The cost of living has gotten out of hand. At the same time, the biggest corporations and their rich CEOs are doing better than ever. Between 2019 and 2023, the Liberals decided to give out \$25.5 million to Loblaw's and Costco. This is while these grocery store chains were making record profits.

No matter where people live in Canada, they should be able to buy the food they need. Canadians are worried about how to put food on the table; the Liberals are worried about how many millions of dollars they want to hand out to their wealthy friends and people at the very top.

Considering that they gave out over \$25 million to corporations that were already making massive profits, it is no surprise that we have people across Canada boycotting these chains right now. It is because the Liberals and the Conservatives have failed to tackle corporate greed. Really, they lack the courage to do so.

It is the role of government to make our country fair. Instead, the Liberals and the Conservatives before them have been making rich CEOs even richer. This \$25 million is in addition to the \$2.35 billion in handouts to the three big grocery chains given by successive Liberal and Conservative governments; taxpayer money is handed out to corporations that are making record profits.

It is no wonder that the majority of Canadians support an excess profit tax. We are talking about a tax on grocery store chains, but I also want to take a moment to talk about the need for a windfall tax on oil and gas. On the eve of the federal budget, it was reported that the Minister of Finance was considering a windfall tax on oil and gas. However, according to the *Globe and Mail* article, multiple sources confirmed that she backed down “in the face of strong lobbying from oil patch executives and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.”

The same lobbyists and executives are raking in record profits, increasing their emissions and gouging Canadians at the pump, all while handing out millions of dollars in bonuses to their CEOs. Luckily for them, the Liberal government has their back.

Canadians are not so lucky. They have been experiencing the dual crisis of the cost of living and the climate crisis. There are wildfires, heat domes that kill hundreds of people and multi-year droughts; at the same time, communities are evacuated because of extreme flooding. This is costing our economy and our communities billions of dollars in damages. It has taken the lives of hundreds of Canadians.

While Canadians are struggling with the impacts of the climate crisis, they are also struggling with the price gouging from big pharma, big grocery chains, real estate developers and investors, and oil and gas corporations, which are driving up prices while corporate profits hit record highs. Left unchecked, soaring corporate profits are a major driver in the recent inflation spike. These inflationary price increases hurt workers' pockets while padding corporate profits, particularly in oil and gas.

Most Canadians can see that greedflation is a problem. The majority of Canadians support a windfall tax on oil and gas. The concept of a windfall profits tax or an excess profits tax is not a radical

solution. It is a pragmatic approach that has been adopted by countries around the world. A windfall tax has been implemented by the United Kingdom and more than 20 European countries. It has raised over \$10 billion. In response to record profits, these countries decided to put in place a windfall profits tax.

● (1025)

The global surge in energy prices that has been exacerbated by geopolitical tensions, market manipulations and corporate greed has generated a response; countries levied additional taxes on the surplus profits of oil and gas companies. However, in Canada, both the Liberal government and the Conservative opposition have shown a disheartening reluctance to take on big oil and gas. While New Democrats successfully forced the Liberals to put a surplus profits tax on the big banks, the Liberals refuse to ruffle the feathers of their friends in oil and gas. The Liberals lack the courage to take on corporate greed.

Of course, then there are the Conservatives, who continue to do the bidding of the oil and gas executives who are flocking to the Conservatives' fundraisers. Conservatives champion increasing production and emissions; they disregard the long-term environmental and economic consequences of these policies. The corporate-controlled Conservatives have no climate plan. They have no problem letting oil and gas companies pollute and gouge Canadians without consequence.

It is not surprising that the Conservatives will not even talk about corporate greed or about a windfall profits tax when the Leader of the Opposition's top adviser had to use a shell company to try to hide her lobbying, which she denies. The fact is that their party is run by lobbyists. However, no matter what the Conservatives believe, climate change is real; the cost of living crisis is real. These crises are costing Canadians. They are costing our economy billions of dollars in annual disaster response, mitigation and adaptation. Canadians are struggling. However, the Liberals have shown that, despite a clear mandate from Canadians, who support a windfall tax and demand accountability, the Liberals would rather be wined and dined by big oil, big grocery store chains and big pharma. For years, Liberals have sat on their hands while Canada's biggest polluters have made more money than ever before and while the biggest grocery chains are gouging Canadians and price-fixing with no accountability.

Routine Proceedings

The Parliamentary Budget Officer reported that, if the Liberals just made oil and gas companies pay their fair share and just implemented a windfall tax on oil and gas companies, the government would generate \$4 billion a year. This could be invested in helping Canadians who are struggling with the cost of living, in clean energy, in public transportation and in helping families switch to heat pumps, ultimately driving down emissions and helping people with the cost of living. A windfall tax on the profits of grocery store chains and on oil and gas profits is not just wise; it is essential. It is a needed policy to support Canadians when they are struggling.

I want to take a moment to talk about an amazing organization in my community: Flourish! School Food Society. It is a school food program for many communities in my region. Canada is the only G7 country without a national school food program, so we need to generate funds to ensure that we can support Canadians and make sure that kids never have to worry about where their next meal will come from, that they never have to worry that they cannot focus on school, cannot learn or cannot grow. We need to invest in Canadians, tax the corporations that are making record profits and ensure that every Canadian can make a good life.

• (1030)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to recognize that, as a government, we are moving toward a grocery code of conduct for the first time. We have actually made amendments to the Canada Competition Bureau. The member who spoke before the member for Victoria talked about how important the Competition Bureau is in terms of being effective.

The member talked about the national school food program, which has been incorporated into the most recent budget. In fact, just last week, as I pointed out, the Prime Minister himself was in Winnipeg North talking about that program at Elwick Community School. We understand the needs of Canadians, which is one of the reasons we continue to bring in the programs and the legislation that are necessary to support Canadians in all regions of the country.

Would the member provide her additional thoughts regarding how important the national food program is for the children of Canada and how it is a good thing to have that in the budget? Unfortunately, the Conservatives will be voting against it.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, a national school food program is an essential policy, and the Liberals were pushed into actually delivering on it by the NDP, but I just want to take a moment address what the member started off talking about, which is a grocery store code of conduct. The Liberals are asking grocery store chains nicely to please behave. This is not how we get greedy corporations to actually do the right thing.

The government has a responsibility to tackle corporate greed. We need to regulate these industries. Big oil and gas companies are not going to fund climate solutions on their own; we have seen it. They have rolled back their emissions targets while they rake in record profits, and then they come to the government asking for more handouts, and for some reason the government continues to give out billions of dollars to big oil and gas companies and mil-

lions to big grocery store chains. How about the government gives that money to Canadians?

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering whether the member would like to comment on the fact that the brother of the leader of the NDP is a lobbyist from Metro and that in fact its profits have actually outstripped those of Loblaw. Metro is at 4.6%, whereas Loblaw is at 3.4%. Is that just a coincidence?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, we need to tackle grocery store chain profits: all the big grocery store chains. Unfortunately we have seen from the Conservatives that half of their national executive, their governing body, is made up of lobbyists from the big grocery store chains, from big pharma and from oil and gas. The same CEOs are flocking to Conservative fundraisers to donate to them because they know, as they have seen it time and time again, that Conservatives in power make rich CEOs richer, and Canadians get their services cut. They get the programs they depend on cut. This is what we get with Conservatives.

• (1035)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member so much for raising the oil and gas industry and the amount of profit that they are taking off the table. As we head into or are already deeply into the wildfire season, I wonder whether the member could talk a bit about how that is impacting Canadians at this point in time.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her ongoing advocacy for climate action. At a time when we are seeing wildfire season starting in some regions of the country in February, and when last year we saw the worst wildfire season on record, with thousands of people evacuated from their homes, we need to name the fact that rich oil and gas CEOs are culpable in the climate disasters that are happening in our country and the government is letting them get away with it.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, could the hon. member explain to me how lower grocery prices would be seen by Canadians if the government should choose to tax 100% of the profits of the big grocery stores? How would it affect someone going to the store if the money flowed from the grocery stores to the federal government?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, I think the member does not understand an excess profits tax. It is a tax on the excess profits, the windfall profits, and it is not a radical idea. It has been implemented in the UK with respect to oil and gas. It has been implemented in 20 European countries, and it has been shown that taxing excess profits, windfall profits, disincentivizes price gouging. It disincentivizes the greedy corporations from making even more money and putting it in the pockets of their shareholders at the expense of everyday people.

*Privilege***PRIVILEGE**

ALLEGED BREACH OF SPEAKER'S IMPARTIALITY

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a question of privilege, and I regret having to do that.

I am raising this question of privilege today on yet another instance of public display of partisanship on the part of our Speaker, following the promotion of a Liberal Party of Canada event with the Speaker as a featured guest, combined with very partisan, inflammatory language bashing the official opposition, the Conservative Party.

Normally this is where I would lay out the facts and then argue how they meet or differ from the relevant authorities and precedents that are on point. However, in the present instance, I think it is important for us to address upfront the importance of raising this matter in the manner in which I am doing so, as a question of privilege, and your authority to rule on the same. I will then revert to the facts of the present matter and how they amount to, in my view, a contempt of the House.

In your December 5, 2023, ruling at page 19501 of the Debates, when the House was last confronted with the Speaker's public display of partisanship, you said, "if members wish to take issue with the conduct of the Speaker, rather than raising points of order or questions of privilege, I would instead direct them to place a substantive motion on notice."

This is, it is fair to say, an attempt to give expression of the statement found at page 620 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, that reads, "Only by means of a substantive motion, for which 48 hours' written notice has been given, may the actions of the Chair be challenged, criticized and debated." However, I would argue that the statement requires a narrower interpretation of addressing the actions of the Chair, which is to say, the actions or omissions of the Speaker or any other chair occupant here within the chamber.

I would have you consider the following factors for the analysis. First, as you yourself said in your December 2023 ruling, there are two past examples, from June 1956 and March 2000, where dissatisfaction with the procedural rulings was vented through a question of privilege but was steered towards a substantive motion being placed before the House. I underline here that those examples involved procedural rulings of the Chair.

Second, and on the other hand, another precedent, which was referred to in the arguments before you in December but which did not receive any treatment in your ruling, was Speaker Fraser's March 9, 1993, ruling at page 16685 of the Debates concerning the then Deputy Speaker's appointment as Chair of her party's leadership convention. In ruling against the question of privilege, Speaker Fraser did so on the merits of the case before him; that is to say, he did not dismiss it on the technicality of preferring for it to proceed by way of a substantive motion. Indeed, to that later point, the Chair said:

Normally the Chair would not allow comment on the conduct of a Chair occupant to come before the House in such a manner. There is a formal and well-established procedure whereby Chair occupants can be censured. I allowed the discussion because the hon. member insisted on proceeding forthwith and pointed out, as

subsequently also did [another member], that the Deputy Speaker's performance in the House was above any reproach and was not in question.

In the precedent's case, as much as has been said about the current Speaker's performance in the House, I will restrain myself from doing so and will focus squarely on his publicly partisan conduct outside the chamber, which is of course not a procedural ruling's being objected to.

Third, you yourself declined to dismiss the December 2023 question of privilege on this technicality. If the requirement for a substantive motion were truly a hard and fast rule, it would have been invoked by the Chair at the time. Indeed I believe that all of the precedents speak to the viewpoint of the limitation of using only a substantive motion concerning a chair occupant's conduct within the chamber, such as rulings, and not external conduct, which reflects on the institution of the Chair or the House as a whole.

• (1040)

Fourth, the statements from Bosc and Gagnon, as well as your December rulings, must now be viewed through the constraints that were subsequently imposed by the Assistant Deputy Speaker's December 15, 2023, ruling at page 20180 of the Debates, whereby such a substantive motion moved during routine proceedings cannot be treated as a privileged motion but is instead subject to the following practice, described at page 469 of Bosc and Gagnon: "When debate on any motion considered during Routine Proceedings is adjourned or interrupted..., the order for resumption of the debate is transferred to the Order Paper under Government Orders".

In fact, that has been the fate of the motion of non-confidence which my House leader moved for debate on December 15, 2023. It has sat on the Order Paper ever since, as Government Motion No. 33. It has never been called for further debate. It has never been put up for a vote, despite the words of the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader on May 8: "The motion did not find consensus, and as such, the matter is closed". What all of this means is that a handful of members could in essence protect a Speaker from a majority decision by exercising a short filibuster to prevent a substantive motion from coming to a vote.

If the House adopts a motion to adjourn the debate or even to proceed to Orders of the Day, that would at least reflect in some fashion the will of the majority in the moment, but that is not what happened on December 15, 2023, nor is it what our procedures would require at any other time. Of course, a government seeking to shield an openly pro-government Speaker would in turn have no interest in calling a motion that would be placed under Government Orders to allow it to be further debated.

Combining these two factors during the tenure of a minority government, like the one we are in today, it would be very easy for a government to protect its guardian Speaker from a non-confidence motion's ever coming to a vote, despite the sentiments of the majority of the House. Then, on the basis of little, a short speech or two, it could be dismissed as a matter having been, as the parliamentary secretary said, "closed" because it "did not find consensus", thereby depriving the House of the ability to purge itself of a festering controversy over its Speaker and to clear the air in either direction. That is, I would submit, the predicament that we find ourselves in today.

In Canada, no one is above the law. Likewise, in the House, no one should be above the rules and the practices, certainly not the Speaker, who is called upon to enforce them. That is why I would urge you to interpret the requirements of censuring the Speaker by way of a substantive motion as being properly limited to procedural rulings to which objection is taken.

Having addressed the matter of the receivability of my question of privilege, I will turn now to the substance of the present concern. It has come to light that the Liberal Party of Canada is advertising “a summer evening with the Honourable [Speaker]”, scheduled to be held on the evening of June 4 in the shadow of Parliament Hill at a location adjacent to the Gatineau bank of the Ottawa River, less than a kilometre over my right shoulder.

The promotional material of the event used very partisan, inflammatory language concerning the Conservative Party and the leader of the official opposition. Allow me to read just some of it for the benefit of the whole House: “Join us for an event in your community—you don't want to miss it. It's an opportunity to join fellow Liberals to talk about ways we can continue to build a better future for all Canadians—because a better future starts with you.”

● (1045)

It goes on to say this:

While [the Leader of the Opposition] and his Conservatives propose reckless policies that would risk the health, safety, and pocketbooks our Liberal team is focused on making life more affordable for Canadians and moving forward with our bold plan to grow an economy that works for everybody, protects our environment, keeps our communities safe, and so much more. Especially in a minority Parliament, we can never take our progress for granted. Together, with your hope and hard work, we can keep Canada moving forward.

The Speaker's event is being promoted by attacking the very same leader, on whom he recently used his authority to kick out of the House of Commons, allegedly for his choice of wording in the middle of question period, when the Liberal Prime Minister, merely seconds before, had used equivocally questionable language and had been given a pass for it.

A footnote beneath the promotional rhetoric explains, “Team [Prime Minister's name] events are posted by local volunteer teams...” That means, I would submit, the Speaker must take personal responsibility for what his local team, the Hull—Aylmer Federal Liberal Association, whose past president, I would add, is the Speaker's chief of staff, has organized and published.

The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs noted in its 55th report, “Today, an expectation exists among members of the House, and the wider public, that the Speaker's duties ought to be carried out with scrupulous impartiality and independence.... The Speaker must be fair and impartial.” The House concurred in this report on January 30, lending its endorsement to that position, and it is a position that the Speaker has yet again fallen short of. Moreover, it is an established standard that has not been lived up to.

Our leading procedural guide, Bosc and Gagnon, on page 323, says, “When in the Chair, the Speaker embodies the power and authority of the office, strengthened by rule and precedent. He or she must at all times show, and be seen to show, the impartiality required to sustain the trust and goodwill of the House.” When he was elected Speaker, his extensive partisan history, from being the

Privilege

president of Young Liberals, to being national director for the Liberal Party, to being parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister, among other offices, gave many members of the House pause about lending their trust and goodwill to him. Regrettably, his subsequent actions have done nothing to dispel these concerns. If anything, they have only been heightened.

During the seven months as Speaker, he has repeatedly engaged in questionable partisan behaviour, including in October when he called a former Liberal member of Parliament and opinion writer and asked him to pen an op-ed slamming the official opposition for its efforts to hold the government to account. In November, he attended and spoke at a cocktail militant, where donations were solicited in support of the provincial Pontiac Federal Liberal Association.

In early December, a partisan tribute was broadcast at the Ontario Liberal Party's leadership convention, where he was seen in his full Speaker's trappings, heaping praise on the party's outgoing interim leader and current parliamentary leader, a man who is not actually retiring from politics, but fully intends to run as a candidate in the next provincial election. As we know, that led to an unprecedented ruling of prima facie contempt in the House, to a committee study and to a Board of Internal Economy penalty. Then, while the House was seized with the fallout of this scandalous video, and in the midst of a sitting week, he jetted off to Washington for a trip centred around a retirement party for a personal friend from international Liberal politics, where he made a speech reminiscing about his days as Young Liberals' president, and of course, we now have this summer rally for the Liberal Party of Canada.

● (1050)

As for the Speaker's events scheduled next month, I fully acknowledge that Speakers do not arrive in the chair through some form of immaculate conception. Speakers have all been politicians before being elected to the chair, and some have even gone on to further partisan service after serving in the chair.

Most Speakers have typically sought re-election to the House of Commons under their original party banner, which understandably requires the usual groundwork any member of Parliament places in his or her constituency association by engaging the support of volunteers and by ensuring adequate resources are available come election time.

That being said, long-standing tradition and custom in the Canadian House of Commons and in its sister legislatures across the Commonwealth all have the expectation of the Speaker's impartiality while in post. This varies from country to country, as was explained in greater detail by the official opposition leader of the Conservative Party in the December question of privilege concerning the Speaker's convention tribute when he quoted various procedural authorities in Quebec, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and India, for instance, and I would commend those texts to the Chair.

Privilege

Our own Bosc and Gagnon reflects, on page 324, “In order to protect the impartiality of the office, the Speaker abstains from all partisan political activity (for example, by not attending caucus meetings)”.

In a campaigning context, the same authority adds, on page 314, “although the Speaker eschews partisan political activity, he or she does not make a complete break. When running for re-election, incumbent Speakers are usually careful to avoid partisan statements that might prejudice their perceived impartiality in the future.”

Reconciling these demands on the Speaker as a local member of Parliament and as a candidate for re-election is typically not that onerous. A Speaker can focus on local issues, promote his or her efforts on intentions they might want to undertake as a local member of Parliament, and build up local enthusiasm and resources, all without taking partisan statements that might prejudice their perceived impartiality. If those types of statements are considered inappropriate when Parliament is dissolved, then it must be even that much more inappropriate during an actively sitting Parliament.

Indeed, as my party House leaders told the House in December, in respect of the video controversy, if the Speaker openly engages in partisan conduct, it opens the door to public analysis of all partisan motivations underlying his rulings. That is exactly where his habits, with this month's event promotional material I quoted as an example, have led us.

It has simply become impossible to make any distinction now between the member for Hull—Aylmer, who also serves as the Speaker, and the Liberal member for Hull—Aylmer. Every ruling that is now given and, with hindsight, every ruling that he has ever given, will now be assumed to have been delivered with a red hint.

The Speaker has failed at showing, and at being seen to show, the impartiality required of a Speaker. In turn, he can no longer count on the trust and the goodwill of members from all corners of the House. That is not where the House ought to be. It is far from it, in fact.

Following the convention tribute video scandal, the Conservative and the Bloc Québécois caucuses lost confidence in the Speaker's continuing in his office.

Meanwhile, the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby, speaking to journalists, for the New Democratic Party, after the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs' review of the issue, said, “This cannot happen moving forward. From now on, you cannot have a Speaker engage in partisan activity.” He also said that, “if there was any derogation from that, in the weeks and months to come”, his party would join in voting “non-confidence” in the Speaker.

● (1055)

If the NDP House leader and his party were true to their word, there would now be a majority of members, representing the majority of parties in the House of Commons, who have lost confidence in the Speaker. For the good of the institution of Parliament and of the enduring interest of the House of Commons, I regret to say that the Speaker must go. Failing that, it is incumbent upon the House to take action immediately.

That is why I urge you to find in favour of my question of privilege establishing a prima facie contempt so that I may put forward a motion of remedy to vacate the chair and to schedule the election of a new Speaker.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in response to the question of privilege raised by the Conservative Party, I would like to present the Bloc's position and thinking on the fact that the Speaker of the House released a partisan message. This is the third instance where there is clear evidence that the Speaker of the House lacked judgment and breached his duty of impartiality. Unfailing impartiality and sound judgement are the foundation of the office of the Speaker and are required of a Speaker, and yet this is the third time we face this kind of situation.

The Bloc Québécois made its position clear in December. It said that the events in which the Speaker had been involved at the time proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the Speaker did not have the skills required to continue in his role. What we are seeing today, unfortunately, is a repeat of what happened before. Therefore, it would seem that the Speaker, who issued his mea culpa at the time, simply does not understand the role he has to play. This is obvious, and it should come as no surprise that the Bloc Québécois is unfortunately maintaining its position and calling for the Speaker in question to step down.

As everyone can see, House debates are becoming increasingly acrimonious. That is why we need someone at the helm who can command respect and has the skills required to control the debate, which tends to get overly heated in this chamber. The responsibility of the Chair has become increasingly important in view of the climate that has taken hold in the House.

Obviously, we all know that the Speaker, who is the member for Hull—Aylmer, was well known for his partisanship at the committee level. That went without saying, and there was nothing wrong with that. He had a job to do, and his partisanship was not out of place in committee. However, there is no place for partisanship in the role of Speaker.

We simply raised the flag when we saw him assume the speakership for the first time. We wanted to let him know we would be watching him, and we hoped he would show impartiality. What we are seeing, unfortunately, is that he is the wrong person for the job.

I have nothing personal against the Speaker and neither does the Bloc Québécois. However, with all due respect to the Speaker, he does not belong in the chair, as evidenced by the fact that 150 members expressed their loss of confidence in the Speaker back in December, mere months after he was elected to the position. At the time, the NDP said that this must not happen again, but now it has.

That is very worrying. What really worries me is that the three events we all know about may be just the tip of the iceberg. That is the problem. We know that he showed obvious partisanship and lack of judgment on three occasions, but he may have done so more than three times. We do not know. That is what worries us. Whenever he rises in the House, we always have nagging doubts about the decisions he will make, his behaviour and what he does outside the House. What does he say when he speaks to people on behalf of the House of Commons? It is impossible not to think about that.

There are only two ways to put our minds at ease and ensure that, whenever the Speaker rises, he does so competently and with absolute respect for the House. Either the House implements a mechanism for him to leave the Chair, or the Speaker resigns, as a true statesman would. In all honesty and impartiality, that is the question I keep coming back to. I wonder what it will take for the NDP and the Liberals to say that enough is enough.

• (1100)

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is, of course, very worrying. The New Democratic Party is very concerned. We would like to reserve the right to come back at some point in the future. As with all questions of privilege, it is important for us to take the time to look at this very clearly.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the members for their interventions. Knowing that the decision back in December was to bring the substantive motion forward, I do understand the concern brought forward here. We will go back and look at this attentively and, of course, wait for further interventions on this as well.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House of Commons and speak on behalf of the people of Peterborough—Kawartha.

It is an even bigger responsibility as the critic, or shadow minister, for families, children and social development. Without families, without healthy families, without healthy children, we have a serious problem in this country. There is no doubt whatsoever that there are some serious problems in this country.

I will be 45 years old in two weeks, and in my time living here, I have never seen Canada in the state it is in now. I have never seen kids struggle in the way that they are struggling. I have never seen seniors struggle in the way that they are struggling. Every member in the House would know this if they were door knocking, which is part of our job when an election comes, to knock on the doors of people, to listen to them, to hear them, to take the emails and to take the phone calls. I have never seen such genuine misery and fear in my life.

I originally come from a very small community. It is called Douro. Douro is what I always call the foundation of Canada. It has four corners. It has the elementary school. It has the church. It did have a town store, a general store, which was like a mercantile.

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Sadly, it burned down. The town hall was right beside it on the same corner. It also has a graveyard.

I want to also mention that I will be splitting my time today with the hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South. We are, as they call us, the Peterborough pistols.

The community of Douro really represented what Canada is. It is this community where, when one needs help, one's neighbours show up. There is the community centre where one has the weddings, events, hockey games and soccer games. There are the schools. Everybody knew everybody, and everybody helped everybody. Slowly, the erosion of the country has happened. It is no coincidence that this has happened in the last nine years under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

I want to tell members a surprising stat. This is officially the longest-running minority government without an election in Canadian history, surpassing Lester B. Pearson's government in 1968. Why is that? It is because of the leader of the NDP.

Why is this because of the leader of the NDP? It is because the Prime Minister knew he was tanking, knew that his gaslighting was no longer working. He took Canadians and he spoke about sunny ways, sunny days, and that things would never be better. Canadians caught on, really quickly, when they realized that they could not afford the interest rates, that they could not afford to keep their mortgages and that they could not afford food.

They cannot afford food and are spending \$700 extra a year in groceries. Two million Canadians a month are using a food bank, and 33% of those are children.

The Otonabee-South Monaghan Food Cupboard operates in what will soon be my riding, but is now in my colleague's riding of Northumberland—Peterborough South. She came to my office last week and said that they have seen a 100% increase in the usage of food banks. She said that they are not the most vulnerable. These are working families that are doing everything that was asked of them. They go to work, and they cannot afford to feed their kids.

They cannot afford to feed their kids. I think it is deeply upsetting because we have never had people work so hard and feel so hopeless. We have the worst GDP in the G7. People want to say that it is the sign of the times, that it is everything. They want to blame it on everything.

This is about leadership. I often say that politics is very much like parenting. Parenting is a very perfect metaphor for politics. It is one's job as a parent to give one's kids the tools and the knowledge to go and thrive. One should never be on the field with one's child. One should be there to help them. If one does everything for them, what happens? They do not learn how to do it.

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● (1105)

Right now, we have a government, and a coalition, because the Prime Minister knew he was going to lose. He knew that everybody was catching on to the misery and chaos he had created, such as increasing crime and victims no longer having rights. Last month we had victims' rights week, and there was not one mention from that side of the House about victims' rights. The government has made sure that criminals have all the rights they need and that they get transferred to medium security without anybody being told. It secretly did that. It transferred Luka Magnotta and did not tell the public. It does not worry about victims or retraumatizing people.

Because the Prime Minister knew he was going to tank, he got the leader of an opposition party to sign a coalition with him, and then continued to gaslight Canadians in the hope that nobody would catch on. Everybody has caught on. Nobody believes anything the Liberals say. They are frustrated and exhausted. People ask me why, every day in question period, they do not answer anything, but just deflect, not answer the questions and pretend everything is perfect.

There is no better example of this than child care. The Liberals' whole marketing program was that child care is great. I visited a local child care facility in my riding last week that is run by an amazing woman. She is single mom who decided to bring kids into her home to care for them and help offer flexibility to the parents who need to work. She said that the cost of food is out of control if one wants to feed kids healthy food. We all know that what we put in our gas tank determines our overall productivity and ability to function. She said that the cost of food is just unbelievable.

I think the most shocking thing for me is that people will write to me and say that they are so embarrassed because they make \$100,000 and still cannot pay their mortgage and feed their kids. They are having to cut back on sports. Then their health is compromised. Their mental health is compromised. The health of these kids is compromised.

I spoke to a grade 10 civics class last week. These kids were very sharp. They were in tune. I said that I thought that social media has caused a lot of problems in the world, especially for young people. They were pretty dialed in and knew a lot of things. They said that they did not think they would ever own a home. They do not even know why they go to school. They do not even know what to do. They do not want to stay in their town because there are no jobs and no housing that is affordable. These kids are 15 years old and are burdened with adult problems. They were genuinely concerned.

I think there is a real problem with acknowledging the facts, but here are some real facts to change the course we are on.

If we tax fuel, every single thing goes up. The carbon tax is the demise of an already crushed society that cannot afford to live. It is like punching someone just a little more while they are down. It is wild. If we talk to farmers, especially small business owners who, for the record, are the whole backbone of this country as small businesses make up 98% of this economy, they are being destroyed every single day. When we increase the tax on small businesses, these people, who are not swimming in gobs of money but who are trying to make a living and provide a service to families or themselves, cannot do it. They are shutting down. If we go downtown in

any major city in this country, we can see the out-of-business sales and closed restaurants. Why is that? It is because of the Prime Minister, who got into a coalition with that guy for power and control, has doubled down on an ideology that we cannot make our own decisions, that the government knows what is better for us and will do it for us, which is going to cripple us and make it dependent on us. It is baffling and so upsetting because we are here and we are—

● (1110)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member's time is up. I have given her some signals. She can add on throughout the questions and comments period.

Continuing with questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has the floor.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is interesting to have the contrast between the Conservatives and the Liberals.

I made reference to the Prime Minister being in the city of Winnipeg. We talked about a national food program and making sure children are eating. The Conservatives stick to spin after spin. There are concerns, and we are very much aware of those concerns.

There is a CTV report that I googled while the member was speaking. It says that, in comparison to other nations, Canada is ranked the second-lowest nation. It is referring to inflation rates. Canada is not an island. We continue to fight inflation, which is at 2.7% today. We continue to fight it. In comparison to the rest of the world, Canada is doing reasonably well.

There is room for improvement but, news flash for the Conservative Party of Canada, Canada is not broken. Canada is doing exceptionally well, especially in comparison to other nations. Will the member get real and be more honest and straightforward with Canadians on the facts?

● (1115)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for pointing out the significant contrast between Liberals and Conservatives.

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After nine years of the Prime Minister, housing prices have doubled, the use of food banks is at record high levels, opioid deaths are at a record high, criminal activity is through the roof and domestic violence is through the roof. This is a great example of gaslighting.

Maybe the member should just go outside, knock on a door and talk to his constituents to see that they are not okay. This is because of Liberal policies and their lack of leadership.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is fascinating to hear Conservatives talk about children going hungry and that Canadians cannot afford to feed their families. I hear this from the Conservatives all the time.

However, that member stood up and voted against a national school food program for children. Canada is the only country in the G7 without a school lunch program, a food program. This would be a solution, but Conservatives do not believe in solutions. Conservatives believe in trying to gaslight the entire nation on this.

I would like to ask the hon. member why she voted against it, and why she supports a leader whose chief of staff has set up a shell company for lobbying, six of whose employees are lobbying for Loblaw, the people who are making record profits while our families cannot afford to eat.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I am really curious about that NDP member, who has decided not to run again because his constituents have told him enough, and also his leader, who signed an agreement to prop up the Liberal government, and whose brother is a lobbyist for Metro. I find that very interesting.

To the member's point about why we would not vote in favour of that, why would we vote in favour of more bureaucracy? Under the Prime Minister, bureaucracy has increased 40% and customer service has decreased. That school food program is \$2.50 a kid, and there is no food in it. It is pure bureaucracy.

If the government does not fix this carbon tax and quit driving up the cost of food, people will not be able to feed their families. I ask members to do the right thing, make sense and stop doing these nonsense marketing schemes that would not feed anyone.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that, if they have anything to contribute, if they want to ask additional questions or if they have additional comments, to please wait until the appropriate time.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada's GDP per capita is now the worst in the G7. These Liberals keep talking about how we have never had it so good.

What is more accurate? When the member talks to her constituents, are they talking about the fact that we are suffering economically or that Canadians have never had it so good?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, my colleague is precisely right. That is why it is just so baffling. The Liberals should go outside and talk to someone, actually talk to the people.

This is not rocket science. They should go to the grocery stores and the food banks to see these working families that cannot afford to pay for groceries, which have skyrocketed under the leadership of the Prime Minister, propped up by the NDP leader.

That is what it is all about, power and control, and driving up the cost to make Canadians dependent upon them.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I do not think it has ever been said in the House of Commons that this place is lacking hypocrisy. There is usually enough hypocrisy in this place to go around, but the motion brought to us by the NDP is just abounding. It is even overflowing. It is even too much hypocrisy for the House of Commons, which has certainly seen enough of it in our history.

The NDP is talking about corporate greed and grocery prices. Meanwhile, the leader of the NDP's brother, Mr. Singh, is a lobbyist for Metro. I could not believe that the NDP member who rose with respect to the motion actually mentioned the fact. He gave away the story when he said that the most profitable large grocery chain in Canada was Metro. This is the firm that for which the brother of NDP leader lobbies. Therefore, no one is making more money. No one is profiting more from a grocery perspective than Metro, the company for which the brother of the leader of the NDP, Mr. Singh, lobbies. It is unbelievable, the hypocrisy and the chutzpah to bring this into the House, to go forward with the fact that somehow they do not have any responsibility.

Meanwhile, as the member for Peterborough—Kawartha just said, the current government is the longest surviving minority government in Canadian history. The NDP-Liberal government has continued to prop this up, so we have seen this record profit under the NDP-Liberal government. It is not a Conservative government in power. We are seeing these record profits of these grocers under the NDP-Liberal government. Therefore, we have more hypocrisy.

However, let me back up and explain why this might be happening.

The reality is that socialism fails every time it is tried. Of course, we are all aware of the tremendous failures, the suffering and the millions who died during the Soviet Union. We have seen the suffering in Cuba and Venezuela. However, I want to bring three concrete examples of where socialism has failed.

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One is the U.K. After World War II, it embraced socialism. It went full hog into socialism. It nationalized nearly every major industry. What happened? Initially it was not that bad, but then Margaret Thatcher's old adage came into being, "eventually you run out of other peoples' money." That is the problem with socialism. The United Kingdom became known as the sick man of Europe, because its economy was so behind, which brought the standard of living down further and further until Margaret Thatcher came to office, brought free economics, and brought the U.K. back on the economic road map.

The second example is an interesting one, Israel. Israel also embraced socialist policies shortly after World War II. It embraced very socialist collectivized farming. Some members might be familiar with the term "kibbutz". These were socialist farming agricultural places. Initially, it was not bad, because they were carrying this money that had come from before. They were initially spending their money, so they grew debt.

However, what happened was that Israel's economy began to shrink and shrink badly. In fact, it was not until around 1980 or so that eventually it adopted free market policies and went from one of the lower economic growth countries to leading the developed world, from 2000 on, in economic growth.

Once again, we see socialism fail.

A third example is the world's biggest democracy, India. India initially, after World War II, also embraced socialist policies and once again found it to be an unmitigated disaster, lowering the standard of living. Then, it embraced a free market economy and, lo and behold, the market increased.

● (1120)

This is repeated all over again. What is happening in Canada is not new news. We had the Liberal government take power in 2015. The Liberals were coming off a great legacy of the Harper government, when housing was affordable, when Canada was a world leader in GDP per capita and when Canada was strong on the map. Then time went by and the debt, the leveraging and socialist policies had their corrosive effect on the economy over and over again, bringing down our economy.

Then a realization happened. I do not know whether it happens for all the members; maybe some of them live in blissful ignorance or just deny the truth. However, the reality is that eventually it comes to the effect that these policies do not work. We are seeing that now in Canada, just like we did in the U.K., Israel and India. Wherever there are these socialist policies, a legacy always follows. First is high unemployment; we are now creeping up to 6.1%. Second is a lack of prosperity. Third is an increase in inequality ironically enough, given all the talk of equality in the House. Fourth is incredibly slow economic growth, which drives down the economy and economic life.

For the folks who are in government, the challenge then becomes this. They see that their policies have created nothing but failure. What do they have to do? They have to create a bogeyman. They have a straw-man argument and they have to place the blame on something else. They divide, as they did during COVID, and they

distract. They will do everything possible to not look at their record. That is what is going on here.

We have seen the NDP leader, whose brother is a lobbyist for Metro, the large chain with the largest profit margin of all Canadian grocers, out there blaming big grocers. I am not saying Metro is innocent; it is certainly not. However, the hypocrisy of that party to go after grocery chains when the leader's brother is a lobbyist for Metro, the most profitable large grocery chain in Canada, is unbelievable.

With that, I would like to bring an amendment to the motion. I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

the 19th report of the Standing Committee on Finance, presented on Monday, May 6, 2024, be not now concurred in, but that it be recommitted to the Standing Committee on Finance with instruction that it amend the same so as to recommend a more efficient alternative to address food insecurity among Canadians this summer by calling on the government to eliminate the carbon tax, the federal fuel tax, and GST on gasoline and diesel between now and Labour Day.

● (1125)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I am sure the member is aware, the government fully understands and is aware of the importance of food security. It is one of the reasons we made changes to the Competition Act and it is one of the reasons we brought in things such as the grocery rebate. We have brought in a number of measures.

One of the interesting things in the federal budget is the national food program to provide food for children going to school. Approximately 400,000 children would benefit by this. Could the member explain why the Conservative Party will be voting against that program?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, according to the Governor of the Bank of Canada, the carbon tax is responsible for 0.8% of inflation, or about one-third of inflation. We could dramatically reduce the cost of food today for children, for seniors and for everyone who is going hungry. Food banks have never been so busy; they have never had such a stretched demand. Why do we not cut the carbon tax today and let people eat?

● (1130)

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked about the leader of the NDP and his brother who is with Metro. We always wonder why we do not hear about Metro in here. We hear about Loblaw's all the time. However, the government is equally as complicit in grocery prices.

Last October, the minister of innovation stated that grocery prices would come down in a matter of weeks or months. The government passed and received royal assent, on December 15, 2023, on the Affordable Housing and Groceries Act. The government has an act called “affordable groceries”, which was passed on December 15.

I wonder if the member would comment on this. Have grocery prices gone down? Has the government done anything at all to lower grocery prices?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the answer to that is no.

Often when I am talking to constituents, they will tell me they cannot believe how much one bag of groceries costs. They will go to grab a couple things for dinner or grab a couple things for the weekend, and have one bag. That one bag used to be \$20. Now it is \$50, \$75 or even \$100 just to fill one bag of groceries. It is incredible and there is a way to fix it right away. We can eliminate a third of inflation today by getting rid of the carbon tax.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could comment on the gross domestic product.

We sometimes take for granted that we are a well-developed country, yet we do not have a very good track record when it comes to the latest announcements about our gross domestic product, particularly in the G7, never mind the G20.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, it really is quite sad where our GDP is per capita. The GDP per capita actually puts us dead last amongst G7 countries. Why is that important? Because it is not just a number. GDP per capita is a measure of what Canadians make and what they deliver in terms of services. The more products we make and the more services we deliver means the more goods, the more bounty, the more prosperity across this nation. The real nub of the issue is the fact that when prosperity shrinks, as it has over the last 10 years, which is Canada's very own lost decade here, it hurts the most vulnerable the most.

The folks who have big trust funds, like the Prime Minister, will be okay. It is the people who are going to the food banks in Otonabee, in Cobourg or in Port Hope who are suffering because of these socialist policies that are failing Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect that if you were to canvass the House, you might find unanimous consent to allow for the debate to be adjourned so that we can continue on with Routine Proceedings.

[Translation]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1135)

[English]

INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC) moved:

That it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology that, during its consideration of Bill C-27, An Act to enact the Consumer Privacy

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Protection Act, the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, the committee be granted the power to divide the bill into two pieces of legislation:

(a) Bill C-27A, An Act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act, containing Part 1 and the schedule to section 2;

(b) Bill C-27B, An Act to enact Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act, and an An Act to enact the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act, containing Part 2 and Part 3.

He said: Madam Speaker, I rise today on an important debate that is coming from the industry committee. Right now, we are studying what seems to be the unending study of Bill C-27, which is privacy legislation.

I have risen in this House before at least one other time on this matter, as have other members of the Conservative Party and other parties, including the NDP. We are rising today to request that this bill be split into two parts. One would be the privacy legislation replacing PIPEDA in the tribunal, and the second one would be AIDA, or the AI portion of this bill.

The reason for that is twofold. It is taking a long time to pass this bill mainly because of the government. The government produced a bill that was flawed, and because of this flawed bill, when it presented the bill, it presented 55 amendments to the bill. We have been going through them at committee, and we are now just getting through the definitions part of clause-by-clause on the first part, which is PIPEDA. We are finding there has been 16 table-drops to this bill for amendments.

This bill was not ready to come to the floor. We are looking at the need for privacy legislation, which we do agree with. Conservatives have stood in this House and said we believed that privacy should be considered a fundamental right for Canadians. When we look at that aspect of the bill, and it is very important, the second part of this bill, the AI, the AIDA, portion of this bill, is so flawed that it is holding up the first part of the bill.

The parts never should have been put together; they should have been separate. There were some fundamental reasons why the government wanted to put them together. With 55 amendments and 16 subamendments to the main part of the bill, this bill is so flawed we cannot even get through the first part. We are worried if the bill is not separated into two votes, and we do not have AIDA separated and perhaps have it come back as a whole new legislation, we are not going to get the first part of the bill through, which is privacy legislation that Canadians are desperately asking for.

After nine years, Canadians have never had less privacy. We look at the fact that we have Alexa, or AI of any form, and when our children are on their iPads, that data is being scraped off the Internet and collected. None of it is private. We do not have any privacy with our data.

Routine Proceedings

This week, we are looking at privacy, and we are trying to discern the difference between normal privacy and sensitive data. Sensitive data would be looked at under the act, but would be a bit more heightened. It would be looked at with greater penalties for those who breach it. We are certainly looking at everyone's privacy in the coming years with AI and the advancement of computers.

The one that we are specifically looking at is financial data. All of the transactions that we do through Interac, our banking system as a whole, our bank accounts, and the interactions that we have online, like with Apple Pay or on our cellphones, are all held by the banks. Many Canadians would be surprised to know they do not own their financial data.

A bank has someone's data, and that can mean anything from their credit history, where they spend their money, how they get their income or where they are paying their taxes. All of that data right now is not held as sensitive, and more importantly, it is not held under that person's consent. Financial data across Canada needs to be regarded as sensitive.

Perhaps the biggest breach of that within the last two years was when the government enacted the Emergencies Act and bank accounts were frozen under the act. The government has the ability to freeze bank accounts because that data is not sensitive. Through the government, when it took away the rights of Canadians, that data was then held by those banks against consumers' will.

In this country, we want to be able to have open banking. The idea with open banking is to have Canadians control who owns their data, and, with their consent, who can have their data. That is really the crux of this bill. When we talk about sensitive financial data, it is the ability for someone, as a consumer, to control where their data is and where it goes.

• (1140)

Open banking, of course, brings competition to our banking sector, which allows not only the six big banks to have our business, but also hundreds of other financial tech organizations that want to have our business and right now are only able to get it through screen scraping. This is taking data off screens or having their clients take screenshots of their financial history in order to get it to a financial tech organization so it can compete for their business. However, financial data should be sensitive information, and when we look at how that relates to AI, well, it is a whole different component of the bill. Also, when we look at location data, and the ability for someone to know from a person's phone where that person is right now, that is also sensitive data. However, the advancement of AI has allowed all of that information to be out in the open and to be emulated.

When we look at the AI bill, the most important part that we are going to be standing up for, as Conservatives, is to ensure that computers cannot emulate human beings without their express consent. However, when we look at privacy as a fundamental right, AI allows the ability of one's image, likeness and voice to be replicated and used all over this planet, which, of course, is bad when we talk about fraud. We have all the heard stories of parents who thought that their children were calling them for help and to ask for money. It sounded like them, they laughed like they did, but at the end of

the day, it was an AI program that emulated an individual to cause an act of fraud.

Right now, Scarlett Johansson is in the news. If anyone has used ChatGBT lately, version 4, which is the new version, they would find that Sky apparently uses Scarlett Johansson's voice without her permission. AI does this right now. It can scrape images and likenesses off the internet, and there is no recourse to ensure that it is taken care of. However, having this AI bill attached to Bill C-27, the privacy act, is slowing this process down and, because of that, Canada is falling further and further behind. It should be a separate bill, and we are asking that the bill before us, of course, be put into two separate votes, as we have before.

I am splitting my time today, because I have some knowledge, but we have greater expertise coming from the member from South Shore—St. Margarets.

I will end with where we are with AI in general. It was announced last week on the budget bill, Bill C-69, that the government is going to put money into AI, figuring that, finally, Canada should have been a leader and should be a leader on this. However, another article, just released yesterday, effectively said, "Ah, too late", and that the money the government wants to put into AI and infrastructure, Meta Llama 3 has just made obsolete. Of course, Meta, Microsoft, Google and so many other companies have already put money and resources into AI, and Canada is falling further and further behind because, after nine years, Canada has lost almost all of its IP in AI to the rest of the world. China had 13,000 patents in AI just last year, which was more than all patents filed in all sectors in Canada. The U.S. had close to 20,000 patents. So, now, when we put money into IP for AI in Canada, it is not Canadian IP. Once again, we are just investing in American and international companies in Canada. Canada is becoming a branch-plant state. We take our taxpayers' hard-earned money and we put it into intellectual property and multinational corporations that do not provide the GDP that Canada needs but just jobs, which is what we are left with.

Routine Proceedings

We have a bill that was not properly done. It has 55 amendments from the government side and 16 subamendments. I could not believe that, the other day, the government was filibustering its own bill. We were in committee, and the government was talking it out. It did not like that we were talking about financial data as sensitive information. I had never seen this before. However, the bill is flawed and it needs to be split in two. We are happy to make sure that happens and that we get the bill right. Do not worry, a Conservative government will get it right.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is interesting seeing a Conservative stand up and talk about AI. The only time I am aware of the Conservatives actually utilizing AI was when they came up with the idea of using AI to create amendments that they could bring to filibuster legislation. They came up with 20,000-plus amendments in order to prevent legislation from being able to pass the committee. Now, they have another idea, which is to try to divide the legislation into two pieces and, if they are successful, they will have two pieces of legislation they can filibuster instead of one.

The member talks about the government amendments. Is he not aware that governments do that, whether it is this government or even Stephen Harper's government, which made amendments at committee stage for bills? Because a government makes an amendment at committee stage does not mean that the legislation is flawed and should not be ultimately passing. Would the member not agree?

• (1145)

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, the government brought 55 amendments to its own legislation. When has that happened before? The member talks about Stephen Harper. I do not think Stephen Harper brought 55 amendments to his own bill, followed by 16 subamendments and then filibustered his own bill for four meetings in committee.

The government's role is to present a piece of legislation, ensure there is proper debate in the House and in committee and then ensure the bill passes in the House. One does not do that by bringing 55 amendments and 16 subamendments. The government has failed to present a proper bill. We have identified that it needs to be split, or it may never get passed.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the great things Canada had in terms of fighting for privacy rights was the role of the Privacy Commissioner. We know it was the Privacy Commissioner, following a letter of complaint I actually sent in, who identified that what Clearview AI was doing was illegal. The taking of people's images in public spaces and selling those images was such a breach of privacy rights, yet when the Liberals brought forward their privacy legislation, the Privacy Commissioner told us that his ability to take on bad actors like Clearview AI would actually be undermined.

Knowing the power AI has to scrape data and knowing how wide open our data, including facial images, personal information and geo-tracking, is being taken, I would like to ask the member about the importance of having fundamental principles in privacy, including the right not to be tracked, not to be followed and not to have our faces taken by corporate interests.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, I cannot believe I am saying this, but we agree with the member. We are fighting for privacy as a fundamental right and ensuring that those things can happen. We are the only party, and actually the NDP is with us, fighting for that data to be deemed sensitive. This is data such as one's location, biometrics and gender. Even with driver's licences, massive fraud is going up. Violent crime is going up. All those things are extremely important.

I would hope the Privacy Commissioner gets more money and more funding. We are asking for more power to that commissioner. I hope this member does not go down the same road as what has happened with the Information Commissioner and the Ethics Commissioner, who are seeing their funding cut. I do not think that the funding of those two commissions needs to be cut or that the commissioners' wages need to be cut.

We need the Privacy Commissioner to probably see more autonomy, but also get the power they need to make sure they enforce those rules.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague mentions flawed legislation coming to committee. I was on a committee where the Liberals brought over 100 amendments to a piece of their legislation. This speaks to their having a problem writing legislation to begin with. Maybe this member would like to talk about how challenging it is to deal with legislation that is flawed to begin with and many amendments having come from the government.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, yes, going to committee one expects to do the work. This is an important topic for every single Canadian, and the fact is that we have to deal with filibustering and amendments from a government that just cannot get it together or present good legislation to begin with. It would help all Canadians and all the government if it could just get its act together and present some good legislation in the first place

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on this motion today. To remind everyone what it is about, we have a massive bill, as my colleague from Bay of Quinte said, that would, one, replace the entire Privacy Act with a brand new one for Canadians; two, create a new judicial tribunal to appeal decisions; and three, create something totally unrelated, the artificial intelligence and data act, the first such act.

Routine Proceedings

Way back in October 2022, the House leader for the New Democratic Party moved a motion to split the vote, to have two separate votes on this bill, which we had at second reading: one vote on parts 1 and 2, the privacy and tribunal parts, and then a separate vote on the artificial intelligence part. In November, the Speaker ruled in favour of that and we were pleased to support that motion.

What we are asking for now is to go a step further and split the bill, because we had 21 meetings in committee with witnesses, we are in meeting nine or 10 of clause-by-clause, and we have had almost unanimous witness testimony asking for the bill to be split, and not only because it is a totally separate subject area. To remind everyone, the purpose section in part 1 of the bill, regarding the Privacy Act, says:

The purpose of this Act is to establish—in an era in which data is constantly flowing across borders and geographical boundaries and significant economic activity relies on the analysis, circulation and exchange of personal information—rules to govern the protection of personal information in a manner that recognizes the right of privacy of individuals with respect to their personal information and the need of organizations to collect, use or disclose personal information...

However, the purpose section of part 3, the artificial intelligence and data act, says the following:

- (a) to regulate international and interprovincial trade and commerce in artificial intelligence systems by establishing common requirements, applicable across Canada, for the design, development and use of those systems; and
- (b) to prohibit certain conduct in relation to artificial intelligence systems that may result in serious harm to individuals or harm to their interests.

It is a very different piece of legislation bolted onto privacy legislation. I think that is why the Speaker rightly ruled that they are separate pieces of legislation and, therefore, should have separate votes.

Conservatives are proposing, after all this study, that the bills should be separated, and we are not alone in that. I will quote what some members in this House have said about separating the bills. The New Democratic Party member for Windsor West, who has been very active and proposed many valuable amendments to this bill in committee, said, “this is really three pieces of legislation that have been bundled up into one.... The first two parts of the act, concerning the consumer privacy protection act and the personal information and data protection tribunal act, do have enough common themes”, but he still thinks they should be separated. He went on to say, as he has said on many occasions, that the New Democrats agree with having the bill in committee, but they want separate voting, as the AI act is the first time that topic has been debated in the House “and it should be done differently.”

The member from the Bloc Québécois who has spoken on this, the member for Laurentides—Labelle, said, “this bill is important, but I would like to know if we should refer it to a committee to study it properly because it is really two bills in one. The first is on artificial intelligence, and the second on privacy protection.” I could go on. For example, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands said in response to the Speaker's ruling, “The Speaker has now given a ruling that says we will be able to vote separately on the AI piece of the bill, but I do not think that is good enough. I do not know if the committee will be able to set aside witnesses and only look at the AI piece”.

The minister claimed he has done all the consultation and the artificial intelligence bill is a great bill. It turns out he did not have a single meeting on it before he tabled it in June 2022. He did not have a single meeting with any group, but then he bragged afterwards, because he had to put the toothpaste back in the tube, that he had 300 meetings after the bill was tabled. Let me tell members whom he had meetings with.

● (1150)

He said he had 300 meetings. He had five meetings with the AI advisory council; four with the Alliance for Privacy and Innovation in Canada; eight with Amazon; four with the Business Council of Canada; 12 with the Canadian Bankers Association, and maybe that is why we are hearing a big lobby on the filibuster right now on behalf of the Canadian Bankers Association in committee, four meetings where the Liberals have been speaking on behalf of big banks; five with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce; and 12 with the Canadian Marketing Association, the people who send all that irritating stuff. I could go on. The list is here. There were 15 meetings with Microsoft. These are companies that are obviously very interested in protecting people's data and the use of artificial intelligence. It seems that for big businesses, after a bill is introduced, they can get time with the minister.

Now, not to be outdone, the committee has had a request that the bill be separated, signed by the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, Digital Public, the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, Open Media, the Privacy and Access Council of Canada, Tech Reset Canada, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Freedom of Information and Privacy Association, the Centre for Digital Rights, the Centre for Free Expression, the Women's Legal Education & Action Fund, and then another 18 individuals.

The letter was sent to the chair of the industry committee, a very fine chair, by the way. It said:

This letter, submitted on behalf of the individuals and civil society organizations below, is a formal request for your Committee to recommend that AIDA be sent back to the drawing board for full public consultation prior to a substantial redrafting. Additionally, such consultation should not be led by ISED alone given that their stewardship to date has resulted in deeply-flawed legislation, flowing from a process biased heavily toward narrow industry interests.

We are also asking that your Committee split your hearings on AIDA—to have them exist distinctly and separately....

We have done this. It goes on to refer to the Speaker's ruling, saying:

Routine Proceedings

As you know, the Speaker of the House of Commons, in his ruling of 28 November 2022, decided that the House would vote separately on Part 3 of Bill C-27 (AIDA). Subsequent to that ruling, the Committee Vice-Chair [referring to me] noted...that “we’ve chosen as a Committee to break up the witnesses,” and that “The details of AIDA will happen, and those witnesses will be at the back end of the witnesses.”

This was in the context of granting the Minister more time to produce his promised amendments on AIDA.

It goes on to ask for the bill to be split up. I do not have the time to read the whole letter, but it was interesting that when the minister led off the discussion in the committee, he said, essentially, that it is a flawed bill. He admitted it. His whole opening statement was about amending eight areas, or saying he was going to amend eight areas. It was very specific.

Then, when I and my other colleagues asked him to table those amendments, he refused. We actually had to fight, for four meetings, to get him to agree to table those amendments. We were about to embark on hearing from witnesses who were going to discuss a bill that was already out of date, and the minister was refusing to share what parts he thought were out of date and how he was going to amend it. He finally relented and put in eight draft amendments.

We held 21 meetings. Then, as my colleague from Bay of Quinte said, the Liberals proposed 55 amendments in clause-by-clause to their own bill. None of the witnesses in the 21 meetings that we had had a chance to comment on those 55 amendments. Thirty-eight of them are on artificial intelligence. The Liberals have made 38 amendments to the artificial intelligence bill that they introduced, when they said they were only going to make three or four. They hid all of those from the public, and now the public and the people in the industry have no ability to comment on them, because we are in clause-by-clause.

The minister's admission from the beginning that he had drafted a flawed bill, his admission that he had met with people only after the bill was tabled, his admission that he had basically met only with big business about the bill and his tabling of 55 amendments after we had heard from witnesses all speak to the fact that these are two separate bills on a flawed bill and need to be separated.

• (1155)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed. I came here believing that we would be debating budgetary measures on Bill C-69, something that Canadians are very much concerned about and would ultimately like to see passed.

I am wondering why it is that the Conservatives have now made the decision to try to have a discussion on an issue that we have already had a debate on. It is in the committee. Why not allow the committee to do the work and continue to do the work that it has been doing? There is nothing the member has said that previous governments have not done.

• (1200)

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, the simple answer is that the budget has been widely panned by just about everybody in the country. I am surprised that the government wants to get on to debating it, since it has not actually tabled parts of the budget that it has talked about.

This is perhaps even more important to what happens to Canadians in the future than this flawed budget. It is about what is going to happen, how we regulate artificial intelligence, how it uses people's data and how we interact with it in the future. It is probably one of the most fundamental things. That is why Canadians want the bill separated. That is why it is vitally important that we do that now.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I remember that in 2018-19 the ethics committee, working across party lines, was attempting to bring forward to the House language to protect privacy rights in light of the Cambridge Analytica breach. One of the key elements that we had was the right not to be tracked. When my daughter goes on the Internet, why are they tracking her? Why is that phone tracking us? The ability to say no, to limit the amount of information, did not happen.

Then we had Clearview AI stealing people's images and selling them. The Privacy Commissioner stepped into the breach at that point, and yet he said that the Liberal government's privacy legislation at the time would undermine his ability to hold companies like Clearview to account.

Now we have AI. What we were dealing with in 2018 is like dealing with stagecoach robberies, given the speed of the ability to take information, to take our lives and to move them in ways we could not even conceive of, yet the Liberals are still puttering along with legislation. They have put it into what should be two separate bills that are really thought through. We are trying to just deal with one single bill.

I want to ask my hon. colleague what he thinks the danger to Canadian privacy is, with regard to the failure of the government to address the privacy rights of citizens and the right to privacy as a fundamental right.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, that is a question on which our side and the NDP have been in total agreement. We have worked hard in committee with the member for Windsor West to ensure that the bill has the fundamental right recognized up front. We have moved the preamble, which had no legal meaning, into the bill and changed it to make that part of it, as well as to define what a minor is and make the best interest of the child part of that. We have not gotten to the purpose section yet, where we will probably do that.

I know that the member spoke earlier about the Privacy Commissioner. In the committee, the Privacy Commissioner said that, to oversee this legislation, he would need a doubling of his budget. I see that, in this budget, there is not a penny more for the Privacy Commissioner. I guess the Liberals do not intend to have enforcement of the bill that they are trying to push through.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, with the challenge of dealing with a piece of legislation that is too complicated, and with two purposes, how do we deal in committee with legislation written this wrong?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, that is a great question. We struggled with it in committee. We took the privacy part first, the first part of the bill, and had it organized by subject areas, so some witnesses would come twice.

The problem we had was that by the time we got through that, the government decided that it wanted to limit the discussion on artificial intelligence, perhaps the most consequential part, and we ended up with only about eight meetings on artificial intelligence, which is wholly inadequate to deal with all the issues that have been raised. Of course, it makes it even more difficult when the minister does not share his amendments to that bill before we actually hear from those witnesses so that they can have input on the changes that the government wishes to make.

• (1205)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I move:

That the House do now proceed to the orders of the day.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Madam Speaker, we would request a vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (1245)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 760*)

YEAS

Members

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| Aldag | Alghabra |
| Ali | Anand |
| Anandasangaree | Angus |
| Arseneault | Arya |
| Ashton | Atwin |
| Bachrach | Badawey |
| Bains | Baker |
| Barron | Battiste |
| Beech | Bibeau |
| Bittle | Blair |
| Blois | Boissonnault |
| Boulerice | Bradford |
| Brière | Cannings |
| Carr | Casey |
| Chagger | Chahal |
| Champagne | Chatel |
| Chen | Chiang |
| Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek) | Collins (Victoria) |

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| Damoff | Davies |
| Desjarlais | Dhaliwal |
| Dhillon | Diab |
| Drouin | Dubourg |
| Duclos | Duguid |
| Dzerowicz | Ehsassi |
| El-Khoury | Erskine-Smith |
| Fillmore | Fisher |
| Fonseca | Fortier |
| Fragiskatos | Fraser |
| Freeland | Fry |
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| Koutrakis | Kusmierczyk |
| Kwan | Lalonde |
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| Lapointe | Lattanzio |
| Lauzon | LeBlanc |
| Lebouthillier | Lightbound |
| Long | Longfield |
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| MacDonald (Malpeque) | MacGregor |
| MacKinnon (Gatineau) | Maloney |
| Martinez Ferrada | Masse |
| Mathysen | May (Cambridge) |
| McDonald (Avalon) | McGuinty |
| McKay | McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) |
| McLeod | McPherson |
| Mendès | Mendicino |
| Miao | Miller |
| Morrice | Morrissey |
| Murray | Naqvi |
| Noormohamed | O'Connell |
| Oliphant | O'Regan |
| Petitpas Taylor | Powlowski |
| Qualtrough | Robillard |
| Rodriguez | Rogers |
| Romanado | Rota |
| Sahota | Sajjan |
| Saks | Samson |
| Sarai | Scarpaleggia |
| Schiefke | Serré |
| Sgro | Shanahan |
| Sheehan | Sidhu (Brampton East) |
| Sidhu (Brampton South) | Singh |
| Sorbara | Sousa |
| St-Onge | Sudds |
| Tassi | Taylor Roy |
| Thompson | Turnbull |
| Valdez | Van Bynen |
| van Koeverden | Vandal |
| Vandenbeld | Virani |
| Weiler | Wilkinson |
| Yip | Zahid |
| Zarrillo | Zuberi— 172 |

NAYS

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 Gaudreau
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 Lehoux
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 Fortin
 Garon
 Généreux
 Gill
 Godin
 Gourde
 Hallan
 Jeneroux
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 Kitchen
 Kram
 Kurek
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 Lawrence
 Lemire
 Lewis (Essex)
 Liepert
 Lobb
 Majumdar
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
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 Paul-Hus
 Perkins
 Plamondon
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 Rempel Garner
 Roberts
 Ruff
 Scheer
 Seeback
 Simard
 Small
 Steinley
 Strahl
 Therrien
 Tochor
 Trudel
 Van Popta
 Vidal
 Viersen
 Villemure
 Vuong
 Warkentin
 Webber
 Williamson

Government Orders

PAIRED

Members

Fast

Ng—2

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2024, NO. 1

BILL C-69—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-69, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 16, 2024, not more than five further hours shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the bill; and

That, at the expiry of the five hours provided for the consideration at second 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 shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

● (1250)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very encouraged by the budget implementation bill. There are many aspects of it that one could talk about.

I want to highlight something the Prime Minister highlighted just last week in Winnipeg North. We gathered at Elwick school and had a great elevation of an important issue, the national school food program. It is going to feed literally hundreds of thousands of children and ensure they have food in their stomachs while they are learning in the classroom.

Could the minister provide her thoughts on how such important budgetary measures are going to affect the lives of Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very excited about the national school food program, which we estimate is going to lift 400,000 children out of poverty across this country. It is something we will work on with the provinces, territories and, of course, indigenous communities.

We know that developing brains need good nutrition, and Canada needs everyone to be able to reach their full potential. That is why it is important that we work in partnership with communities, school boards, provinces and territories to make sure that every child, no matter their income level, has a fair chance to get a good head start that day and be able to nourish their brains as they nourish their minds.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely disappointing to be sitting here and have the government decide, once again, to use the blunt force object that is time allocation rather than allowing a fulsome debate on the bill.

Government Orders

This is an implementation bill on a budget for which we have had countless constituent emails come to my office from people with very serious concerns. However, here the government is ramming this through again. It is very clear that it is afraid to hear what Canadians have to say on this.

Is the government concerned about the further inflationary spending that is being brought forward through the budget and what the impacts will be on Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised to hear my colleague opposite speak about their concerns around the budget. In fact, the Conservative leader, without a second thought, said he would vote against the budget to support fairness for every generation. It includes many measures that the Conservative Party has been calling for, indeed, for example, more aggression on getting houses built across our country. The Canada housing plan would see 3.87 million new homes unlocked by 2031 and would ensure that the dream of home ownership is in reach for young Canadians, something that I know she and many members of the party opposite have spoken about in the House.

I would urge her to move this bill quickly to study. That is where we will be able to hear a variety of perspectives on this bill. We will be able to move more quickly to ensure that Canadians have what they need to have a fairness in their lives.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is really important to be able to move legislation so that we can actually get something done. Canadians expect us to get something done here.

One of my concerns is that, in dealing with the issue of a national food program, a school nutrition program, if this passes, it is going to rob the Conservatives of their ability to stand up in the House. This morning, we heard the member for Peterborough going on about how concerned she was that children were not eating, although we have offered a national school program. She said that that it was just bureaucracy. That is what they think of feeding children; they called it “bureaucracy”.

I would like to ask the hon. member, the minister, about this. We are the only G7 country without a national nutrition program for school children, yet we have the Conservatives trying to block this. They are gaslighting people, and they actually claim that children are going hungry, while they will not let a program to feed children go ahead.

• (1255)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member noted that, in fact, we have a gap here in Canada, and that is feeding hungry children in school. We know that brains actually need that nourishment to develop and that Canada needs every ounce of potential if we are going to meet the challenging conditions of today and tomorrow.

We hear the members opposite in the Conservative Party speak about the need, on one hand, to take care of children and to take care of communities, but on the other hand, to not move forward quickly to ensure that programs are in place so that, no matter a person's income, they can access food, with dignity and with pride, in school, the way it should be.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege to rise on behalf of the constituents of the riding of Waterloo. They have brought many items to my attention and have raised many concerns. They want different levels of government to work together.

Within this budget implementation act, I understand there would be increased health care funding. There would be the national school food program that we have heard about. There would be funding for nearly four million homes. The region of Waterloo, within the riding of Waterloo, has received really good support through the housing accelerator fund. There would also be support for renters to ensure that they are able to understand their tenant rights so that they will not be put out of their homes.

Some constituents have also been raising the issue of free contraceptives. I know it is a hard conversation in this place, especially as the official opposition does not recognize that a woman should be able to have full control and decision-making over her body. It is unfortunate that we are still having that debate, but we know where Liberals stand.

I also know that this is about affordable dental care and much more.

I would like to hear from the minister as to what this budget implementation act would do when it comes to affordability and when it comes to making lives better for Canadians, especially for constituents within the riding of Waterloo.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her elocution of her constituents' concerns and of their thoughts. In fact, this entire budget is wrapped around the concept of fairness for every generation.

There are many exciting measures in the budget that would actually bring down the costs for Canadians, that would support Canadians, no matter what stage of life they are in, and, in fact, that would get us to a place where we have everybody reaching their full potential. There are things like expanding the Canada student loan forgiveness program so that pharmacists, dentists, dental hygienists, midwives, early childhood educators, teachers, social workers, personal support workers, physiotherapists and psychologists who choose to work in rural and remote communities could have any Canada student loan forgiven. That takes it a step beyond what we have already done, which is to remove interest on student loans, because the government is focused on making sure people reach their full potential.

The member opposite also spoke about contraceptives. In fact, we know that many people struggle with access to medication. That is why we are taking those next important steps on pharmacare, including the provision of diabetes medication and, importantly, contraceptive medication. We do believe, on this side of the House, that women should have the right to full autonomy over their bodies.

Government Orders

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the budget and the BIA are increasing taxes on Canadians who cannot afford any more and on parents who cannot afford to put food on their tables to feed their children because taxes keep going up, in particular, the carbon tax. The reason we do not support the budget is that the NDP-Liberal government keeps increasing taxes on Canadians. Why is the government so bad at managing the calendar that it needs to limit debate on every single piece of legislation at every single stage?

• (1300)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I would propose this question: Why are Conservatives so much in the way of actually making life more affordable for Canadians?

In the budget measures that we have proposed, there are many things the Conservatives themselves have called for that would make it more affordable for Canadians. In fact, we see a highlight of, yet again, misinformation that is being shared around the carbon tax when, in fact, eight out of 10 families get back more than they pay, and it is part of reducing emissions. I happened to overhear a conversation in this place earlier this morning. People were talking about the fear of the fires out west. We know we have to do more to protect the climate and to protect Canadians. The budget has measures for that, and we need to move quickly because Canadians are expecting us to work together on their behalf.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to just repeat that last question in a bit of a different way because, in this place, we should have a government and we should have a strong opposition who holds that government to account. Unfortunately, what we have is an official opposition who only gets in the way.

Every single time that we are trying to do something and actually get results, what do we hear from the Conservatives? We hear Conservatives yelling because they cannot handle hearing a woman ask a question, and then actually listen quietly. When the Conservatives want the floor, they want to be able to speak and to be listened to, but when it is their turn to listen, they do not want to listen. That is what is always really interesting about the Conservative way.

Why is it that every single time—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Hon. Bardish Chagger: If the member wants the floor, Mr. Speaker, you can give it to him. However, I believe I have the floor, so you might want to remind him who has the floor, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to hear from the minister—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not know where all this disorder is coming from, but let us get the hon. member for Waterloo to finish up the question.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to hear from the minister why it is that whenever we are trying to respond to the very challenging times and to the needs of Canadians, we always have to use these kinds of tools to actually get the work done.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, the loyal opposition has a very important job, and that is to work with all members of Parliament to make sure that the laws that we pass and the spending that we undertake actually benefit Canadians.

The Conservatives have an opportunity today. We can get this bill to committee. The questions that their constituents have, the comments that they have themselves, the experts that they've consulted with and those kinds of things can be fleshed out at committee, as members know. In fact, that is an important part of studying the bill.

Therefore, I would urge members not to stand in the way of fairness for every generation. We are talking about those who need the support. We are talking about measures that would make life more affordable for Canadians. That is all the Conservatives seem to want to talk about, but when the rubber hits the road, they do not want to do anything.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister why her party hates democracy so much. The fact is that we have not had a single hour of debate on Bill C-69, a 657-page piece of legislation, and the Liberals are already limiting debate. I know that the Liberals' leader once said that he most admires China, and I know that they find the opposition's questions and perhaps having a different perspective gets in the way. The member for Waterloo said that she thinks it is terrible that the opposition would actually have a different perspective. Why do the minister and the government think that debate on government bills is something that should not happen?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting to be standing in this place talking about democracy with a member of the loyal opposition who voted against the support that Ukraine needed to defend democracy. It is ironic that as we talk about whether Liberals defend democracy, it is actually this side of the House that works with other countries that are working so hard and, in fact, that are losing lives to defend democracy, yet the Conservatives are going to attack our record of democracy—

The Deputy Speaker: I just want to make sure that we keep our noise down to a minimum.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the House, we have seen the Conservatives blocking the dental care legislation.

Six thousand seniors, on average, in each of the Conservative MPs' ridings, have actually signed up for dental care so far, and we know that millions more are joining as we speak. Tens of thousands of Canadian seniors have benefited from dental care.

We have seen the Conservatives opposing the pharmacare legislation, even though 17,000 of their constituents, on average, would benefit from the diabetes medication components, and 25,000 people in their ridings, on average, would benefit from contraceptive coverage.

Government Orders

We now have the Conservatives blocking Bill C-69 as well. We are talking about affordable housing. These are all things that the NDP has forced the government to put forward in a minority Parliament. This is important.

My question to my colleague is simply this. Why are the Conservatives systematically opposing measures that would help people in their ridings?

• (1305)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his hard work on many of the measures that he outlined and that are, in fact, featured in this budget.

I cannot answer why it is that Conservatives oppose measures that help their own constituents, but it is a good question for their constituents. I think that is why it is important that we get this bill to committee because we will hear a variety of perspectives on what is in that bill and how it will help Canadians.

The member opposite talked about dental care. I just want to share that I have someone in my family who will actually benefit from the Canada dental care plan. I am very excited to say that there are so many seniors in my riding getting care for severe dental caries who had no coverage anywhere else in this country. This is life-changing. It is about alleviating pain. It is about increasing dignity. I know we can do better as a country. I hope the Conservatives will help.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in budget after budget, the government has allocated more funding towards indigenous services. However, we have seen various reports by the PBO and by others outside indicating that the dollars being spent by the Liberal government are not leading to an equivalent increase in the ability of ISC and its programs to achieve the goals it has set for itself. In other words, it is more spending, but it is not improving the lives of first nations and indigenous peoples to the measure that it should.

Are there any specific, tangible steps that the minister could provide to assure members of the House and Canadians that the new spending being brought forward in this budget would actually go to the grassroots, to the first nations leaders and to the people who need this funding?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing that the member opposite does not realize that, in fact, after a decade of not spending anything in indigenous services equity, including, for example, keeping indigenous education suppressed below the provincial average, meaning that children in indigenous communities did not have the same fair chances to graduate and that graduation rates were abysmally lower than non-indigenous students, we changed that. In fact, we created equity within education systems.

We are excited that, in this budget, there will be increased amounts of money available for post-secondary education so that anybody who is ready, willing and wants to go to post-secondary, whether it is trades, college or university, will be able to have the supports to be able to succeed, increasing the capacity of every community.

These are the kinds of investments we are proud of. Over 25% of the new spend in this budget is dedicated to indigenous priorities. I

would challenge the member to speak with the national chief and others about how he could be an advocate for ensuring that communities have the autonomy they have the right to.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister this question. Does she see a pattern of behaviour here where the Conservatives constantly want to roadblock programs Canadians desperately need, whether it be dental care, pharmacare or the hot lunch program, the food program for Canadians?

I am also seeing a pattern of behaviour by the Conservatives of blocking the passage of important legislation at committee. We experienced that at the immigration committee when we tried to address the lost Canadian issue; the Conservatives took away the right of second-generation-born Canadians to pass on their citizenship to their children if they were born abroad.

From that perspective, I would like to ask the minister if she could comment. In order to move things forward, to get things done for Canadians, what options does the government have?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, earlier we were talking about a national food program. We cannot starve our way to prosperity, but that is what the Conservatives seem to want to try yet again. They want to starve their way to prosperity, and that is not how we get ahead as a country. We get ahead as a country by taking care of each other, and this budget is about that. It is about fairness for every generation.

I think everyone in the House would say that we appreciate and welcome constructive debate among each other. That is what we do. We are members of Parliament. We are always ready to work with each other, with our opposition colleagues, to make life better for Canadians. When we see that pattern of obstruction, the Conservatives are not obstructing the government, they are obstructing Canadians who are waiting for this bill to pass so they can see improvements in their lives.

• (1310)

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, talking about pattern of behaviour, we see in the House a party, the New Democratic Party, not acting as the opposition party it was elected as, but as the government's lapdog. It is absolutely pathetic. When we talk about Canadians and what—

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This has been a recurring incidence of very poor unparliamentary language, so I would ask the member to withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker: I just remind folks to be judicious in the words they use in explaining things.

The hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster has the floor.

Government Orders

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Mr. Speaker, this legislation was introduced in this place on May 6. There has only been four sitting days since that time and we are seeing, again, time allocation on a bill at a stage. I will go back to my first question I asked not long ago, which I did not receive an answer from the minister.

Why is the government so terrible at managing the government calendar that it needs to limit debate on every stage and every piece of legislation?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, we hear two parties in the House talk about the obstruction of the Conservatives in the House. Therefore, it is a little rich as the members opposite get up and name-call and yell at members of the opposition, who are just doing their job as well.

We all have a job here, and I would encourage us all to stay focused on what that job is, which is to ensure that we work for Canadians, that we work on programs that will support Canadians, and that we work on law and policy that will support Canadians to reach their full potential. There are no shortages of problems in the world and we can be part of that solution if we actually work together.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the minister's comments addressed parts of Bill C-69, but unfortunately, as we know, it is an omnibus bill. As an omnibus bill, it includes other parts that are not intended to help Canadians who are most in need or help indigenous communities, but to push through, without proper study, quick and dirty amendments to the Impact Assessment Act.

I intend to move a motion later today to ask that the impact assessment portions of this omnibus bill be removed so they can be properly studied, not by the Standing Committee on Finance but by the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. I wonder if the minister has any thoughts on that.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, every item in this legislation appears in the text of this year's budget, either in its chapters or in the legislative annex. We look forward to the robust debate that will happen through this debate and certainly at committee. It is important we ensure we work together. As I said, Canadians are expecting us to work quickly together to ensure they have the measures they need.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I made reference to the national food program. There are all sorts of other aspects of the budget that are so important, such as the red dress alert. I know the minister is familiar with the program. Ottawa is working with the province on the very important issue of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls and others. Through co-operation with stakeholders and different levels of governments, this has become a reality.

I am wondering if the minister can provide her thoughts on this important initiative, as well as the importance of working with stakeholders and governments.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member of Parliament for highlighting the importance of the parts of the budget implementation act that address indigenous priorities. Indeed, the red dress alert is an indigenous priority. It is something indigenous

families have been calling to have for a very long time. It is a pleasure to work with members in the House to ensure we can get that alert up and running.

I was very proud to be one of the ministers who launched the inquiry into the missing and murdered indigenous women after a decade of Stephen Harper refusing to do that, saying it was not on his radar. Indigenous women and girls know they have an ally. This government will continue to work with partners across the country.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand why the government is so scared to have an actual fulsome debate on the budget, if it is so proud of the budget. It spent weeks going out selling the budget to Canadians before putting it into the House of Commons, yet, as my colleague has stated, we have had four sitting days to have conversation on this.

The government is absolutely atrocious when it comes to managing its own schedule. It expects everyone else to pick up the slack when it fails to deliver results for Canadians. We are here, holding the government accountable. It is shameful that the New Democrats continue to prop up the government, allowing it to get by with something that they would have previously rolled over to prevent any kind of time allocation. What we see over and over again is them supporting time allocation and curtailing debate.

Why is the government so afraid to have a debate on the budget? If it is as good as the Liberals say it is, why will they not just let us have this conversation and debate?

• (1315)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I think what Canadians expect is for parties to work together in the House, to find compromises to ensure that things can move forward that will benefit them and their families. That is why the NDP works closely with the Liberals to ensure that there are measures in the budget that actually meet the needs of constituents in their ridings. The Conservatives have an opportunity to do that as well.

That member talks about being scared. When they are calling members opposite names and when they are trying to drown people out by yelling at them, that is when they are scared. We see a pattern of obstruction by the Conservatives, while the other parties are willing to roll up their sleeves and work hard for Canadians.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. The minister opposite is implying that somehow we are calling people names or yelling, neither of which is accurate.

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the debate that we are having today, but that is falling into debate.

With questions and comments, the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives oppose every measure that can actually help people. The NDP is bringing a lot to this minority Parliament.

Government Orders

There is one thing I do not understand. Why are the Conservatives blocking all these bills that address affordable housing, dental care, pharmacare? There is even a measure about lunches for school children. All these measures are being blocked by the Conservatives. They do not want it to pass through Parliament. It is a bit like the tyranny of a minority party—they want to block all the bills that will help people.

I would like to ask my colleague a question. Why do the Conservatives oppose every measure that helps people, including their own constituents?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I agree. The Conservative Party's obstruction in the House is sad to watch.

[*English*]

We have to work together. Canadians are waiting for us to implement many of the measures in the budget. In fact, the Conservatives have called for many of those same measures.

Let us talk about housing for a moment. The Conservatives have talked about the need for ambition on housing. This budget proposes a lot of ambition in partnership, something I believe the members opposite are forgetting about, with provinces, territories and municipalities. Canadians cannot wait for that kind of action. In fact, what they want to see is that kind of collaboration.

Of course, let us have debate and let us talk about what we need to achieve on behalf of Canada, but there are many ways to do that in a way that is not obstructionist. We see the Conservative Party continuing to obstruct the House and committees. We hope we will see a change of heart very soon.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that every single member who has been elected to this place has a really important role to play, whether in government or in opposition. When it comes to a minority Parliament, one of the ways of advancing important legislation and programs for Canadians to respond to their needs is to work together.

What I am finding challenging in the conversation today is that I hear some constructive feedback from some members, saying this is a way we could move forward. Then I see an official opposition that never had to play nicely in the sandbox and does not remember the primary principles of kindergarten, where we can work together to deliver for our constituents across the country.

I will always fight for the constituents of the riding of Waterloo and I will try to work with whomever I can to ensure they have the programs and services they need.

When it comes to legislation like this, what is the value and importance of members remembering why we are elected and how do we deliver for constituents? Do we do better by working together or do we just blindly oppose and not get anything done?

• (1320)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member opposite mentioned kindergarten, because it reminds me of a time when I was a lunchroom monitor. It was a lowly position, but a very important one. I went to the school every day to help ensure that students were safe in the playground and safe in the lunchroom. One of the hardest things to see as a lunchroom monitor were the num-

ber of children who did not have enough to eat. I will remind members this was 15 or 20 years ago.

My colleague from the NDP mentioned that Canada was the only G7 country without a school food program. This kind of suffering can be alleviated, and alleviated quickly, because we have provinces, territories and school boards that are eagerly awaiting the implementation of a national food program. Many allies and advocates have worked very hard to propose to the government how best to do this to ensure that no child is in school hungry and that every child has an opportunity to succeed.

We will continue to work with the majority of MPs in the House who want to see this budget pass.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question relates to the minister's own portfolio. The government's indigenous procurement policy obliges that when indigenous companies are hired under the policy, a certain proportion of those subcontractors be indigenous. However, documents shared with the government operations committee show that there is absolutely no tracking of subcontractors.

Does the minister think it is acceptable that adherence to the requirements on indigenous subcontracting are not being tracked by the government?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, one thing that I am very excited about in Bill C-69 is that 25% of the new spending is proposed for indigenous priorities, including a major loan guarantee for which indigenous partners have been calling for economic reconciliation, to ensure that when natural resource projects or other major projects in the country go forward, indigenous people also prosper, stopping what I would say is a pattern of exclusion. This is going to enrich all of us. I look forward to the member's support.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Respectfully, there may have been an issue with the translation because the minister did not seem to hear the question. What she said had nothing to do with the question.

The Deputy Speaker: We are out of time.

[*Translation*]

It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of motion to House*]

The Deputy Speaker: 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. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 761*)

YEAS

Members

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| Aldag | Alghabra |
| Ali | Anand |
| Anandasangaree | Angus |
| Arseneault | Arya |
| Ashton | Atwin |
| Bachrach | Badawey |
| Bains | Baker |
| Barron | Battiste |
| Beech | Bibeau |
| Bittle | Blair |
| Blaney | Blois |
| Boissonnault | Boulerice |
| Bradford | Brière |
| Cannings | Carr |
| Casey | Chagger |
| Chahal | Champagne |
| Chatel | Chen |
| Chiang | Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek) |
| Collins (Victoria) | Coteau |
| Dabrusin | Damoff |
| 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 |
| Gazan | Gerretsen |
| Green | Guilbeault |
| Hajdu | Hanley |
| Hardie | Hepfner |
| Holland | Housefather |
| Hughes | Hussen |
| Hutchings | Iacono |
| Idlout | Ien |
| Jaczek | Johns |
| Joly | Jones |
| Jowhari | Julian |
| Kayabaga | Kelloway |
| Khalid | Khera |
| Koutrakis | Kusmierczyk |
| Kwan | Lalonde |
| Lambropoulos | Lamoureux |
| Lapointe | Lattanzio |
| Lauzon | LeBlanc |
| Lebouthillier | Lightbound |
| Long | Longfield |

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| Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) |
| MacDonald (Malpeque) |
| MacKinnon (Gatineau) |
| Martinez Ferrada |
| Mathysen |
| McDonald (Avalon) |
| McKay |
| McLeod |
| Mendès |
| Miao |
| Morrissey |
| Naqvi |
| O'Connell |
| O'Regan |
| Powlowski |
| Robillard |
| Rogers |
| Sahota |
| Saks |
| Sarai |
| Schiefke |
| Sgro |
| Sheehan |
| Sidhu (Brampton South) |
| Sorbara |
| St-Onge |
| Tassi |
| Thompson |
| Valdez |
| van Koeverden |
| Vandenbeld |
| Weiler |
| Yip |
| Zarrillo |

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| MacGregor |
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| Masse |
| May (Cambridge) |
| McGuinty |
| McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) |
| McPherson |
| Mendicino |
| Miller |
| Murray |
| Noormohamed |
| Oliphant |
| Petitpas Taylor |
| Qualtrough |
| Rodriguez |
| Rota |
| Sajjan |
| Samson |
| Scarpaleggia |
| Serré |
| Shanahan |
| Sidhu (Brampton East) |
| Singh |
| Sousa |
| Sudds |
| Taylor Roy |
| Turnbull |
| Van Bynen |
| Vandal |
| Virani |
| Wilkinson |
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| Zuberi— 172 |

NAYS

Members

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| Aboutaif | Aitchison |
| Albas | Allison |
| Arnold | Baldinelli |
| Barlow | Barrett |
| Barsalou-Duval | Beaulieu |
| Bergeron | Berthold |
| Bérubé | Bezan |
| Blanchet | Blanchette-Joncas |
| Block | Bragdon |
| Brassard | Brock |
| Brunelle-Duceppe | Calkins |
| Caputo | Carrie |
| Chabot | Chambers |
| Champoux | Chong |
| Cooper | Dalton |
| Dancho | Davidson |
| Deltell | Desbiens |
| Doherty | Dowdall |
| Dreeshen | Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) |
| Ellis | Epp |
| Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) | Falk (Provencher) |
| Ferri | Findlay |
| Fortin | Gallant |
| Garon | Gaudreau |
| Généreux | Genuis |
| Gill | Gladu |
| Godin | Goodridge |
| Gourde | Gray |
| Hallan | Hoback |
| Jeneroux | Jivani |
| Kelly | Khanna |
| Kitchen | Kmieć |
| Kram | Kramp-Neuman |
| Kurek | Kusie |
| Lake | Lantsman |

Statements by Members

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| Lawrence | Lehoux |
| Lemire | Leslie |
| Lewis (Essex) | Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk) |
| Liepert | Lloyd |
| Lobb | Maguire |
| Majumdar | Martel |
| May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) | Mazier |
| McCauley (Edmonton West) | McLean |
| Melillo | Michaud |
| Moore | Morantz |
| Morrice | Morrison |
| Motz | Muys |
| Nater | Normandin |
| Patzer | Paul-Hus |
| Pauzé | Perkins |
| Perron | Plamondon |
| Poilievre | Rayes |
| Redekopp | Reid |
| Rempel Garner | Richards |
| Roberts | Rood |
| Ruff | Savard-Tremblay |
| Scheer | Schmale |
| Seeback | Shields |
| Simard | Sinclair-Desgagné |
| Small | Soroka |
| Steinley | Ste-Marie |
| Stewart | Strahl |
| Stubbs | Therrien |
| Thomas | Tochor |
| Tolmie | Trudel |
| Uppal | Van Popta |
| Vidal | Vien |
| Viersen | Vignola |
| Villemure | Vis |
| Vuong | Wagantall |
| Warkentin | Waugh |
| Webber | Williams |
| Williamson | Zimmer— 146 |

PAIRED

Members

Fast

Ng— 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

The hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if you were to canvass the House, I suspect would find unanimous consent to allow the 17 statements by members before question period.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many reports are setting off alarm bells about the state of the Canadian economy, but perhaps none is more shocking than the Fraser Institute's report out last week that showed that Canada's GDP per capita had dropped 3% in four years while the American GDP per capita had grown by 8%.

Canada's economy is now underperforming that of the U.S. by the widest margin since 1965, and has had the worst per capita income drop in the G7 in the last five years. These are the consequences of inflationary spending, taxes and deficits from the Liberal-NDP government.

Sadly, none of this is a surprise to the people of Flamborough—Glanbrook, because they are living it every day. What angers them even more is that it does not have to be this way in Canada. Generations have sought Canada for opportunity, hope and freedom, and yet the Prime Minister has destroyed that. He is definitely not worth the cost. Only common-sense Conservatives will fix the budget and axe the tax so Canadians can bring home powerful paycheques.

* * *

SYMPHONY NOVA SCOTIA

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, music is an essential part of the human experience. It fills our lives with joy and comfort. Fundamentally, music unites us.

Today I make this overture to congratulate Symphony Nova Scotia on its 40th anniversary. Throughout the years, Symphony Nova Scotia has embraced the full spectrum of genres from classical to baroque, pop, jazz and spectacular collaborations with some of Canada's biggest stars. The symphony also plays a vital role in nurturing creativity through educational initiatives, mentorship and community programs. Its diverse and versatile repertoire and the skill with which it performs it has captivated our hearts for generations.

Today, for its long-standing commitment to the cultural traditions that have shaped Nova Scotia over the last 40 years, we applaud Symphony Nova Scotia not from the music hall seats back home but right here from the benches of the Parliament of Canada. Happy anniversary to Symphony Nova Scotia, and may the next 40 years reprise the accomplishments and excitement of the last 40 years.

* * *

● (1410)

HON. JAMES SCOTT PETERSON

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay my respects to the Hon. James Scott Peterson, my extraordinary predecessor as the member of Parliament for Willowdale, who, sadly, passed away on May 10.

Jim Peterson was a distinguished lawyer, philanthropist, parliamentarian and minister who won six federal elections and served as the member of Parliament for Willowdale for 23 years. What made him so incredibly memorable was not only his enviable number of years as a tireless parliamentarian but also his immense intellect and his exceptionally big heart. A larger-than-life personality, Jim was an inspiration to me and to many of the most discerning individuals who follow Canadian politics.

On behalf of the many residents of Willowdale, I would like to offer my condolences to Jim's wife, Heather; his family; and his many, many friends.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL PATRIOTS DAY

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a country, when statutory holidays are not celebrated throughout the land for the same reasons, that tells us something.

Yesterday, in Quebec, we honoured the memory of the Patriots, who laid down their lives while fighting the British Empire to protect our freedom. Meanwhile, in Canada, people celebrated the monarch of the same British Empire that hanged the Patriots and has yet to apologize for this act of colonial violence.

Chevalier de Lorimier and his brothers in arms were, however, on the right side of history. What happened since proved it. One of their demands was a responsible government, accountable to the people of this land.

While Quebec honours the memory of its martyrs, Canada continues to celebrate their executioners. When such division exists in a country, it is because that country is in fact two countries. Although the memory of the Patriots was trampled on this past weekend, we have to remember that the best way to honour their sacrifice is to win.

The Patriots' fight is our fight. Our victory will be their victory.

* * *

MOUVEMENT D'IMPLICATION FRANCOPHONE D'ORLÉANS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pride and a sense of accomplishment that I inform the House that on May 2, the Minister of Official Languages travelled to Orléans to announce that the federal government would be investing \$36 million to build the new Mouvement d'implication francophone d'Orléans, or MIFO, community centre.

Since 1979, MIFO, a pillar of the French-speaking community, has touched the lives of over 100,000 francophones. The revitalization of the MIFO community centre as a net-zero carbon building at the heart of an official language minority community will help the francophone and francophile community of Orléans, Ottawa and eastern Ontario provide services and community spaces to all generations.

I want to thank local leaders and my national capital region colleagues for their support. We got our new MIFO.

* * *

[English]

SKIN CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month, and with summer under way, the Save Your Skin Foundation is using this time to in-

Statements by Members

crease awareness and promote the treatment and prevention of skin cancer.

My wife, Kelly, is a melanoma skin cancer survivor. Unfortunately, too many people have lost their lives to the disease, while others continue to fight. It was projected that in 2023, 9,700 Canadians would be diagnosed with melanoma and 1,250 would die from it. Sadly, the numbers continue to rise year after year.

Skin cancer is caused by overexposure to UV radiation from the sun and the use of artificial tanning equipment. In the past, I tabled a private member's bill that strengthened warning labels on artificial tanning equipment, which was enacted by our previous Conservative government.

This summer I encourage all Canadians to enjoy the great outdoors and be skin-safe. The good news is that prevention is easy: wear sunscreen, cover up when outside, seek shade and avoid tanning beds. Of course, have lots of fun.

* * *

● (1415)

PORT CREDIT SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr. Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the 100th anniversary of Port Credit Secondary School.

As one of the oldest educational institutions in Ontario, the school has a rich history. It has survived the Great Depression, the Second World War, a devastating fire and even a visit from our friend, Prime Minister Chrétien.

The school's alumni have gone on to successful careers, raising families and making significant contributions to our country. With academic excellence as its central mission, Port Credit Secondary continues to inspire the minds of the next generation. The school is a beacon of learning, helping to guide our young leaders in the pursuit of wisdom.

I congratulate the school on its historic achievement. Here is to another 100 years, and as its motto goes, "May the light never fail."

* * *

DARREN DUTCHYSHEN

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian sports broadcasting world has lost a giant. Born and raised in Porcupine Plain, Saskatchewan, Darren Dutchyshen was a mainstay on TSN's Sportscentre for close to 30 years. He was in many ways the heartbeat of TSN.

Statements by Members

Dutchy loved sports, loved Canada and loved his job at TSN. No one was more passionate about bringing the sports highlights to Canadians every single night, and he always did it with a giant smile, his massive personality and often inappropriate humour. Rod Smith, Jennifer Hedger and countless other Canadian broadcasting legends have shared moments that exemplified Dutchy's unforgettable personality and remarkable talent. It has been a tough time, but those memories have been very touching.

Confident and kind, larger than life and always smiling, Darren Dutchyshen was a beauty. To his kids, Tyler, Brett and Paige; his partner, Kate; his TSN family and all of his fans, I want to extend deepest condolences and express our sincerest gratitude for all the amazing stories told by Dutchy, all the laughs and all the highlights. He left an indelible mark on the Canadian sports narrative, and we will never forget him.

* * *

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the Liberal government is not worth the cost or corruption. While Canadians struggle with the cost of living crisis, the Liberals dish out billions to government contractors for their arrive scam.

Last week revealed more corruption: another lavish dinner between GC Strategies, the two-person IT company that was paid \$20 million for doing no work, and government officials. The head of this two-person operation had his house raided by the RCMP in its investigation into the arrive scam.

On top of this Liberal mismanagement and waste, we learn that the former CBSA chief John Ossowski was given a one-day contract for \$500 so he could access documents to prepare him for a committee appearance. All the while, he was working for a consulting firm that does business with the Government of Canada. This is another glaring conflict of interest and waste of taxpayer money.

The incompetent Liberal government is a burden Canadians cannot afford. Conservatives will use every measure possible to bring home accountability for Canadian tax dollars and put a stop to corruption.

* * *

AFRICA DAY

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the rich heritage, diversity and resilience of the African continent, ahead of Africa Day on May 25. As a member of this vibrant community, I understand the importance of fostering strong ties between Canada and Africa. Africa Day serves as a reminder of our shared history and the ongoing journey towards unity, progress and prosperity for all African nations, as well as the African diaspora, including the 1.3 million African Canadians.

It is a day to honour the struggles and the sacrifices of those who fought for liberation, justice and equality, both in Africa and in communities across our country. Canada's relationship with Africa is essential for promoting peace, sustainable development and mutual prosperity. Through collaboration areas such as trade, diplomacy and life-saving health care investments, including Gavi and

IDA, Canada and African nations can work together to address common challenges and seize the opportunities for growth and innovation.

Together, we can build bridges of understanding and co-operation that benefit both of our nations and contribute to a brighter future for all.

* * *

OPIOIDS

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our nation is gripped in an opioid crisis, with over 42,000 Canadians dying from overdose since 2016, yet the Prime Minister still allowed hard drugs like cocaine, meth and heroin to be used in public spaces in my province of British Columbia. Our once-safe hospitals are being destroyed by these radical drug policies. The B.C. Nurses' Union is ringing the alarm bell, saying that vulnerable patients and staff are being exposed to illegal drugs, harmful weapons and increased violence.

Common-sense Conservatives will not allow this catastrophic experiment to come to the rest of Canada. Our safe hospitals bill would put the brakes on the insanity, punishing criminals who bring dangerous weapons, violence and illicit drugs into our hospitals. We would immediately pass my common sense Bill C-321, which would protect first responders and health care workers from the increased violence they face while serving our communities. A common-sense Conservative government would ban hard drugs and taxpayer-funded opioid handouts. Instead, we would invest in compassionate treatment and recovery for our loved ones.

* * *

● (1420)

[*Translation*]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many Quebec families are being forced to cancel their summer vacation plans because the Liberals' taxes and spending, backed by the Bloc Québécois, have made life unaffordable. Some people can barely afford food, so going on vacation is out of the question. While the Prime Minister treats himself to \$230,000 luxury vacations on the taxpayers' dime, most Quebecers are being forced to scale back their holiday plans or cancel them altogether.

Statements by Members

The Conservatives are calling on the Prime Minister to give Quebecers a break this summer by axing the carbon tax, the gas tax and the GST on fuel from now until Labour Day to help families simply take a summer vacation. This measure would allow families to save hundreds of dollars and enable Quebecers to discover places like the Maritimes or Ontario.

The Conservatives will axe the tax for everyone as of the next election, but in the meantime, the Prime Minister should adopt this common-sense proposal to lend a hand to Quebec families this summer.

* * *

[English]

OPIOIDS

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week I joined the health committee during its two days in Vancouver as a part of its study into the toxic drug crisis. We met with people on the front lines: supervised consumption sites, overdose prevention, low-barrier housing, health care and recovery providers, law enforcement and the community court. We also met directly with people who use drugs, the very same people who are bearing the terrible and lethal impact of toxic street drugs. I learned a lot over those two days, especially about harm reduction and safe supply as necessary parts of a continuum of care with treatment and recovery.

Unfortunately and shamefully, not one single Conservative MP showed up in Vancouver. Rather than learn and bear witness to evidence-informed policies on the toxic drug crisis, the Conservatives would rather embrace bumper-sticker politics and false narratives, and scapegoat the most vulnerable. The Liberal government has failed to meet the crisis with the urgency it demands, and the Conservatives are playing politics. All the while, people die.

* * *

[Translation]

CLAUDE VILLENEUVE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I cannot count how many times I have told my colleagues from Jonquière and Lac-Saint-Jean that we should ask Claude. I am of course talking about biologist Claude Villeneuve, a giant in the field of science and a giant of a human being, who left us Sunday evening.

He was a scientist and an academic for whom ideology was no substitute for science and universities should teach facts, not fairy tales. His idea of scholarship was to engage in research, create knowledge and then put that knowledge in service of the common good.

Claude would always play down his talents in such fields as biology, chemistry, physics and energy. He was very quick to launch into some topic or other, but luckily for us, he took his sweet time finishing.

He taught at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, he founded the Chair in Eco-consulting in 2003, he was the driving force behind the Carbone boréal project, and those are just a few of his ac-

complishments. His passing is even being mourned internationally, because the UN adopted some of his research tools.

A few months before leaving us, Claude paid me and my colleagues the greatest of compliments by saying that he was happy to be handing over his project to us, because he knew that with us, it would get done. What a compliment from Claude, but he is gone too soon.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a fun fact is that the Liberal-NDP minority government is now the longest-serving minority government in this country's history. A not so fun fact is that Canadians have never been poorer. With the worst standard of living crisis in 40 years, and in the middle of this historic cost of living crisis, the government decided to hike the carbon tax by 23%, ruining Canadians' vacations.

The Conservatives just announced their common-sense plan to axe the carbon tax and all federal taxes on gas from Victoria Day to Labour Day weekend, which would save the average Canadian 35¢ or, for those in Ontario, \$592. Common-sense Conservatives know that what Canadians really need a vacation from is the government and its tax hikes, which is why, when Canadians elect a Conservative government, we would axe the tax in the summer, fall, winter and forever for everyone.

* * *

● (1425)

MALPEQUE FARMER

Mr. Heath MacDonald (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to recognize Nick Green, a constituent of Malpeque and an island beef producer who is in Ottawa today with maritime beef producers for their annual Hill day. Last year, Nick and his operation, Kingston View Farms, earned the Maritime Beef Council's The Environmental Stewardship Award for his commitment to sustainability in agriculture.

Nick is the third generation on the family farm, which was first established in the early 1900s. When he fully took over the operation in 2019, he set out to improve efficiency while benefiting the environment and reducing input costs. Through a series of operational changes that relied on conservation and regenerative farming practices, such as a closely managed rotational grazing system and late spring calving, Nick has managed to achieve his goals. He is now on track to achieve a 75% reduction in fertilizer and chemical costs and a 50% reduction in diesel fuel costs by 2025. I send my congratulations to Nick, and I thank him for being a leader in his industry.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[Translation]***TAXATION**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, this Prime Minister and the Bloc Québécois are not worth the cost of the inflationary taxes and deficits.

Worse still, the Bloc Québécois and the Liberal Party want to radically hike taxes on gas and diesel, even though 25 countries have cut their gas taxes. The western provinces have shown that by cutting taxes, they have been able to lower prices at the pump as well as inflation compared with the other provinces.

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to follow my common-sense plan to axe the tax until Labour Day?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased that the Conservative leader brought up inflation, because it gives me the opportunity to give Canadians some great news. In April, the inflation rate went down to 2.7%. That is the lowest it has been in three years. It is all thanks to our fiscally responsible plan.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we learned the terrible news that inflation is 35% above target. Again, after eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost of debt interest.

They cannot do basic math over there. That 0.7% is actually a third higher than the 2% target. They are patting themselves on the back when they realize that Canadians cannot afford to eat, heat and house themselves.

Why do they not, instead of quadrupling the carbon tax on the backs of Canadians, follow our common-sense plan to suspend all gas and diesel tax until Labour Day?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader has quite proudly and publicly called for the Governor of the Bank of Canada to be fired. Maybe it is the Conservative leader who should lose his job because he just revealed his astonishing ignorance of the Bank of Canada's inflation target.

The Bank of Canada has a target of between 1% and 3%. For four months in a row, inflation in Canada has been within that target. That is good news for Canadians.

* * *

*[Translation]***FINANCE**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister does not even know that the target is 2%. Maybe that is one of the reasons she is missing the target; she does not know what it is.

The same goes for the interest rates we are paying on the national debt. The Prime Minister says that doubling the national debt is not a problem because the rates were very low. That is why I suggested

locking in the rates with 10-year or 30-year bonds, when the rates were low, as it is done with mortgages.

That incompetent minister did not do that. Now we are going to pay more interest on the \$400 billion that is going to be refinanced this year.

Why?

• (1430)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the Conservative leader is the one who is totally incompetent.

The only thing he knows how to do is to criticize Canada, criticize Canadians and criticize our wonderful country.

The fact is that the inflation rate has come down to 2.7%. That is a huge success for our country. Every member should be pleased.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only does the incompetent finance minister not know the inflation target, she does not know that one locks in low rates when one has the chance.

Do members remember when the Prime Minister was saying to not worry, that we can double the national debt because, as he said, "Interest rates are at historic lows, Glen"?

The problem is that I told him at the time that they should lock in those rates for 10 years, or 30 years, with long-term bonds. It turns out that they did not do that, and now \$400 billion of that debt will roll over into these higher rates, forcing Canadians to spend more on interest than on health care.

Why did he hire the worst mortgage broker in the world to be our finance minister?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Conservative leader is in a grouchy mood today. I think we all know why. The only thing he knows how to do is talk down Canada. What he just cannot bear is the reality that, thanks to our fiscally responsible economic plan, inflation is at a three-year low.

Inflation has been within the Bank of Canada's target rate for four months in a row. That is good news for Canada and Canadians.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberals think that one pays down debt by borrowing more, that one stops inflation by printing money and that one fights the drug overdose crisis by legalizing hard drugs, so at least they are consistent in their irrationality. Now they have been forced to backtrack right before the election on their legalization of hard drugs because Canadians are revolting against the policy.

Today, we have a motion that will be voted on in the House to permanently ban hard drugs. Will the government vote for that motion, or will it admit that it plans to legalize drugs again after the next election?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader is wearing more makeup than I am today. Now, I think it is wonderful—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

I will ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to withdraw that comment. We do not comment on the appearance of members.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. I withdraw that comment.

The fact is that the Conservative leader is phony all the way through. He is phony when it comes to his concern about the economy. All he can do is talk our country down. He is also phony when he talks about his concern about the opioid crisis. He tries to score cheap partisan points. It is just not right.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals seem to have a newfound appreciation for the cause of the francophonie.

The Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, or APF, had 18 Liberals in 2021, 11 in 2022, and 22 in 2023. Since last week, there has been a sudden awakening: No less than 112 members of the Liberal caucus are now members of the APF. I say bravo. Francophiles thank them. It is an extraordinary commitment to the French language.

However, could someone tell us what is the Liberals' priority issue at the APF that explains such a sudden commitment on their part?

• (1435)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank the member for her question. Our government and I, personally, understand that French is in decline in Montreal, Quebec and across the country.

Oral Questions

I must tell the member opposite, however, that I do not find this situation amusing. For me, this is no joke. The Quebec nation is so important to us. The French language is so important.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, no one is pulling the wool over our eyes. They have not decided to overtake the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie because they had an epiphany about the fact that French is under threat in Quebec, Canada and around the world. No, they signed up because there is nothing more important to a Liberal than another Liberal. A friend is a friend. They signed up because they have to save their friend, the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. After that, we will never see them again.

It might be a good idea for this government to start working as hard in the interest of the French language as it does in the interest of the Liberals.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the French language, whether in Montreal, Quebec or anywhere else in Canada, is very important to our government. We understand that the French language is in decline, and we will always support the French language, as well as the Quebec and French culture throughout Canada.

* * *

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court is seeking arrest warrants against five senior Hamas and Israeli leaders. This is a step toward justice for Palestinians and Israeli victims of war crimes.

The Liberals promised to support the ICC when they voted for our motion in March, so will the Prime Minister and the Liberal government state clearly that Canada supports the ICC's work to hold all those responsible for crimes accountable?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada respects the independence of the International Criminal Court. Canada condemns the terrorist attack by Hamas on Israel on October 7. Canada calls for an immediate ceasefire and deplores the humanitarian tragedy. Canada believes it is absolutely wrong to equate the terrorist leaders of Hamas with Israel.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the minister knows, that was not my question and that was not the subject of the arrest warrant.

[*Translation*]

The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, or ICC, is seeking arrest warrants against five senior Hamas and Israeli leaders. This is an important step toward justice for Palestinian and Israeli victims.

Can the Prime Minister state clearly that Canada will support the ICC's work to hold all those responsible for crimes accountable?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada respects the independence of the International Criminal Court. Canada condemns the terrorist attack of October 7. Canada calls for an immediate ceasefire. Canada has made it clear that it is absolutely wrong to equate the terrorist leaders of Hamas with Israel.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, it is clear the Prime Minister is not worth the cost of fuel. Most Canadian families will struggle just to be able to afford their yearly summer road trip. That is because the carbon tax has helped push the cost of fuel up to record highs.

Conservatives have called for a common-sense plan to axe the carbon tax and all federal taxes from fuel from now until Labour Day. That would save about 35¢ a litre.

Will the government adopt our common-sense plan so Canadians can afford their summer road trip?

• (1440)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so glad that the Conservatives are raising questions about the cost of living and the lives of Canadians, because it gives me an opportunity to point out that inflation was 2.7% in April. That is the fourth month in a row that inflation has been within the Bank of Canada's target range. For 15 months now, wage increases have been outpacing inflation. That helps Canadians.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is the Liberal message: Canadians have never had it so good. The carbon tax is failing, except at driving up the cost of everything. The government is succeeding very well at driving up the costs of groceries, home heating and fuel.

The carbon tax is sending millions of Canadians to the food bank for the first time, and it is pushing the cost of simple things, such as driving to one's favourite family vacation spot, out of the reach of hard-working Canadians. While the Prime Minister gets to stick Canadian taxpayers with the bill for his exotic vacations, Canadians are struggling just to scrape enough together to take their families on a trip.

Why will the Liberals not adopt our plan and take the tax off fuel for the summer?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would encourage my hon. friend to actually read the work that was done by 300 economists across this country, which says unequivocally that eight out of 10 Canadian families get more money back in the rebate than they actually pay in the price on pollution. That is addressing affordability. In fact, Premier Smith herself said she got more money back for her family than she paid.

If the member really is concerned about affordability, I would encourage him to talk to his friend Premier Smith. She just increased

the gas price by 13¢; she did so with no rebate and did not account for affordability.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, Canadians cannot afford the costly coalition's carbon tax, but the Prime Minister does not care. He will quadruple it, even though 70% of Canadians and seven out of 10 premiers told him to spike the hike.

The Conservatives' common-sense plan is to axe all federal taxes on gas until Labour Day to save Canadians 35¢ a litre. That is more than \$955 of needed savings for Alberta families alone.

Will the Prime Minister axe the tax on gas this summer so Canadians can afford the basics and maybe even a Canadian road trip staycation?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' lack-of-common-sense approach to these things is about axing the facts. Every reasonable observer, 300 economists across this country and the Parliamentary Budget Officer are very clear. Eight out of 10 Canadian families get more money back, and it is those who live on modest incomes who actually do the best, all while fighting climate change. If the Conservatives have questions, I encourage them to go and talk to the Premier of the Province of Alberta about the fact that she gets more money back than she actually pays.

That is a responsible plan to address affordability and to fight climate change.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years it is clear that everyone but the out-of-touch, elite NDP-Liberals knows the carbon tax is not worth the cost. Page 4 of last year's parliamentary budget office report says, "Taking into consideration...fiscal and economic impacts...most households will see a net loss". The NDP-Liberals' inflationary tax-and-spend agenda makes everything more expensive and hurts vulnerable Canadians.

The most common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax for all, for good. However, since fuel prices have surged over 50% under him, will the PM at least axe the tax on Canadian summer road trips?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear, and 300 economists across this country agree, that eight out of 10 Canadians get more money back in the rebate. It is an approach that addresses affordability and does so in a manner that actually addresses climate change. I would encourage my hon. colleague across the way to talk to her Premier, who has said it is a price on pollution that actually gives her family more money back. She should go and have a conversation with Premier Smith, who just raised the price on gasoline by 13¢, with no rebate and no plan to address the climate crisis.

Oral Questions

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our jet-setting Prime Minister has begun his summer luxury tour early, blowing through Philadelphia with his usual all-expenses-paid five-star hotels and all the food and alcohol his entourage can take. After nine years of an NDP-Liberal government, most Canadians can hardly afford a summer road trip.

Will the Prime Minister adopt our common-sense plan to put \$682 in the pockets of British Columbians and give them a shot at a summer road trip, or is he planning on putting himself first?

• (1445)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again I would encourage my hon. colleagues across the way to stop misleading people with respect to the price on pollution. They need to look at and read the letter that was written by 300 economists across this country, who say the carbon price is the most economically efficient way to address the climate in a manner that actually addresses affordability for Canadians.

I would encourage the Conservatives to go talk to their friend Premier Smith, who said exactly that. Her family got more money back than it actually paid in the price on pollution. I would encourage them, if they are concerned about the price of gas, to go talk to Premier Smith and ask her to reduce it by 13¢. That is how much she just raised it, with no rebate whatsoever.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that rhetoric will not put money in the back pockets of British Columbians, and while the cost of the jet-setting Prime Minister's summer luxury tours and vacation soars, his carbon taxes and gas taxes are driving Canadians nose first into the ground. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Canadians are struggling to afford a simple road trip.

Our Conservative common-sense plan is to give \$682 back to the people of British Columbia. Will the Prime Minister agree that his carbon tax is a road trip wrecker and axe the tax on gas this summer?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really astonished by the gall of the Conservatives. They have the temerity to talk about the road trips of regular Canadians, when they racked up a charge of \$426,283 in Canadians' money travelling to their own convention. The member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola was one of the Conservatives who charged regular Canadians to go to his convention.

That is not right.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Immigration has finally met with his counterparts from Quebec, the provinces and the territories. They have finally started talking about integration capacity. What solution did they come up with? They are going to put a working group together to examine the distribution of asylum seekers.

I thought this was not a problem for the minister. I thought that, when we asked him for fairer distribution, he said that asylum seekers were not cattle.

Is it safe to assume that, until this all-important committee issues its recommendations, absolutely nothing will change on the ground?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if he is criticizing the working group, perhaps he should direct his criticism at the Government of Quebec, because it was the Government of Quebec's idea. We were happy to work with the other provinces and agree to it. That is very important.

The member was not at the meeting eight days ago, but we issued a unanimous news release announcing that we agreed to work together, better coordinate our efforts and do better, because we know that the way we welcome asylum seekers has to be properly coordinated. That is something we can do, as a country, with all the provinces.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, he should have invited me. Next time, I will go.

Quebec is asking to be reimbursed \$1 billion for the cost of welcoming refugee claimants. Quebec is asking that the cost of welcoming refugee claimants be shared with provinces that are not carrying their fair share of the load. Quebec is asking for a temporary reduction in immigration as well as the power to approve all applicants. Quebec is asking that federal programs have French language requirements.

What did the immigration minister offer Quebeckers, after months of shirking his responsibilities? He offered a committee.

Does his committee at least have a deadline to start delivering results?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we do not invite at these meetings is bickering.

Working together is very important to us. For once, Quebec fully agreed with the news release we issued.

In terms of French language training, we have given Quebec \$5.2 billion since 2015. We are committed. We want to ensure, once again, that French, the common language, is strengthened in Quebec.

Oral Questions

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after the meeting, the Minister of Immigration stated that the status quo was no longer acceptable. However, as we speak, it is still the status quo. Nothing has changed on the ground. As of now, the federal government has not paid back a penny, and Quebec is still taking in more than half of all of Canada's asylum seekers.

His committee must not become a gimmick that will sit around being useless until the election. We needed results yesterday. Today, it is a matter of urgency. When are we going to see results?

• (1450)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the status quo is the Bloc Québécois doing nothing for 30 years, while we make \$5.2 billion available to Quebec for French language training, with clear results.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine summers, Canadians know the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. His carbon tax has hiked up the prices of everything. Canadians deserve relief, not taxes. Unlike the coalition of convenience, Conservatives have a solution: It is to cancel all federal tax on gas from now until Labour Day, keeping nearly \$600 in the bank accounts of Ontarians to spend on basic needs and maybe even visit family.

Would it be too much to ask for the Prime Minister to lend a helping hand to Canadians and take the tax off their summer road trips?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am curious about whether the hon. member has actually approached Conservative premiers across Canada, who maintain their own taxes on fuel. In particular, in the province of Alberta, Danielle Smith has increased the price of fuel by 13¢ and offers no rebate. I expect she knows very well that the majority of families receive more than they pay in a fuel tax, but facts do not seem to matter to a party that is committed to eroding all the environmental protections that exist in this country and has virtually no plans to invest in the things that are going to help working-class families address the cost of living.

We are in search of solutions, not fights. I wish Conservatives would at least come armed with facts.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives are calling on the NDP-Liberals to axe the carbon tax and all federal taxes on gas from Victoria Day to Labour Day. For Nova Scotians, this would represent \$542 of savings per family this summer. After nine years, we know the Prime Minister will jet off to surf in Tofino this summer at taxpayers' expense while Nova Scotians cannot afford a summer road trip.

Will the Prime Minister do a surfing cutback to help Canadians by taking the tax off the summer road trip?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the Conservatives are excited because they think they have found a new bumper sticker, but what would they say to families?

Not only are they taking away their carbon rebate, but they would also be taking away child care. They would be taking away their dental care. They would be taking away their diabetes medication. What they would give in exchange for taking all those things away from vulnerable people is a false, empty promise. That is what we have on the other side: empty rhetoric and attacking vulnerable people at a time when they most need help.

We will continue to stand with those who need help.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, Canadians cannot afford the NDP-Liberal government's carbon tax that it just increased by 23%. That is why Conservatives announced a common-sense plan to axe the carbon tax and all federal taxes on gas from Victoria Day to Labour Day. It would mean saving 35¢ per litre. In Manitoba, that would represent over \$600 in savings for each family during the summer.

Will the Prime Minister lend a helping hand to Canadians and take the tax off their summer road trip?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was actually just in Manitoba last week, where we were announcing supports for Canadian families with more investment in creating more child care spaces to relieve the burden for families. These are programs that we continue to invest in, such as the Canada child benefit, dental plan and investments in Canadians, while we see the Conservatives continue to vote against them.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, people cannot afford to live or die. Funeral costs are now out of reach for Canadians in Ontario. The increase in unclaimed bodies is 488% since 2013. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Seniors are already struggling with the affordability crisis. They built this country and now they cannot afford to bid their loved ones farewell.

When will the Prime Minister show some compassion and stop the out-of-control spending so people can live and die with dignity?

• (1455)

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for somebody to live with dignity, they need access to dental care. For somebody to live with dignity, they need access to their diabetes medication. For somebody to live with dignity, they need access to the medicine, support and health care that we are making sure we deliver each and every day.

*Oral Questions***WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY**

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, eight out of 10 Canadians support a woman's right to choose. Yet, it seems the Conservative leader is unwilling to assure Canadians that he and his party will defend this fundamental right.

Could the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth remind the House of our government's position on a woman's right to choose?

Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her advocacy and her tireless work.

I am proud to stand in this House to tell Canadians our government will always defend and support a woman's right to choose. Conservatives claim this is settled, yet anti-choice bills and petitions keep cropping up.

It is settled for us. No ifs, buts or maybes. We will never stop defending the rights that women in this country have fought so hard for.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, July 1 is shaping up to be a disaster for people looking for housing in Quebec. According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, new housing construction in Montreal has decreased compared to last year for both multi-unit dwellings and detached homes. Clearly, this Prime Minister's strategy is just one more in a long list of failures.

Will the Prime Minister remove the barriers to building instead of wasting Quebecers' money?

● (1500)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is interesting, considering that my colleague who asked the question has no plan to fix the situation.

We have a plan to make the investments needed to build housing. For example, we signed an agreement with Quebec to build 8,000 affordable housing units.

[*English*]

To contrast, the Leader of the Opposition, when he was housing minister, was only able to build six units across the entire country. The Conservatives are going to cut programs for housing. We are going to make the investments. There is no clearer contrast.

For the party opposite, the Conservatives, to say that the solution to global inflation and the crisis that people are seeing all over the world is to slash supports to vulnerable peoples and attack the very supports that lift them up in the darkest times that we have faced in generations, we say “no”.

We will continue to be there for Canadians and make sure they get what they need.

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[*Translation*]

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over the past three years, the price of groceries has gone up by 21%. No wonder food banks are swamped. The Liberals and Conservatives could not care less, however.

When the CEO of Metro is a Conservative donor, it is clear who the official opposition leader is working for. Meanwhile, the Liberals are giving Loblaw and Costco millions of dollars in handouts. While ordinary folks are going hungry, CEOs are getting the VIP treatment. Enough is enough.

Will the Liberals support the NDP motion to make wealthy CEOs pay their fair share?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have an economic plan that is fair for all Canadians, for every generation. We understand that, in order to fund this plan in a fiscally responsible manner, we need to ask the wealthiest Canadians to pay a bit more. That is what our government is doing.

The question should really go to the Conservatives, who are opposed to our plan. The Conservatives are the ones who are against a fair plan.

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are hungry and hurting. Liberals have failed to lower food prices while Conservatives promote corporate greed. Over the last three years, grocery prices increased 21% while portions shrank. In 2023 alone, grocery giants made a record \$6 billion in profit, all while Canadian families were tightening their belts and missing meals. That is why today New Democrats are forcing Liberals to take a stand.

Will Liberals support our motion to make CEOs pay what they owe or continue to put profits over people like the Conservatives do?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has put forward a plan for fairness for every generation, a plan to invest in housing, in affordability and in economic growth. We have done it in a fiscally responsible way because we know inflation has to come down, so that interest rates can come down. To do that, we are asking those who are the most successful in our amazing country to contribute a little bit more.

That is tax fairness. We support it. The party that opposes it is the Conservatives.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the minister should remember is that over the last nine years, this government, with help from their Bloc Québécois friends, has created the conditions that have made today's cost of living unaffordable, raised interest rates and increased inflation.

This government, aided by the Bloc Québécois, voted in \$500 billion in inflationary spending. As a result, Canadians and Quebecers are now faced with a housing shortage or unaffordable options.

Can the minister answer my question more thoughtfully?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, memories are short. After spending a week in our ridings, it is easy to forget the six affordable housing units that the Leader of the Opposition built when he was the minister responsible for housing. We are talking six affordable housing units across the entire country during his entire tenure.

In the riding of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles alone, 222 affordable housing units have been built in the last few months thanks to the leadership of Quebec municipalities and the financial support of the Canadian and Quebec governments.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this government, after nine years of this Prime Minister's leadership, this Liberal Party is not worth the cost. Unfortunately, Canadians are paying the price. In what way? Rent costs have doubled since the Liberals took office.

People in Quebec City are starting to worry about the crisis that is looming for July 1. Le Soleil spoke to Nicole Dionne, who helps people find housing. She said, "Starting in mid-May, people start panicking if they haven't found housing yet.... A lot of people could be forced to camp outside."

What does the government have to say to those people who would rather camp outside when they cannot find decent housing?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Ms. Dionne is absolutely right and, unfortunately, she will be surprised to learn that the Leader of the Opposition created only six affordable housing units across the country during his entire term as the minister responsible for housing. I do not mean six units in the Quebec City area. I mean six affordable housing units in the entire country.

Just in the riding of my esteemed colleague, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, more than 150 affordable housing units have been built in the past few months, thanks to the leadership of Quebec City's municipal government, whom the Conservative leader calls incompetent, but also thanks to the support of the Canadian government.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is really unfortunate that the member for Québec is continuing to tell tall tales.

I am not sure that Ms. Dionne will find what he just said very funny, because people in Quebec City are suffering right now. According to Le Soleil, the organization is receiving twice as many re-

quests in Quebec City and Lévis as it did last year, and 815 people have asked for help from the CMHC.

Is the minister willing to go see them and tell them another tall tale?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted to go and visit the 160 affordable housing units that have been built in my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent's riding. The problem is that his Conservative leader is accusing the municipalities of Quebec of being incompetent.

Nevertheless, hundreds of affordable housing units are currently being built in Quebec City thanks to the leadership of its municipal government and, obviously, with the support of the Canadian government, which, instead of boasting about the six affordable housing units that the Conservative leader built, is working closely and respectfully with all those involved.

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THE BUDGET

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is moving a closure motion to force the implementation of the budget.

This budget interferes in Quebec's jurisdictions; its theme is to decide for Quebecers. Imposing conditions on Quebec and the cities under the threat of cutting funding for housing, intruding into health care in favour of private care, grabbing power in the financial sector; we have to wonder if the Liberals have a bit of a separatist streak. Indeed, never has a budget attacked federalism in such a way.

Why not collaborate with Quebec instead of picking a fight?

• (1505)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised that my colleague is worried about the state of federalism. I thank him for his concern for Canada.

We too are concerned about Canada. That is why we are introducing important programs for all Canadians.

The Bloc Québécois should be ashamed because it campaigned on wanting to work for housing, for seniors, for the environment and for families. It voted against all that. It should be ashamed.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let me reassure the member, I do not care much about federalism.

I know that Quebecers want to be masters in their own house, and yet what the federal government is doing with this budget is trying to be master everywhere.

Oral Questions

While the Liberals seek to govern in place of the provinces, no one is looking after federal business. No one here is looking out for seniors 65 and over who do not qualify for the OAS increase. No one is looking after EI. No one is seeing to reimbursing the costs of receiving asylum seekers. No one is looking after our key sectors like forestry and aerospace.

Instead of trying to be masters everywhere, why do the Liberals not take care of their own responsibilities?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Who is taking care of our seniors, Mr. Speaker? It is the Liberal government. Who is looking after housing? It is the Liberal government. Who is looking after our young people? It is the Liberal government. Who is taking care of the environment and fighting climate change? It is the Liberal government.

The Bloc Québécois is doing one thing and one thing only: looking for a fight. Bloc members have lost their identity. They do not even know why they are here anymore.

At the risk of repeating myself and without wanting to cause them too much grief, these people, in the beginning, were here for their passion. Today, they stay here for their pension.

The Speaker: Order.

I invite all members to be very careful with their language.

The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

* * *

[English]

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this NDP-Liberal Prime Minister and his extremist agenda, once-safe B.C. hospitals are now infested with chaos, drugs and weapons. The B.C. Nurses' Union confirms that staff are exposed to fentanyl and meth smoke, even in maternity units. This is wacko.

That is why I will introduce the safe hospitals act, which would toughen penalties for criminals who bring in weapons and ban the minister from allowing open hard drug use in hospitals.

Will the Prime Minister support our common-sense Conservative plan, yes or no?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the first order, if we are going to have safe hospitals, we have to provide science-based, evidence-based information and not support misinformation, because, too often in our hospitals, it is actually misinformation that is fuelling much of the aggression that our doctors and nurses are facing.

Secondly, I would say to the member opposite, with regard to the health committee going and listening to people on the ground in British Columbia and hearing directly from those affected by this toxic drug crisis, why were the Conservatives not there?

Why did they not send anybody to listen? Why are they not actually on the ground listening to the people who are suffering in this crisis?

It is time to act on solutions and evidence.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it will be news to the B.C. Nurses' Union that it is spreading disinformation. Here is the reality. Nurses should never be exposed to fentanyl smoke in their workplace. Patients should not have to worry about dangerous weapons when they are vulnerable and seeking treatment in hospitals. After nine years, I cannot believe I even have to ask this.

Does the Prime Minister support tougher sentences for criminals who bring weapons into hospitals?

Will he make it permanently illegal to smoke meth in hospital rooms next to newborn babies, yes or no?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only thing that separates the member opposite and her concern for victims and families is that my colleagues and I on this side of the House want to use evidence-based solutions to make sure that we respond to the crisis with things that are working.

The reality is that the strategy the member is advocating was first led by Newt Gingrich in the United States. It was the greatest disaster of his career. He has completely abdicated any responsibility for it, saying that it was a disastrous mistake. Stephen Harper's advisers are saying the same thing. What they are advocating would not work.

• (1510)

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal coalition, Canadians are suffering with crime, chaos, drugs and disorder.

The minister talks about evidence. What about the evidence from the BC Nurses' Union and its outcry to ban weapons and hard drugs inside of hospitals? What more science could there be than that?

On this side of the House, the Conservatives announced our plan for tough penalties for weapons in hospitals and to not allow the minister to decriminalize or even legalize hard drugs.

Why do we have to ask again? Will the Prime Minister make it illegal to smoke crack and meth in a hospital next to a baby?

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it disappointing that the member across actually did not join the recent visit by the health committee to B.C. to speak to experts on the ground, an actual member of the committee.

Oral Questions

On this side of the House, we follow science, we follow medical experts and we follow the best, evidence-based practices in order to save lives. The war on drugs did not work then; it will not work now. We need compassion, evidence and science to guide us through this.

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[Translation]

PHARMACARE

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives voted against the pharmacare act, which outlines our government's plan to provide free medication to Canadians.

This bill is an important step in ensuring that every Canadian has access to the reproductive options they deserve and that no Canadian will ever have to ration their insulin again. Can the Minister of Health describe the positive impact this legislation will have on Canadians?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her important work on this issue.

We share the goal of ensuring that everyone across the country can access the medication they need. This is essential. I have a very simple question for the vast majority of Conservative Party members who oppose abortion. Why do they also oppose access to contraceptives? The only answer is that these members oppose women's rights in general.

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[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, we learned that three contractors involved in the Prime Minister's \$60-million arrive scam alone were awarded \$1 billion. After nine years, we know that the Prime Minister is not worth that cost.

Let us also talk about the corruption. One of those contractors, who received \$20 million in IT contracts but did no IT work, had their doors kicked in by the RCMP. We also learned they were winning and dining senior officials from the Liberal government.

We know that it cost \$60 million. How many boozy dinners were involved in this \$60-million scandal?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend knows very well that there are internal investigations taking place with respect to this matter. A number of people were properly called before parliamentary committees, and they came to testify. Of course, he also knows that the RCMP is looking into this matter. He made reference to that in an overly dramatic moment as well.

The member should have the decency to let the police do its work. We have said from the beginning that anybody who misused taxpayers money will be held to account. I have confidence that the RCMP will do its work.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the ad hoc committee concluded that the Prime Minister went to unprecedented lengths to hide the Winnipeg lab documents from Parliament to protect the government from political embarrassment, in other words, a cover-up.

The cover-up continues. Last week, Liberal and NDP MPs voted to shut down a parliamentary committee to get to the bottom of the cover-up. It is a cover-up of a cover-up by the cover-up coalition.

I have a simple question. What are they hiding?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, the hon. member across would be aware that his party was against any of the mechanisms that actually brought these documents to light. It was this government, and in fact, I was the House leader at the time, that made sure that we had an ad hoc process to make sure that there was a way to properly vet secure documents. That is why these documents in full, unredacted are available for everybody to see.

The Conservatives refuse to participate in that and they continue to search for some way to pretend those documents are not available. However, to any Canadian, not just any parliamentarian who wants to see those documents, they are available in their entirety.

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● (1515)

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are defending the indefensible. The member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell used foul and aggressive language towards Quebec witnesses defending the French language before the Standing Committee on Official Languages on May 6. This MP must be sanctioned, as he has damaged the reputation of the committee and all its members. The Liberals always protect their own, however. They will go to any lengths.

Can the Prime Minister show respect for francophones by immediately removing the MP from the Standing Committee on Official Languages and replacing him as president of the international Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell has spent far more time in this Parliament defending the French fact in Canada than any member of the Conservative Party has. We will continue to defend the French language throughout Canada, including Quebec. The member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell will do everything in his power to be with us in defending French across Canada.

Tributes

[English]

● (1520)

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are worried that the right to choose, along with sexual and reproductive health care, is no longer guaranteed. Our government has made critical investments in protecting and strengthening sexual and reproductive rights in Canada.

Could the Minister of Women, Gender Equality and Youth update the House on the work our government is doing to support sexual and reproductive health care across the country?

Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, strengthening sexual and reproductive health care is essential to ensure women can make their own decisions when it comes to their health. It is why we are making contraceptives free to nine million women across Canada. It is why the menstrual equity fund was created, which has lifted nearly three million people out of period poverty. It is why we invested \$45 million into the sexual and reproductive health fund to organizations providing essential services. Investments like these are a true step forward to lasting gender equality.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, trinkets and beads is what Obsidian Energy, an American company, has been willing to offer the Woodland Cree First Nation. Its drillings have caused earthquakes and polluted the land. Worse yet, now that Treaty 8 first nations are exercising their treaty rights, the company has called on the RCMP to imprison Woodland Cree leaders. It is a shameful display of colonial tactics that have plagued indigenous communities for generations.

Will the Liberals uphold the treaty and support the Woodland Cree against this greedy company?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, self-determination over indigenous land is so critical to our path toward reconciliation. We will be working with the Woodland Cree as well as my colleague opposite toward a resolution to this very important issue.

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, major wildfires hit early this year here in northern Manitoba because of drought, because of climate change. Thankfully evacuees in Cranberry Portage and elsewhere are back home.

However, in addition to thousands of hectares, the fire destroyed fibre optic and telecom lines and left major centres like Flin Flon stranded without vital Internet and cell service for days. Bell MTS has reconnected its customers, but the truth is that there needs to be backups in place. Let us be clear: We need plans that apply to the catastrophic effects of climate change.

Will the government step up, use its jurisdiction over telecom companies and ensure critical infrastructure plans are in place for communities during climate emergencies like these?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for raising those concerns directly with me, and we responded. Other ministers in other departments responded very quickly. I also spoke with my counterpart within the province to look at the issues. We are speaking with the telecommunication companies to look at how we can look at a longer-term solution and also emergency solutions, and making sure that communication stays.

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HON. JOHN FRASER

The Speaker: Colleagues, there have been discussions among representatives of all parties in the House and I understand we will now proceed to tributes with respect to the passing of the Hon. John Allen Fraser, former Speaker of the House.

I would like to first recognize the hon. government House leader.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a man who truly was a distinguished and honourable member of the House. I speak of John Allen Fraser, whose role as Speaker of the House of Commons will always be remembered with affection and respect.

He passed away last month in Vancouver at the age of 92. His legacies were many: 21 years as a member of Parliament, membership in the federal cabinet in multiple postings and seven years as Speaker of the House of Commons. Perhaps the most memorable for those of us in Parliament, in this chamber, is that he was the first Speaker to be elected directly in a secret ballot by members of the House. Why did this happen? It was that John Fraser was a decent and a courteous man who treated people with respect, no matter where they came from or what their political colours were. He was the best of us.

John Fraser was born in 1931 in Yokohama, Japan. Three years later, his family returned to Canada, eventually settling in Vancouver. As a teenager, he worked in a lumber mill in the interior of British Columbia. It was there where he gained a lifelong appreciation for nature and where he developed his work ethic that carried him through law school at the University of British Columbia, through the Canadian Army Reserve training and, of course, through an extensive career in public service.

Tributes

He was first elected to the House in 1972 as a Progressive Conservative in the riding of Vancouver South. He was re-elected in five further elections. During those two decades, he served his constituents and his country well from all sides: the opposition, the government and the Speaker's chair. In government, he served as environment minister, postmaster general, and minister of fisheries and oceans. It was in the fall of 1986 that history was truly made. Reform was brought to the House. No longer would the Speaker be nominated by the prime minister of the day, to be merely confirmed by the House.

[*Translation*]

At 3 p.m. on September 30, the House was convened so that members could directly elect their new Speaker. Eleven rounds of voting were needed, and the results were not announced until 1:48 a.m. John Allen Fraser was elected by his peers to the position of 32nd Speaker of the House. He would hold this office with distinction until his retirement from political life in 1993, and yet, he had not finished serving his country.

His love of nature was genuine and profound. In January 1994, he was appointed Canada's ambassador to the United Nations for the environment, a position he held until December 1997. He was a man who loved his family and his country deeply.

[*English*]

We were lucky to call him our Speaker. We were fortunate to have him in the House, and we shall always be thankful for his and his family's service to Canada.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to rise and pay tribute to a proud British Columbian, a great Canadian and my friend. The Honourable John Allen Fraser passed away last month on April 7 at the age of 92. He was born in Yokohama, Japan, and his family returned to Canada in 1934, settling in Vancouver when he was a small child. As a young man, he worked in a lumber mill in the B.C. interior, sparking a lifelong appreciation for nature and the outdoors. He also developed a strong work ethic that would benefit his distinguished career in public service.

John completed Canadian Army Reserve training and attended law school at UBC. In 1972, he was elected to Parliament as the Conservative voice of Vancouver South, a role he would retain for 21 years. He served in the cabinets of the Right Honourable Joe Clark and the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney as Minister of the Environment, as postmaster general and as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. From 1986 to 1994, he served as our 32nd Speaker of the House, with the distinction of being the first Speaker elected by secret ballot. I believe the Speaker was a page at that time.

On a personal note, I was honoured to speak at Speaker Fraser's piping out ceremony from the Seaforth Highlanders during my tenure as associate minister of national defence. I and many others sought his counsel on many occasions and always appreciated his kindness, his sense of humour and his wisdom. I can say with confidence that he was held in the highest regard by all who knew him.

Through a mutual love of skiing, John met Cate Findlay in Whistler, beginning a love story that lasted 59 years. I will note again that Cate is not a family member of mine, but is part of the

right clan, and John too was always proud of his Scottish heritage. He loved to wear a kilt. He was also very appreciative of his campaign volunteers and organisers, giving gifts of thanks that included the words "country, family, party".

On behalf of a grateful nation, I once again thank Speaker Fraser for his service and for his contributions to our province and to our country. A celebration of life will be held in Vancouver next Friday, May 31. My thoughts continue to be with his many friends; his three wonderful daughters, Sheena, Anna and Mary; and their children, as they and many friends mourn his loss. He will be greatly missed.

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to honour John Fraser today, whom I had the honour of working with for many years when he was a minister and when he was Speaker of the House. He was the proud representative of the riding of Vancouver South from 1972 to 1993.

In 1986, Mr. Fraser was the first MP elected Speaker of the House of Commons by secret ballot. Prior to this first election in the House, the Prime Minister appointed the Speaker, and the leaders of the other parties simply gave their approval. As was mentioned earlier, in this election, it took 11 rounds before he was elected. We finished at around 1:30 a.m., and the procedure was subsequently changed. He held this position continuously until his retirement in 1993. Decisions made at the time by Speaker Fraser are still cited today.

I want to tell a little story. Speaker John Fraser was very clever. At one point, when I was serving as an independent member, I asked a question that he found to be a bit radical, I guess. He asked me to withdraw some of my comments, which, being a good MP, I willingly agreed to do. To my great surprise, two or three weeks later, the Prime Minister used the same expression and so I asked the Speaker if he was also going to ask the Prime Minister to withdraw his remarks, since that is what I had done. He told me that he would think about it.

That is when I understood that he was very clever. He gave his answer when I was absent, even though I had been there every day to hear what he had to say on the matter. He decided that it was fine for the Prime Minister to have said what he did, so I went to the Speaker's office to meet with him and ask him why it was okay for the Prime Minister to have made those comments. He said that the reason was very simple. It was that my tone was aggressive, whereas the Prime Minister's tone was humorous, and so it was more understandable. We can see how clever and original Speaker Fraser was.

Tributes

I remember him as a charming man, and we liked to call him John outside his official duties. He was such a pleasure to be around. He would invite everyone to a cocktail party at the end of the year, where he would wear a kilt and serve a good Scotch from the same region. He was also an honest, articulate and dedicated man. He could be authoritarian at times, but always eager to serve all members effectively. His re-election as Speaker was merely a procedural matter, because he was so well liked by all members of the House.

Of course, he is being remembered as Speaker of the House, but he was also an excellent environment minister and served as minister of fisheries and oceans. He got in a bit of hot water at the time and, apparently, he did not eat tuna for several months. Anyone who looks it up will understand what I mean. After retiring from Parliament, he continued to be a strong advocate for Pacific salmon conservation in British Columbia and with a number of groups. He also served as an ambassador.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I extend our sincere condolences to his entire family. Farewell, Mr. Speaker. He was a dedicated member of Parliament, a capable minister and an exceptional Speaker.

• (1530)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Hon. John Allen Fraser, former member, 32nd Speaker of the House of Commons, minister of the environment and minister of fisheries and oceans. Roughly two years ago, I rose during this Parliament to honour former Speaker John Bosley following his passing. It is with a heavy heart that I rise to honour his successor, Mr. Fraser.

As mentioned in the speeches we just heard, Mr. Fraser had the distinction of being the first Speaker of the House of Commons to be elected, as the position was previously filled through an appointment process by the Prime Minister.

Having been a candidate for the position several times, I can say that it is not easy to put one's name on the ballot and explain to our colleagues in the House why they should put their trust in us and choose us to be the arbiter of the rules of the House. It is a great responsibility for a parliamentarian to accept the challenge of this role, given the nature of the debates. It is also a great responsibility to determine that the candidate is better suited to being not a player, but an arbiter.

[*English*]

On the day he was elected as Speaker, Mr. Fraser famously said in an interview with the CBC, "I've sat on the opposition side, I've sat as a minister and I've sat as a private member on the government side. I think I've got a pretty fair idea of how members feel about exercising their responsibilities and their obligations in the chamber."

He was clearly correct in his assessment, because it took the MPs at the time just 11 ballots to come to that conclusion and elect him as the first Speaker. He would remain in this position for an astonishing seven years and 108 days, from 1986 to 1994.

Speaker Fraser would continue to have a momentous career beyond the time of his retirement as a member of Parliament in 1994. He would go on to be appointed to the United Nations as Canada's ambassador for the environment until 1997.

Speaker Fraser spent the first four years of his life in Japan, where his father sold lumber. Those early days must have had a profound influence on him. In his obituary, his family indicated, "One of his proudest moments while serving as Speaker, was being witness to the Government of Canada announcing redress for Japanese Canadians."

Speaker Fraser would go on to be honoured by his country for his service on numerous occasions, including twice as an officer of the Order of Canada. He would also receive the Vimy Award for making a significant contribution to the defence and security of Canada.

It is once again difficult to put into words the importance of the legacy Speaker Fraser brings to this House. I would say to John's family that I know they have lost a tremendous individual who dedicated so much of himself to Canada. I thank them for having supported him along the way and for sharing him with all of us.

On behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus and our leader, the member for Burnaby South, we extend our deepest condolences to his daughters Sheena, Anna and Mary, as well as their families, his friends and former colleagues, and all who were blessed to have known him.

May he rest in peace.

• (1535)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to add the voices of those in the Green Party across this country and myself, as someone who was so honoured to know and love John Fraser as a friend, a colleague and a fellow warrior in the battle to save this planet. He would raise a glass and say, "To the conspiracy, to the conspiracy to save the planet." The Hon. John Fraser brought into that conspiracy his ability to pull people from all sides of the political spectrum into one space.

I can remember his close friendship with the former member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, Jim Fulton, NDPer and dear friend of John Fraser, the two of them and Bill Blaikie, another Scot, my goodness. I was a bit younger, and I was so honoured to be in the Speaker's chambers when they would get a bit in their cups with the whisky, and I remember fondly John Fraser, arm in arm with Jack Harris from St. John's East, and Bill Blaikie from Winnipeg, and dear Jim Fulton, singing a bit of Robbie Burns.

It was John Fraser who introduced to this place the Robbie Burns night dinner. In one of the obituaries now up online, the Right Hon. Kim Campbell, the former prime minister, recalls well when John Fraser tapped her to do the "Reply from the Lassies", which, by the way, she delivered in French with a Scottish accent. I still do not know how she pulled that off.

Tributes

In reflecting on John's time as Speaker, I have to say we have lost some of the love. There used to be a lot of love in this place across party lines, no matter what. We would see it in the way he pulled people together, time and time again. Some people would be surprised that a Progressive Conservative was on the front lines of the battle to stop acid rain, on the front lines of those who wanted to stop the logging of trees that were over 1,000 years old up in Haida Gwaii, and on the front lines of people concerned about the destruction of the natural world and the loss of our wild Pacific salmon.

As an angler and a flyfisher, he really knew what it meant to stand in a river and cast the line out for those fish. He was part of nature. He did not see it as some separate environment. He was in it. He cared deeply, and he would say, "If you're a Conservative, it means you want to conserve. You don't want to destroy. If you're a Conservative, the natural world is a place you respect and love."

Well, I could go on and on, but I will try not to. I remember when they were trying to talk him into running. By the way, some of the members will know this story, but most are too young. One time Jim Fulton smuggled a dead salmon down one of his trouser legs, in a Glad bag, and managed to get it across the floor and slap it on the desk of Brian Mulroney, the former prime minister, before anyone could stop him.

Jim was trying to talk John Fraser into running for Speaker. John said to Jim Fulton, as Jim remembered it, "Jimmy, if you had pulled that trick and I was Speaker, you wouldn't have been recognized in this place for six months." Fulton said, "Oh no, Fraser, you wouldn't have done that to me." He said, "Oh yes, I would have done that to you."

He was still elected Speaker, and he was able to quell the noise and chaos in this place, as Garth Turner recently reflected in an on-line tribute, with a voice barely above a whisper. He commanded the respect of everyone in this place, because everyone knew that John Fraser was a man whose integrity was above reproach, who knew his parliamentary principles and who basically, through the core of his being, understood fairness.

He would stand up for MPs such as those in my position, although I had never had the honour to serve with him as an MP. However, when Bill Blaikie brought the point of order that said that if a party happened to fall below 12 members in this place, they still needed to have the respect that allowed them to participate in question period more or less as equals, John Fraser said that was not in doubt. However, they could not get exactly the same privileges when they were fewer than 12.

He stood up for everyone in this place without favouritism, without partisanship, and he fought for what was right. He always fought for what was right. I know that I cannot recognize people in the gallery, but perhaps, Mr. Speaker, you will. I am certainly overwhelmed that Sheena, Anna and Mary have shared their father with this country.

• (1540)

There was a former quite young staffer I first met then who worked for Speaker Fraser, our former Ottawa mayor, Jim Watson. John Fraser knew everyone and knew how to pull in their involve-

ment and engagement when it mattered, whether it was Dalton Camp or the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney. We would not have solved acid rain without John Fraser. We would not have Gwaii Haanas National Park without John Fraser. We would not have the rivers that we have in British Columbia that were in danger.

God bless the memory of John Allen Fraser. May the light perpetual shine upon him as he is gathered up in Heaven right now. I sure hope that they are protecting everything that needs protecting or he will be on the angels' case in short order.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Colleagues, I thank you for the kind words and thoughts that you have shared and the deep respect you have shown for our 32nd Speaker, the Hon. John Allen Fraser. He lived a long, rich life in service to his country.

[*English*]

I was a page standing in front of this chair, and I can tell everyone how inspiring he was. I can also say how his shoes squeaked every time he stood up, which gave the signal to the pages to stand. When asked what advice he would give a young person, he said, "Try mightily to maintain a vivid curiosity about everything, care about things a great deal and have courage." Those are, indeed, words to grow and live by.

He had a deep love for the traditions and history of this place. He said that democracy does not function well without a sense of history and that we cannot take freedom and civility for granted. In many ways, his career path led him inevitably to this chamber and to this chair. He started in law and moved into politics.

[*Translation*]

John Fraser was always interested in politics and an active member of the Progressive Conservative Party, so he finally decided to take the step that everyone here has taken and run for a seat in the House of Commons.

He was elected for the first time in 1972 in the riding of Vancouver South, and he obviously served his constituents well because he was re-elected five times.

[*English*]

He served as Speaker from 1986 to 1994. Following the enactment of significant changes to the Standing Orders, many of his decisions created the basic interpretation of our modern rules and re-defined what is appropriate practice in our chamber today.

[*Translation*]

John Fraser lived a long life of service. We are very grateful for his service to Canada and to this place.

[English]

He was also, as was mentioned by several members, a man who loved nature and all creatures, great and small. I heard an interesting anecdote about Speaker Fraser when he used to live at the farm, the official residence for the Speaker. One year there was an infestation of raccoons, and the people who take care of the official residence thought it was appropriate to set raccoon traps throughout the property. Mr. Fraser thought otherwise, so he would get up early, at the crack of dawn, armed with a broomstick, and set off all the traps along the property so the raccoons would not get hurt, much to the befuddlement of the people who took care of the official residence, as they wondered why all the traps were set off and not one raccoon was caught in them.

[Translation]

We extend our deepest condolences to his family, who are here with us today. We hope that John Fraser's remarkable contributions to Canada will bring comfort to his family in their time of grief.

[English]

I thank his family for being with him and having him serve not only this place but our great country.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1545)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—LEGALIZATION OF HARD DRUGS

The House resumed from May 9 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:46 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Carleton relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

● (1615)

(The House divided on the motion, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 762)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Aboultaif | Aitchison |
| Albas | Allison |
| Arnold | Baldinelli |
| Barlow | Barrett |
| Berthold | Bezan |
| Block | Bragdon |
| Brassard | Brock |
| Calkins | Caputo |
| Carrie | Chambers |
| Chong | Cooper |
| Dalton | Dancho |
| Davidson | Deltell |
| d'Entremont | Doherty |
| Dowdall | Dreeshen |
| Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) | Ellis |
| Epp | Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) |

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| Falk (Provencher) | Ferreri |
| Findlay | Gallant |
| Généreux | Genuis |
| Gladu | Godin |
| Goodridge | Gourde |
| Gray | Hallan |
| Hoback | Jeneroux |
| Jivani | Kelly |
| Khanna | Kitchen |
| Kniec | Kram |
| Kramp-Neuman | Kurek |
| Lake | Lantsman |
| Lawrence | Lehoux |
| Leslie | Lewis (Essex) |
| Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk) | Liepert |
| Lloyd | Lobb |
| Maguire | Majumdar |
| Martel | Mazier |
| McCauley (Edmonton West) | McLean |
| Melillo | Moore |
| Morantz | Morrison |
| Motz | Muys |
| Nater | Patzer |
| Paul-Hus | Perkins |
| Poilievre | Redekopp |
| Reid | Rempel Garner |
| Richards | Roberts |
| Rood | Ruff |
| Scheer | Schmale |
| Seeback | Shields |
| Small | Soroka |
| Steinley | Stewart |
| Strahl | Stubbs |
| Thomas | Tochor |
| Tolmie | Uppal |
| Van Popta | Vecchio |
| Vidal | Vien |
| Viersen | Vis |
| Vuong | Wagantall |
| Warkentin | Waugh |
| Webber | Williams |
| Williamson | Zimmer— 116 |

Business of Supply

NAYS

Members

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Aldag | Alghabra |
| Ali | Anand |
| Anandasangaree | Angus |
| Arseneault | Arya |
| Ashton | Atwin |
| Bachrach | Badawey |
| Bains | Baker |
| Barron | Barsalou-Duval |
| Battiste | Beaulieu |
| Beech | Bergeron |
| Bérubé | Bibeau |
| Bittle | Blair |
| Blanchet | Blanchette-Joncas |
| Blaney | Blois |
| Boissonnault | Boulerice |
| Bradford | Brière |
| Brunelle-Duceppe | Cannings |
| Carr | Casey |
| Chabot | Chagger |
| Chahal | Champagne |
| Champoux | Chatel |
| Chen | Chiang |
| Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek) | Collins (Victoria) |
| Coteau | Dabrusin |
| Damoff | Davies |
| DeBellefeuille | Desbiens |
| Desjarlais | Dhaliwal |

Government Orders

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Dhillon | Diab |
| Dong | Drouin |
| Dubourg | Duclos |
| Duguid | Dzerowicz |
| Ehsassi | El-Khoury |
| Erskine-Smith | Fillmore |
| Fisher | Fonseca |
| Fortier | Fortin |
| Fragiskatos | Fraser |
| Freeland | Fry |
| Gaheer | Gainey |
| Garon | Garrison |
| Gaudreau | Gazan |
| Gerretsen | Gill |
| Green | Guilbeault |
| Hajdu | Hanley |
| Hardie | Hepfner |
| Holland | Housefather |
| Hughes | Hussen |
| Hutchings | Iacono |
| Idlout | Ien |
| Jaczek | Johns |
| Joly | Jones |
| Jowhari | Julian |
| Kayabaga | Kelloway |
| Khalid | Khera |
| Koutrakis | Kusmierczyk |
| Kwan | Lalonde |
| Lambropoulos | Lamoureux |
| Lapointe | Lattanzio |
| Lauzon | LeBlanc |
| Lebouthillier | Lemire |
| Lightbound | Long |
| Longfield | Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) |
| MacAulay (Cardigan) | MacDonald (Malpeque) |
| MacGregor | MacKinnon (Gatineau) |
| Maloney | Martinez Ferrada |
| Masse | Mathysen |
| May (Cambridge) | May (Saainich—Gulf Islands) |
| McDonald (Avalon) | McGuinty |
| McKay | McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) |
| McLeod | McPherson |
| Mendicino | Miao |
| Michaud | Miller |
| Morrice | Morrissey |
| Murray | Naqvi |
| Noormohamed | Normandin |
| O'Connell | Oliphant |
| O'Regan | Pauzé |
| Perron | Petitpas Taylor |
| Plamondon | Powlowski |
| Qualtrough | Robillard |
| Rodriguez | Rogers |
| Romanado | Rota |
| Sahota | Sajjan |
| Saks | Samson |
| Sarai | Savard-Tremblay |
| Scarpaleggia | Schiefke |
| Serré | Sgro |
| Shanahan | Sheehan |
| Sidhu (Brampton East) | Sidhu (Brampton South) |
| Simard | Sinclair-Desgagné |
| Singh | Sorbara |
| Sousa | Ste-Marie |
| St-Onge | Sudds |
| Tassi | Taylor Roy |
| Therrien | Thompson |
| Trudel | Turnbull |
| Valdez | Van Bynen |
| van Koeverden | Vandal |
| Vandenbeld | Vignola |
| Villemure | Virani |
| Weiler | Wilkinson |

Yip
Zarrillo

Zahid
Zuberi— 204

PAIRED

Members

Fast Ng— 2

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[English]

FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023

The House resumed from May 10 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.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The House will now proceed to the deferred recorded division on the motion at report stage of Bill C-59.

The question is on Motion No. 1.

● (1625)

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 763)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Aboutaif | Aitchison |
| Albas | Allison |
| Arnold | Baldinelli |
| Barlow | Barrett |
| Berthold | Bezan |
| Block | Bragdon |
| Brassard | Brock |
| Calkins | Caputo |
| Carrie | Chambers |
| Chong | Cooper |
| Dalton | Dancho |
| Davidson | Deltell |
| d'Entremont | Doherty |
| Dowdall | Dreeschen |
| Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) | Ellis |
| Epp | Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) |
| Falk (Provencher) | Ferreri |
| Findlay | Gallant |
| Généreux | Genuis |
| Gladu | Godin |
| Goodridge | Gourde |
| Gray | Hallan |
| Hoback | Jeneroux |
| Jivani | Kelly |
| Khanna | Kitchen |
| Kmieć | Kram |
| Kramp-Neuman | Kurek |
| Lake | Lantsman |
| Lawrence | Lehoux |
| Leslie | Lewis (Essex) |
| Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk) | Liepert |
| Lloyd | Lobb |
| Maguire | Majumdar |
| Martel | Mazier |

Government Orders

McCaughey (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Rempel Garner
Rood
Scheer
Seeback
Small
Steinley
Strahl
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

McLean
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Patzner
Perkins
Reid
Richards
Ruff
Schmale
Shields
Soroka
Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vis
Wagantall
Vaugh
Williams
Zimmer — 114

Hutchings
Ien
Joly
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lapointe
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Long
Lotis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saanch—Gulf Islands)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Miao
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Normandin
Oliphant
Pauzé
Petipas Taylor
Powlowski
Rayes
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Sousa
St-Onge
Tassi
Therrien
Trudel
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Villemure
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

Iacono
Jaczek
Jones
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lemire
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendicino
Michaud
Morrice
Murray
Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Regan
Perron
Plamondon
Qualtrough
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Sajjan
Samson
Savard-Tremblay
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vignola
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi — 202

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Battiste
Beech
Bérubé
Bittle
Blanchet
Blaney
Boissonnault
Bradford
Brunelle-Duceppe
Carr
Chabot
Chahal
Champoux
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Coteau
Damoff
DeBellefeuille
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fisher
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaheer
Garon
Gaudreau
Gerretsen
Green
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hughes

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bergeron
Bibeau
Blair
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Cannings
Casey
Chagger
Champagne
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Dabrusin
Davies
Desbiens
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser
Fry
Gainey
Garrison
Gazan
Gill
Guilbeault
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen

PAIRED

Members

Fast

Ng — 2

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I declare the motion defeated.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (for the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance) moved that the bill be concurred in.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): 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.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

• (1640)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 764)

YEAS

Members

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| Aldag | Alghabra |
| Ali | Anand |
| Anandasangaree | Angus |
| Arseneault | Arya |
| Ashton | Atwin |
| Bachrach | Badawey |
| Bains | Baker |
| Barron | Battiste |
| Beech | Bibeau |
| Bittle | Blair |
| Blaney | Blois |
| Boissonnault | Boulerice |
| Bradford | Brière |
| Cannings | Carr |
| Casey | Chagger |
| Chahal | Champagne |
| Chatel | Chen |
| Chiang | Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek) |
| Collins (Victoria) | Coteau |
| Dabrusin | Damoff |
| Davies | Desjarlais |
| Dhaliwal | Dhillon |
| Diab | Drouin |
| Dubourg | Duclos |
| Duguid | Dzerowicz |
| Ehsassi | El-Khoury |
| Erskine-Smith | Fillmore |
| Fisher | Fonseca |
| Fortier | Fragiskatos |
| Fraser | Freeland |
| Fry | Gaheer |
| Gainey | Garrison |
| Gazan | Gerretsen |
| Green | Guilbeault |
| Hajdu | Hanley |
| Hardie | Hepfner |
| Holland | Housefather |
| Hughes | Hussen |
| Hutchings | Iacono |
| Ien | Jaczek |
| Johns | Joly |
| Jones | Jowhari |
| Julian | Kayabaga |
| Kelloway | Khalid |
| Khera | Koutrakis |
| Kusmierczyk | Kwan |
| Lalonde | Lambropoulos |
| Lamoureux | Lapointe |
| Lattanzio | Lauzon |

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| LeBlanc |
| Lightbound |
| Longfield |
| MacAulay (Cardigan) |
| MacGregor |
| Maloney |
| Masse |
| May (Cambridge) |
| McDonald (Avalon) |
| McKay |
| McLeod |
| Mencicino |
| Miller |
| Morrissey |
| Naqvi |
| O'Connell |
| O'Regan |
| Powlowski |
| Robillard |
| Rogers |
| Rota |
| Sajjan |
| Samson |
| Scarpaleggia |
| Serré |
| Shanahan |
| Sidhu (Brampton East) |
| Singh |
| Sousa |
| Sudds |
| Taylor Roy |
| Turnbull |
| Van Bynen |
| Vandal |
| Virani |
| Wilkinson |
| Zahid |
| Zuberi — 173 |

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| Lebouthillier |
| Long |
| Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) |
| MacDonald (Malpeque) |
| MacKinnon (Gatineau) |
| Martinez Ferrada |
| Mathysen |
| May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) |
| McGuinty |
| McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) |
| McPherson |
| Miao |
| Morrice |
| Murray |
| Noormohamed |
| Oliphant |
| Petitpas Taylor |
| Qualtrough |
| Rodriguez |
| Romanado |
| Sahota |
| Saks |
| Sarai |
| Schiefke |
| Sgro |
| Sheehan |
| Sidhu (Brampton South) |
| Sorbara |
| St-Onge |
| Tassi |
| Thompson |
| Valdez |
| van Koeverden |
| Vandenbeld |
| Weiler |
| Yip |
| Zarrillo |

NAYS

Members

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| Aboultaif | Aitchison |
| Albas | Allison |
| Arnold | Baldinelli |
| Barlow | Barrett |
| Barsalou-Duval | Beaulieu |
| Bergeron | Berthold |
| Bérubé | Bezan |
| Blanchet | Blanchette-Joncas |
| Block | Bragdon |
| Brassard | Brock |
| Brunelle-Duceppe | Calkins |
| Caputo | Carrie |
| Chabot | Chambers |
| Champoux | Chong |
| Cooper | Dalton |
| Dancho | Davidson |
| DeBellefeuille | Deltell |
| d'Entremont | Desbiens |
| Doherty | Dowdall |
| Dreeshen | Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) |
| Ellis | Epp |
| Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) | Falk (Provencher) |
| Ferreri | Fortin |
| Garon | Gaudreau |
| Généreux | Genuis |
| Gladu | Godin |
| Goodridge | Gourde |
| Gray | Hallan |
| Hoback | Jeneroux |
| Jivani | Kelly |
| Khanna | Kitchen |

Government Orders

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| Kmiec | Kram |
| Kramp-Neuman | Kurek |
| Lake | Lantsman |
| Lawrence | Lehoux |
| Lemire | Leslie |
| Lewis (Essex) | Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk) |
| Liepert | Lloyd |
| Lobb | Maguire |
| Majumdar | Martel |
| Mazier | McCauley (Edmonton West) |
| McLean | Melillo |
| Michaud | Moore |
| Morantz | Morrison |
| Motz | Muys |
| Nater | Normandin |
| Patzer | Paul-Hus |
| Pauzé | Perkins |
| Perron | Plamondon |
| Poilievre | Redekopp |
| Reid | Rempel Garner |
| Richards | Rood |
| Ruff | Savard-Tremblay |
| Scheer | Schmale |
| Seeback | Shields |
| Simard | Sinclair-Desgagné |
| Small | Soroka |
| Steinley | Ste-Marie |
| Stewart | Strahl |
| Stubbs | Therrien |
| Thomas | Tochor |
| Tolmie | Trudel |
| Uppal | Van Popta |
| Vecchio | Vidal |
| Vien | Viersen |
| Vignola | Villemure |
| Vis | Vuong |
| Wagantall | Warkentin |
| Waugh | Webber |
| Williams | Williamson |
| Zimmer— 141 | |

PAIRED

Members

Fast

Ng— 2

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I declare the motion carried.

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, Mental Health and Addictions; the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot, Carbon Pricing.

* * *

*[English]***BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2024, NO. 1**

The House resumed from May 8 consideration of the motion that Bill C-69, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 16, 2024, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege today to rise to speak to the 2024 budget. It is a plan to build more homes faster, help make life cost less and grow the economy in a way that helps every generation get ahead. When I talk to my constituents in Scarborough Centre, they tell me

that they want to see our government work to ensure fairness for every generation, including for the youth just finishing school and ready to enter the world, for the families trying to get by and save for the future, and for the seniors looking to live the dignified retirement they have worked so hard for. That is the goal of this budget: growth that lifts everyone up and fairness for every generation.

Let us start with housing. It is consistently the number one priority of my constituents. I will admit our government has not always gotten this right. Successive governments from both parties and at all levels of government, including cities, provinces and the federal government, have failed to work together on housing with the seriousness this issue deserves. That is why we are in a housing crisis in Canada. It is a crisis that impacts every generation. Young people are moving back home after college or university because they cannot afford to move out on their own, homeowners are worried about keeping their homes when their mortgages are up for renewal and seniors are trying to either age at home with dignity or find assisted living that meets both their needs and their budgets.

Inaction in the past does not mean we should not act today. We must act on housing and this budget lays down the federal gauntlet in a serious way with an ambitious plan to unlock 3.87 million homes by 2031. If we are going to do it, we will need to work together, and the federal government is ready to do its share and then some. We would invest \$1.5 billion in the Canada rental protection fund to help affordable housing providers acquire units and preserve rents at a stable level for decades to come, preventing those units from being redeveloped into out-of-reach condos or luxury rental units.

The \$6-billion Canada housing infrastructure fund would accelerate the construction and upgrading of housing, enabling water, waste-water, storm-water and solid-waste infrastructure that would directly enable new housing supply and help improve densification. More money would be available to cities that legalize more housing zoning for smart density and more missing middle homes. We would leverage the \$55-billion apartment construction loan program to partner with provinces to build more rental housing across the country. Provinces would need to make their own investments, cut red tape to begin building faster, and agree to expand protections and rights for renters in order to access federal funding. Solving the housing crisis requires a team Canada approach. Working with the provinces, we are creating the Canadian renters' bill of rights to protect renters from unfair practices, make leases simpler and increase price transparency as well as crack down on renovations, introduce a nationwide standard lease agreement and require landlords to disclose historical rent prices of the apartments.

Government Orders

We are taking action to make it easier for homeowners to increase Canada's supply of housing by adding additional suites to their home. The new Canada secondary suite loan program would enable homeowners to access up to \$40,000 in low-interest loans to add secondary suites to their homes.

More homes need to be built closer to the services that Canadians count on. Transit that is more accessible and reliable means Canadians can spend more time with their friends and family members. It is crucial that all orders of government work together to achieve this. Any community seeking to access long-term, predictable funding through the federal government's permanent public transit fund would be required to take action that directly unlocks housing supply where it is needed most, by eliminating mandatory parking requirements and allowing high-density housing within 800 metres of a high-frequency transit line.

● (1645)

These are just a few of the concrete measures, backed by real dollars, that we are taking to jump-start housing in Canada. We are ready to work with the provinces and cities that are ready to get serious on housing, and we are ready to take on the gatekeepers if they stand in our way.

However, we need to do more than just focus on housing. Affordability is impacting all facets of life in Canada and around the world, and we are taking action. In Scarborough and in many communities across Canada, many children are going to school hungry. It is hard to learn on an empty stomach. Our next generation deserves the best possible start in their lives. That is why we are launching the national school food program to help 400,000 more kids get the food they need through existing school food programs.

Our child care program is saving families thousands of dollars every year, but there still are not enough child care spaces. We will help public and not-for-profit child care providers to build more child care spaces and renovate existing centres. We are investing \$8 billion to build more child care spaces, offering student loan forgiveness for rural and remote early childhood educators and training more early childhood educators.

We are taking action to help seniors on a number of important fronts. Since 2017, we have invested \$11.8 billion in long-term care and community care, but more action is needed to keep our seniors safe. We will introduce a safe long-term care act to support new national long-term care standards to help ensure safe, reliable and high-quality care and improve infection prevention and control practices. The old age security program, which includes the OAS pension, GIS and other allowances, is the government's largest program. It will provide \$80.6 billion to more than seven million seniors in the year 2024-25. Old age security annual program expenditures are projected to grow by close to 24% to almost \$100 billion by 2028-29 for Canadian seniors.

Oral health care is an important part of overall health care, and we are rolling out the Canadian dental care plan, starting with Canadian seniors. Since May 1, more than 50,000 Canadian patients have accessed care through the CDCP, and more than 9,000 dental care professionals have signed up to provide care. This program will improve health outcomes and save money for Canadians, starting with our seniors.

We have introduced legislation to help make essential medications more accessible and more affordable for Canadians. The budget includes \$1.5 billion to support the launch of the national pharmacare plan. The first phase will ensure the effective rollout of pharmacare by providing immediate support for health care needs of women as well as people with diabetes. More areas will be added very soon.

Budget 2024 is a plan to take bold action to build more homes faster, help make life cost less and grow the economy in a way that is shared by all. This year's budget would drive our economy toward growth that lifts everyone up, because that is fairness for every generation.

● (1650)

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):

Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the member's speech, but I did not hear any explanation from that member as to why, as the first speaker, she thought it was appropriate that time allocation be put on the budget bill on a half a trillion dollars of spending, limiting debate before it even starts. I would like her to explain to this House, if she could, why she thinks that not having sufficient debate on this spending is a good idea.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Madam Speaker, it is a budget for fairness for every generation. It is really very important that Canadians are looking to all of us to come together and make decisions that will help build more houses faster. Action needs to be taken today, and many Canadians are relying on us, so it is really very important that we put our partisan politics aside and make sure that the implementation of the budget starts as soon as possible, so that Canadians can start seeing the results. We can start building housing; we can make sure that the kids do not go hungry at school. This budget would help 400,000 kids get food during these food programs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her speech.

Earlier, during oral question period, we heard the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance tell us how important the Quebec nation and the French language in Quebec are for her.

However, there is nothing in the budget to subsidize French. From 1995 to 2002, I found that 94% of funding of official languages in Quebec went to support English. Furthermore, in the action plan for official languages 2023-28, it is the same thing, with 94% of the money going to supporting English.

I know that my colleague believes in people's right to self-determination. In her opinion, should the federal government not stop using official languages funding to undermine Quebec's self-determination?

[English]

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Madam Speaker, I want to highlight that in Bill C-13 there are major investments for the French language. Within the 2024 budget, we are here to support Quebec by investing \$3.4 billion to support young researchers in Canada and in Quebec, \$1.28 billion to fight homelessness and \$1.5 billion to protect and to expand affordable housing. These are some of the measures being taken in this to make sure there is help to support Quebec.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know economists have been saying for years that there is going to be a need for more rental housing. The capitalist society realized this very quickly, and corporations started buying up more affordable apartment buildings. I think about REITs and about one specific REIT, Boardwalk, which recently made its profit announcement. It talked about the fact that it is using CMHC funding and is taking advantage of low interest rates through CMHC that average Canadians do not have access to.

My question to the member is this: Why is the Liberal government continuing to put the needs of corporate Canada ahead of people who need a place to rent?

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Madam Speaker, I really want to thank the hon. member for her question and for making sure that we have more rental units available here in Canada.

Rental units are really very important and our government is doing its best to make sure that we see the construction of more rental units. That is why we will leverage the \$55 billion apartment construction loan program to partner with provinces to build more rental housing across the country. Rental units, for sure, are really very important, and we have taken many initiatives to make sure that there is a greater stock of rental units in Canada.

* * *

• (1655)

CORRECTION TO OFFICIAL REPORT

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

There have been consultations among the parties, and I believe, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the name of the individual referenced by the member for Don Valley West during his speech on the opposition motion standing in the name of the member for

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Carleton, be struck from the House of Commons Debates of Thursday, May 9, 2024, and from any House multimedia recording, and that the Parliamentary Publications be authorized to make the necessary editorial changes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2024, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-69, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 16, 2024, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to lead off second reading debate for His Majesty's loyal opposition on Bill C-69, the NDP and Liberals' budget implementation bill. I am disappointed that there will be so few Conservatives allowed to speak on this bill. That being said, we will deal with it at a later date in committee. I know the House will be shocked to learn that I will be voting against this budget bill, and I will tell members why.

As the opposition critic for industry, I have been focused on Canada's declining prosperity since 2015. The public policy choices of the Liberals have caused this decline in prosperity because of three major choices the Liberals made. Number one is that we have too much debt in Canada. Number two is that the world no longer buys enough of what Canada makes, our exports. Number three is that too many oligopolistic industries are charging Canadians too much for their services.

Let us start with the first point: too much debt. When the government debt grows faster than the economy, which is how the Liberals have been managing the country's finances, we eventually hit a wall. Liberal debt has caused inflation, which has caused interest rates to rise. Liberal inflation and interest rates have doubled housing costs and have hurt Canadians. For the ninth year in a row, the NDP-Liberals are running a huge deficit. This year alone, it is \$40 billion, and a balanced budget is not even in their thinking.

Government Orders

Let us look at the numbers the budget the Liberals are so proud of proposes. The Liberal spending spree continues with \$61 billion in new spending initiatives. The national debt will rise to a record \$1.37 trillion. Interest on the national debt will rise from \$26.6 billion in the last year of the Harper government to \$64.3 billion. Debt interest payments will be more than what Ottawa spends on health care and twice what it spends on national defence.

The budget projects the government's spending to grow to \$608 billion, which is \$328 billion more than the first year of the Liberal government in 2015. That is a 117% increase in spending alone under the Liberals. That increase alone is more than the entire Harper budget of the last year. In case someone is worried about it, revenue, which is taxes, will rise from \$282 billion in 2015 to \$586 billion. In other words, government tax revenue has gone up by \$304 billion, or 108% under the Liberal government. However, spending has gone up 117%, hence the debt.

If government spending made for a stronger economy and for more powerful paycheques for Canadians, we would be leading the world on our standard of living. However, that is not what Canadians are experiencing. Instead, what we have is a homegrown affordability and productivity crisis. The price of everything has gone up, and productivity per worker has declined. Since 2022, inflation-adjusted GDP per capita, which is an indication of living standards, declined from \$60,000 to \$58,000 in only a year and a half into 2023 and is now below where it was in 2014, a decade ago.

In other words, declining incomes at a time of rising costs of food, fuel, heating and everything, while our incomes are sliding back, make it more difficult for people to afford daily life. It is a double hit on Canadians thanks to the NDP-Liberals. Clearly, the record spending by the NDP-Liberal government, with the Liberal finance minister adding 62% of Canada's national debt, is not making people better off; it is making things worse.

This is the result of the disastrous policy choices of the NDP-Liberals on deficits, spending, government manipulation of the free market and policy choices to destroy Canada's competitive advantage over other countries, and those are our natural resource industries.

Let us turn to my second point. The world is not buying enough of what Canada creates anymore. As a small nation globally, in terms of population, Canada needs to export in order to maintain and to grow our living standards.

● (1700)

I spent most of my career in business, and when one's company has a competitive advantage, one innovates and works extremely hard to grow and to protect that competitive advantage, otherwise one's business declines and eventually dies. To export what Canada does successfully, we need to offer something other countries do not. In the world of nations, what is Canada's competitive advantage? It is our natural resources. Those include renewables, such as agriculture, fisheries and forestry, and non-renewables, such as minerals, oil and gas. We have been blessed like few others. We need to lead in exporting those commodities and the technology to harvest them.

We do not hear Saudi Arabia saying that they are glad they do not have all those forests to manage like Canada. We do not hear Germany saying that they are glad they do not have all that Canadian oil and gas to manage. In fact, Germany is begging for our oil and gas. However, In 2016, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rick Perkins: I apologize, Madam Speaker.

In 2016, the Prime Minister told the World Economic Forum “My predecessor wanted you to know Canada for its resources. Well I want you to know Canadians for our resourcefulness.” While that is a cute thing, let us look at how that has worked out. In 2019, natural resources accounted for 14.9% of Canada's economy, dropping from 19.5% in 2015. At the same time, Canada's prosperity began to decline, as measured by GDP per capita, and it is now the worst in Western democracies. By the way, Klaus Schwab apparently has resigned from the head of the World Economic Forum, so there is a job opening for the Prime Minister.

Why is productivity important? When productivity rises, it means that more output is generated with the same number of hours worked, which boosts profit for business and creates wage growth without lowering business profitability. The growth and export of Canada's natural resource sector not only is the driver to restore our productivity and prosperity, but also is the most important factor in restoring Canada's productivity. It is our competitive advantage globally.

The challenges that the natural resources sector has faced are because of the specific Liberal government policies, which are the key driver of Canada's overall economic decline. The policy choices of the Liberal government with its unconstitutional Impact Assessment Act, which is basically a no-capital-back act, has diminished our ability to get things to market. The Liberals do not recognize that the policy choices they have had on Canadians are driven by their decisions.

According to a report from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, displacing only 20% of Asia's electricity that is generated by coal with clean Canadian liquefied natural gas is the equivalent to eliminating all of Canada's emissions globally. Our goal should be to displace 40% of Asia's coal generation, which would remove two of Canada's carbon emissions from the globe while driving more powerful paycheques at home as Canada resumes its place in the world as an energy superpower. Why would the NDP-Liberals think that destroying this industry is anything but harmful not only to Canadian prosperity but also to reducing carbon emissions? They will have to answer this to voters, hopefully in the not-too-distant future.

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However, there is good news. Common-sense Conservatives would proudly restore Canada's competitive advantage by developing all of our renewable and non-renewable resources. Canada's productivity recovery begins with our resource sector. It also begins with restoring fiscal sanity to our finances. We would fix the budget, reduce spending and ensure new spending is matched dollar for dollar with spending reductions. Common-sense Conservatives know that the value of Canada's competitive advantage is our natural resources, and we will get projects permitted in under 18 months.

Does the Liberal budget do anything to get clean, ethical, liquefied natural gas to Asia to replace harmful coal generation? There is not a word, not a peep, not a sentence in the bill on that. This is not a serious budget, since it would not do anything to improve our productivity, and it would do nothing to improve the world's climate issues. However, there is hope on the way and hope for the planet, and it is called an election, which cannot come soon enough for Canadians.

• (1705)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is somewhat consistent, yet disappointing, that the Conservative Party does not see fit to support many of the initiatives the government is looking to provide through budgetary measures, such as the national food program for kids. Somewhere in the neighbourhood of 400,000 children would benefit from that particular program. There are programs dealing with pharmacare and dental care, and the Conservatives continuously vote against these programs by voting against the budget.

I am wondering if the member can explain why the Conservative Party does not believe it should be standing up for Canadians and providing the services that are needed across the country.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, I thought my speech made it clear. This budget, with its fiscal irresponsibility and efforts to continue to destroy the Canadian competitive advantage of our natural resources, is so significantly dire that we are at a crucial economic turning point for our country. If this is not reversed shortly, we would be in a spiral that would be very difficult to get out of. All we have to do is look at countries such as Argentina, and others with similar resources that had governments that were not willing to develop their natural resources, to see what our economic future under the Liberal vision entails.

Conservatives also believe that we should have a balanced budget. The Liberals used to believe that. In 2015, they said they would balance it in 2019. How has that gone so far? We are now up to a \$40-billion deficit after nine years. Every single year, there is a deficit. I guess the Liberal promise in 2015 is not worth any more than the Liberal promise today of this budget.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the member of South Shore—St. Margarets for his speech. He is eloquent as usual. I really appreciate my colleague. Among other things, I like his thoroughness.

I find the previous question on the long-term consequences of the budget interesting, particularly in terms of the debt and the deficit, especially as we will be dumping that on future generations.

Why can we not balance the budget? It is because the federal government wants to interfere in something that is not its responsibility or in its area of expertise, by investing in pharmacare, health insurance and dental insurance. These are all things that are not its responsibility.

Can we take this money, lower federal taxes and allow the provinces to invest more? If not, can we stop dumping this on future generations? Perhaps there are solutions to explore. I would like to know what my colleague thinks of that.

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, the member from the Bloc and I served together for quite a while on the industry committee, and he added a lot of great value.

Conservatives and the Bloc share the same concerns with the constant and historic desire of the Liberal Party to always tell provinces what to do and how to do their job. Apparently, the Constitution that Pierre Trudeau negotiated and signed is something that members on the Liberal side do not hold in high regard because they are constantly breaking the provisions of the Constitution when they intrude in provincial jurisdiction by using the federal spending power, as the member pointed out.

• (1710)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that my colleague used the World Economic Forum in his speech to keep the Conservative base happy. I sometimes think that the current leader of the Conservative Party is really unhappy with the WEF because former prime minister Stephen Harper never let him go when he was a cabinet minister.

I want to know why my colleague is so tone deaf to the real cause of inflation. If we look at every single major corporate sector that is responsible for the prices that consumers pay, we will see that the increases in costs for shipping containers, fertilizer, oil and gas, and food retail all coincide with massive corporate profit increases over the last three years. Why do the Conservatives refuse to acknowledge this? Are they that intent on running interference in this place on behalf of their corporate Bay Street friends?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, my colleague would know from living in B.C. that RBC has a report out now on the housing crisis in Vancouver, which says that it now takes 106% of people's gross income for them afford the average mortgage on a house in Vancouver. That is before paying taxes, buying food or doing anything else. People still do not have enough money. That is the only place in the world where that exists.

That is a homegrown issue caused by the government's insane spending, where it has added more debt to the—

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages has the floor.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, fairness across generations is the quintessential Canadian promise that every individual deserves an equal opportunity, with hard work, determination and a little support, to join the middle class, to secure savings, to purchase a home, to grow a family, and to enjoy retirement and their golden years in dignity.

That is what budget 2024 is all about. Budget 2024 is crucial for the health, well-being and prosperity of my community in Windsor—Tecumseh. The foundation of prosperity and a strong middle class are good-paying manufacturing jobs. We know that. More and more, those good-paying manufacturing jobs are in the growing clean tech sector.

In this budget, there is record investment in clean technology and record investment tax credits to create tens of thousands of new jobs in the growing zero-emission economy. It builds upon clean tech and climate change investments in the fall economic statement and in previous budgets. It is already working.

We have seen over \$50 billion in auto investment in just the last four years, including the historic Honda investment in Alliston and Port Colborne, the historic Northvolt investment in Quebec, the historic VW investment in St. Thomas and the Stellantis battery plant that our federal Liberal government delivered for my community in Windsor—Tecumseh, the first battery plant in all of Canada.

I drive past the battery plant on the corner of EC Row Avenue and Banwell Road every single day on my way to work. It is an incredible thing to see. The battery plant is the size of 120 hockey rinks. It stretches as far as the eye can see. Driving by it, hundreds of pickup trucks belonging to local skilled workers, iron workers and millwrights can be seen. There are 2,000 workers, Canadian, local, unionized workers, building our battery plant.

When it is completed, the battery plant will employ 2,500 local, unionized Canadians. What a remarkable turnaround. Eight years ago, under the previous Conservative government, Canada lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. My community had an unemployment rate of 11.2%.

However, today there is optimism. Today, we are building a bright future. Where Conservatives destroyed manufacturing, Liberals are rebuilding the manufacturing heartland of Canada, right here in southwestern Ontario and in Windsor with a new battery plant and thousands of new jobs. Soon, there will be the return of the third shift at Windsor assembly plant, where proud auto workers in my community will build the Dodge Charger Daytona, the first electric muscle car in North America. Windsor is back, and it is because we have a Liberal government standing by auto workers in Windsor with historic investment, respect and a true partnership.

Like many other communities across the country, we also face challenges. One of those challenges is the rate of childhood poverty in Canada. Just last week, I met with the incredible people at ProsperUs, a unique local partnership of 40 organizations, including labour and industry, that are tackling childhood poverty by building wraparound supports from cradle to career in some of the most vulnerable neighbourhoods. It has built a unique neighbourhood opportunity index that gives us neighbourhood-level data on the health of our children and of families.

In many neighbourhoods, we see moms and dads, often single parents, working hard, juggling multiple part-time jobs to take care of their children, and sometimes it is not enough. It is hard to make ends meet. Oftentimes, the struggle to balance time and money means that kids go to school hungry. We can have the best teachers in the world in front of a classroom, but they will not reach the student in that classroom if the student is hungry. That is why our Liberal government, through this budget, is investing over \$1 billion in a national school food program. That is historic for Canada, and it will be transformative for my community.

● (1715)

The national school food program is the result of decades of tireless advocacy by local leaders such as United Way Centraide Windsor-Essex County, VON and the Ontario school nutrition program, as well as the teachers, principals, volunteers and parent councils that have been providing school nutrition on a shoestring budget for years. It would lift 400,000 children across the country, put over \$800 back in the pockets of parents and ensure that hundreds of thousands more kids would have access to nutritious meals to kick-start their day. More than food, this is about a fair start, a fair start for all of our kids, regardless of their background or postal code, so that they can be their best, and so that they can help build our Canada.

Our budget 2024 is about investing in people and communities. The national school food program is just one example, albeit a great example. It is what differentiates Liberals from Conservatives. Liberals invest. Conservatives cut. Liberals believe in neighbour looking after neighbour. Conservatives believe that one is on one's own. We already know this because the Leader of the Opposition has telegraphed this.

Government Orders

Conservatives will vote against clean tech investments such as our battery plant in Windsor. Conservatives will vote against a national school food program for kids. Conservatives will vote against record funding to build more homes and support renters. Conservatives will vote against dental care for seniors. Conservatives will vote against a fairer tax system that asks the super wealthiest to pay a little bit more so that we can strengthen the programs that help young people, working families and seniors.

These measures all share a common goal, which is to lift people and to lift communities, to build a Canada that we want, a Canada that rewards hard work and that is fair. I see it in my community of Windsor—Tecumseh. It is not just about building and helping Canadians today. It is also about building a Canada that is fair for future generations and for generations still to come.

Here I turn my attention to the environment. Liberals care about passing along a healthy environment, clean air and clean water to the next generation. Last year, I remember stepping out onto my front step, seeing a sky that had turned a burning bright orange while breathing in the thick air and smoke from the wildfires burning millions of hectares of forest in Quebec, New Brunswick and Alberta. Is this the future that we want to pass on to our kids? Budget 2024 confirms our commitment to fight climate change, to take real action to prevent wildfires and floods ravaging our communities.

The Conservatives oppose climate action. They oppose investments in wind and solar, and in electric vehicles. Not only do they not have a climate plan, they are actively working to dismantle Canada's climate plan, which is already reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Along that vein, the Conservatives will also vote against the historic investment of \$36.1 million in budget 2024 for the creation of the Ojibway national urban park in my community. There is over \$40 million in this budget to open and operate an Ojibway national urban park, which our community has fought for, defended and championed for decades. The Conservative Party will vote against an Ojibway national urban park, too. I know our community will be watching for how our local Conservative MPs will vote. Will they vote with their Conservative leader to cut funding for Ojibway, or will they vote with their community and vote for Ojibway?

Ojibway is a testament to the resilience and perseverance of grassroots advocates, community leaders, environmental stewards and, above all, first nations. It underscores the power of strong partnerships, local advocacy, solidarity and a government that believes in conservation and in fighting climate change.

Budget 2024 will have a huge positive impact in my community, so much so that it feels like this budget was written by Windsor—Tecumseh for Windsor—Tecumseh. In my community, we are building a battery plant and thousands of jobs. We are taking care of the most vulnerable through programs such as the national school food program, and we are fighting climate change, preserving our land and waters and building an Ojibway national urban park. That is what this budget is all about. It is about stronger, healthier and more prosperous communities and a stronger, healthier and more prosperous Canada.

• (1720)

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, as a member of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, I was dismayed by the lack of transparency by the government. In the last number of months, over \$50 billion has been announced in different EV subsidy contracts. As a member of that committee, I was given only two hours, along with the other committee members, to really scrutinize what the government was committing Canada to for only two of those contracts. In many respects, it is committing Canada to mimicking the programs in the United States. However, we cannot really be sure, because we do not actually know.

How much time should members of Parliament have to review 50 billion dollars' worth of contracts?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Madam Speaker, here is what I know. Eight years ago, when the Conservative government was in power, my community had an unemployment rate of 11.2%, and 300,000 manufacturing jobs were lost across Canada. Today, we see \$50 billion of automotive manufacturing investment under the Liberal government. We are reviving the industrial manufacturing heartland of southwestern Ontario. Communities such as mine and those such as St. Thomas are building battery plants. We are seeing tens of thousands of automotive jobs being created in my community. Our focus is on bringing investment, creating well-paying jobs and lifting up manufacturing communities such as mine.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, we will vote against the budget, not because we are against pharmacare or because we are against the creation of a park or because we are against the creation of 2,000 jobs and more in the world of automotive technology. We will be voting against this budget because it creates duplicate services in Quebec and in the provinces that already have drug coverage, by refusing to grant them the right to opt out with full compensation. We are going to vote against it because, strangely enough, it disrespects the Constitution.

My question is this: Are we to understand that the government's refusal to respect the Constitution means that it wants to reopen the Constitution? If it reopens the Constitution this time, will it negotiate in good faith, which it did not do in 1982?

• (1725)

[*English*]

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague is absolutely brilliant at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. I really enjoy her questions, her insight and her incredible hard work.

Private Members' Business

We need a team Canada approach in order to be able to lift communities across Canada. When I see over \$100 billion for clean-tech industries in this budget, I know it is going to impact not only communities such as mine in Ontario but also communities such as those in Quebec, especially with the Northvolt battery investment. It is going to help lift communities across the country from coast to coast to coast.

When I see the Canada disability benefit, pharmacare and child care, when I see all these programs, I know that these investments in budget 2024 will lift communities and Canadians from coast to coast to coast. For that very reason, I urge my hon. colleague to continue to work with us as team Canada and vote in support of this incredibly important budget.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, as the very proud spokesperson for employment and workplace development, I am baffled that the parliamentary secretary stands to deliver the comments he did in his speech. Just last month, provincial and territorial labour ministers united across all parties and coast to coast to coast to call an emergency meeting to decry the \$625-million cut to workforce development programs for people across the country. This would imply that, somehow, in a just transition, we do not need labour training anymore.

Could the hon. member, the parliamentary secretary for this file, please explain to those provincial premiers why the government made cuts to those very important programs?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Madam Speaker, there is no government in the history of this country that has invested more money in skills training in Canada. Whether it is through sectoral workforce development, UTIP or apprenticeships, the government has made more investments in skills training than have all other previous governments combined.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, to respond quickly to the last speech, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh made many comparisons between the Conservatives and the Liberals.

One key thing the Conservatives want to do is fix the budget. That is because the Liberals love to take. They love to increase taxes. They say, “Work hard. We're going to take more of your money and then we're going to mismanage it and not tell you how it was spent”. That is the basis of this budget, and it is why I am opposing it.

[*Translation*]

After nine years under the NDP-Liberal government, life is more expensive. The budget should have invested in a more productive economy and encouraged investment, innovation and economic growth by cutting taxes.

Instead, the budget maintains this government's reckless deficits and raises taxes. This year, taxpayers will have to shell out \$54.1 billion to pay interest on the Prime Minister's debt. That is more than we send to the provinces under the Canada health transfer.

After nine years of this policy, is the average Canadian better off? I do not think so.

[*English*]

After nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, life is more expensive. The budget should have invested in a more productive economy while encouraging investment, innovation and economic growth with lower taxes. Instead, the budget continues the government's reckless deficits and raises taxes. This year, taxpayers are on the hook for \$54.1 billion just to pay the interest on the Prime Minister's debt. That is more than we send to provinces through the Canada health transfer. The budget is yet another incremental push toward socialism.

With everything the government has done, it has never been about making life better and more affordable for the average Canadian. It is about how the government can take more of people's hard-earned money and more control over their lives. After nine years of this, is the average Canadian better off? I do not think so. Nine years of this—

• (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am going to cut the hon. member off. Just as a reminder to members, if they plan to finish their speech, they should not end their speech too quickly.

The hon. member will have seven and a half minutes the next time this matter is before the House, plus five minutes for questions and comments.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

PROTECTION AGAINST EXTORTION ACT

The House resumed from April 17 consideration of the motion that Bill C-381, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (extortion), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-381.

This is a private member's bill introduced by a member of the Conservative Party. It fulfills a promise made earlier this year by the leader of the Conservative Party. He said that if his party came to power, he would establish mandatory minimum prison sentences for individuals convicted of extortion.

We have already heard my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord explain the Bloc Québécois position on this matter. We support the bill in principle. It is quite a simple bill. It would change the text of the Criminal Code to “amend mandatory minimum penalties in relation to the offence of extortion, including when the offence is committed for the benefit of, at the direction of, or in association with, a criminal organization”. It proposes a mandatory minimum penalty of three years for extortion and the reinstatement of a four-year mandatory minimum sentence for extortion with a non-prohibited firearm. The mandatory minimum sentence was repealed by Bill C-5. The Conservative Party wants it to be reinstated. The bill also speaks of a five-year mandatory minimum sentence for extortion “for the benefit of, at the direction of, or in association with, a criminal organization”.

Moreover, the bill proposes to “add arson as an aggravating factor for the purposes of sentencing when a person is convicted of extortion”. It is quite simple.

As I said the Bloc Québécois supports the principle of this bill. We would like it to be referred to committee so we can study it in more detail. Given the rise in crime, I believe this bill is important. In Canada, extortion is often committed during auto thefts, which are also increasing nationwide. Recently, we have seen newspaper reports of armed robberies and physical assaults when offenders tried to steal cars from ordinary citizens. I think this bill is very relevant.

At the same time, it gives us the opportunity to set the record straight about the Bloc Québécois's position on Bill C-5. During study of this bill, the member for Rivière-du-Nord proposed an amendment to reinstate the mandatory minimum sentence for extortion with a firearm. This position became somewhat lost in the debate. We often heard the Conservative Party, with its slogans, say that the Bloc Québécois was helping the government in its efforts to let criminals serve their sentence at home. This has confused people a bit. It is important to clarify what happened.

I would like to remind members that Bill C-5 dealt with the repeal of certain mandatory minimum penalties. The Bloc Québécois is in favour of repealing minimum penalties, except for crimes against people. We believe that if mandatory minimums are to be maintained, at the very least judges have to have the necessary latitude to occasionally depart from them with justification. This proposal was made by the Bloc Québécois, but it was rejected. That is why we voted in favour of Bill C-5 in the end. This proposal was rejected, but let me point out that the bill dealt with something else. It was proposed that Bill C-5 be split in two, because it dealt with two completely different topics. There was also the part on diversion measures for simple drug possession offences. We were in favour of those diversion measures. That put us in a rather difficult position. We even tried to amend Bill C-to make it more reasonable, but our amendment was rejected.

We support abolishing mandatory minimum penalties for less serious crimes, as we recognize that these types of penalties are not necessarily effective in dissuading criminals from committing a crime. They can also needlessly increase the size of prison populations. Police officers who were recently invited to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to speak about the rise in auto theft in the country said as much. I asked them if the

Private Members' Business

offenders or youths who were associated with street gangs were aware of the sentences connected to crimes they were preparing to commit. We often hear, in political circles, certain parties say that increasing sentences will solve all the problems. I thought that maybe criminals were aware of the sentences associated with the crimes they wanted to commit, or maybe not at all. I asked if that made any difference to them.

● (1735)

The police officers explained that criminals were well aware of the sentences associated with the crimes they were going to commit, but decided to commit those crimes anyway.

Nevertheless, we believe that maintaining mandatory minimum sentences for violent crimes is justified because legislators have the legitimate authority to rank crimes in order of severity, and mandatory minimum sentences ensure that the penalties reflect that ranking.

Obviously, mandatory minimum sentences are not perfect. Because they apply to everyone convicted of a particular crime, they sometimes lead to unjust sentences. That is why the Bloc Québécois wanted the Criminal Code to include a notwithstanding clause to allow judges to depart from minimum sentences in exceptional circumstances. That is what lawyer Julie Desrosiers reminded us when we were studying Bill C-5:

One thing for certain is that if you decide to keep minimum sentences in certain cases, you should also provide a possibility of making an exception to them in exceptional circumstances. In fact, that is what my colleague, Mr. Henry, suggests. In other words, you prescribe a minimum sentence, but you give discretion back to judges not to apply it in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances do exist. The reality is complex, and it isn't just hardened criminals who sell guns to children. The courts have to manage all sorts of situations, and sometimes it is not appropriate to apply a minimum sentence.

That is what this lawyer told the committee.

Let us not forget that gun crime has surged in recent years. Canada's rate of firearm-related violent crime was 36.7 incidents per 100,000 population in 2022, and the increase is mainly attributable to increases in Ontario, New Brunswick and British Columbia. In this context, I believe that we, as legislators, must send the public a message that violent crime is unacceptable and, above all, that it is punishable by law.

Lastly, while we note and condemn the fact that certain communities are overrepresented in Canadian prisons, we reject the Liberal-NDP suggestion that mandatory minimum sentences must be abolished to reduce their sentences. We do not see it that way. When an individual commits a crime, that individual must be held accountable for their actions, pure and simple. If the government is sincere about wanting to reduce Canada's prison population, I think it needs to invest in giving people the resources they need and, above all, in providing genuinely equal opportunities for all communities in Canada.

Private Members' Business

Let us return to gun crime. Despite what it is saying today, during our study of Bill C-5, the government chose to maintain its position on abolishing mandatory minimum sentences for serious crimes. It is important to say that the Bloc Québécois opposed these amendments. For example, the government deleted the mandatory minimum sentences from subsection 244(1) of the Criminal Code, concerning discharging a firearm “with intent to wound, maim or disfigure, to endanger the life of or to prevent the arrest or detention of any person”, and from subsection 346(1), regarding extortion with a firearm. These are serious crimes. It is essential that such crimes be punished according to the degree of violence involved and the consequences for the victims. This was our position during the study of Bill C-5, and our stance has not changed. It is unreasonable for someone convicted on such charges to get off with a paltry sentence or a conditional discharge.

The public judges the justice system harshly, and with good reason, when the courts are too lenient with criminals who are prepared to use firearms to terrorize their victims. On this matter in particular, we will always stand firm. I would like to return briefly to organized crime. Although the provisions of the bill are legitimate and relevant, I believe the Conservatives seem to be unaware of the burden of proof required under the Criminal Code to establish ties with organized crime. In recent years, we have seen growing numbers of young people, sometimes minors, commit violent crimes without necessarily being affiliated with a criminal organization. This is especially true for auto theft.

• (1740)

Madam Speaker, you are signalling that my time is up. I did not get the message. We will be voting in favour of Bill C-381.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I request that the ordinary hour of daily adjournment of the next sitting be 12 midnight, pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, February 28.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The request to extend the sitting is deemed adopted, pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, February 28.

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[English]

PROTECTION AGAINST EXTORTION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-381, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (extortion), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate being able to stand in the House today to give my comments with respect to Bill C-381 as the NDP's public safety and national security critic.

The bill is brought in by a Conservative MP. It does seek to amend the Criminal Code by adding mandatory minimum penalties in relation to the offence of extortion. This would include when the offence is committed for the benefit of, at the direction of or in association with a criminal organization. The bill would also add ar-

son as an aggravating factor for the purposes of sentencing when a person is convicted of extortion.

It is important to note that the bill before us is actually seeking to reinstate a mandatory minimum penalty that was repealed by Bill C-5 in this very same Parliament. In fact that bill passed third reading in the House of Commons by a vote of 206 to 117 on June 15, 2022. It had the New Democrats', the Bloc Québécois' and the Liberals' support, so it did pass with overwhelming support. It received royal assent later that year. Therefore, this is a Conservative attempt to try to address an issue which was already decided on by the House in the current Parliament.

It is important also to make mention of the fact that there is an important clause in Bill C-5, which was passed in 2022. Section 21 of the bill stated that a review of the provisions in the bill was to happen by the fourth anniversary of the bill's coming into force. We have not yet even met that part of the original Bill C-5. There has been no review of Bill C-5 and its provisions.

Essentially, Bill C-381, as a consequence, would be jumping the gun before any such review. We have not had the chance to look at how the provisions are acting in Canadian society. We have not had a committee call forth witnesses to find out testimony. It would also be going back on something to which the House has already given due consideration.

With all due respect to the member who introduced the legislation, I have to say that I get the sense that every time I see a Conservative private member's bill dealing with the Criminal Code, it is “Here we go again.” I have to say that it is a fairly weak effort at writing legislation, because I again am reminded of the fact that many of these bills seem to be all style with no substance. There is a lot of flavour to them and they make a big impact. They get a lot of people all riled up. However, when we look at what they would actually accomplish, there is really not much there.

When I see these kinds of bills brought forward by the Conservative Party, I am often reminded of an undergraduate student who wrote their term paper the night before it was due and then handed it in. If I were the teacher grading that paper, I would ask the person to show their sources. Unfortunately for the Conservatives, whenever it comes to these kinds of bills, especially when they are trying to talk about mandatory minimum penalties, when we ask them to show their sources, they are unable to do so.

If Conservatives actually did their homework instead of using the sloganeering that is often associated with these types of bills, they would realize a few things. Number one is that mandatory minimum penalties do not work as a deterrent. There is no evidence. I will give a case in point. When criminals are out there committing crimes, they are not thinking of the sentencing provisions in the Criminal Code as a deterrent. No, what they are actually wondering is what the chances are that they are going to get caught while committing the offence. The bigger deterrent is having increased police resources and more intelligence gathering so we can disrupt attempts and not have an after-the-fact solution.

Furthermore, on a statement of principle, as New Democrats we remain opposed to the use of mandatory minimum penalties. I do acknowledge that there are some that exist in the Criminal Code as presently written, but there is cold, hard evidence that their use has disproportionately affected indigenous, racialized and poor Canadians. One need only look at Canada's prison population and at the number of racialized Canadians who are inmates there, and then look at their percentages as a part of the general Canadian population. They will see just how disproportionate the statistics are.

● (1745)

I also want to say that I firmly believe in the ability of our judges to render appropriate sentencing by taking the existing Criminal Code and case law into account when making their decisions. I will refer members again, as I have with other pieces of legislation that deal with similar subject matters, to section 718.2 of the Criminal Code. This part of the Criminal Code contains sentencing principles that inform a judge on aggravating factors or mitigating circumstances that they can then use when looking at the defendant standing before them to increase or reduce a sentence based on the circumstances of the individual. A mandatory minimum sentence takes all that away.

I will point out that the sentence can be increased or reduced for a number of things, such as if there is “evidence that the offence was motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on race, national or ethnic origin”, and a whole host of factors that, if the crime was committed with those in mind, can lead to an increase of the sentence.

There is also a point in section 718.2 of the Criminal Code that, if there is “evidence that the offence was committed for the benefit of, at the direction of or in association with a criminal organization”, that is an aggravating factor.

Again, with respect to the bill we have before us, Bill C-381, not only has the House of Commons already voiced its opinion on this matter, but the bill is redundant.

One thing I learned as the NDP's justice critic back in 2017 is that the existing Criminal Code is littered with redundancies. It is one of the most inefficient pieces of federal legislation that exists, and many efforts have been made over the years to try to clean it up. There are clauses in the Criminal Code that exist for crimes that are not committed anymore, and there is a terrible amount of redundancy, often because we have bills such as this attempting to amend certain sections of it.

On another point, when focusing our efforts on the Criminal Code, it is important for us to understand that it is primarily a reactive instrument. It comes into play after the fact. As a legislator, a policy-maker and a representative of the proud people of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, I am more interested in tackling the crime before it happens, putting in effective policies, and making sure that people are not enticed into joining gangs and committing crimes on their behalf. I am interested in making sure our police have the right kind of tools at their disposal and can gather important intelligence, so they can break up these criminal elements, which are often preying on the most vulnerable people in our communities.

Private Members' Business

It is also important, again speaking of the Criminal Code, to note that it already has a five-year mandatory minimum sentence for first-time extortionists who use a restricted or prohibited firearm or any type of gun on behalf of a criminal organization. Therefore, this is a completely redundant and unnecessary bill.

In conclusion, I want to underline that I understand the concerns of communities throughout Canada on the issue of extortion and the rise of organized crime. I support reversing the cuts that were made to the RCMP organized crime units, which were mandated by the previous Conservative government and have not yet been reversed by the Liberals. The lack of resources has resulted in the rise of the crimes we are witnessing today. We need to provide not only local but also national law enforcement with the resources they need to keep Canadians safe. I prefer that we bolster those resources in organized crime to make sure that crucial intelligence allows them to really confront this problem in a meaningful way.

It is very clear that our police services are facing a rise in extortion-related crimes across the country. However, new sentences and laws are not what is needed to tackle this very important issue; rather, police services need the resources to investigate and apprehend those who are committing the offences. We do not need virtue signalling in another Conservative criminal justice bill to do that.

● (1750)

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Madam Speaker, after listening to my colleague's remarks, there is no doubt in my mind or in Canadians' minds why crime is absolutely out of control after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government. Liberals simply do not get it.

They talk about resources for police; I will share one story we heard recently. Police in Victoria arrested the same man three times in three days for stealing vehicles and committing other offences. This is not a matter of the police's ability to arrest, catch or find an individual. They were able to do that, but I will tell everyone what happened. First, the man was arrested for trying to steal an occupied car and released on bail. The next day, he pushed a woman out of her car and caused several crashes before trying to take a second vehicle. The police caught him; he was arrested and then released on conditions again. Incredibly, on the third day, police were called to a home invasion in progress. The suspect left and attempted to enter an occupied vehicle before he was finally arrested. Following this out-of-control crime spree, a statement from Victoria police leads with the question: Why was this person originally released?

Private Members' Business

That is the question Canadians have been asking of the government over and over again. The results are in, the evidence is in, and the evidence is staggering. Since 2015, violent crime in this country is up 39%. Why do I mention 2015? That happens to be the year that the Liberal-NDP government took power. It began the Liberal governance and the running of our justice system. Since 2015, homicides are up 43%, the highest rate in 30 years. Since 2015, gang-related homicides are up 108%. As I mention these statistics, we should remember that they represent victims from across the country, victims from urban and rural areas, individuals whose families will never see them again. Therefore, these are not just statistics. They represent Canadian victims.

Violent gun crimes are up 101%, and they have gone up every year since the Liberals took office in 2015. Assault with a weapon is up 61%, sexual assault has increased 71% since 2015, and sex crimes against children are up 126%. We all know that auto theft is out of control. Incredibly, since the Prime Minister took office, Toronto alone has seen a 300% increase in the number of vehicles stolen. Therefore, members will forgive me if I find it absolutely incredible to be lectured by the NDP or the Liberals on what works and what does not work. Canadians know and are ready to pass judgment on the government and its weak crime legislation.

It is incredibly weak in that there were deliberate efforts in Bill C-75 to create catch-and-release bail reform. Bill C-5 removed mandatory jail time for an individual who commits extortion with a firearm. I will get to this issue of extortion. The deliberate actions of the NDP-Liberal government have led us to the travesty that is our justice system. I use the words "justice system" very reluctantly; at the justice committee, a victim of crime appeared as a witness and said that Canada does not have a justice system anymore. It has a legal system. There is no justice for victims. When we look at these statistics, we see that the witness was absolutely right.

I am speaking today on the excellent legislation by my colleague from Edmonton Mill Woods, Bill C-381, the protection against extortion act.

• (1755)

We know that, over the last nine years, the rate of violent crime, as I just mentioned, has gone up in Canada; the rate of extortion is no exception. Extortion is the act of obtaining something, typically money, through force or threats. Since 2015, the rate of extortion in Canada has increased 218%; again, this should be no surprise for anyone who listened to the general stats around crime. In 2022, the rate of police-reported extortion increased 39% in a single year. Bill C-381 is part of our common-sense plan to crack down on extortionists and to protect Canadians.

I would like to mention some of the concrete measures that are in the bill. The bill would establish a mandatory jail sentence of three years for criminals convicted of extortion. This is Parliament's way of saying that the current sentencing on extortion is too soft and that the criminal justice system is too lenient. The revolving door that allows someone to commit serious crimes and then be released into the community has to be shut for individuals who commit such crimes, and this is an entirely appropriate mandatory jail sentence for the serious crime of extortion.

The bill would also restore the mandatory jail sentence of four years for the offence of extortion with a firearm. Now, who in their right mind would think that we should have removed a mandatory four-year sentence for the offence of extortion with a firearm? Nobody would, except that the Liberals did exactly that with Bill C-5. They removed a penalty for extortion with a firearm, allowing individuals to serve their sentence from the comfort of their own home and requiring no mandatory jail time for using a firearm in the offence of extortion. However, this is the same bunch that are happy to go after law-abiding Canadians: If a person is a hunter or a sport shooter, the Liberals want to take their guns and want to make sure that they harass them to the maximum. They are going to spend millions, if not billions, of taxpayers' dollars to buy back legally owned firearms to go after the good guys. What do they do to the bad guys, the individuals who are committing extortion with a firearm? They say, "You know, there's probably no need for you to even serve any time in jail."

What I heard the previous speaker say, which is that criminals are somehow not aware of the penalties in our justice system, is incredibly naive. Of course criminals know that we have a lax justice system. Canada is a target for many of these criminal offences because of our lax regime. Of course criminal organizations know that minors are subject to a different legal system than adults, which is why minors are often used in the commission of some of these offences.

The private member's bill would also extend the five-year mandatory jail sentence for the offence of extortion when "committed for the benefit of, at the direction of, or in association with a criminal organization". We are seeing criminal organizations targeting, for example, business people, saying that if they do not pay up, there will be consequences. It may be done using a firearm, or as has been the case throughout our country, with individuals using arson and burning down a project that is under construction if a person does not pay up. This is why the bill establishes arson as an aggravating factor for the charge of extortion.

For too long, the Liberal government has ignored the rising rate of extortion while communities are targeted by gangs and business owners face threats, such as having their property torched by arsonists. We know that these are not empty threats, and gun violence and arson are often associated with these extortion schemes.

Since 2015, the rate of extortion has skyrocketed under the Liberal-NDP government; it is up 263% in Ontario, 284% in Alberta and 386% in British Columbia. This is why, in January, the mayors of Brampton, Ontario, and Surrey, B.C., wrote a letter to the Minister of Public Safety asking him to take urgent action. The Liberals have not taken action. The NDP are certainly not going to take action. The Conservatives will stand up for Canadians and fight against extortion.

• (1800)

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak about Bill C-381, an act to amend the Criminal Code on the important issue of extortion, which is something that I and, I expect, all parliamentarians are deeply concerned about.

Bill C-381 proposes amendments to the Criminal Code to address the rise in extortion offences. I will focus my remarks today on the proposed amendments relating to mandatory minimum penalties, or MMPs. I want to say at the outset that we know MMPs do not actually deter crime. Our government knows this, and frankly, the Leader of the Opposition knows this. However, he will continue to pretend for political purposes that they do deter crime. Our government is committed to evidence-based policy, not empty sloganeering, to combat crime.

The proposed amendments in the bill would reverse reforms introduced by our government in Bill C-5, which reflected the government's commitment to the introduce legislation that takes action to address systemic racism and discrimination in the criminal justice system, while ensuring strong penalties remained in place to target serious crime.

Bill C-5 helps address the disproportionate negative impact that MMPs have on indigenous people, Black persons and members of other marginalized communities by repealing all MMPs in the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act as well as a number of MMPs in the Criminal Code for which there was evidence to demonstrate that they contributed to the overincarceration of these populations.

MMPs remain for extortion in cases where a restricted or prohibited firearm is used, or where the offence involves a firearm and was committed for the benefit of, at the direction of, or in association with a criminal organization. Such conduct continues to carry an MMP of five years for the first offence and seven years for second and subsequent offences.

I know that some will argue that Bill C-5 has weakened the ability of our courts to impose fit sentences, which is completely false. In fact, it is nonsense in my opinion. I think it is important to note here that the maximum sentence for extortion is life in prison. Judges have the option to give the full range of sentences for extortion, depending on the severity of the crime.

Courts have repeatedly highlighted the importance of proportionality in sentencing. Giving judges greater flexibility in their ability to impose sentences does not mean that offenders will receive a slap on the wrist or otherwise receive a penalty that does not reflect the seriousness of the crime. Giving judges flexibility ensures that our system works fairly in all cases, and I applaud the effort made

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by our government to ensure that our criminal justice system is effective, efficient and fair for everyone.

Bill C-5 was a significant step forward in addressing the overrepresentation of indigenous people, Black persons and other marginalized communities. To reinstate penalties that could contribute to overincarceration would be contrary to the government's ongoing commitment to tackling systemic racism in the criminal justice system.

What is more, research shows that increased use of MMPs has also had significant impacts on the criminal justice system. The Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *R. v. Jordan* has brought heightened attention to the issue of trial delays. The imposition of MMPs can exacerbate delays in the trial process, as accused persons may be more inclined to exercise their right to trial rather than accept a guilty plea and face a minimum mandatory provision.

Evidence also shows that MMPs do not support deterrence from crime. Rather, they increase costs for all levels of government, diverting finite resources from evidence-based crime prevention programs. This is the position taken now by former Stephen Harper legal adviser Ben Perrin. I want to note some of his statements on MMPs. He said, "If history is any judge, [the Leader of the Opposition]'s MMPs may not be worth the paper they're printed on. What's worse, even if they do pass constitutional muster, they will only exacerbate the...challenges facing the criminal justice system."

Here is another one: "MMPs are ineffective at reducing crime, may actually increase recidivism, are highly vulnerable to being struck down by the courts as unconstitutional, can increase delays in an overburdened system, and perpetuate systemic racism." Finally, he states, "[the leader of the Conservative Party]'s idea may actually backfire, leading to more crime in the long term."

• (1805)

While it is true that MMPs can be a tool to denounce criminality, there are more effective ways to denounce criminal offending while avoiding the negative impacts that MMPs have on our criminal justice system. For instance, the Supreme Court of Canada has indicated that increasing maximum penalties is one way that Parliament can denounce and has effectively denounced offending. Again, here I want to note the maximum penalty of life imprisonment for extortion. Other ways that Parliament has effectively denounced certain types of offences include enacting aggravating factors and directing sentencing courts to prioritize denunciation and deterrence in certain cases.

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Our existing legal framework provides judges with the tools and discretion needed to tailor sentences that reflect the gravity of the offence and the culpability of the offender. While it is important for all parliamentarians to recognize the serious threats posed by the rise in cases involving extortion, sentencing measures in the Criminal Code allow judges to impose stiff penalties in cases where circumstances warrant it, without being constrained by rigid MMPs that may not adequately account for the nuances of each case. This is why we will be opposing the flawed proposal.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will try to give a nuanced speech, without too much partisanship, because partisanship too often hinders debate.

Bill C-381 fulfills a promise made by the leader of the Conservative Party. The Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-381 in principle. This bill aims to reinstate mandatory minimum sentences for extortion crimes, particularly crimes involving weapons. My colleagues have gone into a lot of the details. I will avoid repeating the same things they said.

In this speech, I will briefly go over the position that the Bloc Québécois took during the study of Bill C-5. I will reiterate our position on minimum sentences for crimes. Lastly, I will suggest a few avenues for tackling the sources of the problem.

When Parliament was studying Bill C-5, which is now law, the Bloc Québécois was in favour of abolishing mandatory minimum sentences, except in cases involving crimes against the person. It is very important to mention that. We were in favour of abolishing minimum sentences, but not for the same reasons as other colleagues in the House. We were in favour of this because mandatory minimum sentences do not take into account the context in which the crime was committed. For some people, mandatory minimum sentences can take away their hope of improving themselves, of repenting, of getting their lives together. It also removes the potential discretion judges should have.

One of the reasons mandatory minimum sentences were removed is that certain populations are overrepresented in prison. The Bloc Québécois acknowledges that as well. However, is the problem really mandatory minimum sentences, or does it go deeper than that? For example, is it tied to socio-economic issues? Would removing mandatory minimum sentences really solve the underlying problem? We have to ask ourselves those questions. It is important to do so.

I am going to fumble my way through some of Thomas More's thoughts in *Utopia*. He basically says that punishing a crime without tackling its root cause simply ensures it will happen again. The more modern way of putting it is that insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. If the same punishments are continually handed down in a broad, indiscriminate way and we fail to see any results in terms of helping people get their lives together and improving their socio-economic situation, then it should come as no surprise if repeating the same actions fails to achieve the desired results.

It is important to understand what is causing a particular problem. Several years ago, a father was sentenced to six months in

prison because he was caught stealing medicine for his children, who had colds. It was an unarmed robbery, but he was caught stealing, and stealing is a crime. No consideration was given to the context of his crime. Nevertheless, he was sent to prison, which made his family's situation even worse. That is why it is important in some cases to contextualize and understand what happened. In other cases, the crime might be serious enough to warrant a mandatory minimum sentence.

It is a well-known fact that overcrowding is a problem in our prisons right now. We all know the impact that overcrowding has on people. The impact can be significant, particularly on mental health, but also on the physical health of inmates. These effects have been linked to an increase in violence and they undermine inmates' ability to integrate into the community and engage in good behaviour.

• (1810)

When prisons are overcrowded, inmates are always on high alert. When people's thoughts are focused mainly on their safety, they spend a lot less time thinking about empowerment or getting their lives back on track, even in prison.

Yes, we support minimum sentences for crimes against the person, but with some allowance made to depart from them in exceptional circumstances. The word "exceptional" is important because it refers to an exception, something that very rarely happens. If used indiscriminately and without regard for the circumstances of the offence or the situation of individuals, minimum sentences can create injustice. It seems quite a paradox that the justice system could ultimately create injustice.

We must ensure that our justice system does not cause injustice. Nevertheless, we believe that maintaining mandatory minimum sentences for violent crimes is justified, because we believe that legislators have the legitimate authority to rank crimes in order of severity and that mandatory minimum sentences ensure that the penalties reflect that ranking. It should be noted that the rate of violent crime in Canada has increased over the past few years, especially firearm-related violent crime. In Ontario, there were 1,016 more cases, or a 24% increase; in New Brunswick, there were 64 more cases, or a 24% increase; in British Columbia, there were 194 more cases, or a 12% increase. This is serious, and we must take action. I will come back to how we might do that.

During our study of Bill C-5, lawyer Julie Desrosiers told us that if we decided to keep minimum sentences in some cases, we should also provide a possibility of making an exception to them in exceptional circumstances. What I suggested just now has the support of Julie Desrosiers. Her colleague Mr. Henry also mentioned it. If a minimum sentence is prescribed and the judge is not given the discretion to depart from it in exceptional circumstances, the sentence will not reflect the complexity of reality. Let us also focus on the sources of the problem, namely protecting our borders, education, social integration, socio-economic support. Let us not cause injustice from birth. I invite everyone to read Thomas More's very edifying writings on this topic.

Let us think back to the *Heritage Minute* about the Klondike, where the RCMP officer would not let anyone with a weapon into Canada. Right now, our borders are like Swiss cheese, and weapons that should not be crossing our borders are constantly being let into the country. Violence is unacceptable in Canada and Quebec, and the mandatory minimum sentences for serious crimes against the person serve as a reminder that it is completely inappropriate and unacceptable to use violence against others. That is also in keeping with our history, or at least the prouder moments in our history.

Lastly, the Bloc Québécois invites the government to keep the promise of Quebec and Canadian society, which is that everyone can succeed and live a good life within the law. In order for that to happen, the necessary foundations must be laid, and those who did not have those foundations must be given an opportunity to get back on track. Everyone has the right to a second chance, but we need to send the message that violence is unacceptable and that, eventually, something has to give.

● (1815)

[English]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, last November, many people in the Fraser Valley, Abbotsford and Surrey were disturbed by stories on the front pages of our local newspapers. We recounted letters sent to local businesses, extortion letters.

The letters read:

Read carefully do not think this is a fake letter!!

We are Indian gang members, we want our share from your businesses like protection money. As you seen on news on November this month two shooting on houses....

The shooting of houses was in Abbotsford, in my riding. The letter said they were targeted because they did not give these gangs money. The letter went on to say that they wanted to “peacefully” take their money to avoid more shootings. This is the reality that many of my constituents live with in respect to extortion.

I am proud tonight to speak to the member for Edmonton Mill Woods' private member's bill, an act to amend the Criminal Code to address extortion.

Many of my constituents in the Punjabi and broader Indian community have been targeted by extortion letters. The RCMP is taking this issue so seriously that it assigned over 200 officers to this, with over 20,000 hours of investigative time put into stopping transnational crime targeting Canadians of Indian descent.

My constituents have been scared, their businesses have been targeted and their lives have been impacted. This bill is an attempt to listen, especially to those in the Punjabi community who have asked for these measures and who have asked for the Government of Canada, for the Parliament of Canada, to take action to stop violent crime, to stop threats and to stop drive-by shootings and extortion.

I am proud to represent one of the most diverse ridings in all of Canada, and one of the greatest honours of my professional life has been to immerse myself in the Sikh and Punjabi community. Down the road from my house is the Khalsa Diwan Society, a national historic site where Canadians of Sikh faith come together every

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week to worship. They have shared langar with me, more meals than I can count. What I know from my constituents of Punjabi descent is that they want law and order back.

Since the Liberal government came into power, crime has increased by 39%. We see more shootings. We see more deaths. We see more chaos on our streets. It is not rhetoric; it is a statistical fact.

This bill would specifically restore the mandatory minimum penalty for extortion with a firearm to four years. It would restore the mandatory minimum penalty for discharging a firearm for recklessness to four years. It would restore the mandatory minimum for using a firearm in the commission of an offence to one year in the case of a first offence and three years in the case of a second or subsequent offence. It would eliminate eligibility for bail if there are prior Criminal Code convictions within the last 10 years where the Crown proceeds by way of indictment and establish arson as an aggravating factor for the charge of extortion.

British Columbians have been very clear: They want tougher laws to stop crime. This bill is a direct response to the needs and desires of the people we represent, who feel let down by the lack of enforcement of the Criminal Code and the soft-on-crime policies of the Liberal government.

I do not want local shops that I go to receiving extortion letters. I want new immigrants to Canada and established businesses alike in places like Cedar Park, where these letters were distributed, to be able to operate their business freely and without fear of violence.

● (1820)

It pains me to even have to state these words in the people's House of Commons, but in reality, it has to be said, because of so much crime taking place.

My constituents want this. They want safety. They are asking us for safety, so I plead with all members of Parliament to work with the Conservatives to see this bill passed, a common-sense bill that is a direct response to what my constituents in Abbotsford, and many constituents of Liberal members in Surrey, specifically asked for.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Edmonton Mill Woods has five minutes for his right of reply.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Madam Speaker, after listening to the debate today and the first session of it as well, I am quite disappointed in hearing that the NDP and the Liberals will not be supporting tougher penalties for such serious crimes as extortion.

Government Orders

The fact is that after nine years, backward, soft-on-crime Liberal policies have resulted in a full-blown crisis across Canada. Canadians are suffering the consequences of the Liberal government's failed policies on crime with skyrocketing auto theft, extortion, gun violence, random assaults and arson right across the country. Crime is not only more frequent, but the severity of crime has also gone up.

In fact, we see extraordinary crime statistics in almost every possible crime category. Statistics Canada paints a very grim picture, reporting that car thefts are up over 300% in some cities across the country, and the rate of firearm-related or violent crime in 2022 was the highest ever recorded. According to a recent report, violent crime is only getting worse, and Canada's violent crime severity index is at its highest level since 2007.

Extortion, which we have been discussing today, is up across the country. In Ontario and Alberta, extortion offences are up almost 300%, and 386% in British Columbia since 2015. This is the result of the last nine years of soft-on-crime Liberal policies allowing crime, chaos and disorder to run rampant in our Canadian streets.

Instead of addressing this Liberal-made crisis, the government continues to make life easier for criminals and their organized crime organizations. In today's Canada, it is common for criminals to get released within hours of arrest, allowing them to return to the same communities that they terrorized just hours earlier.

Under the current Prime Minister, our police are sick and tired of arresting the same criminals over and over again just to see them walk away unpunished. They know that despite doing their job and catching these criminals, the criminals will be released because of the bills the government brought in: Bill C-5 and Bill C-75. It is not surprising that Canadians are losing faith in our justice system. After nine years of the Liberals' catch-and-release chaos, the majority of Canadians do not have confidence in our justice system anymore.

None of this is normal. None of this makes any sense, but most importantly, it does not have to be this way. Our Conservative plan in Bill C-381 would ensure that anyone who commits extortion will serve jail time. This common-sense bill would establish a mandatory sentence of three years for any criminal convicted of extortion. It would send a clear message to organized crime rings that if they do the crime, they will do the time under a Conservative government.

The bill would undo the serious damage caused by the government's reckless Bill C-5, which eliminated mandatory jail time for committing extortion with a firearm. Not only would Bill C-381 restore a mandatory four-year prison sentence for committing extortion with a firearm, but it would also make arson an aggravating factor. Additionally, any criminal who commits extortion on behalf of a gang, criminal organization or crime ring would get a mandatory five-year sentence. Finally, we would reverse the damage done by the government's Bill C-75 and restore jail, not bail, for repeat offenders who continue to benefit from Liberal soft-on-crime policies.

This common-sense bill would give prosecutors and the police an important tool to go after the ringleaders of criminal organiza-

tions and allow them to put away those who work on the ringleaders' behalf.

Canadians deserve safer streets and secure communities that are free from extortionists and organized crime. It is our Conservative common-sense plan that would bring home safer streets, reverse the damage of the last nine years of the Liberal government's chaos and restore peace in our neighbourhoods.

• (1825)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded division.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 22, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1830)

[*English*]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2024, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-69, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 16, 2024, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, nine years of the same failed policies from this government have resulted in small businesses getting pushed to the brink of collapse and many are shutting their doors altogether.

According to the superintendent of bankruptcy, business insolvencies in the year ending March 31 increased 56.7% year over year. The Business Development Bank of Canada reported last year that we now have 100,000 fewer entrepreneurs than we did 20 years ago, despite a massive increase in our population. In 2000, Canada had three entrepreneurs for every 1,000 people. By 2022, that number dropped to 1.3 per 1,000.

Government Orders

April's labour force survey showed an alarming loss of more than 11,000 jobs in Canada's construction industry. In the same month, housing starts dropped by 2.2%. One of the biggest challenges businesses are facing is finding workers, largely because those workers cannot find an affordable place to live. How are we supposed to build the homes Canadians need if our construction industry is shedding jobs by the thousands each month?

A result of the challenges businesses are facing is that Canada's productivity has drastically declined. Recently, the Bank of Canada's senior deputy governor, Carolyn Rogers, declared Canada's low productivity to be an emergency. In 1984, Canada produced 88% of the value generated by the United States economy per hour. As of 2022, we produced just 71% of the value that the U.S. does per hour. This ranks us second-to-last among our G7 peers, with only Italy witnessing a larger decline in productivity over the same period.

Adjusting for inflation, Canada's GDP per capita is lower now than it was in 2014. Budget 2024 ignores this emergency, pours more fuel onto the inflationary fire and sends a signal to investors that Canada does not want them to invest in our economy. Even the former Liberal finance minister, Bill Morneau, has criticized this government for its reckless spending and tax hikes that will take Canada in the wrong direction.

For Canada's economy to thrive, it must be competitive with the economies of our allies but, right now, it is not. Why is this the case? Canada has an uncompetitive tax system and burdensome red tape policies that continue to drive job creators and our brightest minds south of the border. In America, there is a competitive tax system. According to a recent study from the Fraser Institute, which ranked Canada's provinces and America's states by highest combined marginal income tax rates, nine provinces rank in the top 10 and all 10 provinces are in the top 13.

Why would an entrepreneur stay in Canada when they can go to pretty much any state in America and keep more of their money to invest back into their business or save for their retirement?

At the core of Canada's economic problems are a lack of affordable housing, an uncompetitive economy, an out-of-touch budget and rampant crime in our downtown cores. That is why Conservatives are so resolutely focused on our four key priorities: axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. The carbon tax is driving up the cost of everything. It costs more for farmers to produce food, more to ship goods and more for businesses to keep the lights on. Businesses struggle to find workers because those workers cannot find affordable places to call home. Nine straight budget deficits and hundreds of billions of dollars in added debt have driven interest rates higher than they have been in decades, making it harder for entrepreneurs to access the capital they need to grow their businesses.

People are scared to go to our downtown cores and support local businesses because they are worried about being a victim of the rampant crime that has increased by 39% since the government took office. Addressing these issues is paramount to turning around our economy and becoming competitive with our global leaders once again.

Frustratingly, the budget failed to axe the tax on our farmers and food. The budget failed to put forward a real plan to build the homes Canadians can afford. The budget failed to cap spending and implement a dollar-for-dollar rule. The budget failed to address the productivity emergency Canada faces. In fact, it will only make it worse. After nine long years, this budget is just more of the same from this costly and reckless NDP-Liberal coalition.

• (1835)

For these reasons, I will be joining my Conservative colleagues in voting against this terrible budget.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to questions and comments, I just want to remind members that if they are going to have conversations, they should maybe take them outside. I have my speaker on, and yet I can see that it can be disruptive. A few members were having conversations. I just want to remind members that they would want to be tuned in to the discussion in order to ask questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. deputy government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will have a chat with the member for St. Catharines later about that.

My question for the member is as follows. Conservatives have been going on for months now, talking about fuelling inflation with more, I think they called it, budget inflation. They keep talking about how inflation is going to skyrocket and get even more out of control as a result of the budget.

However, none of that happened. We have now seen four straight months where inflation has stayed within the Bank of Canada's target of 2% to 3%. Today's inflation numbers are the lowest that they have been in three years.

Why does the member continue to suggest that false narrative, that the budget is contributing to inflation, when reality suggests that he is completely wrong?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I would like to correct the member for Kingston and the Islands. The target from the Bank of Canada is in fact 2%.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I actually agree with my colleague on several points. We are not necessarily voting against measures that are good for Canadians. Rather, we are voting against jurisdictional meddling and interference.

I would like to hear my colleague thoughts on the importance of upholding a contract, especially the most important contract of all for a country, namely, a Constitution.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I agree with my Bloc Québécois colleague. The federal government must do a better job of protecting our Constitution. Our party, the Conservative Party, wants a policy of open federalism.

Privilege

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, with this minority government, the NDP has used its balance of power to make meaningful gains for people and their families.

Among other things, there is the dental care plan. It is incredible progress for the less fortunate and for people in the middle class. This year, seniors can sign up to be reimbursed for 80% or 100% of their dental care. Millions of people will benefit. In the first week, 45,000 or 50,000 people have already taken advantage of the program.

If my colleague's party comes to power after the next election, heaven forbid, will it drop the dental care program for seniors or will it maintain the program?

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie failed to mention the broken promise of the NDP-Liberal government, and that was to provide a national pharmacare program. It did not provide a national pharmacare program, even though it said it was going to do it in the last election platform for the NDP.

With respect to dental care, I will note representatives from the B.C. Dental Association have said that they do not want to participate in this program. As we have said on this side, the program is so cumbersome and has so much red tape, it does not actually achieve its objectives, because the NDP-Liberal government is so poor at governing.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. If the hon. member has anything to contribute, he should wait to the proper time.

We have time for a brief question from the hon. member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, every time our Liberal friends across the way get up, they tell us how good Canadians have it. In fact, just a moment ago the member from Kingston and the Islands got up, telling us Canadians have never had it so good, and to look at inflation, it is only 2.7%.

Perhaps my colleague from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon could explain how harmful the reckless spending of the Liberal government has been, and how that spending has stoked the inflationary fires in Canada.

• (1840)

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, two weeks ago, I was on a Mission friends and neighbours Facebook site in the community of Mission, with about 25,000 community members. There was a mother on there who asked if it was just her who could not get by with \$350 a week for groceries any more.

All we have to do to see the impacts of inflation is to look at the cost of food, specifically beef, and fresh fruit and vegetables. Unfortunately, due to the policies of the reckless government, fresh fruit and vegetables have become out of reach, even for the middle class.

PRIVILEGE

RESPONSE TO ORDER PAPER QUESTION NO. 2221

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am rising on a point of order to respond to the question of privilege raised by the member for Simcoe North on May 8, respecting the government's response to Order Paper Question No. 2221 and the testimony of the Department of Finance on the subject matter of Bill C-69, the budget implementation bill. Question No. 2221 asks for information about overpayments for the Canada child benefit. The member acknowledged in his intervention that the government did respond to significant parts of his written question. However, the government was unable to respond to a sub-element of the member's question, and I will quote that part. The question states:

...collected from taxpayers who received overpayments following or due to death of a child; and (b) what is the amount of money represented by the overpayments in (a)(i) and (a)(ii)?

There is a simple and straightforward response to this. The Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA, has an identifying code for why a child has become ineligible for the Canada child benefit. However, CRA does not have the reason codes for the overpayment. The reason for this is that the CRA does not have the information about a child's death, but the CRA cannot determine the reason for an overpayment or a recovery and how that relates to the child's death. The death of a child could form one piece of potentially multiple pieces that would result in an overpayment.

The question posed by the member on May 7 at the finance committee was about cancelled eligibility for the Canada child benefit and was not requesting information about overpayments. These are two different questions. In conclusion, the specific information sought in Question No. 2221 relates to overpayments. The answer provided to the member reflects the data available in the CRA systems relating to overpayments in the manner requested by the member. Where there were limitations to the provision of data, a rationale for the limitation was provided in response to the member.

As you can see, Madam Speaker, there was no intent to mislead the member or the House in the government's response to Question No. 2221. Moreover, information the member referred to in his intervention from testimony at the finance committee on May 7 differs from the information provided in response to Question No. 2221 since they are different questions. As I have previously stated in the House, the government can only answer the question posed in the Order Paper Question. It cannot assume that a member is making a different question. I can confirm that the government's response to Question No. 2221 was accurate, and we stand by it. A question was posed through the Order Paper process. The government responded to the precise question accurately and within timelines established in the Standing Orders. This matter does not in any way affect the member's rights or privileges in discharging his parliamentary duties.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The additional information is duly noted and will be taken under consideration.

The honourable member for Battle River—Crowfoot is rising on a point of order.

Government Orders

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, on that question of privilege, I would note that this is not a one-off instance, and the member tried to suggest that somehow privileges were not being violated. However, if we look back on a series of Order Paper questions that have been asked, the government has been required to provide supplementary answers when there was inaccurate information that was provided to the House, which it had to correct, and it is very clear that this has become a trend. Therefore, when that member, who was speaking on behalf of the government, suggests that somehow members' privileges were not violated, I think it speaks to a very troubling trend we are seeing from this government, which is that it feels it is unnecessary to provide fulsome, accurate and appropriate information, as Canadians would certainly expect. As parliamentarians, we should be able to use the processes that are provided to this place and to all members to be able to have and to expect accurate information.

My suggestion, which I hope would be taken under serious consideration, is that this continual trend where inaccurate or incomplete information is provided, and then we have to use mechanisms like a question of privilege in order to force the government to actually provide that information, is in fact a violation of a member's privilege, which is so important to the appropriate functioning of this place and, ultimately, to the ability for Canadians to get information from their government.

• (1845)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to thank the hon. member for the additional information. I do not have the actual question that was posed before me, so I am not sure if the hon. member was deviating a bit, but no matter what, the information has been noted and will be taken into consideration. I do wish to advise the hon. member that a decision will be rendered soon.

On another point of order, the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, just to clarify, as I hope was made clear in my remarks for when this is reviewed further later, this is not the first time that a question of privilege has been raised—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That information was provided, as I have already indicated, and now it is becoming more of a point of debate.

* * *

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2024, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-69, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 16, 2024, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here today to discuss the budget implementation act.

I was listening to the previous Conservative member. Unfortunately, we seem to be, and it is not surprising to anyone here, falling into the same pattern, which is just a verb the noun slogan after slogan, but not really saying anything.

It is shocking that the community of the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, who spoke before me, experienced one of the worst environmental disasters in Canadian history a couple of years ago, with significant damage to his community. It is still struggling to deal with it years later, and the only answer he has is to make pollution free again. It is the only answer Conservatives have on that side. I have said before that the only plank in the Conservative environmental agenda is recycled slogans. However, this is a real crisis. To have that member see his own community go through what it went through and to still come here and repeat an empty slogan that he knows will not have any impact, it just speaks to the modern Conservative movement. There is no seriousness on climate change, no seriousness on getting homes built and no seriousness on building our economy. It is just verb the noun. That is all Conservatives have. They can say it over and over again, but they do not have a plan.

I was at an announcement last week in Niagara. It was a great announcement from governments that have a plan and that invest in workers and in their communities. It was based on a partnership with Honda and the major Honda announcement that happened in Alliston. Asahi Kasei, a Japanese company that produces battery separators, announced it is going to invest \$1.6 billion in developing a factory in Niagara, which will be transformational. It was great to see the Premier of Ontario there, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Innovation. These are governments that are looking to invest in Canadians, in the future and in the economy of the future.

Conservatives, again, verb the noun, have no plan for any of this because of items like putting a price on pollution. It is about investing in critical minerals so that Canada is poised to be a leader in EV manufacturing and the jobs of the future. Conservatives will stick their heads in the sand and say that it is the same old thing, that they do not need to do anything and that they will make it free to pollute. They are not going to get the results. From the investments in Honda, we are going to see thousands of manufacturing jobs in Ontario.

It was unfortunate that when the previous Conservative government was around we saw thousands of manufacturing jobs leave Ontario, one after the other. We could go through a tour of factories in the Niagara region that closed under that government's watch, and it did not care. It did not have a plan for the future. Here we have an opportunity to be a leader in the EV space, enough that a Conservative premier and government in the Province of Ontario know it is important and step up to invest in workers. The Conservative leader would tell us that he would not invest in these types of factories we have seen in Niagara, in the London area, in Windsor and in Alliston.

Government Orders

We are creating an infrastructure, and international companies, some of the largest in the world, are eager to invest. That shows actual work on the ground to get things done, to plan for economic growth and for the economy of the future. There is a change happening. Again, we can stick our heads in the sand, and I know Conservatives like to do that frequently, but these changes are happening, and we need to be at the forefront of that.

• (1850)

Also, I am happy to report that, last week, a controversial housing development in the city of St. Catharines, the municipality I represent, which may not seem large to certain members from the GTA as it is a 500-unit development, was approved. It is good news, seeing more and more housing approved and the mayor and city council taking the charge on housing. I had the opportunity to speak with one of the owners of the property after the development was approved. She told me that the federal government's investments are going to ensure that approximately half of the units being built would be rental units.

We have seen across the country, especially in southern Ontario, the very low vacancy rates that exist and the acknowledgement that we need more rentals. It was a big step to remove the GST from purpose-built rentals. The changing of the capital cost allowance, from approximately 4% of mortgage costs to 10%, is making the math work, and that is what we have heard from developers. We have heard that, with interest rates, labour costs and other items, it is becoming a challenge to get those shovels in the ground. We can all agree, I hope, on all sides of the House that we need to see more rental housing built, and this is just one item. We are seeing announcements like that across the country.

We are seeing partnerships with municipalities that have bold plans to build more housing. Again, not to boast, but the City of St. Catharines was a recipient of the housing accelerator fund because it does have a bold plan for housing. I am happy to see that the current budget would top up the housing accelerator fund, so we would see more municipalities join the list, eliminate red tape when it comes to permitting, and increase the density of lots. Four units as a right is something that we want to see and something that would get more housing built.

The house that I currently live in is on the plot of what was an old farmhouse on a very large lot. Development had happened all around it decades before, and the house was taken down and four units of housing were built, a couple of semi-detached homes. Now, there are four families living on this property rather than one. Changes through the housing accelerator fund will make that easier. We will make it so that we can speed up the process and get construction started quicker.

There is no magic bullet for solving the housing crisis, but I think we can solve the housing crisis. Canadians have solved it before, and we can do it again. We estimate it will take about 3.87 million homes being built, but it is something that we can do. It is something that can be done, whether we use new ways of building houses or old ways.

If we look back to what we did after the Second World War, there was a housing catalogue. Someone could just pick a house, and it could get built and speed up those processes. We can do that.

We can ensure that there is a housing catalogue. The developers can just pick the house, or a family can pick the house they want, get it built and not go through the process of getting that permit approved, which speeds up the construction of that house.

That is an old idea, but it can work in a modern setting, especially with larger density projects. We can use new materials. We can use factory-built housing. We can encourage that. Also exciting, and it may not be the most fun announcement in terms of housing-related infrastructure, is that something the budget is keenly about, and something that we need to be part of, is ensuring that water and waste water are there to make sure that the housing gets built.

The Conservatives, as I was starting to talk about, talk about the slogan. They are against all of these actual proposals to get housing built. It is unfortunate to see that their actions do not match their slogans.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague about Témiscamingue, a region not far from yours, Madam Speaker.

Témiscamingue got some bad news today. The Foire gourmande de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue et du Nord-Est ontarien, a gourmet food fair in my region and northeastern Ontario, is facing an uncertain fate. Témiscamingue has gotten a lot of bad news lately. For example, three forestry-related processing facilities have closed their doors, agriculture and public safety are under threat, and funding for a new pool in Témiscamingue, a project led by Complexe des Eaux profondes, has not materialized. The federal government has not stepped up for any of this.

As the MP for Abitibi—Témiscamingue and Témiscamingue in particular, I expect the federal government, which collects half of our sales and income taxes, to be there to meet people's needs, but the federal government is not there at all.

Can my colleague tell me what purpose the federal government serves these days?

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I always look forward to the Bloc seeking more federal investment and more federal participation in municipal infrastructure projects. We work very closely with the Government of Quebec. On the housing file, the Minister of Housing entered into a partnership with Quebec, and Quebec stepped up and matched the funding, unlike any other province.

I look forward to getting the budget passed and seeing this infrastructure money in place. I know Quebec will do the same thing it has done before, which is to step up, be there to invest and be partners to help the people of Témiscamingue. Hopefully this could address many of the issues the member talked about.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is great to have this plan to build houses, but we have a 25% shortage of labour workers. How is he going to concentrate on hiring more people or attracting more people to come to Canada to help build the homes that are so desperately needed?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, the member made sure to get in the slogan, and that was great.

We have to be looking at alternative ways to build housing. As I said in my speech, we need to be looking at factory-built housing. We need to be looking at innovative ways.

The member is right that it is a serious situation now. It is getting worse as skilled trades workers are getting older. We can do it through immigration, education at the provincial level, working with our provincial counterparts, and new and innovative ways. The construction industry oftentimes falls behind other industries in being more innovative. However, I know it can. This budget is going to invest in that, and we are going to be ready to build the homes of tomorrow.

● (1900)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about his environmental concerns, which I share, and the fact that the Conservatives refuse to have a price on pollution; that is not a plan to help us or help our communities.

However, at the same time, his government is spending \$34 billion to buy a pipeline that will triple the production of the dirtiest oil in the world. Is that not contradictory?

He is talking out of both sides of his mouth.

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I do not believe it is a contradiction. It is ensuring that the amount of oil we are producing gets to tidewater so we can have supply. The world needs oil right now. We do have to transition away, which is why we are investing in the jobs of tomorrow and in EV technology. Canada can be a leader in battery production and be the energy leader of the future.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, would the parliamentary secretary agree with me that, if Conservatives spent more attention on making lives better for Canadians instead of on what Tim Hortons coffee cups lids are made out of or on the plant-based options Häagen-Dazs is offering, if they had the kind of passion they show toward those issues for actually solving problems for Canadians, we would be a lot further ahead?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I think an hon. member went to the grocery store and picked up the wrong ice cream, and instead of telling his family he made a mistake, he decided to do a social media post about it.

Government Orders

The Conservatives never step up when it comes to delivering results for Canadians. They vote against things such as the Canada child benefit. They vote against things such as affordable child care. They vote against taking care of the environment. They vote against every affordability measure the House has in front of them. They are not serious. They do not have a plan. They only have slogans.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, as always, it is a privilege to speak in the House on these decisions. We are talking about the implementation of the budget.

I will be a good sport and highlight the positive elements of the budget. Everyone is in favour of doubling the tax credit for volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers. Extending the family allowance by six months for parents whose child has died, that is just being compassionate. We support that. Raising the ceiling on eligible expenses for newsroom staff and increasing the tax credit, we are in favour of that.

Yes, we agree when it comes to supporting clean technology, but we have to be careful. We need to be very vigilant about the interference we see into Hydro-Québec's pricing. The increase in the amounts available for the home buyers' plan is also a good thing. So far, so good. We agree with capping the excise duty on beer, wine and spirits at 2%. We also agree on halving the excise duty rate on the first 15,000 hectolitres of beer brewed in Canada for two years. This is one of our rare requests that have been granted. We agree. As for the school food program, we agree, but we need to be vigilant. We have always said so.

As one of my colleagues mentioned earlier, half of our taxes are here, in Ottawa. We need that money to help our people. We want the money, but we want it distributed to organizations that are already working in Quebec.

There is a worthwhile measure on underused housing. It would eliminate filing requirements, reduce the penalty for failing to file a return and create an exemption for residential properties held as a place of residence or lodging for employees. I think that could be a good thing for the agricultural industry in particular. The budget talks a lot about grocery prices. The government is saying that it is going to control them. We know what to do. We need to increase competition and stop authorizing mergers that do not make sense and that take place even after the Competition Bureau advises against them.

Government Orders

The budget also very briefly mentions that the government will do something to help cattle producers. We do not really know what the government will do. The Bloc Québécois has some ideas. All the government has to do is ask us about them. For example, could the government give \$100 per hectare to maintain grasslands? That would have a positive impact on the environment and on greenhouse gas emissions, and it would give our farmers a potentially worthwhile source of additional income.

What is in this budget for the future of agriculture and agri-food? There was talk of the advance payments program. We know that the government lowered the limit to \$100,000, which is completely ridiculous, given current prices. Farmers were asking for \$350,000. It was set at \$250,000. It might be disappointing, but at least they got something. Sadly enough, that is how the farming community thinks now. They are so used to being disappointed that they tell themselves that at least they got something.

The big problem I see is that it is only for this year. The government is offering \$250,000, but only for this year. What does that mean? It means that, next year, farmers will have to come crawling back to the government to ask that it maintain the same limit for the advance payments program and not reduce it once again to the ridiculous amount of \$100,000. However, if the government really wanted to show good will and respect for agricultural producers, it would have increased it to \$350,000 on an ongoing basis. Farmers have better things to do than come here begging. They have crops to tend to, they have animals to care for. There do not seem to be many people here who understand that.

There is much more money for the local food infrastructure fund, the LFIF. I think that is great. The amount doubled. Will it be enough? We will see. Some sad things happened in the ridings, as members know. Several of my colleagues told me about people submitting a grant application only to be told that the rules had been changed because there was so little money in the program and that only small producers were being accepted. Producers that were no longer eligible for the program were told, "Sorry you spent two weeks completing your application and maybe hiring an accountant or experts to help, but it was all for naught. Better luck next time".

That is not professional. The government needs to take things seriously. Even so, I applaud the LFIF budget increase and the capital gains increase for intergenerational transfers. It is not enough for me, but, in any case, it has gone up.

• (1905)

Then there is innovation, like the \$10-million exemption for capital gains realized on the sale of a farm business to an employee ownership trust. That is a good measure, but it got no attention. Hardly anyone talked about it. I fail to understand why members of the government do not put good initiatives like that one front and centre. It seems like they are too busy stammering over their mistakes to remember their successes.

However, a few things were missing that should have been included. Take the excise tax on berry- and maple-based alcohol. An exemption was recently created for mead. It would be easy to include these products in the exemption too. It would make sense. They are made by very small businesses that need the money. What is the government waiting for?

Earlier on, I spoke about making the \$350,000 increase under the advance payments program permanent. What is the government waiting for? It would cost next to nothing. It is just interest.

Let us talk about the emergency on-farm support fund. Members will recall how devastating the 2023 season was for southern Quebec, where extremely heavy rains drove many market gardeners to ruin. Northern Quebec had the opposite problem: Terrible droughts forced cattle farmers to sell off part of their herds, not because they wanted to sell, but because they did not have enough hay to feed them. Farmers are in a bad way when they get to that point, and no one is getting the picture. These people cannot receive compensation from a program because, since they sold cattle, they made more money this year than last. Their financial position does not look bad on paper, but once in a while, we have to look up from the paperwork and go see for ourselves. It takes something important, but these people are important.

That is why we need an emergency fund that is agile, permanent and fast. I know this is a complicated topic and it may sound dry, but if I may summarize, there are a bunch of agricultural programs that do not work. However, there is one that has been set up as a last resort if nothing else works.

This program is supposed to be triggered quickly. It is an emergency program called AgriRecovery. I am still waiting for more information. Everyone is waiting to hear more. The provinces and Quebec have to apply to the federal government. Quebec applied in November. Today is May 21. They call that an emergency program? Far from it.

I do not want to be unreasonable. I know there are complex calculations involved in these claims and that people are going to be compensated for things that are new to us, but could someone at least start working on those calculations? As far as I am concerned, if it takes from November to the end of May, someone, somewhere, is taking their sweet time. That is the only explanation.

I really liked what a witness told me in committee last week. I asked Mr. Forest if there was anything he wanted to emphasize. We had 30 seconds left. He looked me straight in the eyes and said that, on a farm, we have to be efficient, and when something happens, we have to act quickly and figure things out. He said that farmers need programs that are as responsive as they are. The government needs to get going on this. He added that people are not participating in the current programs because they are not working anymore. When programs stop working, they need to be changed. It is as simple as that.

We expect something to happen, like an investment in agri-food. Agri-food is the largest employer in the country. Not too many people talk about that around here. This is a critical sector not only in terms of the number of jobs, but also in terms of what we eat three times a day. Where is the program to help this sector modernize, to invest in innovation and to improve the productivity of our businesses?

Government Orders

I would really like to see an investment in this sector, which is often neglected. Farmland is undervalued. The Liberals have grand plans to plant trees. Could they at least spend the same amount not on planting trees, but on restoring land for cultivation, especially land that has a lot of potential? Improved and accelerated capital cost allowances for agricultural equipment are simple requests that would not cost the government very much. I find the budget extremely disappointing in that regard.

• (1910)

We in the Bloc Québécois hope that the government will show some vision at some point. If people on the government side want to speak with us, we will gladly go out for a beer and explain it to them.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it may have been an omission on my colleague's part, but there are lots of measures for indigenous people in the budget. One in particular that matters to me is the indigenous loan guarantee program, because there are infrastructure gaps. We know that needs have exceeded investments, but this measure has the potential to be transformative.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, that is a very important question, one we discuss regularly at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. One of the things we have looked at is food prices. A bottle of Pepsi costs quite a bit more in northern Quebec than it does in Montreal. I am inclined to use unparliamentary language here, because allowing that kind of thing to happen makes no sense.

Government members tell me they are going to do great things. I do not want to be mean to my esteemed colleague, but I cannot sugarcoat this: Some indigenous communities still do not have access to clean drinking water even though this is 2024.

I am in favour of investment programs for indigenous communities. I am also in favour of giving them more autonomy. Maybe greenhouses can even be set up in northern Quebec and northern Canada, but can we start with the basics and make sure people have access to safe drinking water? That promise from 2015 still has not been kept.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know that my colleague and I have different visions for dental care. We in the NDP pushed for a dental care program that is in fact a bill paying program. An individual can go to the dentist and then get reimbursed 80% of the bill directly from the federal government.

There are no federal dentists. There are no federal dental clinics either. This program allows four million Quebecers who do not have dental coverage to gain access to care they did not have before because dental care costs too much.

I am sure that people in my colleague's riding have already benefited from the program. Seniors have already been able to sign up for it this year. Does my colleague know anyone who was able to get reimbursed for dental care and who is pleased with this new program?

• (1915)

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, it is interesting that my colleague brings this up because I do indeed know people who signed up. I also received phone calls from people who told me that their dentist did not want to participate in this program because it was a botched program that the federal government implemented when it has no business in this sector.

In fact, I have the same concern as my colleague. He says that we do not share the same vision. Essentially, however, our vision is the same. When I first came here as a parliamentarian, my biggest disappointment was the realization that I was not disagreeing with members of the NDP more often. Unfortunately, the NDP believes that the provinces should always be bypassed. Quebec already had a dental care plan. It was limited and far from perfect, I agree, but it was public.

Now the program is being administered by private insurance companies. Once again there will be bribes paid through some kind of middleman. We know what will happen. In the end, the money will be spent and people will receive fewer services than if provincial jurisdictions had been respected. The government could have transferred the same amount of money to the Government of Quebec to have it deliver dental care under a public plan.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I heard my colleague talk about the "Agri" programs and the fact that the money was not ending up in farmers' pockets. Last year was a catastrophe, especially in Abitibi West. Because of the winter we had and the lack of snow, there was less water but also less protection and insulation for crops.

I am very concerned about this situation. If the program did not work last year and there is nothing in the budget for next year, what does that mean for the future of agriculture in Abitibi-Témiscamingue?

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his passion—his regional passion, I want to say. What is going to happen? It is simple. Some producers have already stepped away from producing this year.

My colleague told me about Abitibi. I can tell him about the south and market gardeners. Producers are pulling out. Why are they doing that? They are stepping away to do something else, because they keep losing money year after year and they are not complete suckers. Everyone tells them they how great they are, but they are taken for granted. They eventually end up thinking that someone else will come along at some point to provide the food people need.

The day when we import most of our food from outside the country and go through another crisis like COVID-19 is the day people will realize they should have done something. I do not want to sound like I am fearmongering, but that is the reality. There will be panic, and people will wonder how we could have a food shortage in our country.

We must respect our people and ensure our food resiliency.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise to speak to the budget and Bill C-69, as well, which implements some of its measures. When I think about folks in my community, the long and short of it, in my view, is that this budget just does not meet the moment that we are in. If anything, it just seems to be a similar story again where the government over-promises and under-delivers or, in some cases, breaks promises altogether.

I would like to start with a couple of items that I appreciate and that will help folks in my community. First, it is important to point out that there are good measures in the implementation bill. One example is that there is a provision included to deny income tax deductions for non-compliant short-term rentals. It was first announced in the fall economic statement. It is a really important measure to move ahead with as we look to address the housing crisis and remove various incentives that are in place for those who are actually removing rental units from the housing market. Second, for parents who are mourning the loss of a child, there is a provision in the bill that will extend the Canada child benefit for six months after a child's death. This is the least that the federal government can do to support parents in such a difficult, unimaginable time.

On the whole, though, when taking a step back to look at the budget and Bill C-69, I am concerned that it just does not follow through on the big promises that the government made. First, there is the promise about the Canada disability benefit. The promise made in 2021 in the Liberal platform was that “this new benefit will reduce poverty among persons with disabilities in the same manner as the Guaranteed Income Supplement and the Canada Child Benefit.” Those are both programs in the tens of billions of dollars a year. Instead, what is proposed in the budget is nothing that the disability community has called for and not what the government had promised. The maximum amount being proposed, \$200 a month, is far too little to actually reduce levels of poverty among folks with disabilities. I will point out that 40% of people living in poverty across the country are people with disabilities. I have since asked at committee for the minister to table a list of people with disabilities who would be lifted out of poverty as a result of what is proposed in the budget. I have yet to get that list.

I am also still waiting for a list of people with disabilities who asked for what was proposed in the budget. We were told that it would take three years to wait for consultations from the disability community. I am waiting for a list of people with disabilities and organizations that serve people with disabilities who asked for this \$200 a month and asked for the Canada disability benefit to be delivered through the disability tax credit.

Second, this is an incredibly burdensome tax credit to apply for and receive. That flies in the face of the requirement in section 11(f) of the Canada Disability Benefit Act, which is an amendment that I was successful in securing: it requires the benefit to be barrier-free. It remains my concern that what is being proposed in budget 2024 actually contravenes the Canada Disability Benefit Act, because the delivery of the Canada disability benefit is required to be barrier-free. However, the disability tax credit has an incredibly burdensome application process.

Third, the benefit itself is not even proposed to start until July 2025, leaving people with disabilities at the exact same level of poverty as they are in right now. As of that point, they will get an extra six dollars a day or so. As Krista Carr at Inclusion Canada put it, “Our disappointment cannot be overstated.... This benefit was supposed to lift persons with disabilities out of poverty, not merely make them marginally less poor than they already are.”

- (1920)

Another promise the government made in this budget was for tax fairness. The simplest place to start, if we are going to talk about tax fairness, would be an excess profit tax on the largest oil and gas companies in the country. In 2022, the top five biggest companies in Canada made \$38 billion in profits after they paid shareholders \$29 billion in increased dividends and share repurchases. The government already introduced, in the pandemic, an excess profit tax on banks and life insurance companies. It called it the Canada recovery dividend.

I proposed in Motion No. 92 for the government to do the same thing and apply it to oil and gas companies. It has been advocated for by groups like Environmental Defence, the David Suzuki Foundation, Climate Action Network Canada and Canadians for Tax Fairness because it is a reasonable measure. With a one-time tax on profits, even just 15% of those profits over a billion dollars, it would generate \$4.2 billion that could be used to help Canadians with day-to-day life, to help incentivize more public transit, reduced fares and increased service.

It could help with incentives for home energy retrofits as folks in Ontario and my community continue to wait for the new version of the greener homes grant program, for example. What did we get in this budget? We got whispers that it was in the budget a few weeks before it came out, but the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers had 30 meetings with the federal government in the three months before the budget came out and Pathways Alliance had another 23 meetings in the months before the budget came out. I guess their lobbying blitz was successful, for them at least, for their corporate greed, while the windfall profit tax is nowhere to be seen. However, when it comes to our children's future, when it comes to being serious about the climate crisis and at least making sure that these companies pay some measure of additional tax if they are going to gouge us at the pumps, it is nowhere to be found.

The budget promised to make housing affordable. What does it deliver? There is a plan that counts, in its projections, 800,000 new homes that are going to be built as a result of other levels of government being impressed with the government and there is a reduction in funding for non-profits that want to build the deeply affordable housing we need. I am really concerned about the rapid housing initiative, for example, and this is true for MPs across the country who have non-profits in their communities that want to build affordable housing. The stock of social housing in this country is down to 3.5%. It is the lowest in the G7. If we doubled social housing, we would still just be middle of the pack. When it comes to the rapid housing initiative, it used to be \$750 million a year. As of this year, it looks like this budget is proposing only \$100 million in total right across the country.

The budget also promised to fix the Impact Assessment Act. What did it deliver? It delivered a complete renouncing of federal jurisdiction over nationally significant greenhouse gas emissions of major projects, for example, like Highway 413 in Ontario that the Ontario government currently plans to move ahead with.

Here is what 14 leading environmental NGOs, including West Coast Environmental Law, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, and Greenpeace had to say about what is in this bill, “The Supreme Court said Canada should have explained when and how GHG emissions become a matter of national concern. The federal government should seize that opportunity, not abandon its responsibilities to Canadians and the environment.” I know my colleague, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, will have more to say about this.

There are also some items in this bill I am not going to have time to get into that were not promised at all, including a plan to expand immigration detention into federal prisons being panned by former Liberal cabinet ministers. On the whole, though, the government needs to do more to follow through on the big promises it makes. It is true that whether it is young people thinking about their climate future or folks with disabilities, we are going to need far more organizing to get the budget and the legislation that we need.

● (1925)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his passion and commitment. I certainly support him on going further on environmental initiatives.

Something that I thought was very positive in the budget was dedicated funding for friendship centres. I know that this is very much welcome news in my part of the world, and I am wondering if there is a friendship centre in the member's riding that could benefit from some of this funding.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, it is another example of a positive initiative that is not in Bill C-69, but it is in the budget. It is important funding. We do not have a friendship centre in Waterloo Region. It is something that indigenous leaders have been calling for, both in terms of land and funding to build, and it is certainly an important measure that is in the budget.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the member, in his analysis of the disability part of the budget, could describe the protec-

Government Orders

tions against provincial clawbacks and any protections against the disability tax credit promoters who fill out these forms charging an unreasonable fee and then taking a percentage of all future benefits.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, it is an excellent question. Protection from clawbacks is something that the government has been using as one of the rebuttals, I am hearing, for why the benefit was not higher. There is actually a provision in the Canada Disability Benefit Act that is meant to address this. It is an amendment that I was successful with over a year ago, which requires that the agreements between provinces, territories and the federal government be made public. To those who are saying that they are concerned they cannot go further without a clawback being applied, the agreement will be made public afterward. No province or territory should attempt to do it because Canadians and folks with disabilities will judge them for it.

We also should mention that the Senate had improved the bill, which would have done more to prevent the insurance industry from clawing back any benefits from folks with disabilities. That amendment was rejected by the government. It continues to be a significant concern with what is being proposed in the Canada disability benefit, as is using the disability tax credit. The government should move away from that altogether, to make sure that folks with disabilities have barrier-free access to the benefit.

● (1930)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, as we know, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Without calling this budget hell, I can say that it is paved with good intentions, but also with interference.

My colleague talked about financial support for people living with disabilities. In my constituency, people wrote to me saying they had high hopes for this support. As it turns out, they are now writing me to say that the amounts provided are nothing short of an insult.

Everything that has to do with social support belongs to Quebec and the Canadian provinces. Does my colleague believe that the federal government should respect its own areas of jurisdiction, which it currently manages very poorly, and that it should leave it up to the provinces to support their people who are struggling?

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, I agree with my friend from the Bloc Québécois and hon. member for Beauport-Limoilou that this government talks a lot about good intentions.

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However, when it comes to people living with disabilities, I think that provincial and territorial programs are inadequate, since these people are still living below the poverty line. We need the federal government to create a program to increase the basic income for everyone living with disabilities in the country.

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to protect the fiscal integrity of residents in the riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Here is some of what the residents in the Upper Ottawa Valley had to say about the budget.

Paula from Westmeath wrote, “I’d like you to know that I do not support this federal budget. It’s time to cut spending, not increase debt. The NDP leader has shored up this unpopular government far too long past its expiration date with Canadian voters.”

Sean from Petawawa wrote, “I’m asking that you please push to change the budget to reduce the deficit, not increase taxes. They’re already astronomical in Canada. Instead, focus on items that will help improve Canada’s productivity, which will help add tax revenue to the government without increasing taxation.”

Roger from Renfrew wrote, “After the Prime Minister’s outrageous delaying of the election for a week so that his about-to-be-defeated cronies will get their fat cat pensions, now the taxpayers are assaulted again with a ridiculous budget. The latest Liberal budget will impoverish Canadians for generations. Will you please do everything possible to stop them from spending taxpayer money like a drunken sailor?”

Doris from Golden Lake wrote, “I’m interested in seeing a balanced budget and way less debt. The debt needs to be brought down as soon as possible and as much as possible before our country goes bankrupt.”

Lucinda from Pembroke wrote, “Just a short note to let you know I do not support the Liberal budget. I don’t know how any intelligent person thinks you can spend yourself out of debt. It really shows he has no concept of how ordinary, unspoiled, unprivileged people really live. Keep up your fight against such stupidity.”

Sally from Cobden wrote, “Canadians, for generations to come, should not be paying for the irresponsible spending of the out-of-touch Liberals. Neither should we be taxed on capital gains to the point where it becomes impossible to pass on the property and farms that we have worked on for all our lives to build up a future and a business to be carried on by our children. I consider it government thievery to pay for their terrible decisions. We certainly need a government capable of balancing the budget.”

I think John from Burnstown summed it up best when he simply wrote, “I want a government to have balanced budgets and little debt.”

The thing about the government is we also have to check the tax supplement it issues alongside the budget. That is where the devil hides the details.

Now, the government’s most devilish detail is the plan to violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms again. Sorry, violate is wrong, the government plans to kill section 8 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The murder weapon of choice is the Canada Revenue Agency’s ballistic device called a notice of non-compliance.

Section 8 of the charter states everyone has the right to be secure against unreasonable search and seizure. In practice, this means that if the RCMP shows up at someone’s door and demands to know something or demands to see something of theirs, every Canadian should know that they can voluntarily comply with the RCMP demand or they can tell them to come back with a search warrant. The RCMP would then have to go to a judge and explain what it wants and why it wants it.

What the NDP coalition is proposing is to give unlimited power to the Canada Revenue Agency to come to someone’s door, demanding to see any information they want that would assist them in making the person look like a tax cheat.

If that person declines to provide the information the Prime Minister demands, the CRA would have the power to issue a notice of non-compliance and impose a fine of \$50 a day. If a Canadian believes this is unfair, the government says, not to worry, they can appeal the decision to the same bureaucrats who issued the decision. Now, if the CRA denies the appeal, Canadians can resort to Federal Court at their very own considerable expense.

The result will be that wealthy Canadians receive the charter’s protections, while everyone else is left to the political whims of the radicals currently running this country. Of course, millions of Canadians have already learned this regressive Liberal Party will ignore the charter when it suits them, and when doing so polls well. This is the natural result of socialism.

In a liberty-respecting democracy, property rights are fundamental human rights. Section 8 falls under our legal rights. Our legal rights are meant to protect our human rights. Not only is our body protected from unreasonable search and seizure, so too is our property.

● (1935)

In order to get at someone’s property, the socialists need to chip away at their legal rights. Sometimes the attack on property rights is subtle, like the new power for the CRA. Other times the attack on owning property is spelled out in black and white, as at page 41 of the budget. That is where Canadians can find the Liberal plan to invent an entirely new federal property tax. For a government so addicted to ruling by slogans and clichés, it is a little surprising it has not heard about failing to learn the lessons of history.

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The new proposed federal residential property tax is a perfect example of the Liberals' not learning anything from recent Liberal history, and by recent history, I am talking about this March. That is when the Liberal ministers hit up their local bars and taverns to celebrate an increase in the excise tax on alcohol. Drunk on their own arrogance, the Liberals were celebrating the fact that they were not going to pay as steep a political price.

The Liberals had put the excise tax on an automatic escalator in 2017, and instead of elected, accountable political leaders' being in charge of federal taxes, the Prime Minister handed control over to fate and the inflation rate. Inflation soared thanks to government spending, so the tax on alcohol was set to match it. The Liberals made a political calculation that a 5% tax increase on alcohol would cost them more votes than a 2% increase, so they intervened. Canadians might have hoped that this would be a lesson for the Liberals in the importance of maintaining control over tax rates, but that would require humility.

Having learned nothing, the Liberals are now proposing a brand new federal property tax to be imposed on Canadians who own vacant land that is zoned residential. Unlike excise taxes on alcohol, the tax rate would be controlled by the government, but everything else would be controlled by municipalities and local politicians. Just as with the excise tax on alcohol, the decision over how much tax someone pays, or whether they even have to pay the tax, would be out of the Liberals' control.

The difference is that no person would control the rate of inflation, though some could influence it more than others. Whether or not someone's vacant property would be zoned residential is a different story; that would be decided by a small group of local politicians. The Liberals believe this would incentivize the construction of housing, but they do not know that for sure.

What it would do is incentivize lobbying. The well-connected and privileged would lobby their council to rezone their vacant land to avoid tax until they are ready to develop it or sell it. If a developer wants to build houses on vacant land zoned residential, the decision to move forward is not entirely its own. It has to take into account interest rates, labour availability, permitting issues, weather and a host of other normal things which could delay development.

The Liberal plan is to punish them with more taxes, and at the end of the day, the developer would not be the one paying the additional costs. That would be passed on to the homebuyer. Only the NDP-Liberal government could be incompetent enough to believe that inventing new taxes would build more homes.

After nine years of this failed socialist experiment, Canadians are hurting from high taxes. They feel insecure about the world. While European leaders are preparing their citizens for the worst case and building up their armed forces, our socialist coalition is busy accusing Canadians of being tax cheats. The government is chipping away at our legal rights while taxing and confiscating our property.

The Liberal-NDP government has maxed the tax, fuelled the crime and doubled the rent. Only common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax, stop the crime and build more homes, and we will fix the budget.

● (1940)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's entire speech, and the one thing I just cannot wrap my head around is how she can accuse government spending and government investing in Canadians through our budget of being inflationary.

Conservatives have been saying for months now that by the investments we are putting into Canadians and the money that we are putting into the budget, we are just going to fuel inflation. However, the opposite is true; this is the lowest that inflation has been in three years. Over the last four months, inflation has been in the target range that the Bank of Canada sets, which is between 2% and 3%. In reality, there is no rise in inflation as a result of the budget.

Does the member not recognize that what she is purporting and what the Conservatives are purporting was never actually a reality?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I guess what the member just said explains that he does not understand the basic fundamentals of economics.

The government threw billions of dollars into the economy. As a consequence of there being more money in the economy, prices went up, and when prices go up, inflation occurs. Maybe the member has not been grocery shopping, but a pound of hamburger on sale used to be two bucks. Now, in just a few short years, if we can get it for four and a half dollars a pound we are doing well. It is inflation. He is out of touch.

What happens to bring down inflation is that interest rates are increased, and they have kept those interest rates pressuring. Now we are at the point where we are almost at zero productivity. The inflation rate being lower on a monthly basis is not necessarily a consequence of less government spending, as it is spending more, but it is a consequence of everybody's being broke.

● (1945)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague, I did have some concerns about the budget. We know that currently there is an attack on trans kids. We know that currently, certainly according to what I have seen in the House of Commons, there is an attack on the right to choose to have access to safe, trauma-informed abortion care.

I am wondering whether my colleague supports me and millions of Canadians around the country in ensuring these human rights, because she spoke about fundamental human rights to safe, trauma-informed abortion care and also gender-affirming care.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, here we go again. It was last week, but now we are tag-teaming. The NDP is tag-teaming with the Liberals. They are so far down in the polls and are so desperate that they are already playing the abortion card, and the election is still at least a year away.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke a question. Her riding includes the town of Deep River. The member is also my riding neighbour. We share a small part of the southern Témiscamingue region, and we are both close to the Ottawa River.

There is a project to build a nuclear waste disposal facility in Deep River. We know that because there have been nuclear facilities there in the past. I am very concerned about the environmental impact that could have. We know that spills are happening as we speak. However, it is very difficult to get any media coverage of what is happening. It is very difficult to draw attention to this situation, even though it is having a major impact on ecosystems.

Since the Government of Canada announced major investments in small modular nuclear reactors in the most recent budget, is my colleague worried that her riding, particularly the town of Deep River, will become a nuclear dumping ground for the rest of Canada and that nuclear waste will be brought there? Is my colleague concerned about that from an environmental perspective? I would like her to comment on that.

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the low-level, near-surface waste deposit is very low-level radioactive waste that is coming out. It is not spent fuel rods. It is nothing that is really hot or even medium level. It is gloves, booties and other things that are in everyday use on people so they are kept safe.

I received over 100 questions from people on my side of the river in the community as well as from the member's side of the river, and I thought they were really good questions. I found a place in eastern Ontario where there is a similar near-surface waste disposal site, in Cobourg, Ontario. I went there with some scientists and asked them the 100 questions. I will tell the member that for every piercing question, they were able to provide an explanation and assure me so that I can assure my citizens that it is indeed a safe way of disposing of low-level waste.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise tonight to participate in the debate on Bill C-69. The debate has been treated by some speakers as a debate on the whole budget. That is fair enough as it is the budget implementation bill. I certainly appreciated very much the remarks by my colleague, the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, moments ago, who focused on some aspects of Bill C-69 and the budget that I will not be able to address in my remarks.

In the time I have available, I want to dive deeply into one part of Bill C-69. For those who are observing tonight's debate, perhaps I can just back up and say that this is what is called an omnibus budget bill. It is exactly the kind of bill that, in the 2015 election platform by the Liberals, they said they would not be using. It is an omnibus budget bill in that it deals with many aspects of things that are in the budget, and particularly a reference in the budget to the court case on impact assessment legislation.

What is tucked into a bill that is over 400 pages is, from page 555 to page 581, a section I do not believe should be in there. I will

be very clear from the start that it is a rewriting of substantial sections of the Impact Assessment Act. The irony is probably not lost on people who have tracked the debate on environmental assessment in this country that when the Liberals brought in repairs to the environmental assessment legislation that they had promised would be done in the election platform of 2015, that bill was also called Bill C-69.

I voted against that bill. I will be voting against this one too. This speech is my effort to try to persuade government members, and particularly the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Justice, to rethink things and to pull what is called part 4, division 28, of Bill C-69 and instead bring in what was promised in 2015, repairing what had happened to our impact assessment legislation, which is usually called environmental assessment legislation in this country.

I do not have much time to set this out, so forgive me for taking the time it takes to explain it. In 1975, this country held its first federal environmental assessment, ironically, of the Wreck Cove hydro project in my home province of Nova Scotia, on my home island of Cape Breton Island, and I attended those hearings. The federal government at that time was operating under something called the environmental assessment review process, a guidelines order by order in council to the federal cabinet. It set out basically that when the federal government did something, the federal government reviewed its own actions.

There is no question of constitutionality because the federal government was reviewing its own actions. The rule under the guidelines order was that if it was on federal land, involved federal money or permits given under certain kinds of acts, one had to have an environmental assessment. That general formulation went into the drafting in the late 1980s, under the government of the late Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, of an environmental assessment process that again started with the four corners of federal jurisdiction, including whether something is on federal land and involving federal money. It evolved into something called the law list permits, which were given under various acts.

The whole scheme worked very well. It evolved. There were many amendments over the years. It had a five-year review process. By the time 2012 rolled around, one could talk to almost anyone in the industry about it and hear the same thing. It was predictable. With the Mining Association of Canada, for instance, I remember the CEO, Pierre Gratton, asking why the Conservatives were trying to wreck the act now. He said that we had just finally made it right and liked the way it worked.

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A federal environmental assessment act was brought in under Brian Mulroney and enacted under former prime minister Jean Chrétien. It had evolved over the years. In the spring of 2012, in an omnibus budget bill called Bill C-38, the government of former prime minister Stephen Harper set out to destroy the legislation. It was repealed in its entirety and was replaced with something called CEAA, 2012.

• (1950)

At the same time, it also went after the pieces of legislation that triggered environmental assessment, the law list sections, the Fisheries Act, the Navigable Waters Protection Act, and so on.

To fast-forward, in the election of 2015, the Liberals promised in the platform to repair and fix what had been done by Harper to environmental assessment, to the Fisheries Act and the Navigable Waters Protection Act. In 2016 and 2017, various ministers went to work. The current Minister of Public Safety, who was the then minister of fisheries, actually did fix the Fisheries Act. He got it back to what it had been before and even improved it. The former minister of transport, our former colleague, the Hon. Marc Garneau, really fixed the Navigable Waters Protection Act. Somehow or other, our former minister of environment, Catherine McKenna, was persuaded, I believe by officials in her department, not to fix it. The single biggest change that was made, besides repealing the Environmental Assessment Act, was to ditch the criteria that tethered environmental assessment to areas of federal jurisdiction if it was on federal land, involved federal money or under a permit given by the federal government.

Instead, Stephen Harper's government created something called the “designated projects” list, which could be anything the ministers thought they wanted to put on the list. It was project-based but not decision-based, and it could be anything, at the minister's discretion. That was CEAA 2012. It meant we went from having 5,000 to 6,000 federal projects a year reviewed, and they were mostly paper reviews that went quickly, to fewer than 100 reviewed every year. We can see perhaps the attraction for people in the civil service to not go back to actually reviewing the federal projects every single year and to keep it to fewer than 100.

Somehow, the federal government, under former minister Catherine McKenna, put forward Bill C-69 and decided to reject the advice of the expert environmental assessment panel, under the former chair of BAPE Johanne Gélinas. It kept the key elements Stephen Harper had put in place, which was that the Environmental Assessment Agency was no longer responsible for many assessments, and regulatory bodies such as the National Energy Board, now the Canada Energy Regulator, the offshore petroleum boards or the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission would do their environmental assessments separately. It also got rid of the idea that we are tethered strongly to federal jurisdiction. It remained discretionary. That is why I voted against Bill C-69..

Former Alberta premier Jason Kenney said that this was the anti-pipeline act. I said that it was completely discretionary to the minister in a different government and that it was the pro-pipeline act. Where is the rooting to federal jurisdiction? Where is the commitment to review everything the federal government does to make sure we have considered its environmental impacts? Those were all

thrown out the window. I may have been the only one in the pro-environmental assessment community, although I do not think I was the only one, who actually cheered on October 13, 2023, when the Supreme Court of Canada said that the designated projects list was actually ultra vires the federal government. It would just ask a minister to say what project they want on a list, but it was not rooted in federal jurisdiction the way it had been from 1975, under a guidelines order, to 1993, when it became law, right up until 2012 and Bill C-38 when Harper repealed it.

Then, for some crazy reason, and I use the word “crazy” advisedly because I do not know the reason and I am not referring to anyone in particular, the Liberals decided to keep the designated project list, which is the part that the reference in the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada said was ultra vires the federal government and now stuffed in an omnibus budget bill that we were told we would never see. We get amendments to the Environmental Assessment Act that keep the designated projects list.

I do not think this new version in Bill C-69 is going to get Supreme Court of Canada approval. I know it will not get environmental assessments for projects across this country that need to be assessed. It will not get environmental assessment for Highway 413. It will not get environmental assessment for things that are squarely within federal jurisdiction. What it will do is be a quick and dirty fix that only goes to the finance committee for study.

• (1955)

With that, I will close my opening remarks with what I can only describe as disgust.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is well aware that air pollution has been on the rise for several years now. Increased air pollution leads to an increase in health problems, particularly lung problems and, by extension, heart problems and other conditions. This leads to higher health care costs, which are also linked to age, but also to the problems that arise from increased pollution.

Despite all this, Canada is not responding to the demands of Quebec and the Canadian provinces when it comes to health transfers. What is more, Canada is adding more funding and tax breaks for the oil and gas industries. Would my colleague say that Canada is a little backward in the way it thinks about its budget and the population's actual needs?

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• (2000)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more. It is more than just ironic. It is unbelievable that the government continues to give subsidies to fossil fuel industries despite all the promises to cancel subsidies and government support.

For example, \$34 billion has been invested in building the Trans Mountain pipeline. This flies in the face of our efforts to protect our climate and, as the member said, it flies in the face of public health interests and the need to protect the public from pollution. We can do more, and we can make better and wiser decisions, but not with this bill.

[English]

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my hon. colleague because I have been hearing this a lot in my constituency. After nine years of the Prime Minister, one in 10 people in Toronto has relied on food banks, and more than half are \$200 away from missing bills. This crisis is getting worse and worse every day.

I spoke to Vishal from Sai Dham Food Bank recently, and his numbers are increasing at a more rapid pace than he can afford to supply for individuals, including seniors. Up to 4,000 baskets are being delivered each and every month to our seniors, who just cannot afford the price of food.

The proposed inflationary budget would not help our communities. What does the member think of that situation and the inflationary spending of the wasteful government?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend from King—Vaughan and I may not agree on the details of this. There is no question but that Canadians are facing an affordability crisis. We do need, though, to spend the money it takes to alleviate that affordability crisis. What we have seen over the last number of decades is a growing gap between the very wealthy and the poor. A growing number of people who would not have considered themselves poor, and who had been in the middle class with incomes, can no longer fill a grocery cart.

I think it is a really important thing to have a school meal program. I think that would help alleviate some of the strain on families. I think we have to recognize that the inflationary impacts of postpandemic life and the breaking of supply chains have affected more than just Canada, so I think we need to address this as an affordability crisis and come up with solutions that really work. The Green Party believes one of those is a basic and livable annual income.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to that last exchange between my colleague and the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, and she said that she thought it was important to have a national school food program. This budget would provide for that, so obviously she supports that element of it.

I did not hear, or I did not quite decipher, whether the Green Party is going to vote in favour of this budget, so my first question is this: Is the Green Party going to vote for it? If the answer is no, how does she justify voting against the budget, given that there are

some elements to it that she very much does support, such as the national school food program?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I will be very clear. Members of the Green Party do not always vote the same way. My colleague from Kitchener Centre and I discuss every issue. We are governed by what we think our constituents would want us to do.

However, a budget vote is the ultimate vote of confidence in government. As much as I would like to vote for the elements I like within this budget, and I passionately believe in a school meal program, preferably one with local food that helps our young people know how it is to farm, grow their own food and have it served in a local school, I cannot vote for the budget in good conscience. I cannot vote for a budget that will further wreck our environmental assessment process. I cannot vote for a budget that does not take the climate crisis seriously, and I cannot vote confidence in a government that has put \$34 billion into building a pipeline that puts my entire community, and the entire ecoregion around the Salish Sea, at grave risk.

• (2005)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to have an opportunity to speak to the budget today. I would like to start with the positives. I know that my NDP colleagues and I achieved a number of good things in the budget. Certainly, the national school food program is an absolutely historic shift. It is something that the NDP has fought for and that we pushed to make sure was part of the budget.

We are ensuring the beginnings of a pharmacare program with access to medication for diabetes and contraception. There is the fact that the Conservatives have voted against it. There are currently more than nine million people of reproductive age in Canada, many of whom lack access to contraception and experience unintentional pregnancies as a result. My colleague from the Conservative Party was talking about fundamental human rights. It is a shame that not only are the Conservatives going to anti-choice rallies and physically invested in violating the fundamental right to protect reproductive health, but they also voted against access to free contraception. This is anti-feminist, anti-women and anti-equality, and it denies women, particularly, the ability to choose how they wish to proceed in their life.

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I have to say that, even with the Liberals, this is something we had to fight for and something they have often failed to uphold, including being a disappointment in the budget. In spite of the fact that we have abortion clinics either closing or at risk of closing and, in my riding of Winnipeg Centre in Manitoba, the only abortion clinic closing, we still have to fight for the right to access trauma-informed abortion care. In fact, even though it seems to be convenient to use jurisdictional cards on certain matters, it is a shame that the federal government continues to violate women's and gender-diverse folks' right to access safe, trauma-informed abortion care in doing so. Respecting reproductive rights and respecting the right to choose is a so-called pillar of their government, but it is one thing to respect a right and another thing to give access to that right. This is something that I have really pushed in the House but that the current government has failed on. Nobody should have to take a plane across the country or to phone a hotline to get access to safe, trauma-informed abortion care. That is a failure of the Liberal government. Let us not forget the Conservative Party members, who are all listed on anti-choice websites. That is shameful.

However, it is good that the NDP fought to get a pharmacare program started, including the access to free contraception and diabetes medication. We need to have this in place, because free contraception is also a matter of personal privacy and confidentiality. People need to be able to access contraception. They should not have to seek approval of a partner or parent, especially if they are in coercive or abusive relationships. We know that many young women and gender-diverse people can only access contraception through the permission of their parents or partner, particularly in cases where they do not have the financial resources to access this care.

I am glad, again, that we have a school food program. I am pleased that some people can now benefit from a dental care program.

However, the budget falls flat, particularly in regard to the disability benefit. It is a slap in the face to the disability community.

• (2010)

Again, \$200 a month is something that I know is insignificant. I represent one of the poorest ridings in this country. We can have band-aids for programs or communities, such as food banks, which are absolutely critical. However, if we want to get at the roots of poverty in this country, we need to start looking at and finding solutions for the growing income inequality, where we see the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. That is why I am pleased that the NDP pushed forward an excess profit tax on grocery chains and one of the reasons I pushed forward on my bill, Bill C-223, to put in place a framework for a guaranteed livable basic income. This has been supported by all the members of the NDP caucus, the majority of NDP members and women's organizations that are dealing with gender-based violence. We know it will save taxpayer dollars, because we always neglect to talk about the high costs of poverty. It is also something that the Conservatives turn a blind eye to with their sound bites and rhetoric, with no real solutions to alleviate suffering. The Liberals, again, talk a good game, but when they actually have to do something, there is nothing easier to keep than a broken Liberal promise.

My bill is coming up for debate. I hope that all members of Parliament are serious about this. People are talking about an affordability crisis and the fact that there are more and more people unhoused. We have given them a real solution, a real investment in affordable housing with rent geared to income. It would be a real investment in "for indigenous, by indigenous" housing, something that my colleagues, the members for Nunavut and East Vancouver, have led the charge for the NDP to implement. Affordable housing with rent geared to income and a guaranteed livable basic income are things that I, along with the NDP caucus, have supported, as well as a school food program and a national child care program that prioritizes not-for-profit public care.

We know that the Conservatives do not support those programs. They voted against pharmacare. They screamed and yelled about the national child care program, but then voted in favour of it, I think for political reasons. They voted against a national school food meal program for kids. Who would vote against kids having food so they do not go to school hungry? That was something that we had to fight the Liberals for, for years and years, and we succeeded.

In the fall, my private member's bill should come up for a vote. I will see at that time how serious elected officials in the House of Commons from the Liberals, the Conservatives, the Bloc party and the Green Party are about eradicating poverty once and for all.

I hope that my hope is correct and that people really do care about eradicating poverty in this country. I hope I see that all the members in the House of Commons really do care about the affordability crisis that we are being faced with and vote for my bill, Bill C-223, to put in place a guaranteed livable basic income.

• (2015)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member asked a rhetorical question: Who would vote against putting food into the mouths of children? Who would vote against a national school food program? I will tell her that it is the exact same people who get up every day and talk about the struggles of people and having to go to a food bank; these people talk about the problem but have absolutely no interest in helping to create a solution.

The reality is that the Conservatives are almost rooting for the opposite, for failure in government policy. They see that as a political win. Unfortunately, we are at this place in the House where Conservatives do not have an interest in outcomes being successful. They just have an interest in their political opportunity.

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The member and her colleagues have shown great leadership over the last number of years in their ability to bring forward ideas. What are her thoughts on that?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, one of those ideas is a guaranteed livable basic income. This has been researched and studied, and it is something that is being facilitated in some of the happiest countries in the world right now.

We know that, when we look after people, it is good economics. I hope that my hon. colleague across the way supports good economics, supports ensuring that people can live in human rights and dignity, and supports my bill, Bill C-223.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Winnipeg Centre, who is such a passionate, strong voice in the House of Commons, speaking up for equality for women and gender-diverse peoples, as well as for reproductive health rights. She is an extraordinary advocate for many Canadians.

I want to ask her about the guaranteed livable basic income. We know for a fact that the government, like the previous Conservative government, loves to shower money on corporate CEOs, overseas tax havens and banks. However, the guaranteed livable basic income that she proposes would make a fundamental difference in the lives of people who are struggling to make ends meet, put food on the table and keep a roof over their head.

Could the member talk about what a difference it would make for so many Canadians to have the bill adopted and to have a guaranteed livable basic income for people in Canada?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I love working with my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby. He is such a wonderful House leader and colleague.

In saying that, he is absolutely right. The Liberals are talking about fairness. They need to go after offshore tax havens and rich CEOs, and they need to take that money and spread it out to those who are being left behind.

Every day, I have to sit in the House of Commons and listen to Conservatives and Liberals talk about how people are struggling. However, when a solution is put on the table, they are nowhere to be found. This solution is well-researched, and the Province of P.E.I., for example, wants to pilot it.

This would mean that people living in poverty could actually live in dignity. These are the people who are falling through the cracks of the current social safety net, folks that I have to hear the member from Carleton put down and poor bash daily. He talks about people who are poor as being criminal. He fails to talk about the very wealthy, the corporate elite, as being related to the reason so many are poor and very few are rich.

This would save lives. This would ensure that people could live in dignity and with human rights.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I enjoy working with my colleague from Winnipeg Centre on the status of women committee.

I have been listening to her speech, and I can understand how disappointed she is. We are disappointed on this side of the House as well. Very simply, will she vote against the budget, yes or no?

• (2020)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I love working with the member from King—Vaughan.

My answer to that is no, I will not vote against the school meal program, dental care, pharmacare and a national child care program. These are things that have been moved along and that the NDP fought for.

I will not vote against a red dress alert, something that I got in, along with advocates, with the support of the leadership of the NDP. It is a shame that, in the House of Commons, we talk more about stolen cars than we do about murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. I will absolutely continue to fight.

I will not vote against a red dress alert. I will not vote against pharmacare and free contraception. I cannot, particularly as a feminist and as somebody who has fought for much of my life to get something in place for a red dress alert. Along with advocates in the NDP, I have fought for this for a number of years. I cannot in good conscience vote against that.

The Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind my hon. colleagues to keep their questions and comments as short as possible so everyone gets to participate. I see two more people who would like to ask questions, but we have run out of time.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for London West.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to join and participate in today's debate in support of Bill C-69.

This legislation would advance many of the government's key priorities in budget 2024, "Fairness for Every Generation". Budget 2024 is our government's plan to build a Canada that works for every generation, where younger generations can get ahead, where their hard work completely pays off, and where they can buy or rent a home of their own. It is our plan to ensure that everyone has a fair chance at a good, middle-class life.

[*Translation*]

The government is working to implement this bill quickly, because Canadians deserve bold investments in housing, in a stronger social safety net and in economic growth that creates good-paying jobs.

Bill C-69 will have a positive impact across the country, and I am already optimistic about the impact in my riding, London West. With budget 2024 and Bill C-69, we are taking action to ensure fairness for every generation and to drive the kind of economic growth that will ensure every generation can reach its full potential. We are aiming for nothing less. I would now like to talk about some of the measures we are putting forward to achieve that goal.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Our government understands that more needs to be done to build more homes faster and make housing more affordable. I am delighted to see that we are quickly moving forward with the bold measures that are in Bill C-69. For example, we are enhancing the homebuyers' plan to help first-time homebuyers at a time when saving for a down payment is more difficult. More specifically, we are increasing the withdrawal limit from \$35,000 to \$60,000 and temporarily adding three years to the grace period before homebuyers are required to start making their repayments to an RRSP.

We are also cracking down on short-term rentals by denying income tax deductions on income earned from short-term rentals that do not comply with the provincial or local restrictions. By doing so, we are unlocking more homes for Canadians to live in, because that is what Canadian homes should be for. They are for Canadians to live in. Also, to ensure that these homes are available for Canadians to live in and not used as a speculative asset class for foreign investors, we are banning foreign buyers of Canadian homes for an additional two years. This means that the ban will now be extended until January 1, 2027.

[Translation]

The government is also taking action to make life more affordable for Canadians. For example, Bill C-69 amends the Telecommunications Act, making it easier to find better Internet, home phone and cell phone services.

We are making amendments that will give Canadians more flexibility to renew or switch plans, with a clear understanding of the choices and services that will best suit their needs. We will also launch a consumer-driven banking framework, also known as open banking or consumer-directed finance, to provide Canadians and small businesses with safe and secure access to a wider range of financial services and products.

Another way we are making life more affordable is by giving law enforcement agencies the tools they need to protect Canadians from auto theft. We will also introduce more serious criminal offences related to auto theft as well as new restrictions on the possession and distribution of devices used to steal vehicles.

- (2025)

[English]

I am also particularly proud of the measure that would benefit many firefighters and search and rescue volunteers. We are going to double the volunteer firefighters tax credit, and the search and rescue volunteers tax credit as well. These credits would go from \$3,000 up to \$6,000 in recognition of the essential roles and the sacrifices that the volunteers make to keep Canadians safe. These are volunteers who are Canadian heroes and they deserve all the recognition.

Budget 2024 is also about growing Canada's economy. In Bill C-69, we are including many measures that would do exactly that. We would grow Canada's economy by further advancing indigenous economic participation through the indigenous loan guarantee program. Thanks to the creation of this program, indigenous com-

munities across Canada would be able to share in Canada's prosperity and benefit from new opportunities ahead.

This new loan program, with up to \$5 billion in loan guarantees, will unlock access to capital for indigenous communities to create economic opportunities and support their economic development priorities as well.

We are moving forward with investment tax credits that are designed to boost investment and secure Canada's competitiveness while supporting our country's goal of net-zero emissions by 2050.

[Translation]

In budget 2024, the government recently announced the next steps in our plan to attract significant investment to Canada. These investments will help us create good-paying jobs in Canada and accelerate the development and deployment of clean energy and clean technology.

[English]

More specifically, in Bill C-69, we are also going to deliver two investment tax credits, the up-to-40% clean hydrogen and the 30% clean technology manufacturing investment tax credits. Passing these two tax credits into law means that we are going to secure a cleaner and more prosperous future for Canadians today and tomorrow by securing more private investment in our country.

[Translation]

To wrap up, with budget 2024, our government is putting forward a plan to deliver fairness for every generation in Canada. We are introducing measures to give everyone a fair chance at a middle-class life here in Canada.

[English]

As discussed, we are moving forward in Bill C-69 with measures that are going to make housing more affordable, make our communities safer and continue to grow Canada's economy while creating clean and good jobs. All Canadians will greatly benefit from the measures that are included in Bill C-69. I am already eager to see the multiple benefits that are going to happen for the Londoners of London West.

Bill C-69 is a good bill, and I invite all of my colleagues to join me and vote in favour of this important legislation for Canada's future.

It is a shame that there are members of the House who have already indicated that they will not be voting for this budget. This means that they are voting against the food program that we have put forward for children, as well as the dental care for seniors and for young children. They are voting against Canadians, basically. It is a shame.

Government Orders

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the speech that was just given by my colleague, but something that she failed to articulate in her speech was the fact that the continual deficits, the massive increases in spending, are contributing to inflation. The government seems to be taking credit for inflation continuing to rise at 2.7%. That is not a decrease but simply a slowing of what has been an exceptional increase.

I would like her to comment on that, but also on the fact that the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has announced that the government is increasing the debt ceiling for our country by \$495 billion. I am wondering if the member would be able to shed some light onto why such an incredible increase in the national debt ceiling is required, in light of the circumstances that we find ourselves in, especially with the inflationary environment.

● (2030)

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Mr. Speaker, maybe my colleague was not in the House of Commons today when the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance announced that inflation has been reduced to 2.7%, which is the lowest in three years.

There was also some good news last Thursday, that our AAA credit rating was again affirmed by Moody's, with a stable outlook, which keeps Canadians' debt payments low.

Maybe he can vote for Canadians by supporting the dental care plan, by supporting the child care benefit, and by supporting helping Canadians, helping seniors and making sure that Canadians are set up for a good future.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague what measures the budget contains that will strengthen federal programs, like EI and OAS, or reduce wait times for services like immigration or Service Canada. What measures has the government implemented to strengthen its own social safety net programs? That is my question.

For my comment, I would point out that it is easy to say that members who vote against the bill are voting against food programs in our schools, but food programs in our schools come under Quebec's jurisdiction. Housing comes under Quebec's jurisdiction. Health comes under Quebec's jurisdiction. The reason we are voting against it is because the federal government is not minding its own business.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Mr. Speaker, once again, I appreciate the questions from my Bloc Québécois colleague. I want to respond to her comment about the federal government interfering in provincial jurisdictions. I was a municipal councillor well before I came here. The reason why we announced housing measures for the entire country is that the cities and provinces were unable to meet the needs of their own populations.

My colleague talked about social investments. No other budget has provided for as many social investments as budget 2024. Over \$3.87 billion will be invested in housing by 2031. We want Canadians and Quebeckers to have a roof over their heads. That is why we are continuing to invest. I encourage my colleague to sup-

port this budget, which will ensure that Quebeckers also have a roof over their heads and a place to call home.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I work with my colleague quite closely on the global cooperation caucus, and I know how much she cares about people in Canada and around the world.

As an Albertan, I know that inflation in Alberta is among the highest in the country and people living with disabilities are really struggling. We have heard words from the government that it wants to support people living with disabilities, but when we saw what was actually brought forward, what a disappointment that was, what a betrayal that was. The idea that Canadians living with a disability are not able to live with dignity in our communities is heart-breaking. All of us should be very concerned when the Government of Canada is not supporting the most vulnerable within our communities.

I wonder if the member has some comments on the failure of this budget to meet the moment, to meet the needs of people living with disabilities.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Mr. Speaker, I also enjoy working with my NDP colleague on many subjects that connect us.

On the subject of disability, it is important to note that, number one, we are investing in housing for all Canadians. Earlier last year, I put forward a motion that was passed and that I think my colleague voted for, which was to support the national housing strategy having a council that would include people with disabilities. That is a first step to making sure that we are including people with disabilities in the conversation around housing and around their needs.

We are also launching the new Canada disability benefit. It is a beginning. We have heard from communities. We consulted them and we continue to talk. With all the measures in this budget, they can also find a lot of support. This is a beginning to do more, and we will continue to work together to make sure that we are responding to the most pressing needs of the many Canadians who live with disabilities and have family members who live with disabilities.

● (2035)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just want to start off by saying it had been predicted that this year's NDP-Liberal budget was likely to be the worst budget since 1982 when the Prime Minister's father was running the government. That prediction was made by the former Liberal-appointed Bank of Canada Governor, David Dodge.

Mr. Dodge was speaking about the budget before he even saw it, but what he already observed was \$40 billion in announced new spending. Someone does not have to be a former Bank of Canada governor to realize that doubling down on a failed approach is a bad idea. The proof is out there in the lived experience of real people across our country. Canadians deserve better.

Government Orders

In my speech today, I will highlight a number of reasons the Liberals have failed to respond to the needs of everyday Canadians, including the good people of Westman.

First, the NDP-Liberal budget fails on tax relief for struggling Canadians. At a time when life is costing far more for Westman residents, the Prime Minister's budget does nothing to bring the relief families desperately need. As the cost of gas, groceries and home heating continue to increase, the Liberals have deliberately chosen not only to leave the carbon tax in place, but also to increase it even more, despite the financial hurt Canadians are feeling.

Thanks to the NDP-Liberal coalition, the Prime Minister was able to hike the carbon tax by 23% on April 1, further driving up the cost of everything. The fact is that 70% of Canadians oppose this tax hike, and 70% of the provincial premiers have asked the Prime Minister to stop this painful tax increase. The simplest, fairest thing to do is to axe the carbon tax for everyone, everywhere, for good. That is what Conservatives are working toward.

Instead of siding with Canadians facing an affordability crisis, it was very frustrating to see the NDP and Liberals join forces to save the Prime Minister from a carbon tax election last month. In fact, the parties have voted together 22 times to keep this tax grab in place since 2019. Those who are watching can rest assured that common-sense Conservatives will continue fighting to axe the tax and bring home lower prices for everyone.

Second, the NDP-Liberal budget fails on measures to restore affordability. Under the Liberal government's watch, the cost of rent, mortgage payments and down payments has doubled. The Liberals' record deficits have driven interest rates sky-high. Food banks received a record two million visits in a single month last year, with a million more people expected in 2024.

In my riding, the Samaritan House food bank gave out nearly 36,000 hampers last year, a dramatic increase of 12,000, which was a 50% increase above its normal annual average. This is in line with trends across the whole country as families struggle to make ends meet and put food on the table.

As the Prime Minister and his ideological environment minister keep taxing the farmers who grow the food and the truckers who transport the food, at the end of the day, they are adding to the cost of food for everyday Canadians who buy it. That is why one thing the Liberals could have done to bring tax relief is axe the carbon tax.

Third, the Liberals could have moved to stop inflationary spending. The finance minister green-lighted a deficit of \$39.8 billion, which would bring Canada's national debt to a staggering \$1.25 trillion. It has been proven time and time again that it is these exact deficits that are driving inflation in Canada and making life more unaffordable for Canadians across our whole country.

The ever-increasing rates of spending in Canada are causing the Bank of Canada to maintain or even raise the interest rate, which is now at 5% versus the 1% of two years ago. These were the worst two years for millions of families who trusted the Liberal Prime Minister when he claimed that interest rates would stay low forever.

That is why Conservatives demanded that budget 2024 include a commitment to cap spending, with a dollar-for-dollar rule, to bring down interest rates and inflation. The government must find a dollar in savings for every dollar of spending, so Canadians no longer see the value of their dollar drop thanks to rising inflation.

● (2040)

The Prime Minister's reckless spending is leaving less money available for health care. This year, Canada will spend a shocking \$54.1 billion on interest servicing our national debt, more money than the entire Canada health transfer. Should the NDP-backed Liberal government continue on its spending spree, it would simply mean more money for wealthy bankers and bondholders who own our debt, while less money flows to the doctors and nurses who keep our communities healthy. If we continue to go down this road, the pot of cash that is available for health care in Canada will only continue to get smaller, endangering our rural and remote hospitals, clinics and care homes.

Another failing is the government's approach to housing. In its 2015 platform, the Liberals said they would "conduct an inventory of all available federal lands and buildings that could be repurposed, and make some of these lands available at low cost for affordable housing in communities where there is a pressing need." That did not happen. Now its 2024 budget is restating that commitment nine years later.

Under the Liberal government, Canada is building fewer homes than we did in the mid-1970s when we had half the population, making housing more expensive for everyone. Reannouncing old pledges will not help to build the 5.8 million homes that are needed to restore housing affordability for Canadians. Even in Brandon, the rent of a modest unit has risen from \$989 to \$1,242, an increase of more than \$250 a month, not to mention the rising cost of everything else. A common-sense Conservative approach would build homes, not bureaucracy, by requiring that cities permit 15% more homebuilding each year as a condition for receiving federal infrastructure money.

Government Orders

This budget “falls short for Canadian farmers.” That is a statement we heard from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. Despite a specific Conservative demand to axe the carbon tax on farmers and food by passing Bill C-234 in its original form, no such commitment has been made by the Liberals. Instead of saving farmers \$1 billion between now and 2030, which is exactly what passing Bill C-234 in its original form would do, the Liberals continued to ignore farmers. The result is that all Canadians will continue to pay more at the grocery store because higher expenses for farmers lead to higher prices for consumers. Conservatives will keep fighting to bring home lower food prices for all Canadians.

Another failing of the Liberal budget is our growing national debt. The Prime Minister has doubled down on \$40 billion of new spending, \$2,400 in new government debt and new inflationary spending alone for every Canadian. Not only have the deficit and debt grown at substantial rates, but the interest payments due on the debt continue to grow at skyrocketing rates. In fact, all of the GST Canadians pay this year will be needed to pay for the Liberal government's interest payments on the debt. For the first time in a generation, we are spending more on debt interest than on health care.

I would ask every Canadian watching to remember this. Every time they pay at the cash or close a business transaction, the extra 5% they pay in goods and services tax is all going toward interest on the Prime Minister's debt. After nine years of the Prime Minister, Canada is now spending more money paying off interest on his debt than on Canada health transfer to provinces. Meanwhile, housing prices have doubled and food banks are overwhelmed.

The decline in the Canadian economy since 2019 created by the Liberal Prime Minister means Canadians are now poorer by \$4,200 per person. While American GDP per capita growth has grown by 7% since 2019, Canada's has fallen by 2.8%. This is the single-largest underperformance of the Canadian economy in comparison to the United States since 1965. It is long past the time to bring home affordability and restore common sense. Unfortunately, I could not support budget 2024 as it failed on both accounts.

• (2045)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I find disappointing about the budget is the lack of support for seniors in our communities. I have spent many days speaking to seniors. Recently, during one of our constituency weeks, I met with seniors in 15 different residences to talk about the concerns that they have. My issue is that I do not know how seniors in Alberta could trust the Conservatives, knowing the record that they have, knowing that Stephen Harper was the person who put in place cuts to support for OAS, such as making sure a senior is 67 instead of 65 before they apply for OAS, as well as knowing that the leader of the Conservative Party has very clearly, historically, been against the Canada pension plan.

I wonder if this member could comment on the support that a Conservative government would give to seniors because, historically, Conservatives have been extraordinarily bad for seniors in this country.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, that question was a little misleading. I know that Mr. Harper increased the GIS for seniors by 25% during his term in power.

I just want to say that the person who just spoke continues to support the coalition with the Liberal government that has caused all the inflationary spending in the first place. That leaves us, as I said, in one of the worst precarious financial positions the country has ever been in, which is not good for seniors.

I spoke to many seniors on the last break week that we had, back in my constituency. They are very concerned about the increased price of gas, home heating fuel, the carbon tax and inflationary issues as well. They are also concerned about the billions and billions of dollars that have caused us to have a \$1.25-trillion debt now. They know that the amount that they're paying for food at the grocery stores is certainly inflationary.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke a lot about carbon tax.

Can he explain to the House the difference between this carbon tax that we have in place now versus the one that he ran on in 2021?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, Canadians know, today, that the government has caused the inflationary situation that they are in. They know that the government is forcing 53% of Canadians to be within \$200 of insolvency at the end of every paycheque. There is a big difference between balancing the books, like Mr. Harper did in 2015. Mr. Harper did not take money out of employment insurance, like the Liberals did before his time.

If the member wants to get into tit-for-tat stuff, the Liberals are not dealing with the reality of today, and this is when Canadians have to pay the bills that the Liberals have cost them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague.

He talked about huge expenditures, massive spending, and rightly so. He also talked about inflation and how it is getting harder and harder for some people to get by, while others are lining their pockets. I may have missed it at one point or another, but I did not hear him talk about the gifts this budget gives to oil companies. I guess it is because he ran out of time. He had a lot to say.

I wanted to give him the opportunity to speak out against that, as he just did regarding other parts of this budget.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, earlier today my colleague for South Shore—St. Margarets indicated that the oil industry in Canada today is paying about \$22 billion in taxes in the Canadian economy. I know that the oil industry shares opportunities for our natural resources. I was on the natural resources committee for a while. I appreciate my colleague from the Bloc for his question.

We are limiting the amount of export opportunities that we have, which brings revenue into the government in this country to pay for the social programs that we have already had in health care and education. The government is neglecting those.

● (2050)

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege to stand in the House and to contribute to the debate today on Bill C-69, the budget implementation act for budget 2024, which is focused on ensuring fairness for every generation. It is another building block to help future generations and is based on supporting the promise that all Canadians should have a fair chance to build a good, middle-class life and to do as well as their parents, if not better.

Today, too many young Canadians feel as though the deck is stacked against them, and the reward of secure, prosperous, comfortable middle-class life remains out of reach. Budget 2024 presents our plan to fix that. We will build a Canada that works better for everyone, no matter where or when they were born, and we are going to do that by building more affordable homes. We will make life cost less, and we will grow the economy in a way that is shared by all because our country works best when our economy is growing and when more opportunities exist for every generation.

Today, I would like to talk about the housing pillar of budget 2024 and the elements of Bill C-69 that support the effort to make homes more affordable to more Canadians.

For generations, one of the fundamental, foundational promises of Canada's middle-class dream was that if one worked hard and saved money, one could afford a home. However, for today's young adults, this promise is under threat. Rising rents are making it hard to find an affordable place to call home, and rising home prices are keeping homes out of reach for many first-time buyers, especially in my home province of British Columbia, and in Richmond, B.C.

On April 12, the government released our ambitious housing plan, “solving the housing crisis: Canada's housing plan”, which is supported by new investments from the budget. Budget 2024 and Canada's housing plan lay out the government's bold strategy to unlock 3.87 million new homes by 2031, which includes a minimum of two million net new homes beyond what was already expected to be built. The plan will enable more apartments and affordable housing to be built across the country, while protecting the stock of affordable housing and protecting renters from unfair practices.

When it comes to Bill C-69, the federal government is taking action to help Canadians buy and stay in their homes while also curbing investor activity that drives up the cost and decreases the availability of housing. Homes are for Canadians to live in, not speculative assets for investors, so we would crack down on non-compliant short-term rentals. The operation of non-compliant short-term

rentals is helping to keep too many homes off the market. The 2023 fall economic statement proposed tax changes to incentivize the return of non-compliant short-term rentals to the long-term market and to support the work of provinces and territories that have restricted short-term rentals.

Bill C-69 proposes those amendments to the Income Tax Act, which would deny income tax deductions for short-term rentals operated in provinces and municipalities that have prohibited such activities or where short-term rentals operators are not compliant with the applicable provincial or municipal orders. This measure would induce owners of short-term rentals to return their properties to the long-term market and would unlock more housing supply for Canadians to live in.

The extension of the foreign buyer ban on Canadian housing now is to address increasing affordability concerns in cities across the country due to foreign money coming into Canada to buy up residential real estate. The government introduced a two-year ban on the purchase of residential property by foreign investors, which went into effect on January 1, 2023, to help further curb speculative foreign investments that reduce the supply of homes for Canadians to live in.

The government announced that it intends to extend the ban on foreign buying of Canadian homes by an additional two years. As confirmed in budget 2024, Bill C-69 proposes to amend legislation to extend the restrictions on foreign investment in Canadian housing, established under the Prohibition on the Purchase of Residential Property by Non-Canadians Act, to January 1, 2027. Foreign commercial enterprises and people who are not Canadian citizens or permanent residents would continue to be prohibited from purchasing residential property in Canada.

Government Orders

● (2055)

Regarding the issue of underused housing tax refinements, as part of the 2023 fall economic statement, the government proposed several changes to the underused housing tax, or the UHT. Canadians and other stakeholders were invited to share their views on these proposals, and the amendments included in Bill C-69 take into account the feedback received. These changes would do the following: eliminate the UHT filing requirement for entities that are substantially or entirely Canadian; reduce the minimum non-filing penalties from \$5,000 to \$1,000 for individuals, and from \$10,000 to \$2,000 for corporations; introduce a new employee-accommodation exemption that would be available in areas of Canada that are rural or otherwise not densely populated; and, finally, make several technical changes to ensure that UHT applies in accordance with the policy intent. These proposed amendments aim to facilitate compliance while ensuring that the tax continues to apply as intended, and that is to discourage having non-resident, non-Canadian-owned residential property sitting vacant and off the market.

When it comes to enhancing the home buyers' plan to help Canadians buy their first home while at the same time we increase supply, the federal government is also enhancing the tax-free savings plans that help young prospective buyers save for a down payment. Support to help first-time buyers save must keep pace with market prices. That is why the government launched the tax-free first home savings account in 2023. To great success, more than 750,000 Canadians have already opened an account to save for their first down payment.

That is also why, through budget 2024, we propose to enhance the home buyers' plan. To effect that enhancement, Bill C-69 proposes to amend the Income Tax Act to increase the home buyers' plan withdrawal limit from \$35,000 to \$60,000, enabling first-time homebuyers to use the tax benefits of an RRSP to save up to \$25,000 more for their down payment or, if they are in a partnership, \$50,000 and almost \$120,000 toward their first down payment. The newly increased limit would be effective since the budget was tabled on April 16. Bill C-69 also proposes to temporarily extend the grace period, during which homeowners are not required to repay their home buyers' plan withdrawals to their RRSP by an additional three years.

Of the two million net new homes I mentioned earlier, we estimate that the recent policy actions taken in Canada's housing plan in budget 2024 and in fall 2023 would support a minimum of 1.2 million net new homes. Budget 2024 investments for increasing the supply of affordable homes are necessary and timely, and they are part of the investments we are making for the prosperity of every generation. We will build more homes. We will make life cost less. We will invest in our small businesses. We will grow our economy in a way that works for everyone, and I encourage all hon. members to support this bill.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, does my hon. colleague acknowledge that the Communist dictatorship in Beijing interfered to get him and the Prime Minister elected in 2021, as has been shown by various studies and reports, including Justice Hogue's inquiry?

● (2100)

Mr. Parm Bains: Mr. Speaker, Justice Hogue's report was very clear that there was no certainty with respect to the election interference. I encourage the member opposite to read the report thoroughly before they make misleading accusations and try to do a character assassination on any member in the House.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals tell us that they are very green and very environmentally minded. We have looked at the budget and analyzed it carefully because we are thorough. If something is good for Quebec, then we will vote for it. If it is bad for Quebec, then we will vote against it, of course. There is no partisanship in that. It is based purely on facts.

The Liberals tell us that there are no more subsidies for the oil industry. However, in the budget, we see \$30.3 billion in subsidies for oil companies in the form of tax credits.

I hear my Liberal colleagues talk about future generations. Not only is the government using taxpayer dollars to fund the most polluting industry in the world, but it is taking that money away from those same young people, that same young generation and that next generation, who will have to deal with climate change. What explanation could there be for such a measure to appear in this budget?

The government is giving \$30.3 billion to an industry that is likely the wealthiest and most profitable industry in the world, and it is getting that money from taxpayers. How can it justify such a measure?

[English]

Mr. Parm Bains: Mr. Speaker, as we all know, on this side of the House, we have worked very hard and aggressively to combat climate change, and we will continue to do so for future generations. Not only that, but also I was talking more precisely about housing and how we are going to be combatting the issues around affordability on housing.

I can only speak for my riding specifically. We have already broken ground on the rapid housing initiative on Steveston Highway and Railway Avenue in Richmond, British Columbia, where we will be building 25 units for those who need it the most: women and women with children. It is something we are really happy to introduce. We have broken ground on that, and I am looking forward to it being done in record time.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate hearing my colleague and neighbour from the lower mainland of B.C..

Government Orders

I do have a question for him that is serious. We have seen how badly Conservatives managed money when they were in power, with the giveaways to banks, the massive giveaways to CEOs for the oil and gas sector and the infamous Harper tax haven treaties that have sucked the lifeblood out of this country. It is \$30 billion each and every year, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who should know, having evaluated the impacts of this dismal list of Harper treaties that have really sucked this country dry and that have led to, of course, all the cuts to services as well.

My colleague, though, should be able to comment on why the Liberals have done much the same thing. They have not ended the tax haven treaties. They continue to give money, splurge, to oil and gas CEOs, and they provided even more money to the banks in liquidity supports than the Harper government did.

Why do liberals take the worst practices of the Harper regime, rather than the best practices of financial management? Of course, as we are aware, those come from the party that is best at managing money and paying down debt, and that is the NDP.

Mr. Parm Bains: Mr. Speaker, I am always happy to answer questions from the member opposite from British Columbia. When it comes to our banking system and taxation, the member opposite very well knows that we have made adequate and competitive choices when it comes to tax fairness. I encourage working closely with him on these issues.

• (2105)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I never thought I would rise in the House one day to say that the Prime Minister and I finally agree on a constitutional issue. A careful reading of this budget makes it clear that the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party are no longer federalists. Like the Bloc Québécois, they now oppose the idea of dividing responsibilities between the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces and those of the House of Commons.

Let us take a closer look at the definition of federalism. According to the late Benoît Pelletier, the hallmark of a federation is that federal institutions have sovereignty in their areas of jurisdiction, while the provinces have sovereignty in their own areas of jurisdiction. We in the Bloc Québécois do not subscribe to Canadian federalism, but since our party was created, we have always fought to protect Quebec's areas of jurisdiction until Quebec becomes independent. How could anyone conclude that the Liberals still believe in Canadian federalism after seeing the dozens of encroachments on Quebec's jurisdictions featured in this budget?

That means that most members in this House do not believe in Canadian federalism. That is great news. However, rest assured that is where the similarities end. The Liberal Party is running a country that is unable to provide passports within a reasonable period of time, unable to make sure its public servants get paid and even unable to properly equip an invaded ally without neutralizing its own army's capabilities. This same party is now claiming that it wants to show the provinces and Quebec how to manage their health care systems, for instance.

The Liberals have interfered so much that they have run out of areas to infringe upon. If the Prime Minister loses a few more points in the polls, will he suggest changing the code of conduct for child care centres or will he interfere in how Hydro-Québec operates? Oh, wait. He has already done that. Believe it or not, when the Bloc Québécois comes up with its pre-budget requests, we do our homework and we request things that actually fall under federal jurisdiction.

Here is what we asked for. We asked for the federal government to give Quebec the unconditional right to opt out with full compensation from any new federal program in areas under the constitutional responsibility of the provinces. Obviously, that is not in the budget. We also asked for the federal government to increase old age security starting at age 65, which is what my esteemed colleague from Shefford's Bill C-319 seeks to do. Obviously, that is not in the budget either.

We also asked the government to put an immediate end to all fossil fuel subsidies, including tax measures, and to support clean, renewable energy instead. Everyone knows that tax credits are a pretty deceptive way of subsidizing an industry that is already very rich and that is making billions in profits on the backs of taxpayers. It is actually very difficult to figure out exactly how much those tax credits are worth. Obviously, this budget does not end fossil fuel subsidies.

We had another request as well. We asked the government to pay Quebec what it owes for asylum seekers. That is certainly not in the budget. Quebec is still asking for the \$900 million it spent welcoming asylum seekers after the feds opened the borders. Quebec welcomed them and worked hard to integrate them, but we are still waiting to be reimbursed.

Lastly, Quebec asked the government to transfer the housing budget. The federal government is unfortunately taking over in the housing crisis. Instead of transferring the money to Quebec and the provinces, the federal government is now imposing conditions, not only on Quebec and the provinces, but also on municipalities. For example, it wants to impose conditions related to density around college and university campuses. That is direct interference in municipalities' jurisdiction over city planning. That is next-level jurisdictional encroachment.

Let me recap what is in this budget, because none of the Bloc Québécois's requests are there. On April 16, the Government of Canada tabled its budget. First, it mentions a negative budgetary balance of \$40 billion for 2023-24, \$39.8 billion for 2024-25 and \$38.9 billion for 2025-26, which is not that far off. The trend continues before reaching a projected deficit of \$20 billion in 2028-29. The government is therefore choosing to rack up debt for itself, for Canadians and for Quebecers in the years to come, of course, with no plan to balance the budget, which is alarming. The government is therefore deciding to tax the public more, as with the increased capital gains tax. However, it is taking on as much debt as ever. I laid out the figures. Our debt remains the same. The government is going to get a little more money, but it is going to keep taking on more debt.

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The Deputy Speaker: I would like to point out that the hon. member for Terrebonne has the floor, and I hope that those who are taking part in conversations will keep their voices very low.

• (2110)

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, it seems we are witnessing an NDP-Liberal coalition meeting here in the House.

Basically, the government just keeps spending. Is it spending more? Not really, it is mostly just wasting more. Over the past few months, we have seen examples of the government spending too much and spending poorly. One obvious example is the money allocated for first nations housing. The government announces significant investments year after year, but it is unable to ensure that this money has any real impact. In fact, a recent Auditor General's report demonstrated that zero improvements have been made in on-reserve housing since the government took office. Billions of dollars have been sunk into it and there have not been enough results.

Another fine example is, of course, the ArriveCAN app, which I have spoken to several times in the House. It was supposed to cost \$80,000, but it ended up costing the government, and therefore taxpayers, at least \$60 million. What we learned from ArriveCAN is that there is a much larger and more widespread problem within the current government. Under the Liberals, the public service has grown enormously, more and more contracts have been awarded to consultants, and a growing proportion of those same contracts are being awarded on a non-competitive basis. Let us not forget that many of these contracts could have been carried out in-house, by our public servants.

It is quite clear that Canadians and Quebecers are not getting the best value for their money. There has been talk about encroachment into Quebec's jurisdictions. There has been talk about the deficit. There has been talk about the mismanagement of services that fall under federal jurisdiction, but nothing has been said about why. Why is the government proposing such a disastrous budget? I will give a hint. The majority of the money promised is planned for 2026-27 and the years thereafter, well past the date of the next federal election. Just as an example, 97% of the \$1.1 billion allocated to accelerating the construction of apartments is budgeted for after the election, as is 91% of the \$1.5 billion allocated for the new housing infrastructure fund. The same goes for the 88% of the money promised for pharmacare, 88% of the funding to support research and 87.5% of the funding to strengthen Canada's advantage in artificial intelligence.

This budget is at best an election promise and at worst a strategy to stay in power by convincing the NDP to support the government. In its desperation, the government wants to interfere everywhere, yet people in government are unable to do the work themselves. I already gave a few examples. They are taking away responsibilities from the provinces and managing them ineffectively and at a much higher cost.

As an economist, I would describe any budget that tries to create a slew of new services, while disregarding the government's primary responsibilities, as irresponsible. If the Liberal Party is so desperate that it is looking for ideas for the next election, I would like to offer it a campaign slogan: "Spend and borrow for a mismanaged tomorrow".

This government thinks that, by disregarding Quebecers' right to manage their own responsibilities and those of their nation, it can buy itself a brief reprieve, but only by taking on debt. According to an old French proverb that Quebecers have not forgotten, no debt is ever repaid faster than a debt of contempt. As it happens, Quebecers have long memories.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. Her remarks are always relevant, but I have two questions for her.

First, I want to talk about dental care. Hundreds of thousands of seniors in Quebec are now enrolled in the dental care plan, which means that it has already been very successful. Thousands of Quebecers have already had access to this care. This new program is clearly working.

Next, I want to talk about pharmacare. Quebec's system unfortunately leaves 15% of Quebecers out in the cold. That is why all the major unions have said that the Bloc Québécois must support the pharmacare bill that the NDP set in motion, because it is very important.

Two voices from Quebec have been very clear in their support for the dental care plan and the new pharmacare program. We do not understand why the Bloc Québécois continues to oppose them.

Can the member explain why the Bloc Québécois is not listening to all these voices from Quebec?

• (2115)

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. I would like to answer those two questions, which are ultimately one and the same.

Quite simply, these are encroachments on Quebec's areas of jurisdiction. As I said at the outset, since its inception, the Bloc Québécois has opposed encroachments on Quebec's areas of jurisdiction. The federal government is in no position to tell Quebec how to manage its health care, when Quebec has already done it and done it well. The system is not perfect, but it continues to improve. It has served Quebecers well for years. If Quebec wants to increase dental coverage, Quebec will do it. It does not need the federal government to tell it what to do.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment about balancing the budget. I know that there are all sorts of examples in history, including Quebec's history, where perhaps too many eggs were broken to make an omelette. We know that fiscal austerity or zero deficit efforts have been made, often much more violently in other countries of the world, especially developing countries, to the detriment of those who are struggling the most and at the expense of public services. Those were the days of triumphant neo-liberalism.

However, I think that asking for a plan is about making sure that we do not get to that point. If the plan is no good, we will say so. Sooner or later, we need to balance the budget in one way or another, so it is better to do it the right way. Is asking for a plan not just a way to ensure that we do not end up using drastic or highly ideological remedies that would penalize those who are struggling the most?

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more. That is why several jurisdictions already have laws on the books requiring a plan to return to a balanced budget, precisely to prevent situations where debt accumulates to the point of hurting the people who need it most. As my colleague rightly pointed out, a return to a balanced budget is essential. It is essential to guarantee a future for Quebeckers as long as we remain part of Canada.

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED BREACH OF SPEAKER'S IMPARTIALITY

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising in response to the question of privilege that was raised earlier today, and we have given notice to the Table.

To start off, it seems that the premise of the question of privilege raised earlier today has already been overtaken by events. As you know, the Liberal Party of Canada profusely apologized to the Speaker. Over the course of the day, it issued a letter clarifying that the posting put on the Liberal Party's website that involved the riding association of the Speaker was done without the authorization or even the knowledge of the Speaker. Thus, the whole basis of the question of privilege seems to have been surpassed by events and by the facts coming out.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, even though, factually, the question of privilege was wrong in many respects, not one member of the House heckled the member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie while he was raising his question of privilege. I would ask that the Conservatives be asked to show the same respect to me, as a member, as we showed to the member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie.

The Deputy Speaker: I tend to agree with the hon. member. People actually gave the hon. member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie plenty of leeway in his presentation, and I would ask that the hon. members do the same for the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, we now know the facts: this was posted without the Speaker's knowledge or authorization, it was promptly deleted and an apology has been issued, so I think in a very clear sense, that should bring closure to the question of privilege. I did want to comment on a number of the points that were made this morning by the member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie.

First, and I find this somewhat disturbing, the member from Grande Prairie—Mackenzie seemed to be questioning a decision made by the Assistant Deputy Speaker when the Speaker ruled on the issue of the moving of a substantive motion around the issue of the Speaker. That ruling is absolutely correct. It should not be

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called into question. In fact, it would be inappropriate for a member to call that into question. It follows along with the procedural manual, the bible of this House of Commons. It is very clear that this ruling was appropriate.

If Conservatives felt strongly about this, they could move a substantive motion during any opposition day. It is quite clear, given that we have had the same opposition day motion moved, with a bit of tweaking, for two years, that the Conservatives have basically been using their opposition days to move the same thing over and over again. The reality is that the rules of our House actually stipulate that an opposition day motion could be used in that regard, so I found the questioning, by the member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, of a decision that is very clearly in keeping with the procedures of this House, quite disturbing.

Second, the issue that was raised by the member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie questioned the decision to ask the member from Carleton to leave this House when he caused disorder with very unparliamentary, disrespectful language that the Speaker asked him to withdraw and apologize for, and he refused. The characterization by the member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie in his question of privilege is completely inaccurate.

We all saw that scene. We were present in the House of Commons. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that the one party that was not in favour of it was the party that was impacted by the member for Carleton refusing to apologize and withdraw, and all other members in this House believed that the Speaker had made the right decision. I find that disturbing as well.

Third and finally, in the comments made by the member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, he did not recognize the fact that the events that happened in December of last year were treated through a PROC motion that was brought forward to this House, voted on and passed concurrence, so that issue had already been dealt with. To raise that as a new question of privilege is clearly not appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, my final comments are these: I have raised this with you previously, and this comes from a ruling that was established by this House on September 24, 2014, by the former Speaker, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, who is currently the Conservative House leader. He said, "Reflections on the character or actions of the Speaker—an allegation of bias, for example—could be taken by the House as breeches of privilege and punished accordingly."

I have raised this numerous times. We have seen disrespectful, unparliamentary comments on social media from numerous members of the Conservative caucus that are violations of this very clear ruling from 10 years ago. I have brought them forward for your judgment, Mr. Speaker. In my opinion, for the Conservatives to so cavalierly throw the rule book out, throw precedence out and throw the very clear decisions of this House and rulings by the Chair out the window and continually question the Speaker, raising allegations of bias, is something that could be treated as a breach of privilege and could be punished accordingly.

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● (2120)

I find the question of privilege this morning to be in a very similar vein: it was factually inaccurate, poorly drafted and contained elements that were, quite frankly, false and misleading. It does constitute again, rather than a bona fide question of privilege, an attempt to skirt the rules of this House that have been clearly established. I come back to that issue of numerous cases of Conservative MPs violating that principle from 10 years ago and the ruling by the former Speaker, now the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you look into that and come back to the House in short order. These violations cannot continue. They are inappropriate, unparliamentary and disrespectful of this place.

● (2125)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his input. As it puts me in the awkward position once again to make a decision, I will try to come back to the House as soon as possible.

* * *

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2024, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-69, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 16, 2024, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years and eight consecutive deficit budgets, the Prime Minister has doubled the debt, adding more to our national debt than all other prime ministers combined. Housing costs have doubled under his watch and, now, two million Canadians are forced to visit their local food banks in a single month. That is twice the population of Nova Scotia. With the budget, we can see another \$50 billion of inflationary spending. The budget and the Prime Minister are simply not worth the cost. I will be voting no confidence.

Common-sense Conservatives have a plan to axe the tax, build the home, fix the budget and, yes, stop the crime. Since he became the Prime Minister, the wealthiest .01% of Canadians have been living lavishly, receiving major subsidies from their corporations that are bigger than ever in the history of our country and huge loan guarantees that prevent them from losing money on bad investments.

Who foots the bill for the out-of-control Prime Minister? The hard-working taxpayers. Contractors like those from GC Strategies are among the .01% thanks to the generous gifts from the NDP-Liberal government. Who else is in that .01%? The Prime Minister himself. As a matter of fact, he is considered one of the world's wealthiest politicians. Yet, over the past nine years, Canada's personal income growth has fallen behind that of other G7 nations. Today, average Canadian families and seniors are forced to choose between paying their mortgage and putting food on their table.

Let me make one thing clear. Conservatives are not against spending. We are against wasteful spending, which the NDP-Liberal government excels at. Conservatives will support programs that deliver proven positive outcomes. Take the government's dental care program, for instance. Who will it really help? Is it helping seniors? No. Did the government consult with the Canadian Dental

Association before announcing it? No. The result is a program rushed out the door in a desperate attempt to buy votes with no real thought or consultation behind it.

I have heard from many dentists and one thing is clear. These dentists care about their patients and have worked tirelessly to build their business, but the Canadian dental care program in its current state will not allow them the same high level of patient care they provide. The proof is in the extremely low sign-up rate by dentists. Canadians have been promised free dental care, but are now upset due to the massive limitations and restrictions imposed by this ill-conceived NDP-Liberal program. Eligible treatments are insufficient for the prevention and maintenance of good oral health. Dentists should be able to make recommendations based on the individual needs of their patients and not the constraints dictated by this government and covered up by their insurance company.

The public is being misled about the scope of coverage and the fees. Most patients will be surprised by out-of-pocket expenses such as copay balances and limitations of service. The burden will fall on dental teams to explain these deficiencies. After analyzing the CDCP benefit grid, most treatments will be reimbursed to the dental team at around 80%. The Liberals claim this is to avoid overburdening the taxpayers. Is that not rich? They awarded Sun Life \$747 million to administer this program. Clearly, the Liberal government does not understand the cost of providing quality health care. To be a provider, dentists were told to sign an open-ended, unilateral contract. Who would sign a contract where the details are unclear and unfair?

● (2130)

The Minister of Health has said dentists should just try it if they like it. That does not even make sense. It is an insurance plan, not a pair of gloves. Dentists cannot just try out a plan to see whether it fits. This is neither sensible nor ethical. What happens if they decide not to continue? How can they morally or ethically stop treating a patient based on insurance coverage?

Let us also talk about patient privacy. Accepting the claims processing and payment agreement gives Sun Life rights and access to the entire patient chart. Client consent is obtained as part of member enrolment in the CDCP, meaning that personal health information and dental charts will be readily available to Sun Life and the government.

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The plan has little to no thought on how it would work. To sell it as free dental care is nothing more than false advertising and wasteful spending, not unlike the billion-dollar arrive scam app.

I googled the meaning of the word “budget”, and this is what came up: “A budget is a plan you write down to decide how you will spend your money”. That part of the definition the government seems to understand, but it is the next sentence where it fails: “A budget helps you make sure you will have enough money every month. Without a budget, you might run out of money before your next paycheck.”

The NDP-Liberal coalition has spent so much money that more Canadian tax dollars are used to service the debt than are spent on health care. This year, Canada will spend \$54.1 billion to service the Prime Minister's debt. That is more money than the government is sending to the provinces for health care. The Governor of the Bank of Canada, Tiff Macklem, confirmed that the Prime Minister's \$61 billion in new spending is not helpful in bringing inflation down and lowering interest rates.

After nine years, the Prime Minister's budget is just more of the same of what got us into this mess. He did not stop the inflationary deficits that are driving up interest rates. He did not stop endangering our social programs and jobs by adding more and more debt. His government has doubled rent, mortgage payments and down payments. His record deficits have driven interest rates sky-high. Food banks received a record two million visits in a single month last year, with an additional million expected in 2024. He will not stop until common-sense Conservatives start governing with common sense for this country.

The Prime Minister is not worth the cost for any generation. While life has gotten worse for Canadians, the Prime Minister is spending more than ever before. This year's budget includes over \$61 billion in new inflationary spending. This would cost the average Canadian family an extra \$3,687. Former Liberal Governor of the Bank of Canada David Dodge said that the current budget is the “worst since 1982.” Both the Bank of Canada and former Liberal finance minister John Manley told the Prime Minister that his spending is pressing on the inflationary gas pedal, driving up interest rates.

Struggling families cannot afford higher taxes and more inflationary spending that drives up the cost of everything, keeping interest rates high. That is why common-sense Conservatives sent a letter to the Prime Minister with three demands to fix the budget. First, axe the tax on farmers and food by immediately passing Bill C-234 in its original form. Second, build the homes, not bureaucracy, by requiring cities to permit 15% more homebuilding each year as a condition of receiving federal infrastructure money. Third, cap the spending with a dollar-for-dollar rule to bring down interest rates and inflation. The government must find a dollar in savings for every new dollar of spending. The Prime Minister refuses to listen.

Common-sense Conservatives will not support this budget, and the people of my constituency are just waiting for us to form government and beat the current Liberal government.

• (2135)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am going to pick up on a question that my friend from Kingston and the Islands has actually asked in the chamber a few times this evening, without receiving a response. It concerns the idea that the budget is creating more inflation in Canada. We know that now for four months in a row, inflation has gone down. It is at a four-month low, at 2.7%.

Can the member explain to me how apparently the budget is creating more inflation, when we actually see inflation going down in Canada?

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Madam Speaker, I am going to share a story that was told to me by an 88-year-old senior who came to visit me in my constituency office. He said to me that he cannot afford to eat, and he asked what good going to the dentist is if he has nothing to eat. He told me that 10 years ago he could afford to eat; it was no problem at all. It is only after nine years of the incompetent NDP-Liberal government that seniors like this one cannot afford to eat.

The senior also told me that he was ashamed of himself. I asked why. He said that up until 2021, he always voted Liberal. He told me that he will now be voting—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Normally answers have to be the same length as the questions so other members can ask questions.

The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the one thing that struck me was that the member mentioned that seniors are not benefiting from the dental care program. We know already that two million seniors across this country have registered for the program. We know that tens of thousands of seniors are registering every week. We know that in the first two weeks of the program, 60,000 seniors got dental care.

That means that hundreds of seniors in the member's riding have benefited from the dental care program. I am wondering what she says to those seniors in her riding, when she says that nobody has benefited and when the proof is so very clear that tens of thousands, if not millions, of Canadian seniors are benefiting from the NDP dental care program.

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Mrs. Anna Roberts: Madam Speaker, I would like to make a correction. First of all, it is 1.7 million people who have registered. Second, it is 5,000 dentists who have signed up. Third, there are 25,500 dentists, 30,000 dental hygienists and 26,000 to 29,000 dental assistants in Canada.

Let me quote something else. If one takes it line by line and looks at the dental care plan, children under the age of 12 are allowed seven minutes once a year for cleaning of their teeth. Seniors with existing periodontal disease do not qualify.

How is this helping seniors?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am somewhat troubled—actually I am extremely troubled—by this determination to completely disregard all the social programs that exist in Quebec and the provinces, suggesting that Canada is going to swoop in and save the poor provinces by implementing a dental care plan, when Quebec has one that is governed by the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec and not by private insurance.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague the following question. Instead of interfering, would her party be willing to substantially increase health transfers, if it forms the next government? This federal government is starving Quebec and the provinces when it comes to health care. Then it invents and proposes all sorts of programs from coast to coast that do not meet the needs—

• (2140)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. member for King—Vaughan an opportunity to respond.

The hon. member for King—Vaughan has 20 seconds.

[*English*]

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague that provinces do take care of health care, but I am going to say something. We are going to reduce taxes, which is going to be able to lower the budget so that we can increase the transfer money to all provinces, unlike the wacko policies of the current Liberal government.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour tonight, as always, to rise in the House to speak to the challenges facing our country. Top among those is housing. There is no reason to sugar-coat it. We have to be clear-eyed on the problem at hand, which is that we have a housing crisis in front of us.

To address the housing crisis, we have to build more homes. We must build more homes to make sure that current and future generations are taken care of. To do that, we have to make the math work in the first instance. That is why the government would waive GST on apartments in general, but also on co-ops and residences for students. Public universities and public colleges would now benefit through a GST waiver.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Speaker, my Conservative friends, whom I hear jeering on the other side, ought to look at the housing plan and compare it to their own leader's housing plan, which does not include any tax incentive of this kind at all.

Last week, in my community of London, I met with the private sector, and with builders specifically, to—

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

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, I just cannot help but notice that the member for Saskatoon—University keeps interrupting our speaker, and I would like to hear what our speaker has to share with us this evening.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I agree. We would like to have the same courtesy accorded to both sides of the House: to be able to make their speeches without interruption.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Speaker, I do accept that in the course of debate, heckling happens. It is part of the tradition, but I would like to finish my speech. However, I would invite my colleague who was doing it to raise a question during questions and comments. I look forward to debating him on this issue and others.

I mentioned the GST waiver that will lead to more building. Just last week, I talked to builders in my London community who are quite excited about this measure because, in the context of high interest rates and a more expensive situation when it comes to securing labour and building supplies, it is incumbent on governments at all levels to do whatever they can to put incentives on the table, just like this government has, and the GST waiver stands out as part of that.

Low-interest loans for apartments in general, but also student and senior residences, are another example of incentives put on the table by this government to ensure the math does work for builders. Through the CMHC, we would ensure that those who want to take out those low-interest loans through the apartment construction loan program, or the ACLP, can do that. The interest rate will fluctuate. It is attached to the bond, but certainly a more attractive interest rate is available than, say, interest rates that would be secured through the big banks. We expect hundreds of thousands of homes, in fact, 131,000 homes, to be specific, to be built as a result of the ACLP program.

There is also a measure that has not been talked about nearly enough, but, based on conversations with builders over the past few weeks, it has been confirmed that changes to the accelerated capital cost allowance program would give builders the ability to write off up to 10% of annual mortgage costs from their taxes, and that is going to lead to much more building.

We saw something akin to that in the 1970s. Earlier tonight, I heard a colleague across the way ask why we are not seeing more homes built. He talked about the 1970s as a period of enormous building in terms of housing starts in Canada. One of the key reasons is that the accelerated capital cost allowance program at that time was akin to what the government has now done. We have moved ahead in this regard, taking our cue not only from the building sector but also from listening to what economists have said. In my community, we have Mike Moffatt at the Ivey Business School, who, among others, has advised the government to go in this direction, and the government has done exactly that.

Finally, on making the math work, we have looked at public lands, and ensuring that leasing is possible through public lands is something that we have taken very seriously. There has always been a debate in terms of land use in Canada for lands that are owned by the federal, provincial and municipal governments. At one time, the thinking was that perhaps they could be sold for housing purposes, but I think it is much more appropriate, and I agree with the government on this, that a leasing option be provided. If the government retains the opportunity to lease instead of sell, we can ensure a more affordable approach to housing.

Underused land or land that is not used at all could be put up for leasing purposes. There could be an affordable housing project on site. There could also be child care opportunities for families. There could also be health care services provided on site. I know the government, in concert with municipal and provincial governments, wants to begin that dialogue to understand how we can better use public lands going forward in this country. An inventory of public lands will be necessary in the first place, but, as I have said, I very much look forward to seeing where this could go. It is very promising, and we are seeing the needle move on this issue. I know many advocates across the country have called for this and are quite pleased with what the government has proposed in budget 2024 in this regard.

Second, in terms of building more homes, we have to work with communities to ensure that more homes get built, because it is municipalities, in particular, that are in charge of zoning. We need many more types of homes. We need duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, mid-rise apartments and row houses. This is the missing middle housing that advocates have called for. We see communities throughout the land moving in this direction. They have signed on to the housing accelerator fund in return for federal dollars. In return for making a pledge to ensure that zoning is changed to allow for that missing middle housing, they have access to funds that can be used for public transit, for infrastructure, for all sorts of needs, including affordable housing.

● (2145)

My community of London, back in September, was the first community in the country to receive dollars through this program, with \$74 million that will see thousands more homes built in the next few years, and 750,000 homes nationally is what we expect to be built as a result of communities signing on to this program.

Much related to this is tying infrastructure dollars to home building. This is something that makes perfect sense. There are federal dollars available, as they always have been, for infrastructure pur-

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poses, dollars that would flow to municipalities, but especially to provinces, for water infrastructure, waste-water infrastructure and solid waste infrastructure, for all sorts of infrastructure. Tying that to an expectation that we see more homes built mirrors what we have done with the accelerator fund program and is something that will lead to more construction.

Finally, we have to change the way we build. That is crucial to getting more homes built. On that point, I point to the example of modular housing and the potential of modular housing in this country. We have factories throughout the land where homes are being built that are not exposed to the elements. For example, I was in Alberta recently, in Lethbridge. I visited Triple M Housing, the largest modular producer in the country. What I saw was three homes built a day of varying size appropriate for income types that exist, the varying income types we see in this country. Large homes or modest homes, whatever the desire is, the company is able to produce those.

In my own area, just north of London, in Hensall, I visited General Coach. I went to Northlander Industries in Exeter. I look forward to engaging with Royal Homes. These companies have seen in this budget loan opportunities put on the table to the tune of \$500 million to see an expanded approach. A greater ability to serve the needs of the country in this regard is what modular companies will have. If they are not engaged in modular housing, if they are doing any type of prefabricated building, that is something that certainly builders can look at. They can look at this budget and see opportunities to expand their operations.

I would surmise that we see the potential of modular homes not only to fill the gap that exists with respect to market housing, but also to ensure that we have more non-market housing built for people, fellow citizens, who unfortunately have found themselves in a very unfortunate way living on the street. We have a huge responsibility in this regard. We have to get people housed, with the wraparound supports necessary for people to make a much more positive transition to ensure they have a brighter future: mental health support services on site, supports to ensure their physical health care, job training, all of that. That is what we would call a just vision to ensure that homelessness is finally dealt with in this country.

Modular home building fits into that, because we can have homes built, as I said before, very quickly. One company is doing three homes a day and others are producing close to that rate. It is something that makes a great deal of difference, and budget 2024 realizes that, among other things.

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• (2150)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his focus on housing. He talked about removing the GST from apartments and building, but if Liberals are so focused on reducing the costs for builders, developers and Canadians, why are they charging the GST on top of the carbon tax? Why in this budget did they not remove the GST from the carbon tax entirely? That would lower costs for every aspect of the supply chain and encourage builders, developers and trades to lower their prices because the consumer is not being taxed on a tax and double-dipped with the GST being charged on top of a carbon tax.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Speaker, because of my parliamentary secretary role, I have engaged with those in the building sector, and I have put this question to them on the carbon tax. They say that it is not very significant at all. Much more important is removing, as I said, the GST from the construction of rental apartments. Much more important is ensuring that builders have access to low-interest loans. Much more important is seeing on-the-ground changes through municipalities in terms of zoning. That is going to lead to much more building.

The colleague opposite is a colleague I respect. He has been in the House for many years. He did not run off, for example, as the other colleague did. He stayed here to debate.

We have an opportunity here to get more homes built, and if we want to do that, we have to see zoning changes. All of those things add up to more building in this country.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary mentioned non-market housing, which I would note is for more than those who are suffering from homelessness.

One of the reasons so many people are struggling to find affordable housing is that previous Liberal governments, starting in the 1990s, really abdicated the federal role when it came to building non-market housing. Today, only 3.5% of Canada's housing stock is non-market, compared to about 12% for our peer countries in the OECD.

Research out of the University of British Columbia says that at least 25% of the 5.8 million homes that CMHC says needs to be built by 2030 should be non-market. However, I have seen no indication of a target for the construction of non-market housing. Does the government have a non-market housing target? If so, what is that target?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Speaker, the current stock of affordable housing in Canada is around 4%. That is not enough. We have to increase that.

My colleague wants to be partisan tonight. I do not think there is a need to be partisan. Yes, previous Liberal governments did let the country down when it came to not putting enough on the table and not investing enough to ensure an adequate, affordable housing stock. That is true of previous Liberal governments. It is true especially of previous Conservative governments. I do not want to dwell on that.

I hope that my colleague opposite will support this budget, a budget that does put serious investment on the table, as previous

budgets introduced by this particular government have, to ensure that more affordable homes get built. There will be more affordable homes that have wraparound support services on-site, which I talked about before, provided by excellent not-for-profit and charity organizations that have the expertise to ensure people can make a transition to something better.

I have heard my colleague speak in the House many times. I know he believes in these things. He should support the budget.

• (2155)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, here we have the government that created this housing shortage by having an imbalance from taking in new Canadians without making sure the capacity to take care of them was there. It is now blowing billions of dollars when we are already \$1.4 trillion in debt, adding another \$60 billion, and there is no end in sight.

Instead of getting into the housing jurisdiction, which is not a federal jurisdiction, how is the government going to solve the problem? Will it be by concentrating on the imbalance and fixing the problem in the first place, which is that we have too many people and not enough housing?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Speaker, we do not have enough housing. We have to build more, as I said in my speech. There is so much in that question, I am not sure where to begin. I know my time is limited, so I will focus on the one point that stood out. The member said that, in her view, the federal government has no business engaging in housing. From that, I assume it is the position of the Conservative Party of Canada.

It is no surprise, and now we understand why the Leader of the Opposition has yet to allow his private member's bill on housing, his so-called housing plan, to come forward. It was supposed to come forward months ago, and he has delayed it. That is why.

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Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, if the leader of the Conservative Party has made one thing clear, it is that, after nine years, the NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost. It is not worth the cost for the out-of-control spending. Federal government spending is up 43% since 2019. It is not worth the cost for increasing the deficit. Canada's total debt has ballooned to \$1.4 trillion, up from \$600 million in 2015 when Stephen Harper was prime minister. It is not worth the cost for interest payments. Canada's interest payments are higher than what we spend on health transfers. Plus, the incompetent finance minister forgot to lock in Canada's debts at lower interest rates, costing us billions more. It is not worth the cost for our hard-earned savings, as it is imposing the largest capital gains increase in decades. Because this budget, the government and the Prime Minister are not worth the cost, I will be proudly voting against this budget.

Before this budget came down in mid-April, common-sense Conservatives sent a letter to the Prime Minister with three demands to fix the budget: one, axe the tax on farmers and food by immediately passing Bill C-234 in its original form; two, build the homes, not bureaucracy, by requiring cities to permit 15% more homes each year as a condition for receiving federal infrastructure money; and, three, cap the spending with a dollar-for-dollar rule to bring down interest rates and inflation, so the government must save a dollar for every new dollar of spending. The Prime Minister refused to listen and the result is a budget that the NDP-Liberal government delivered just a few short weeks ago that is just more of the same that broke our country in the first place.

Common-sense Conservatives will not support this runaway train wreck of a budget, nor will we support the NDP-Liberal government, which has broken our country, because the truth is that the budgeting of the government is like pressing the accelerator on a runaway train. Its budgets have boosted spending by 43% since 2019, which is like pouring gas on the inflationary fire, which drives up interest rates. This increased spending further endangers our social programs and jobs by adding more debt and more interest payments. Frankly, this spending spree will not stop until common-sense Conservatives are able to start governing, stop that runaway train and turn it around.

The Liberals and their costly NDP partners are not worth the cost for any generation. The government has doubled rent, mortgage payments and down payments. Food is getting so expensive that food banks received a record two million visits in a single month last year, with a million additional visits expected this year.

While life has gotten worse for Canadians, the NDP-Liberals are spending more than ever before. This year's budget will include nearly \$40 billion in new inflationary spending. Former Liberal governor of the Bank of Canada, David Dodge, said that this budget is the worst budget since 1982. This year, Canada will spend \$54.1 billion to service the NDP-Liberal debt. This is more money than the government is sending to the provinces for health care. Both the Bank of Canada and former Liberal finance minister John Manley told the Prime Minister that he was pressing on the inflationary gas pedal with all this additional spending, but the Liberals did not listen. As a result, the Bank of Canada has implemented the most aggressive interest rate hikes in its history. As millions of

Canadians are renewing their mortgages and know this right now, the NDP-Liberal government simply is not worth the cost.

Let us talk about the carbon tax. We will hear many myths coming from the NDP-Liberal government concerning the carbon tax. I want to dispel some of them for the people back in Saskatoon West who are watching.

The first myth is that the carbon tax does not add to inflation. Canadians know that is not true. They know it is making everything more expensive and miserable for everyone. The International Monetary Fund defines the carbon tax. It states:

Carbon taxes, levied on...oil products...in proportion to their carbon content, can be collected from fuel suppliers. They in turn will pass on the tax in the form of higher prices for electricity, gasoline, heating oil, and so on, as well as for the products and services that depend on them.

This is black and white. Carbon taxes are meant to make everything more expensive. Energy, products, food and everything else that we buy are all more expensive. Boy oh boy, has the NDP-Liberal carbon tax been very successful in making everything much more expensive. Anyone who goes to the grocery store knows the price of food has increased astronomically since the carbon tax came into effect. One cannot buy carrots, potatoes, eggs, milk, cheese, chicken, beef, pork or even Kraft Dinner without burning through one's paycheque. The Prime Minister has blamed this laughably on the war in Ukraine. How much of our cheese, milk, carrots and Kraft Dinner come from Russia or Ukraine? Let me say that it is zero, yet, as any common-sense Saskatchewan person can tell us, Canada produces and manufactures our own food.

• (2200)

What does affect the domestic price of food is when the Canadian farmer must suddenly start paying hundreds of thousands of dollars in carbon taxes to fuel his farm equipment, keep the greenhouses hot, and move the manufacturing line and processing facilities. These costs get passed on to the retailer. The retailer, of course, has their own carbon taxes to pay on the electricity to keep the lights on and keep the fridges and freezers cold while absorbing whatever extra carbon tax costs were incurred by the transport trucks delivering the food to that retailer. All those taxes get added up and passed on to the consumer. That is how the carbon tax is making everything more expensive. That is inflation, plain and simple.

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There is a second myth to dispel about the carbon tax. The Prime Minister goes around touting his so-called carbon rebate cheques as his new Marxist wealth redistribution project. He tells Canadians to not worry about paying carbon taxes because he will just give it back to them with a quarterly cheque. Is that true? Like everything the Prime Minister says and does, it may seem true in his world, but in the real world, he is absolutely wrong.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer, an independent officer of Parliament who is not beholden to any political party, looked at the Prime Minister's claims and produced a very detailed report. Using the Prime Minister's own figures and math, he went across Canada and examined how much everyone pays in carbon tax and how much they get back in these so-called rebates.

In my home province of Saskatchewan, this year the Liberals will collect an average of \$2,618 from every family, but the Liberals will only rebate on average \$2,093. That means that each Saskatchewan family will lose \$525. Only in the Prime Minister's head does losing over \$500 mean that someone is coming out ahead. Within five years, as the carbon tax quadruples, that net loss would be well over \$1,700 per year for each family. It is clear that only in the alternative reality the Prime Minister lives in does a loss of \$1,700 every year turn out to be a win.

As such, myth one is that the carbon tax does not make everything more expensive, but we know that it does exactly that. Myth two is that families get the carbon tax back, when the truth is they do not, leaving each family \$500 in the hole. The third myth is that the NDP is somehow not to blame for the Prime Minister's brazen disregard for the Canadian public every time he raises the carbon tax.

The fact is that the coalition government agreement the NDP and Liberals struck is akin to one of the greatest heists ever committed against the Canadian taxpayer. Did the Prime Minister put the gun to the taxpayers and pull the trigger? He absolutely did, but it was the NDP that loaded the gun, kept the getaway vehicle idling when the dirty work was being done and then put its foot on the accelerator to make sure the Liberals got a clean getaway.

Myth number four is that the home heating oil exemption was not meant to help Liberal MPs in the Maritimes. The truth is that they created this exemption so people heating their homes in Atlantic Canada did not have to pay carbon tax. I can clearly see that in the announcement filled with all the Liberal Maritime MPs.

When Saskatchewan thought this type of exemption should also apply to people heating their homes in our frigid province, what did the Prime Minister do instead? If I turn to page 408 in annex 3 of the budget, it would give the Liberals the legal authority to prosecute the Saskatchewan government for not collecting the carbon tax on natural gas. As such, exempting home heating in Atlantic Canada is A-okay for the Liberals. Exempting home heating in Saskatchewan would be a criminal act, so obviously this shows the lengths to which the Prime Minister is willing to go to favour one region of Canada over another.

Ultimately, as a member of Parliament, I must make a decision on how I will be voting on the budget. How do I represent the interests of the people of Saskatoon West? Do I vote in favour of higher

taxes, out-of-control spending, massive inflationary debt payments and no end in sight? Many folks in my riding email me, almost on a daily basis, imploring me to stop doing these very things.

They are very concerned that our activist Prime Minister is breaking Canada. They see the crime, chaos and destruction are on our streets. They feel the pinch of higher grocery prices and higher taxes. As such, do I vote against another wasteful budget, a budget that is meant to harm Canadians, a budget that raises their taxes and increases inflation?

I am a Conservative, and I believe in common sense. I am voting no to the budget. I am voting non-confidence in the NDP-Liberal government, and I am voting in favour of us having a carbon tax election as soon as possible.

Let us bring it home.

● (2205)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I found it very interesting that the member asked what Kraft Dinner has to do with Ukraine. He should go and have look, because CNN did an interview with the Kraft CEO specifically, who said, "We've already increased the prices that we were expecting this year, but I'm predicting that next year, inflation will continue, and as a consequence [we] will have other rounds of price increases". The article goes on to say, "Beyond the double-barrel challenges of shortages of raw materials and inflation, issues like...the war in Ukraine...are adding to the uncertainty", so the member does not need to take my word for it.

The member asked what Kraft Dinner has to do with Ukraine. He can listen to the CEO from Kraft, who made those comments that I read out, who explicitly said shortages coming out of Ukraine are contributing to inflation.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, this is just another example of the Liberals failing to take responsibility for the inflation that has happened in this country. We have had serious record inflation, the highest rates we have had in 40 years.

This has hurt the pocketbooks of all Canadians. It has reduced their buying power. It has made everything more expensive, including Kraft Dinner and everything else. The carbon tax has a lot to do with that.

Inflationary spending has caused the rate of inflation to go up and has caused those expenses to get higher. Canadians are feeling the pinch.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. We work very well together at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. I really enjoy working with him. He is very thorough.

The Conservatives say they are going to form the next government. We, as well as the Conservatives, are going to vote against this budget; there is no doubt about that. Now, what would the Conservatives do if they were sitting where the Liberals are? That is never quite as clear.

Since my colleague sits on the immigration committee with me, I will ask him a question. There is one item that is missing from the budget, and I would like to know whether the Conservatives would proceed differently from the Liberals when it comes to the billion dollars that the Quebec government is requesting for taking in asylum seekers. The Liberals refuse to pay that money to the Quebec government.

Quebec's National Assembly is calling on the federal government to reimburse the \$1-billion cost of taking in asylum seekers. If my colleague's party were in power, would Quebec be reimbursed that \$1 billion?

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean and I do enjoy our time at the immigration committee.

What would Conservatives do if we were in government? Well, first of all, we would not have all the messes we have now that are leading to situations like what my colleague described. The most important thing I want to reiterate about what we would do is that, first of all, we would get rid of the carbon tax. That is the first thing we would do.

The second thing we would do would be to balance the budget because that is causing inflationary pressure. The third thing we would do would be to build more homes by requiring cities to permit 15% more houses each year in order to get federal infrastructure funds.

The fourth thing we would do would be to stop the crime by making sure that repeat offenders end up in jail and that we have proper treatment facilities for those who need it in the country.

• (2210)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Saskatoon West talked about the so-called Conservative housing plan, but I have not seen anything in that housing plan that speaks to the kind of communities that I represent, which are rural communities with small populations.

The challenges in rural communities are categorically different from those in urban centres. The Conservative plan mentions forcing density around transit hubs. Small rural communities do not have transit hubs. They talk about requiring communities to build 15% more new homes every year. In many small communities, the housing demand does not allow for that kind of growth, yet small communities deserve housing just like any other community in this country.

I am wondering why the Conservative plan so wholly ignores the housing needs of rural communities.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, first of all, I just want to say that I was a home builder in a small community, so I understand that very well.

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I have really good news for the member. There is an easy way to find this out. All of our detailed plans will come up during an election. That member and his party have the ability to force an election on this very budget. If they choose to not support the Liberal government and this Liberal budget, and instead vote against it, we could have an election. All of the detailed plans that he is looking for will be there for him to see.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wanted to start off by saying that the NDP will be supporting the budget because of the many provisions that the NDP has forced into the budget. These things are not negligible. They would help to deal with the here and now. Canadians are struggling to make ends meet, put food on the table and keep a roof over their head. This is 50% because of the Liberal government's continuing the terrible practices of the former Harper regime; in addition, about 50% of the blame has to be shared by Conservative MPs, who have never admitted to the incredible way that they ran roughshod over the rights of Canadians, gutting services and giving massive handouts to the billionaires in this country. Therefore, 50% of the blame is shared on both sides of the House, by Conservatives and Liberals.

The NDP has gotten to work. The member for Burnaby South and the NDP caucus all make a real difference in the House of Commons. We have really extraordinary members of Parliament, such as the member for Edmonton Strathcona and the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley; they are two of the very best members of Parliament. However, the entire NDP caucus is very proud of the work we do, and Canadians are seeing the results of that.

Dental care has been an extraordinary success that Conservatives should be thanking the NDP for. In the first two weeks of the new dental care program, 60,000 seniors were able to get dental care, dental surgery and dental supports. For many of them, it was for the first time in their lives. There are 60,000 people. Members can do the numbers. That is hundreds of constituents in each and every Conservative riding, Liberal riding and NDP riding. However, Conservatives have not once stood up to say, "Gosh, we should have been more effective as official opposition, and we thank the NDP for providing these services to our constituents." Two million seniors have signed up so far. Tens of thousands are signing up each additional week. We know that, by the end of this month, those seniors aged 65 to 70 will be able to sign up for the program and are signing up now. We know that, next month, people with disabilities and families with children under 18 years of age will be able to sign up. This is all a result of the work of the member for Burnaby South, the member for Edmonton Strathcona, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley and the entire NDP caucus, which makes a difference each and every day.

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However, we do not stop there, of course. There is pharmacare now for six million people with diabetes, some of whom are paying \$1,000 or \$1,500 a month for their diabetes medication and devices. An example is my constituent, Amber. She is paying \$1,000 a month for diabetes medication. By the time the pharmacare program is rolled out in the course of the next few months, she will finally be able to breathe; she will not have to find \$1,000 each and every month in order to pay for a diabetes medication that keeps her in stable health. Now, the reality is that, in every Conservative riding, 17,000 to 18,000 constituents would be helped by this. The constituents of each Conservative MP should be telling their MP to vote yes for the pharmacare provisions, and not only for that which affects diabetes but also for contraception. On average, 25,000 constituents of each Conservative MP would be benefiting from contraception; however, again, the member for Carleton has tried to block these types of supports, which would make a huge difference in the lives of the constituents of Conservative MPs. They are not doing the work. The NDP is doing the work for them, but the least they can do is stop blocking it so their constituents could actually benefit from what the NDP has done for all Canadians.

We also see in this budget a furthering of the work of the member for Burnaby South, the member for Edmonton Strathcona, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley and the entire NDP caucus. What does that mean? Well, it means such things as ensuring that there is a growth guarantee around the Canada health transfer. I will come back to that in a moment, because this was a particularly egregious decision made by the Harper government to slash health care, destroying health care in this country. The fact that we now have, in this budget, a growth guarantee to ensure that health spending grows as expenses do is actually an important step forward.

• (2215)

With the national school food program, we are talking about nearly half a million kids who would benefit from getting food at school. Conservatives are saying, no, they want to block that provision. They do not want kids to eat healthily.

That makes no sense at all. Again, we are not even asking Conservative MPs to do any work. We are just asking them to please stop blocking the school lunch program, so kids in their ridings can actually benefit from school lunches.

In rural areas of this country, we have a shortage of pharmacists, dentists and dental hygienists, teachers and social workers. We have seen those shortages. Expanding the Canada student loan forgiveness program so that we can have more people in rural areas and northern areas of this country with those skills and professions is vitally important. Again, Conservatives are blocking that program.

I wanted to then turn my attention to the issue of tax provisions. This is going to be an important part of the second half of my speech. The reality of actually ensuring that Canada's big corporations start paying their fair share includes implementing a 15% global minimum tax to ensure that large multinational corporations pay their fair share wherever they do business. Tax provisions are important. Capital gains provisions are important, as we saw under the Harper government, during the terrible Harper regime, with its infamous tax haven treaties.

The PBO did an analysis just after the Harper government was thrown out. The most profitable corporations and our very wealthiest citizens bled \$30 billion a year out of this country. As a result of those infamous Harper tax haven treaties, over \$30 billion a year was shipped overseas where those corporations and citizens never had to pay a cent of tax. What was the result of that? Under the Harper regime, there was a slashing of services. Veterans Affairs was slashed. The veterans who laid their lives on the line for their country were treated with such disdain and disrespect by the Harper regime. Basically, their services were gutted.

We saw a whole range of unbelievable cuts to other services, such as for seniors. Seniors were being disrespected. The Harper regime forced seniors to work years longer before they could collect a pension. There were cuts in services from environmental services to food inspection. The Harper regime was a terrible calamity for this country. It was the worst government in Canadian history; of that there is no doubt. There were scandals and financial mismanagement, along with a terrible approach by the Harper regime.

What I reproach the Liberal government for, despite the fact that there has been some progress in the budget, which we will be supporting as a result, is its maintenance of many of the terrible practices of the Harper regime. Many of those practices are still intact. We are still losing \$30 billion each and every year, as a result of the infamous Harper tax haven treaties. Colleagues can do the math. That is a third of a trillion dollars that we have lost over the course of a little more than a decade as a result of Conservative mismanagement, scandals and corruption.

However, colleagues should not stop there. Again, Liberal practices and Conservative practices are so similar that we say there has been a corporate coalition between the two parties over the course of the last 15 years, with a trillion dollars having been given in liquidity supports to Canada's big banks. Why was this? It was to maintain bank profits, executive bonuses and dividend payments for Canada's big banks. Between the Conservatives and the Liberals, over the last 15 years, a trillion dollars in 2024 dollars has been given to Canada's big banks. When we talk about oil and gas CEOs, a regular stipend with massive subsidies that was given under the Conservatives has continued under the Liberals.

The NDP has forced major improvements, with significant steps forward, but the reality is that the legacy of the Harper regime is terrible. It continues today because the Liberals have simply not stepped up to do what is right, to ensure that we have a fair tax system, that the terrible legacy of the infamous Harper tax haven treaties has finally ended, that banks stop receiving hundreds of billions of dollars in supports, and that oil and gas CEOs stop being subsidized off the public purse. Those are steps that an NDP government would take.

• (2220)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know that the member was in the House earlier in the debate when a Conservative colleague stood up and tried to glowingly suggest that Stephen Harper had actually balanced a budget in 2015. I was not here at that time, but I certainly know how Stephen Harper did that. He did that by selling off shares of GM. He did that on the backs of veterans. He did that by increasing old age security to 67. He did a number of things. Therefore, when Conservatives talk about balancing a budget, what they are really talking about is cuts and cutting as much as they can, because they do not believe in these social programs. Could the member give some insight, since he was here at that time?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the Harper government was the worst government in Canadian history. Yes, the Conservatives cut and they slashed services, but they never balanced the budget. They slashed services to seniors, to veterans, to the most vulnerable. They would announce, "Oh, next year is going to be different. We're going to balance the budget." However, they never did. They used sleight of hand; they tried to reconfigure the budget, but they had a deficit each and every year, sometimes an enormous one.

Now, for folks who want to check that, they can look at the fiscal period returns issued by the Ministry of Finance, which is surely not a hotbed of social democrats. The fiscal period returns have compared all governments, federal and provincial, over the course of the last 40 years. What those fiscal period returns tell us is that Conservatives and Liberals are woefully inadequate in managing money and paying down debt. However, the best administrations have been, uniformly over the last 40 years, NDP governments in the provinces, which have balanced budgets and paid down debt more than any other political party. Folks should not believe me; they should consult the fiscal period returns and see the proof.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague said something interesting. He said that, ever since the Harper government lost power nine years ago, the Liberals have not stood up to do what is right and fair.

In other words, he just admitted that the Liberals have not been getting the job done for the past nine years and that they are not doing things fairly. If there is one thing the NDP and the Bloc Québécois are fighting, one thing we agree on, it is injustice. We want to fight injustice.

We know for a fact that most of the money allocated to programs the NDP lobbied for will not flow until after the next election. With things going the way they are going, the Conservatives might well take power and never implement those programs, so I have to ask

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myself why the NDP is not positioning itself as the progressive party in the rest of Canada. It could position itself as the party that is not corrupt. It could campaign on that to make sure these programs will actually be set up.

Apparently the NDP does not have the courage to do that and is supporting the Trudeau government. Polls say they are going down with him.

My question, therefore, is this: Why not trigger an election right now?

• (2225)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would remind the hon. member that sitting members are not to be referred to by name.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I really like my colleague, but he is mistaken.

First, dental care is already being offered to Quebeckers. The services covered by the pharmacare program will make a big difference. They already have the support of Quebec's major unions.

What the NDP is doing is already having a positive impact on people's daily lives. I could go on, but this impact will continue to grow.

The next election will be a referendum election. I know that my colleague loves referendums, but this one will be a referendum election for the millions of Quebeckers and the millions of Canadians who receive dental care, about whether they want to keep those services. Pharmacare will assist six million Canadians with insulin and nine million Canadians with contraception. Do people want to keep these services?

I am convinced that people will say yes, that they will want to keep these services and avoid the cuts and all the ravages of the Conservative Party. I am convinced that they want the stability that comes with the NDP, that makes it possible to provide all these services, and with better financial management as well.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity tonight to speak to the budget.

A big part of what politicians do is decide which problems in society need to be solved by governments and which problems are best left to individuals and to families and to the private sector.

The Liberal government, with its NDP coalition partners, spends a great deal of time, effort, energy and taxpayers' money trying to solve all sorts of problems, while unfortunately accomplishing very little and more often than not being counterproductive.

Government Orders

I remember when the finance minister presented her budget last month. She received one partial standing ovation from the official opposition when she said:

There are those who claim that the only good thing government can do when it comes to economic growth is to get out of the way.

The finance minister went on to cite the example of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project as an example of her government's success when it comes to government intervention in the economy. It was not too long ago that resource companies and international investors were excited about all of the potential pipeline projects in this country, such as northern gateway, Keystone XL and energy east, just to name a few.

Building pipelines such as these is something that private sector companies are able to do in most countries, but sadly not in Canada. All of the blueprints for all of these pipeline projects have been sitting on the shelf collecting dust for years because the Liberal government has made it practically impossible for the private sector to get projects like this built through its anti-development legislation, such as Bill C-69, the "no more pipelines" bill, and Bill C-48, the "west coast oil tanker ban".

It is sad that the finance minister would cite, as a success story, the one lonely, solitary pipeline expansion project that the government decided to take over while all the others were being chased away. It is also worth noting that this was not a new pipeline being built. It was simply the twinning of an existing pipeline, with a new pipe being laid right alongside the old one. This raises the question: How long did it take to build the new pipeline and how long did it take to build the old one?

The proposal for the original Trans Mountain pipeline was submitted for approval in 1951. Construction was finished in 1952. Compare that to the decade that it has taken for the expansion to be completed. That makes this project hardly anything for the Liberal government to brag about. One also cannot help but be concerned about the cost overruns that have happened under the Liberal government's watch. The Trans Mountain expansion was originally estimated to cost \$7 billion. The final price came in at \$34 billion.

When a fivefold increase in total cost is touted as a success story, that should give all Canadians pause the next time the Liberal government sets out on one of its interventions into the economy. The finance minister went on to talk about her government's new school lunch program. It seems that the Liberals have just recently discovered what Conservatives and food banks have been saying for years, namely that food bank use has skyrocketed under the Liberal government.

According to a report by Food Banks Canada, nearly two million Canadians had to use food banks in March of last year. That is a 32% increase from the year before. Furthermore, one third of food bank users are children. I did not hear the finance minister mention under whose watch food bank use skyrocketed. I did not hear anything in her speech about the Liberals increasing their carbon tax again this year on the farmers who grow the food, the truckers who truck the food and the grocers who refrigerate the food, and about all of those costs being passed on to consumers at the grocery store.

I also did not hear anything from the finance minister about passing Bill C-234 in its original form to exempt grain drying and barn heating from the carbon tax so that those costs are not passed on to consumers in the form of higher grocery prices.

• (2230)

I did not hear anything about the Liberals' \$40-billion deficit driving up interest rates or the \$60 billion in debt servicing charges making it more difficult for Canadians to make ends meet and causing Canadians to have to choose between putting a roof over their heads or putting food onto the dinner tables.

Instead of focusing on the root cause of the cost of living crisis, the Liberals have decided to bring in yet another government program. This time, it is a nationwide school lunch program. While school lunch programs are certainly a reasonable and beneficial public policy, anyone who bothers to take a brief skim of section 91 and section 92 of our Constitution will tell us this is clearly the jurisdiction of provincial governments and best left to provincial ministries of education and social services.

What I find so frustrating about the Liberal government is not only that it is bad at capitalism, but also that it is just as bad at socialism. Take, for example, the new Canada disability benefit. This program resulted from the passage of Bill C-22, a bill the Liberals introduced almost two years ago. The stated objective of this bill was actually very reasonable; it was to provide a social safety net for Canadians living with disabilities so that no one has to live in poverty due to a disability.

Personally, I have always felt programs such as this are best left to provincial governments. In my home province of Saskatchewan, we have a program called the Saskatchewan assured income for disability, SAID, program. I also believe very strongly in an inclusive society for persons with disabilities, so if the federal government wanted to join in, I certainly was not going to stand in the way. It seems that everyone else in this chamber felt the same way since Bill C-22 passed unanimously last year.

When the details of the Canada disability benefit were announced in the budget, they were certainly a disappointment for disability advocates everywhere, with the maximum benefit being only \$200 per month and not one thin dime being paid out until July of next year. Two hundred dollars per month is not enough for anyone in this country to live off, even before inflation and the cost of living skyrocketed under the government.

After nine years of the Liberal government, and with the introduction of this budget, the size of the federal government and the cost of the federal government have now doubled under the Liberals' watch. After nine years, the government has come to the point where literally all of the revenue from the GST goes toward merely paying the interest on the federal debt. The Liberals are adding another \$40 billion to the federal debt this year, which now stands at well over \$1 trillion and rising.

Government Orders

I come back to the finance minister's statement, when she said that the only good thing the government can do when it comes to economic growth is to get out of the way. A more accurate statement would be that the only good thing that the current government can do is to get out of the way.

It is time for a new Conservative government to replace the Liberals and their NDP coalition partners and to fix the budget as well as the many other problems they have created. Therefore, Conservatives will vote against this budget and we will vote non-confidence in the government.

• (2235)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if I understand this correctly, Conservatives are saying it is this government's fault people have to use food banks, but when this government puts forward a solution to that, this member says it is not in the jurisdiction of the federal government, one should read our Constitution and the federal government should have nothing to do with this.

The member spoke as though he was very complimentary and understood and encouraged school food programs. He must know Canada is the only G7 country without a national school food program, but yet he not only will vote against this budget that puts money into it, but also voted against the national school food program policy that came before the House about three months ago. We are expected to believe this is all because the Constitution says we should not do anything about it.

Mr. Michael Kram: Madam Speaker, good heavens. Where do I begin?

Yes, the Liberal government has caused a lot of problems in this country. Most notably is the increased use of food banks, especially among children, over the last nine years of the government.

I would also really encourage the member to read this country's Constitution. I do not know what it is like in his home province of Ontario, but in Saskatchewan every school can be designated as a community school if it is in a neighbourhood with a low enough income and a low enough poverty level, and those schools are given school food programs on the basis of the individual need. I do not understand why we need a national school food program when provincial governments are already doing exactly that.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Regina—Wascana mentioned the northern gateway pipeline.

What he did not mention was that the northern gateway pipeline and the plan by Enbridge to bring crude oil supertankers to the north coast of B.C. was wholly rejected by municipalities, first nations, anglers, commercial fishermen and the majority of the people of the District of Kitimat, who held a specific referendum on that issue. The culmination of that effort led to Bill C-48, the north coast Oil Tanker Moratorium Act.

I say this with no animus to my colleague personally, but his leader is going around the country saying that a Conservative government would tear up that oil tanker moratorium as one of its first acts in office.

Can my friend down the way confirm if that is true? Can he say it loud enough for the people all the way on the west coast of Canada, on Haida Gwaii, in Prince Rupert and Klemtu, and all of the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We get the gist of it.

The hon. member for Regina—Wascana.

Mr. Michael Kram: Madam Speaker, I have said literally hundreds of times on the campaign trail that yes, Conservatives are opposed to Bill C-48, the west coast oil tanker ban. That is because Canada's oil and gas do not do anyone any good when they just sit there in the ground doing nothing.

Other countries around the world buy their oil and gas from Saudi Arabia and Russia. That is so counterproductive to building a productive Canadian society and a better place for our allies all around the world. Yes, we will certainly get oil and gas flowing to our allies and around the world.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Regina—Wascana for his wonderful speech. He and I share a passion when it comes to supporting Canada's world-class energy industry.

Can he share some of what he hears from people in Regina on the impact the anti-energy government has had on the people and the jobs in Regina—Wascana?

• (2240)

Mr. Michael Kram: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for all of her advocacy for Canada's oil and gas sector.

In my riding of Regina—Wascana, it is not just the oil and gas workers who benefit from the natural resource sector. It is not just the steelworkers at EVRAZ north of Regina who make the pipelines who benefit from the oil and gas sector. In any given year, between 10% and 15% of the provincial government's revenue comes from natural resource royalties. That is how the provincial government can afford to build schools and hospitals, and make our society a better place.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Constitution Act requires that there be quorum in this place for it to operate. I respectfully call for—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member knows very well that there are no quorum calls at this point in debate.

Resuming debate, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am certainly happy to engage in our final moments here in this chamber tonight, addressing the very important Bill C-69, which is our budget implementation bill.

Government Orders

As I prepared what I was going to share this evening, I thought a lot about our wonderful staff members here in the House of Commons who have been supporting us tonight. I thought about our lobby teams who do so much for us, and I also thought about my own team, both in the riding of Fredericton and right here on the Hill. I would just like to take this moment to congratulate them and to thank them for all that they do on behalf of constituents across the country.

This got me thinking. I have a wonderful intern in my office right now. She is actually visiting us from Michigan, studying our Westminster parliamentary system and comparing it to the American system that she is used to. She interviewed me today. She asked me a bunch of questions about my personal journey into this place, and about various policies and the process that I undertake.

She also asked me a very interesting question. It gave me a minute of pause. She asked me what the biggest issue would be for Canadians 10 years from now. It made me pause for a second because I thought it very much depends on perception, absolutely. It depends on what kind of Canada we want, what kind of efforts we are going to be putting into what this future looks like. It certainly also depends on the policies and investments of today that could create that future of tomorrow.

The Canada I want to see is one that is inclusive and diverse, one that focuses on equity and justice for all, one that has Canada leading in the green economy, one that respects environmental sustainability, one that has affordable and accessible housing as a human right, and one that ensures safety and security for all.

I think it is safe to say that we can all dream about this kind of Canada, but it is about what we do in this place right now as members of Parliament that sets up this future for the next generation. I think about my two children at home and what kind of world I want to bring them up in.

I refuse to paint a picture of Canada that is devoid of the hope and the energy that is truly reflective of Canadian ambition, of our tradition of hard work and resiliency. Conservatives may chastise me by suggesting I take off my rose-coloured glasses and hop on the nation-bashing bandwagon, but I will not do that. No one is saying that Canadians have never had it so good.

We know there are challenges right across this country. We know that the climate change impacts, geopolitical events, supply chain pressures, a cost-of-living crisis and general everyday struggles have only compounded post pandemic. We know that the word “unprecedented” has, unfortunately, been used an unprecedented amount of times in the last couple of years.

This does not mean that we turtle. It does not mean that we bury our heads in the sand or worse, that we retreat to the angry corners of the Internet to point fingers and to scapegoat our fears against the most vulnerable in society. Unfortunately, this is the direction that Conservatives have chosen. The Leader of the Opposition smiles while our country burns so that he can claim to be the great saviour, like *Dances with Wolves*, swooping in to rescue poor Canadians from the boogeyman.

Canadians do not need a saviour. They do not need to be talked down to or to be patronized. They do not need to be misled. They

need solutions. They need evidence-based policy. They need investments. They need support. Most of all, I think that they need each other.

The Canada that I envision in 10 years would also see co-operation, unity, an atmosphere of civil dialogue where we can set aside our perceived differences to find a common ground that truly binds us. I hear none of this from the Leader of the Opposition. I hear a lot of “me”, I hear a lot of “I” and a lot of what he thinks is best or supposedly what is “common sense”, even when it makes no sense at all.

Bill C-69 is about setting the stage for a bright future for Canadians. It is about fairness. It is about strategic initiatives that respond to the difficult realities faced by Canadians. It is about transforming, for example, our housing system, empowering renters and homeowners, building stock, incentivizing development, and using the creativity and innovation that we know is what defines Canadians across this country.

Fredericton has benefited from these really important policies around housing, for example, the rapid housing initiative, the housing accelerator fund, and green and inclusive infrastructure programs. We are also home to the now famous 12 Neighbours tiny home project by entrepreneur and philanthropist extraordinaire Marcel LeBrun, who has built 99 new homes for those in need, with the help of the federal government. These are good news stories that make a real difference in people's lives, but Conservatives do not want to talk about that.

This budget bill is also about economic growth and productivity. The IMF and the OECD project that Canada will have the strongest economic growth in the G7 on average by 2025. This is good news again.

● (2245)

Bill C-69 looks to invest in the technologies, incentives and supports critical to increasing innovation, attracting more private investment and backing up our workforce. We are doing this by improving access to training and reskilling programs, increased funding for youth employment and skills strategy programs. This is what investing in the future looks like. It brings me hope. We do not have to be pessimistic in this place. I think it is incumbent upon all of us to be optimistic, to lay that path forward for Canadians to come along with us, together, not to divide us, not to draw those lines in the sand I am seeing far too often in this place, but in working together. That, to me, is what Bill C-69 is all about, and I am very proud to support it.

Government Orders

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member is right. A lot of what we are hearing is language that is aimed at dividing Canadians and using those anxieties against Canadians. The reality is that what Canadians have been going through in the last year and a half or two years, since coming out of the pandemic, has been tough on a lot of people. Her message of hope and trying to work together certainly is something that is going to get us somewhere as opposed to trying to find people's anxieties and exploit those. I wonder if she can further share how she sees this impacting Canadians, generally speaking, and the way that people are treating each other.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, I often remind the House that my background is in education and that I came here as a teacher, so I am very much reminded of my teacher voice or teacher process oftentimes in this place. One cannot go into a classroom, paint this doom and gloom picture for youth and expect them to want to work hard, want to achieve and want to set these goals and ambitions; one has to give them the tools, the knowledge and the evidence that shows them what they can do with their best efforts to create that future for themselves.

That is really what this is about for Canadians. It is giving them those tools, providing them with that stage and that hope, so they can then get themselves out of the situations they are facing with us there to support them. This top-down "Ottawa knows best" idea we are very much seeing from the Leader of the Opposition is not going to work for Canadians. We have to roll up our sleeves, link our arms and get through this together.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am sure my hon. colleague has been out knocking on doors and talking to regular Canadians. We have been busy doing that, and the portrait she paints of this country is a lot different from what I am hearing from normal Canadians about the cost of living crisis and about how the government is not only doing nothing to help, but also causing hurt because as Ottawa spends more money, inflationary pressures get worse, interest rates go up and more pain is being felt. What would she say to the millions of Canadians right now who have lost hope because of the senseless wacko policies of the government?

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that question because it very much illustrates the point I was trying to make; continuing to tear down Canada is not serving anyone. It is not serving the House either. I am sure he did not listen to my speech because I certainly did not paint this perfect picture of Canada. What we are doing with the budget implementation act is building what we want to see for the future. It is setting up that green economy. It is setting up affordable housing for all. This is what the budget is about, making those plans and implementing them.

I will say that when I have conversations with community members in my riding, they are very much focused on the climate crisis and actually support the initiatives we have put in place as far as the price on pollution, driving down our emissions and ensuring they are given those rebates to address the affordability challenges as well. That is just one example.

• (2250)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Fredericton for her remarks. I very much appreciate her work and the approach she brings to this work.

I am going to ask my colleague about an issue I raised several weeks ago. In British Columbia, the First Nations Health Authority has stopped funding counselling for non-status survivors of residential schools. This is affecting people in the riding I represent and across the province. It is due to federal underfunding of the First Nations Health Authority. Obviously, this is something she would share my concern about.

I wonder if, in her role as parliamentary secretary, she has looked into this. What is her government's plan to ensure that non-status individuals who survived residential schools and are in need of counselling can get these vital services?

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, I am always grateful to NDP members for bringing up indigenous issues because it seems to be a priority for them and not so much for the other parties in the House.

I have absolutely looked into that issue. There is very much a conversation happening with provincial authorities as well. In my role as Parliamentary Secretary, I have really leaned into wanting to create equity across that system, looking at what non-status looks like, looking at ensuring that those who are disenfranchised are then brought into the system and looking at the second generation cut-off, which is another piece of this. It is incumbent upon us to look across the entire system and to make sure, especially for those in British Columbia who are dealing with this immediate challenge, that their needs are also met.

I will continue to work with this member off-line and with our department as well because I know it is really important.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to join in the debate.

We had some questions to the other members across the way about what Canadians are feeling about the disastrous Liberal government, and I would like to read into the record a couple of emails I have received. I am sure everyone here has received emails on the pain and suffering after nine long years of this failed regime.

I just want to get this on the record from some of the people I represent, because as much as we are all here, the people who are really the masters of this country are the voters, the citizens of this country, who elected all 338 of us to come here to debate. I feel that we would be a better democracy and a better country if the people who are sent here would actually listen to what Canadians are feeling and would listen to how we can make a change in their lives.

The budget comes out, and a flood of emails comes in. I would like to read just a sampling of those, to digest them a little and to explain a little of my feelings towards those emails and hopefully have some questions from others.

Government Orders

Robert, who emailed after this budget was released, said that he just wants his voice added to everyone else's in Canada who are appalled by the \$1 billion a month interest we are paying on this debt; more than we spend on health care. He wants us to please do everything and anything we can to turn this around. He also asks that we let the Prime Minister know that it is over. No matter how much money he squanders, trying to get ahead in the polls, he is yesterday's man. That was from Robert in my constituency. I thank Robert for writing in. I read every email that comes into my office.

David wrote that the Liberal woke policies have put Canadians at—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is all the time we have.

[*Translation*]

It being 10:54 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on the amendment.

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

• (2255)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded vote, please.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 22, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Before we proceed, I wish to remind hon. members of the Speaker's ruling of Tuesday, January 30, regarding 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. At the time, the Chair indicated that, pursuant to Standing Order 69.1, the question on the motion for the second reading would be divided to provide for separate votes on measures that were related to each other.

Furthermore, on November 8, 2017, at page 15145 of the Debates, Speaker Regan explained how the Chair intended to implement Standing Order 69.1. He stated, "The vote at third reading will be conducted in a similar way to the vote at second reading, assuming all of the identified elements are still part of the bill by the time it reaches that stage."

[*Translation*]

Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 69.1 the question will be divided at the third reading stage as follows:

First, the measures in clauses 1 to 136, 138 to 143, 168 to 196, 209 to 216, and 278 to 317 appear in the 2023 budget. Since their purpose is to implement certain budget proposals, they would be grouped based on this unifying theme and voted on together.

Second, the measures that can be grouped under the theme of affordability, clauses 137, 144, and 231 to 272, will be subject to a different vote.

[*English*]

Clauses 197 to 208 and 342 to 365 will also be grouped for voting because they amend the Canada Labour Code.

Clauses 145 to 167, 217 and 218 will be subject to a separate vote because they relate to vaping products, cannabis and tobacco.

The remaining divisions of Bill C-59, consisting of clauses 219 to 230, 273 to 277, 318 and 319, 320 to 322 and 323 to 341, will each be voted on separately because they are not linked to any of the common themes mentioned earlier. In all, nine votes will be held.

I would like to remind members that when putting the question on groups of clauses for Bill C-59, I intend to follow a procedure similar to that outlined in Standing Order 76.1(8) for the putting of the question on amendments at report stage.

I thank hon. members for their attention.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (for the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance) moved that 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, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to the very important piece of legislation before us. It is what we call the fall economic statement, which was, yes, introduced in the fall. Unfortunately, because of Conservative delay tactics and their continuing to put forward amendments and having multiple people speak to it, we still have not even gotten to the place where we can pass the fall economic statement. However, I will say that a lot has happened since then, particularly with respect to inflation.

Members may recall that this particular piece of legislation came in at a time when inflation was still working its way downward but had not yet gotten into the range that the Bank of Canada dictates in its policy, which is within a range of 2% to 3%. We were seeing higher inflation. When I think back to when we were having these discussions in the fall, one of the things I think about is what Conservatives were saying about our budgetary measures at the time. They were saying that they were inflationary budgets. The Conservatives were saying to stop spending money because when the government spends money it is just adding to inflation. They said it over and over.

Government Orders

All the experts came out and said that actually the particular programs that the government was running in order to support Canadians were providing money to some of the most vulnerable people, the people who would be utilizing the money for basic necessities, and this was not going to contribute to impacting inflation. However, that did not matter to Conservatives because it was not feeding their narrative, so they continued on, marching along and talking about the supports that we were making for Canadians as something that was going to affect inflation and continue to drive it up.

We see today that the year-over-year inflationary rate is at 2.7%. This is the lowest it has been in three years. It has been within the range of 2% to 3% despite the fact that I know Conservatives were rooting for inflation to continue to rise because that would fit their political narrative, and they do not worry about the impact it has on Canadians. The Conservatives always just want the government to fail in any possible way it can, just so they can get a little political gain out of it, even if it means it comes at the expense of Canadians. We have seen inflation now, for four straight months in a row, within the target that the Bank of Canada sets, which is between 2% and 3%.

Conservatives were wrong. They were wrong when they said that investing in Canadians contributed to inflation, and they were wrong in predicting an outcome where those investments would actually drive inflation up. We knew that was going to be the case, because all the experts were saying it at the time, but what the Conservatives were doing is something that the member for Fredericton was talking about earlier. The Conservatives intentionally used and continue to use against Canadians the anxieties that Canadians feel. The Conservatives use those anxieties and turn them into a weapon against the very people that they are impacting, and they are doing it just for political gain. That is the only reason. It is the exact same reason that Conservatives say over and over that inflation is caused by the Prime Minister and the current government.

An hon. member: Yes, you got it.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, in reality, we know that inflation is something that is going on throughout the entire globe.

I know that the member for Saskatoon—University just ran back in here and sat down so he could heckle me. I challenge him to ask me a question, to actually think about a question that he can ask me when it comes time to do so, because I am looking forward to hearing what he has to say about what I am saying right now. I will, of course, respond to that question. What we heard is not only Conservatives being wrong—

• (2300)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, the member has been here long enough, though he may not be here for much longer, and he knows that he cannot mention the presence of another member in the House, which he just did.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member is quite correct. We do not reference members'

absences or presences in the House, as is the practice in our Standing Orders.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, we know that Conservatives were wrong when they predicted inflation would go up as a result of the supports we were investing in for Canadians, and we know that they were also wrong when they tried to suggest that inflation was created by the current government, because inflation is something that is being seen throughout the world. It is something that was being seen in the United Kingdom, which had a much higher inflation rate than we do. It is something seen in the United States, which continues to have higher inflation than we do.

As a matter of fact, I got a real kick earlier, when we were debating the budget bill, out of how a member from the Conservatives got up and tried to make a witty joke by saying he does not know what Kraft Dinner has to do with Ukraine, as though he was trying to somehow suggest that there is no connection between the two. The rich irony is that there is something fundamentally connecting Kraft Dinner and Ukraine, which is the resources and the supplies.

The CEO of Kraft himself said that the supply constraints and probably wheat coming out of Ukraine were impacting the ability to keep food prices low, so I just find it absolutely remarkable that Conservatives believe what they are saying. I believe that they have convinced themselves to believe what they are saying, but the reality is that it is just not true. They were wrong when they suggested that investing in Canadians was going to lead to inflation, and they are wrong when they continue to try to make the point that inflation is something unique to Canada, but I think that the vast majority of Canadians understand this. I think that they understand what Conservatives are doing, how they are trying to utilize those specific anxieties against them and weaponize them.

We look at exactly what the measures are that Conservatives were objecting to, and they are the exact measures in the fall economic statement that Conservatives said would lead to inflation. It is things like strengthening the Competition Act to ensure that the Competition Bureau is empowered to hold grocers accountable and prioritize consumer interests. Just so Canadians understand, this is really important because in the United States, the largest grocery retailer owns or controls 11% of grocery sales, and that is Walmart. Do members know which is the largest one and what its percentage is in Canada?

An hon. member: Loblaw.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That is right, Madam Speaker; it is Loblaw. Does my colleague know what the percentage is? He does not. It is 42%, so 42% of groceries in this country are controlled by Loblaw and their retail. With Loblaw and a couple of the other large grocery retailers, very quickly I see how we have created an oligopoly here. There is an oligopoly operating in our country when it comes to grocery sales.

Government Orders

It becomes very important to identify what is going on here and to put measures in place to ensure that they are properly dealt with, and that is exactly what we are doing. It is what Conservatives are against. They are very loud and have a lot to say when it comes to government spending, but they are absolutely silent when it comes to the profits that are being made by Loblaw, probably because the Leader of the Opposition's own chief campaign manager, Jenni Byrne, is an actual lobbyist for Loblaw.

The campaign manager of the very individual who is standing up trying to fight against lobbyists and saying lobbyists are useless is a lobbyist for Loblaw. She has a vested interest in ensuring that Loblaw keeps its prices high, so how can anybody actually listen to what the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Carleton, says, and actually think that he is being genuine in any regard when he suggests that he understands the impacts of the greedy corporations we are seeing, in particular the retail grocery giants and Loblaw, which I mentioned specifically?

● (2305)

A few of the other initiatives that are in this particular piece of legislation, the fall economic statement, include unlocking \$20 billion in new financing to build 30,000 more apartments per year. Conservatives love to get up and talk about how no apartments have been built, apparently. However, I can tell members that, in my riding alone, we are now on the 13th affordable housing project that has been built in Kingston, in which the federal government has, in one way or another, been a partner.

I get a real kick out of it when I hear Conservatives go on and on about it. Meanwhile, when the Leader of the Opposition was the housing minister, he built a total of six units, not buildings, not duplexes, but six units. The number seemed so wildly low to me that I thought it was impossible, that somebody was doing something with the numbers, that there was no way that this could be real, until I realized that this information actually came forward from an Order Paper question that was tabled. That information is tabled and available for everybody to see: In the one year when the member for Carleton was the minister responsible for housing, he built a total of six units. Those six units happen to be in Quebec, if one goes and looks at the numbers. However, he built a total of six units throughout the entire country.

Another thing we have done, through the fall economic statement, is to launch the new tax-free first home savings account. This has helped over half a million Canadians start saving for their first home. We have supported seniors through the Canada pension plan, the guaranteed income supplement and old age security, all of which are indexed to inflation.

Canadians are not going to forget very easily how the Leader of the Opposition, when he was in government previously, raised old age security, the OAS, to 67 years old. If there is anybody out there who is in their early 60s and planning for their retirement, they should seriously give some thought to whom they want to elect as their next government and whether it is a former member of a government that has a track record of actually increasing old age security requirements from 65 years old to 67. In all likelihood, it is going to happen again.

Earlier tonight, when we heard Conservatives talking about how they “balanced” the budget in 2015, I guess that, from an accounting perspective, they did. However, let us look at what they did to get there. They increased old age security to 67. They closed veterans' offices, doing this all on the backs of veterans. They did a number of initiatives to “balance” the budget. They did it in that one year in 2015, if one actually accepts the fact that one would consider that a balanced budget.

People have to understand that, when Conservatives talk about balancing the budget, they are really talking about cuts. Out of every Conservative budget that was introduced between 1990 and present day, only two of them ran surpluses. There is that made-up surplus I just talked about from 2015. There was also another one that Stephen Harper had at the beginning of his term as prime minister, and that was because it was coming off the heels of Paul Martin's surplus that he had. This is factual. Those are the only two budgets that ran surpluses. The reason governments will run deficits is that, as long as one's economy is growing at a faster pace than one is taking on that debt, one is still in a very healthy position. It is why we continue to get AAA credit rating reports from independent third parties for the manner in which the government is spending and taxing.

It is why we continue to see, year over year, more investments made in Canadians. It really just comes down to whether one thinks that there is a role for government to play in ensuring that people have equal opportunities.

● (2310)

That is exactly what we see as a government, which is that at least people have to have a shot at being able to strive and get what they want and hope to get out of their career and their life.

There are a number of other issues in here. The other one I wanted to touch on was \$10-a-day child care, which was another issue that was updated in the fall economic statement. This was a very important piece of legislation that brought in an opportunity to empower more people to get out into the workforce. We have already seen it. We did not have to go far in order to study it. All we had to do was look at what was happening in Quebec and how more people, more spouses and, in particular, more women were in the workforce as a result of \$10-a-day child care. This is another advancement our government is continuing to push forward in the spirit of fairness, equality and opportunity for everybody.

I look forward to the question from the member for Saskatoon—University at this point. I am sure it will be great.

● (2315)

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is very telling that we have a Prime Minister who does not think about monetary policy. We have members of the government who obviously do not think about the long-term financial help of Canada. We have seen this over nine years. There is almost no one in Canada who thinks they are better off than they were in 2015.

Government Orders

Right now it is approaching midnight here in Ottawa, and this is a financial bill. Why is the finance minister not here? Instead, we have a backbencher leading the debate. How does he feel toward a finance minister that has indebted our—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Before I let the hon. member finish, we have a point of order from the hon. member for Fredericton.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, the member for Saskatoon—University signalled the presence or non-presence of a member in the House, and he is not allowed to do that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I apologize for my distraction.

Order, please. I make the same comment I made to the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, and I remind the hon. member for Saskatoon—University of that.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, I am not saying that the finance minister is here or not here. What I am asking is why this member is leading the debate for the government versus the actual finance minister. This is very telling in terms of why we are in so much trouble.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, for starters, monetary policy is something that is done by a central bank. Fiscal policy is done by a government. Maybe the member should just Google those terms so he knows what he is talking about in the future.

When he asks about who is leading the debate, he makes it sound as though this is the first time we have talked about this. This is the fall economic statement. We have debated it.

An hon. member: It is summer.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: He is right: It is summer. Madam Speaker, that is because the Conservatives will not let this debate collapse. They just keep dragging it on and on. The finance minister has spoken to the bill, probably on more than one occasion. He suggests I am the lead on this when we have been debating it for nine months.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am glad to see the member holding back what he really thinks in the House. Yes, like the member, I am very disappointed that we are actually standing in the House of Commons in May debating the fall economic statement. It is unbelievably outrageous, and maybe we will still be debating it next fall if the Conservatives decide to do that. Who knows?

My question for the member is actually quite serious. He talked about housing. One concern I had with the fall economic statement and that I share with all my colleagues within the NDP is about the lack of commitment to helping with indigenous, Métis and Inuit housing, especially in northern communities, especially in Nunavut.

My colleague from Nunavut has stood in the House many times and asked why the government has not committed meaningfully to territorial funding for housing when we know that the crisis is desperate in her community. Why did we not see more in the fall economic statement with regard to indigenous housing?

• (2320)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that very serious question. I think it is a fair question, and an angle that, quite frankly, the government should be pushed on because there is always more that we can do.

There is the northern housing plan, and I might have the name wrong, but perhaps that is not enough. Perhaps this member thinks that it needs to go further, and perhaps there is validity in that claim. However, it is important to reflect on the fact that we are building a lot of housing throughout the country.

I used to be a mayor of a city in Ontario, and I could not have ever thought of the federal government coming to a municipality and saying, “Let’s make a deal” and completely leaving the province out of it. That was unheard of in my time in local government. However, we have a Minister of Housing who is literally going around the country to different communities and saying, “I don’t even want to talk to the province. How do I make a deal with you directly?”

However, the member’s question was more about indigenous communities, and I completely accept that. Perhaps we should be doing more, and I encourage her to continue to stand up to challenge the government to do more in that regard.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have been at this for a while. I have been listening a lot, and all I have been hearing from the other side are slogans and not actual answers to things. It is getting so ridiculous that one member decided to read purported emails from his constituents and angrily brought it over to slam it on our desk, but it was edited. He was reading an edited email. He was not even reading his own constituent’s writing.

I was wondering if the hon. member could speak to the ridiculousness of the sloganeering that the Conservatives are offering. They are not even offering real answers.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, it goes to what I was saying during my speech, which is that Conservatives are taking people’s anxieties, turning them into a weapon and then using it against them. They are trying to convince Canadians that inflation is completely driven by the government and that spending more money on people through budget measures is going to drive up inflation even further, but only the opposite in both of those regards has proven to be true.

Conservatives are really good with their slogans, but they are not so good when they switch from having to rhyme off three things to four things because inevitably one of them misses at least one of them, except for a few key ones that are really good. They have been practising a lot, but the rest of them keep missing one. Although they are good with their slogans, it is not doing anything for Canadians.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, let us be clear that a Conservative government would axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Let us bring it home.

Government Orders

I have a very specific question for the member, and I hope we will get an answer for it. He has promised an answer. Everyone has heard him say that he is going to give us an answer. In what year does he believe the budget should be balanced, if ever?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, on the first part, I want to congratulate the member because he is one of the members who can get all four of those out perfectly. He did not lose eye contact and did not show that he may be forgetting one. It was very well done.

To answer his question, I would ask him this: In what year did Brian Mulroney balance the budget? In what year did Stephen Harper balance the budget?

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am answering his question.

For growing economies, we know that, as long as our growth is outpacing our deficit, we are in a fiscally responsible position, and that is the reality.

They are laughing right now, but they should talk to Stephen Harper because that is all he did, or Brian Mulroney. It is exactly what they did. They never balanced a budget. They balanced one budget in 2015, apparently, by slashing veteran services, and then they had another surplus in 2007 on the heels of Paul Martin's surplus. However, the reality is, and this is exactly what Conservatives do because they know that, as long as our economy is outgrowing our deficit, we are in a fiscally responsible place.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is very simple: axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. That is the answer, and I am sorry—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (2325)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): This is not a conversation.

The hon. member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, I understand that the member does not like hearing the slogans, because the Conservatives are, as he said, very good at communicating with Canadians.

My question is very simple. In what year will this magical budget balance itself?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, she was not successful, because she gave one and then she had to look down. She could learn a lot from the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, because his delivery was really good.

I go back to exactly what I said before, which is that what matters the most is how the economy is performing in relation to the deficit that is projected. That is what matters the most. Conservative prime ministers have known that. Conservative premiers know that. Everybody has always operated in that manner.

If what the member is saying was true, then one would think that these fiscally responsible Conservative prime ministers all throughout Brian Mulroney's time and all throughout Stephen Harper's time

would have just done exactly what the Conservatives are saying, but they did not.

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, I understand consent was sought and given for me to split my time. Therefore, I would ask to split my time with the hon. member from Saskatoon—Grasswood.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, while we are discussing what we renamed the SES, the summer economic statement, Canadians are experiencing the worst cost of living crisis in 40 years, due to a lack of affordable housing, the carbon tax, and record-smashing food bank use and grocery prices. Canadians have always had common sense. When Canadians look at their own expenses, they budget. They stretch dollars. They choose whether they go on vacation or whether the kids go to after-school activities. They go to a grocery store and have to budget what they are buying. They have to look at practical solutions to everyday challenges with resilience and resourcefulness.

However, common sense is like deodorant; the ones who need it the most never use it. With respect to this level of government, Canadians are shaking their heads in disbelief because of the lack of common sense on the opposite side of the aisle. This is the greatest country in the world. We have great people, innovative minds, great institutions and hard workers. We have resilience. Canadians invented peanut butter, the zipper, the Ski-Doo and the Sea-Doo, but common-sense approaches have become rare commodities.

In 2015, among the Liberal campaign promises was the promise to help the middle class and those looking to join it, as well as tax cuts for the middle class. What do we see now? We see more people who are out of the middle class. We see tax increases. The carbon tax alone went up 23% on April 1. More people are finding themselves out of the middle class, and more people are finding themselves taxed, as we have a government that lacks common sense.

Look at what the government could do if it looked at the basics. Let us say a dozen people went into the woods to try to start a community. What would be the first things they would do? They would build shelter. They would hunt and find food. The community would make sure it had a place to look after the children and one another, that everyone would be well looked after.

After nine years under the government, more Canadians than ever before are finding that rent has doubled, mortgage payments have doubled and the amount needed for a down payment has doubled. They are finding that grocery prices are \$700 more this year alone. Groceries have gone up 24% over the last four years. Look at the cost of heating one's home. All prices for farmers growing their crops have gone up. The government's common sense has just disappeared. Let us look at some examples of its lack of common sense.

Government Orders

The government borrowed \$400 billion back in the day when the Prime Minister said that interest rates were at historic lows. When we borrowed \$400 billion, the government borrowed it over the short term. The government did not look ahead 20 or 25 years as a family would when looking at a mortgage. The government looked at the short term.

Now the debt is coming up for renewal. Do members know how much the renewal is going to cost us just in 2025? It is going to cost \$12 billion, because the government did not have the common sense to look at long-term loans to look after Canadians' money. I wonder how many water bombers we could have bought and had fully crewed to be operating in B.C. right now to look after forest fighters.

Look at NATO and NORAD. They are our trusted allies. NATO and NORAD have asked us for years to contribute our 2%. We even passed a resolution in the House to do so, but we have not contributed. Because of that, we do not have a seat at the table. What happens to international security if we are not at the table? We will also not be at the table when it comes to international trade because our trading partners will work only with partners who work with them for security.

What is happening up north right now? The fact is that we do not have a base. We cannot even land an F-35 fighter in the north right now in Canada? We have jets being purchased, but it has taken 10 years. Remember when we said that the F-35 was too much? The Prime Minister said we were not going to buy it, and nine years later, of course, we are buying it for how many billions more? However, we cannot even land the thing in the north. Finland is buying half as many F-35s as we are, and it has already built a runway to land in the north to defend the northern border.

We talk about icebreakers in the north. We have one barely functioning icebreaker. Do members know how many icebreakers Russia has in the north right now? It has sixteen. Do members know how many China has? It has forty. We did not have the common sense to put any money toward our security or the north, which we really need in order to play our part in NORAD and NATO, on behalf of our allies in the U.S. and, of course, just for our security.

● (2330)

We have talked about drugs in hospitals. We are saying that smoking crack at a hospital or bringing in a weapon should be outlawed. More importantly, I visited Millhaven maximum security prison in Kingston only two weeks ago; three inmates there were high on drugs.

After nine years, we have mergers and more mergers under the government. We talk about competition. Part of the bill is about competition. However, under the government's watch, the merger of HSBC and RBC was approved. Because of that, mortgage rates have gone up. HSBC used to have a mortgage rate that was 1% lower than RBC's offering. Right now, that is costing the average taxpayer, who has a \$500,000 mortgage, \$300 more a month because that merger was approved.

We had WestJet buy Sunwing. Only a couple of months later, it was announced that Sunwing was going to shut down. There is only one competitor in the west. Sometimes it is Air Canada; most of the

time it is WestJet. We had Rogers buy Shaw. What happened two months ago? It was announced that cellphone prices were to go up nine dollars a month. When we look for competition, it is not there.

The bill would bring in some aspects of competition. Thanks to the Competition Bureau, and dare I say, some amendments by the NDP, we are going to look at ensuring that we have no mergers approved that have a market share of over 30%. At the end of the day, the government has approved more mergers.

Open banking is probably the closest thing we can have to actual competition coming to one of our oligopolies right now. Open banking in Canada would open up the doors for Canadians to bring them financial freedom. One example is this: If Canadians have a Wealthsimple account, they have to screen scrape and find different ways to get through it. The government makes it really difficult for people to try to use a new banking app. This app right now pays Canadians 5% on their cash balance daily. What is the average bank interest rate right now? It is 0.2%. I think if someone had \$10,000, over 10 years, they could make \$100. Competition is freedom for Canadians. Open banking was not in the fall economic statement or in the new budget, to make that a reality for Canadians.

We are talking about no common sense. The government has hired 100,000 employees, a 40% increase since 2015. However, it takes 58 days to get an email back from CRA, compared with 43 days in 2015. Someone should try getting a passport. There has been no efficiency. There is more government and less efficiency.

On housing, the \$4.4-billion housing accelerator has not built one home. We have a lack of skilled trades. Here is my favourite stat from last year, as we are talking about no common sense. We brought 1.3 million immigrants to Canada, new Canadians, permanent residents and TR. Do members know many home builders we brought last year? It was 4,300, and we wonder why we have a housing shortage.

We need immigration. Our birth rates are extremely low. We need people to come in, but when we are looking at immigration, let us make sure we are also looking at building homes first, so we have a place for people to go and house prices do not go sky-high. We even had the member for Winnipeg North say that MAID has saved lives. That was a statement used. There is no common sense.

Government Orders

Another one of my favourite examples is that the government has cut the budget to the Information Commissioner at a time when access to information is at an all-time low. The Ethics Commissioner had their salary cut when the workload has never been higher. Common sense is not common. Canadians have common sense, but the government does not.

It will only be in electing a common-sense Conservative government that we once again restore common sense to Canada and to Canadians. Of course, we will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. We are also going to create competition for a change, for my home, for everyone's home, for our home. Let us bring common sense home.

• (2335)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I greatly thank my colleague for his rousing speech this evening.

I am sure this is on the minds of all members in this chamber: When will the member treat us to another homemade rap video? I would really love to see that.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, we cannot always flaunt our skills. We say it is thanks to the speNDP helping the government “jiggle jiggle”.

We have so much more we can do in the government, and I think, slogans or not, the main thing we want to do here is work on behalf of Canadians. Canadians are screaming for change. They are screaming for a government that is going to look after them to ensure that they have housing and a good standard of living. No matter what our skill sets are, we will work on behalf of Canadians.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to compliment my colleague on his speech. I certainly did not agree with some of the content, but the volume was there.

Over and over again, he talked about common sense, finding solutions and what we need to do to make Canada better, and I think all of us in this place have that goal. We are all trying to find ways to make Canada better for Canadians. Obviously, we do not always see that in the same way, but that is the goal that we are all here trying to achieve.

From my perspective, I think that my constituents want me to work collaboratively and find ways for solutions. That is why the NDP will often work with the government to bring things such as dental care or pharmacare forward. One of the things that really upset me last week was that I was on the health committee that travelled around the country to look at solutions to the toxic drug crisis we are facing in Canada, and shockingly, when we were in Calgary meeting with people who use drugs and people who help folks who are trying to get off drugs and trying to rehabilitate, no Conservatives came. Not a single Conservative showed up to learn from experts, to learn from medical experts or to learn from people who work in this field. It is shocking, and I wonder how he finds that to be a common-sense solution.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, I come from Belleville, Ontario, and we are at the centre of an opiate crisis right now. We have a major overdose epidemic. In the last three months, we had

240 overdoses. We had 13 in two hours. We had 23 in two days. As an MP, I have been working with the former Liberal member, the mayor of Belleville, Ontario. I have been working with and talking to community groups and those who are addicted and struggling, as well as police, paramedics and our hospitals.

The problem we have is twofold. We talk about how the NDP has supported the government with bail reform, and the police are saying it does not work. The NDP has supported, especially in B.C., decriminalization, and these community groups are saying that does not work. One of the first things we can do is ensure we give the tools to the police and the community groups that make sure that the criminals who are dealing drugs go to jail and stay in jail, and that those who need help in treatment of addiction get the treatment of addiction so we can bring our loved ones home drug-free.

However, most importantly, the NDP can defeat the government and call an election so we can have these issues come to the open, and we could bring a government back to Canadians that would fix these issues once and for all.

• (2340)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, that was a very passionate speech. I think the Conservatives have made their stance on the carbon tax abundantly clear. It sank in a few months ago that they do not want it. They want to abolish it. Fortunately, it does not apply in Quebec.

This tax is meant to fight climate change. If the carbon tax goes away, how exactly will the Conservatives fight climate change?

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, we believe in having Canadians create technology that would solve some of these issues.

The big example we have is Ontario, where 20 years ago we had coal-fired gas plants firing up all our electricity, and the provincial government at the time decided to change all of those plants to natural gas plants. I remember when I was a kid growing up, we had smog and poor weather advisories, and those do not exist anymore because the plants were eliminated. We talk about what we can do to replace them. A lot of Canadians do not know that we burn coal in the east coast to fire 80% of our electricity. That is still coal use. Our biggest export to China is coal, so if we just replaced coal with LNG and then gave it to the world, which is screaming for it, as it is burning coal, that would do way more than the government's doing, which is really nothing, for the environment.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I get into my speech, I just want to say this. Last week, we lost Darren Dutchyshen. He was only 57 years old. He anchored TSN SportsCentre for decades. Darren was bigger than life. As a former broadcaster, I competed against him in Saskatoon. Darren was the pride and joy of Porcupine Plain, Saskatchewan. To see an individual come from a very small community in this country and make it to the top, the voice of SportsCentre, speaks a lot about Darren Dutchyshen.

I just wanted to say to all the TSN family that it has been a rough week for all the broadcasters in this country. It has been a tough week for us because Darren was, as I said, bigger than life and gone at 57 years of age, which is way too young. We are with him and his family and all of those here tonight. I just wanted to say that, being a former sportscaster. Darren actually came through STV. He competed against me and did very well. He went on to Edmonton, and then made his career for good in the city of Toronto.

It seems funny tonight that I am standing here on the fall economic statement, nine months later in the House, yet the Liberals are blaming the Conservatives for the nine months. They are in charge of the agenda. They could have moved this long before May 21. It is ridiculous. Here we are tonight, May 21, talking about the fall economic statement, which happened eight to nine months ago.

We all know that we are facing a crisis across this country. It is an affordability crisis. It is an inflation crisis and a housing crisis. By the way, tonight was the first time I have heard, in over two years, the Liberals admit that they are at fault for the housing crisis in this country. That is the first step. They have known they have blown the housing industry in the last three years. They have only been in government nine years, but tonight was the first time I listened to a number of MPs who said that they are at fault for the country's dismal housing situation. That is the first time we have heard it. They know it. That is why they are reeling in this country, being 20 points behind in the polls. They have finally listened. They have not done the job for the last nine years, and the public knows it.

We know the root of the crisis. It is the Prime Minister. We heard from the Deputy Prime Minister and their Liberal-NDP government. It is the reckless spending, the red tape, the carbon tax. I heard today that inflation is down to 2.7. The Bank of Canada is still at a big rate, if one goes and borrows money. It is 5%, 6% and 7%. In fact, if one wants a used car, it is 9% and 10%. These rates should have been down long before now. They were going to come down in December or February. They were going to come down in April. We are now hearing that they might not come down. Maybe it will be September. It could be at the end of the year, 2024. These guys across the aisle are flushing money out as fast as they can. They did not need to have a deficit of \$39.5 billion this year. There was no need for that.

The families, the small business owners, the single parents, the young graduates who are going to graduate in May and June, and so many others, are struggling today to get by. Do we know what this budget is going to do? To make it worse, this year, \$414 billion of Canada's \$1.4 trillion in debt will all be refinanced. What did I say about when these guys were spending money at 1.5% and maybe 2%? The interest rates are now at 5%, 6% and 7%, so they

go refinance this. The costs are ballooning for all Canadians after nine years of the Prime Minister and nine years of the Liberal-NDP government.

• (2345)

Rent and mortgage payments have doubled across the country. Interest payments, like I mentioned, are sky-high and are not coming down. The cost of living everywhere continues to rise, coast to coast. For two years, Canadians have been suffering from the highest levels of inflation we have seen in decades. We have talked all night long about groceries. Someone goes into the grocery store and gets a bag of groceries. If they are lucky, it is well over \$100, and that does not include meat.

The cost of gas is so high. We have encouraged the government to take the taxes off starting now and through to August, to give families a chance to go on a summer trip. However, the government has raised the tax all over this country, and gas is expensive. I think it is going to go to \$2 this summer. Right now in Ottawa, it is \$1.65. In B.C., it is \$1.90 and going up.

The damage that the Prime Minister has done is being felt across the country. I am going to read what some people who have contacted our office through mailers have said. A number of constituents have responded to us. I am going to name them, though I will not name their last names for confidentiality.

Amanda tells me that she is 25 years old. She cannot afford a house today. She and her boyfriend are both professionals but cannot afford a down payment. That is the story. Canadians need a lot of money down now if they going to buy a home in Saskatchewan worth \$300,000 plus. Tim and Tanya say that the cost of living is a crisis. They are moving into their 70s and are deeply concerned. Emma says that the current government is a real embarrassment and that our country has a terrible debt issue right now. Elaine has noticed people are starting to lose their homes due to the high interest rates. Luke says that we have big problems with housing, rental prices, rising interest rates and mortgage rates.

However, the one that got me came from Samantha, who wrote to me saying that she is a student, and the rent in Saskatoon has gone up \$500 this year. Where is she going to get the extra money? That is a problem we are seeing: students faced with a big increase in rent.

There is another thing that really disturbs me in my province right now because we provide the food for the world. We in Saskatchewan are so proud of our producers who are putting in the crops right now. We have had some rain, which has been good. We are proud of our farmers in Saskatchewan.

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What I am not proud of, because of nine years of Liberal neglect, is needing food banks in every community. Small towns are running out of food on their shelves. In Saskatoon alone, there are the head office of Nutrien potash, K+S Potash, and BHP potash, the biggest producers in the world, and 23,000 people a month are visiting our food bank. Let us think of that: 23,000 people a month in a population of less than 300,000. It is disturbing.

I blame the Liberal government for it. It has not done its job in the last nine years. Now it is panicking with about 12 to 18 months left in the mandate that it has. It is even worse with all the long-term consequences, all of the deficit spending and all of the debt we have. I really also worry about the social programs. We are paying more today on debt than we are for health transfers to each of our provinces and our territories.

The federal government will spend over \$54 billion servicing the federal debt. That is more than the federal government spends on health care with its transfers. The number is only going to go up. The Prime Minister spends more and more. In saying that, I am disappointed that we are talking about the fall economic plan, as I mentioned, nine months later. It is up to the government to move fast.

• (2350)

I was proud tonight to talk about Darren Dutchyshen.

I was also proud to represent Saskatoon—Grasswood, which will soon be called “Saskatoon South”, as we will not vote for the disastrous Liberal-NDP government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed my colleague's speech.

There were a lot of numbers in his speech, which is great. He shared one number that I liked. He talked about the polls and said that the Liberal Party was 20 points behind the Conservative Party in the polls. What he may have forgotten to mention is that there is a place in Canada called Quebec, where the Conservative Party is not first or second, but third in the polls.

My question is quite simple. Is that because the Conservatives see Quebec as a province like the others, or do the Conservatives see Quebec as a distinct society, a nation? Do the Conservatives have anything to offer Quebec that is different from what they have to offer the other provinces?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, yes, as Conservatives, we have a lot of work to do to get votes in Quebec. We know that. We have a good section in Quebec City. We have about 10 Conservatives from that province. We have a great base, but more needs to happen. We understand that. We have some great MPs here. We want more in 2025, if we go to the polls, and I think we can get more. Right now, the polls are very good in Quebec. However, as we know, when we flip the switch, anything can happen during an election time. We have not forgotten about Quebec, and we will be there in 2025.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, through you to my colleague from Saskatoon—Grass-

wood, he mentioned the fact that gas prices are going up dramatically this summer, yet that dramatic increase will be totally independent and unaffected by government taxation. What is happening is that the oil and gas companies are once again going to gouge consumers. Every time they unilaterally raise the price of gas by tens of cents on long weekends and over the summer months, Conservatives are absolutely silent, even though the impact of that price gouging far outweighs the impact of any government taxes.

Why do Conservatives give a free ride to the oil and gas companies that are gouging consumers? Interestingly, under a Conservative government, the U.K. put in place an excess profits tax and then took those revenues from the oil and gas companies and drove them into affordability measures to help average folks. However, these Conservatives continually give the oil and gas giants a totally free ride. Why is that?

• (2355)

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, it is simple. Canadians want us to cut the tax. Whether it is the carbon tax or the gas tax, they are paying too much right now. I used to drive to B.C., but I cannot afford to anymore, to be honest. I mentioned that the gas prices there are over two dollars, but that socialist provincial government will get its reward this year when it gets kicked out of office once and for all by a new Conservative government.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague is very proud of Saskatchewan agriculture, the farmers and ranchers in Saskatchewan and the potash industry there.

One thing that disappointed me in the fall economic statement is that the Liberals keep talking about removing the GST from homebuilding. If they really want to make life affordable, why are they still charging the GST on top of the carbon tax? It is one thing that the carbon tax raises the price of everything, but to put the GST on top of a tax, which is a tax on a tax, is like a double gut punch. It increases the cost of fuel, lumber, home heating and natural gas. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has now said that the GST charged on the carbon tax cost Canadians \$400 million last year. What is the impact on my colleague's constituents with respect to a tax on a tax?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, the impact has been great. Two Boston Pizzas have closed in the last month. Why is that? It is because of tax on a tax. Seven to eight restaurants, in the last three months, have come to my office to show me the carbon tax bill and the GST bill. For many of these restaurants, it was \$1,300 or \$1,400 a month in the cold months of January, February and March. That is a staff member they could have kept on. Instead, with the carbon tax and the GST, they simply have to let people go, or better yet, shut down altogether.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, are the final two minutes of this Tuesday supposed to be the highlight of the show? Were we meant to save the best for last? If so, I think I am going to disappoint a lot of people, given how little time I have left.

To begin, I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House to split my time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have received notice from all recognized parties that they are in agreement with this request.

Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to split his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot has one minute.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I say hello to Liberal illusionism and hello to Canadian junk progressivism. This budgetary smokescreen hides Ottawa's two main obsessions: using our money to support the oil and gas companies despite fine pseudo-environmental speeches that sound good at social gatherings, and invading the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. We know that the oil companies will be getting \$30.3 billion in subsidies in the form of tax credits, meaning that taxpayers will be paying oil companies to pollute less when they do not need that money.

There is also the creation of a federal department of municipal affairs called the department of housing, infrastructure and communities, which signals more interference, more fights and more delays, even though the housing crisis calls for swift action.

I will use my last two seconds to say that we are voting against this bill.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

● (2400)

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, Conservatives have been relentlessly calling on the government for more than six years to recognize that the Iran regime-backed IRGC is indeed a terrorist organization and to shut down its operations in Canada. Indeed, as long as the IRGC remains off the terrorist list, this heinous organization can continue to operate, to be present, to fundraise and to recruit right here on Canadian soil. We have seen directly the impacts here in Canada and on Canadians associated with IRGC operations. This is why Conservatives have been persistently calling on the government to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization.

We heard testimony at the Subcommittee on International Human Rights today about the IRGC. One particular point I want to highlight is that if we look at the Canadian terrorist list, we will actually see many organizations on that list that are backed by the IRGC. We will see Hamas, which is backed by the IRGC. We will see Hezbollah, which is backed and supported by the IRGC. We have well recognized the actions of the Assad regime, including gross violations of human rights; it is indeed backed by the IRGC. There are many different smaller, lesser-known and splinter-grade organizations. The Taliban, I should mention, also receives support from the IRGC. Many that are already recognized as terrorist groups are on our list, but the government has failed to sanction the mother ship, the IRGC, which is supporting and enabling all of these other terrorist organizations. It makes no sense that the government has failed to hold responsible that Iran regime-affiliated terrorist organization, which is really at the heart of so much of the carnage we have seen in the Middle East and in many other places.

Six years ago, I put a motion before this House to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization and shut down its operations in this country. That motion passed. It was not unanimous, but it passed with the support of the government. Then, after the House voted to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization, the government failed to act. For a while, the Liberals said they were thinking about it. The government said, "It is under review, it is under discussion, it is being investigated." It takes some time to list a terrorist organization. Maybe, in some cases, they have a month or a couple of months of reviewing the details, but in six years, the Liberals did nothing. They failed to list the IRGC in six years.

In the intervening time, so much has happened. The Iranian regime was responsible for shooting down flight PS752, killing many Canadians and others with close connections to Canada. There was the murder of Jina Mahsa Amini and the launch of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement; and there are many other crimes we could list that the IRGC was responsible for.

Therefore, a couple of weeks ago, we brought the same motion back to this House and, again, the government voted for it. It was amazing. The Liberals voted for it and they did nothing for six years. Then it came back and they voted for it again. This time, it was unanimous. The entire House voted to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization and to shut down its operations in Canada and yet, the Liberals still have done nothing. What shameful hypocrisy we see when the government votes repeatedly to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization and it fails to act.

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I will ask again and I hope I'll get an answer: Will the government finally list the IRGC as a terrorist organization? Will the Liberals do what they voted to do and shut down the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

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, Canada is committed to holding the Iranian regime accountable for its terrorist activities and gross violations of human rights. The government is exploring all possible measures to constrain the activities of the Iranian regime, and recognizes its disregard for peace and stability in the region. The government uses multiple instruments and has measures in place to hold Iran accountable for its actions, including listing key entities and proxy actors pursuant to its Criminal Code terrorist-listing regime.

● (2405)

[*Translation*]

In 2012, Canada listed the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Qods Force as a terrorist entity. The Qods Force is known to be responsible for terrorist operations and for providing arms, funding and paramilitary training to other terrorist groups, including the Taliban, Hizballah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

I would like to reiterate the various measures Canada is imposing against Iran and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or IRGC. They include vigorous sanctions under the Special Economic Measures Act, or SEMA, explicitly targeting the IRGC, its leadership and several sub-organizations, including the IRGC air force and the air force missile command.

To date, Canada has sanctioned 442 Iranian individuals and entities under SEMA. Since October 2022, Canada has imposed 16 rounds of sanctions under the act, targeting 153 individuals and 87 entities at all levels of Iran's security, intelligence and economic apparatus. These measures effectively freeze any assets that the listed individuals and entities may hold in Canada.

Canada has also taken inadmissibility measures through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or IRCC, and the CBSA. For example, in November 2022, Canada designated Iran as a country that has engaged in terrorism and systematic and gross human rights violations under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, or IRPA. As a result, thousands of Iranian senior officials, including high-profile leaders, are now banned from entering Canada if they apply for a visa or seek to enter the country. Current and former senior officials who are here in Canada may be investigated and removed from the country.

As of March 2024, approximately 17,800 applications had been reviewed for potential inadmissibility under the IRPA, and IRCC had cancelled 82 visas under the act. The CBSA had launched 86 investigations, and additional investigations were to be launched as new information became available. Forty-three investigations had been closed, and 13 individuals had been deemed inadmissible to Canada.

Since June 2023, when Bill S-8, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, received royal assent, the IRPA has been aligned with SEMA to ensure that all foreign nationals subject to sanctions under SEMA are also inadmissible to Canada.

Finally, Canada lists Iran as a state supporter of terrorism under the State Immunity Act. This designation, together with the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act, allows victims to bring civil actions against Iran for losses or damages relating to terrorism—

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has the floor.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, what we have just seen shows the disdain the Liberal government has for the Iranian community and for all Canadians seeking freedom and justice. I asked a very specific question, which is whether the government will finally list the IRGC as a terrorist organization and shut down the operations in Canada. We received no answer. Instead, a parliamentary secretary read out a pre-prepared statement that in no way addressed the question.

Now the parliamentary secretary who is answering my questions tonight is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Families, Children and Social Development and Mental Health and Addictions. In other words, she has no responsibility in any way related to the file about which I am asking. It is hard to blame her as she has been put in this position. She has no responsibility for public safety or for foreign affairs. Of course, she cannot answer the question. It is not even an issue she is working on, but the people who are supposed to be working on this issue could not be bothered to show up to answer the question tonight.

Again, will the government finally list the IRGC as a terrorist organization and shut down its operations? Yes or no?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, my answer is the same answer that my colleague would have received from any other parliamentary secretary.

In terms of adding the IRGC to the list, I would like to point out that the Government of Canada could use listing as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code as a way to respond to Iran's blatant contempt and gross violations.

● (2410)

[*English*]

Moreover, the Government of Canada is committed to holding the Iranian regime and the IRGC accountable for their actions that support terrorism and for gross and systematic violations of human rights.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Speaker, as I begin my comments here tonight, I want to share a sad note that I got from a constituent of mine only a couple of months ago. Daniel Paul had written me, sadly, with the news that his father, Gordon, 65 years old and a resident of the Cornwall and SDG area, was scheduled to come into my office a couple of months ago for some help. Unfortunately, Daniel let me know that, tragically, before his father was able to fulfill that appointment, he had taken his own life. I want to share an email that I exchanged with Daniel. He reached out and said to me that he would really appreciate it if I could share his father's story to highlight the absolute crisis we are facing in this country. He said that it would greatly help his family to heal if his story could be used to shed light on the countless others still suffering today from affordability.

I want to give my condolences here on the floor of the House of Commons, as I said I would do, to Daniel, his wife, Amber, and his five-year-old daughter, Sophie. They have lost their father, father-in-law and grandfather in circumstances I can only imagine have been extremely difficult for them.

I wanted to do this for Daniel and his family to let them know that, at the end of the day, in the House there are members who are working every day to help those who are suffering, whether it be with the affordability crisis we face or the mental health crisis we face, and getting optimism and hope for Canadians. I wanted to keep my word, as I have, and give my condolences to Daniel and his family and continue to fight the good fight in his father's memory.

I had the opportunity a couple of weeks ago to ask a question about the radical drug policy of the Prime Minister and the NDP in British Columbia, with the support of the NDP here in Ottawa propping up the Prime Minister. When it came to the decriminalization, or legalization, of using hard drugs in public spaces in British Columbia, it was the Prime Minister's judgment and that of his coalition partners, which for years could have rejected the pitch from the B.C. government on this aspect, but instead, they approved it. Finally, after the pleas of the B.C. NDP government, which just happens to be facing an election later this year, and more importantly the horror stories that have been emerging from every part of the province about the disaster, the Prime Minister's decision was to reverse the exemption from the Criminal Code of the use of hard drugs such as crack, meth, fentanyl and opioids in public spaces.

I want to not just use the words I have shared here today, but also to share from news articles. It was the CBC, of all media, that covered the Vancouver deputy police chief, Fiona Wilson, testifying on April 15 here at the House of Commons' health committee about the pilot and the Prime Minister's decision to decriminalize and allow hard drugs in public spaces. She said that it is “limiting police response to problematic public drug use, including inside hospitals and at bus stops”, and “in the wake of decriminalization, there are many of those locations where we have absolutely no authority to address that problematic drug use, because the person appears to be in possession of less than 2.5 grams”. She goes on to give a startling example: “So, if you have someone who is with their fami-

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ly at the beach, and there's a person next to them smoking crack cocaine, it's not a police matter.”

What extremely poor judgment on the part of the Prime Minister to agree to the B.C. NDP request. He is just as complicit as they are on this out-of-touch wacko policy, as we have mentioned before.

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, the overdose crisis is one of the most serious and unprecedented public health threats in Canada's recent history, and it is impacting communities across the country. Our hearts go out to the individuals, families and friends affected by this public health crisis.

[*Translation*]

As part of its holistic approach, our government is continuing to support efforts to divert people who use drugs away from the criminal justice system and towards health and social services. This approach reduces immediate harm and helps people find the right supports, including treatment and recovery, while keeping our communities safe.

We have amended the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to encourage police and prosecutors to consider alternatives to charging and prosecuting individuals for drug possession offences.

● (2415)

[*English*]

These amendments mean that individuals can avoid being criminalized and get the help they need to address underlying issues. This strategy encourages a public health approach while making sure that police have the discretion to move forward with criminal offences when there are risks to public safety. Furthermore, in August 2020, guidelines issued by the Public Prosecution Service of Canada directed prosecutors to consider alternatives to prosecution for the personal possession of drugs, except in the most serious cases where public safety concerns arise.

In 2021, the Government of British Columbia requested the launch of a decriminalization pilot project to help address the overdose crisis in the province. B.C. has asked that we make amendments to its project, and we have granted B.C.'s request to prohibit possession of controlled substances in public spaces. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their communities. Law enforcement also needs to have the tools necessary to address issues of public safety while continuing to take a compassionate and public health approach. From the outset, we have been clear. B.C.'s exemption could and will be adjusted if needed. We will continue to work together and respond to what is actually working on the ground.

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We will continue working hand in hand with all of our partners, including provincial jurisdictions, law enforcement, indigenous communities, people with lived and living experience, and municipalities across this country every step of the way.

[*Translation*]

There is no universal solution to this crisis. It requires a global response. We are ensuring that Canadians have access to a full range of options to help them access prevention, risk reduction, treatment and recovery services. These are services and support that they need, when and where they need them. It is not one or the other. We need a full continuum of care.

Last week, I participated in the travelling study of the Standing Committee on Health on the overdose crisis. Every party was represented, except for the Conservatives, who came for just half a day because the Conservatives refuse to look at the evidence. They are bent on their ideological approach.

Budget 2024 announced \$150 million over three years to help the municipalities and first nations communities quickly access funding to mobilize efforts, respond to their urgent harm reduction needs and save lives immediately.

[*English*]

This government remains committed to addressing substance use and addiction as a health issue. All partners must work together—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, it gets bad in hospitals. The president of the B.C. Nurses' Union confirmed it and "said the maternity ward of Victoria General Hospital is now equipped with a special device to detect harmful particulate matter such as smokable drugs. A light goes off to warn health care staff that potentially harmful substances are in the air so they can wear a respirator for protection." That is what happens when this Prime Minister, the NDP and the Liberals got together for their radical drug decriminalization plan.

My follow-up is a key question. Will the Liberals and the NDP support our safe hospitals act, our common-sense Conservative plan, to make sure that these types of experiments will never be allowed in hospitals again, to protect our health care workers and, most importantly, a second important key part the government did not address in that first part, will they rule out ever expanding this type of failed experiment anywhere else in this country, yes or no?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, we will continue to work with British Columbia, the other provinces and territories and all of our partners to address specific needs and support public health and safety.

● (2420)

[*English*]

Law enforcement partners have been clear. They do not want to arrest people for personal drug possession, but rather they want the necessary tools to address issues of public safety. They support a comprehensive public health approach to addressing substance use

harms where they can redirect someone away from the criminal justice system to available and accessible health and social services.

[*Translation*]

Our government's approach to dealing with this crisis is comprehensive and co-operative. It includes measures necessary to save lives, monitor its actions and make any necessary adjustments.

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to ask for further details about the impact the carbon tax is having upon Canadians, but what I would like to highlight in the next couple of minutes is the common-sense proposal the Conservative Party leader, the member for Carleton, has put forward to give Canadians a much-needed break for the summer.

The carbon tax is costing Canadians significantly. The price of food for an average family is up more than \$700 for this year compared to last year. There are a record two million visits to a food bank in a single month. We saw the carbon tax rise on April 1 a shocking 23%. Common sense shows that if one taxes the farmer who grows the food, the trucker who ships the food, the store that sells the food and the person who has to go to pick up the food, the cost of food rises. It is driving up the cost of everything.

This year, the Prime Minister and the NDP-Liberal carbon tax will cost families in Alberta almost \$3,000 a year. In Saskatchewan, it is more than \$2,600 a year, and in Manitoba, more than \$1,700 a year. In Ontario it is \$1,670 a year, and in Nova Scotia, \$1,500 a year. In Prince Edward Island, it is \$1,600 a year, and in Newfoundland and Labrador, \$1,870 a year. Canada-wide, the average cost to Canadians is nearly \$2,000. That is the cost even when calculating the rebate. The net cost to families is nearly \$2,000 a year, which is crippling at a time when inflation is up and Canadians are simply looking for a break.

That is why only a number of days ago, the common-sense Conservative leader, the member for Carleton, called for a tax holiday, to cancel all of the federal government taxes on gasoline and diesel to help Canadians and give them a much-needed break so they can maybe afford not only to buy the necessities that are required to raise a family, and that seniors require to get by, but also to make sure they have the chance to live out a little bit of the Canadian dream. Maybe that is going on a road trip or maybe it is driving their kids to sports. It would give them that chance and ensure that a much-needed break is given.

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The question I asked a number of months ago in relation to the carbon tax is very simple: Will the member speak out in favour of the common-sense proposal to cancel the federal government's fuel taxes on gasoline and diesel to give Canadians a much-needed break from Victoria Day to Labour Day? That would mean cancelling the carbon tax, cancelling the federal fuel tax and cancelling the GST so Canadians can afford that little bit of hope, that little bit of a break that is so very needed at a time when Canadians are suffering so much.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to explain again to the hon. member that putting a price on pollution is at the centre of the government's plan to fight climate change and curb its devastating effects on our communities and economy.

[*Translation*]

The negative impacts of climate change are very real. The public will not soon forget the destructive force of last year's forest fires that scorched much of Canada and choked our communities, which were cloaked in thick smoke. It would be irresponsible of us to stand idly by.

We are proposing solutions to deal with our rapidly changing climate. Standing still is unacceptable. We must act. Our efforts are not just to benefit our generation; they are to benefit future generations of Canadians, our children and their children.

• (2425)

[*English*]

Our government is taking the necessary steps that will have effective, concrete impacts, and a vital part of the plan is Canada's price on pollution. Without a doubt, pollution has a cost. Applying a price on carbon pollution is widely recognized as one of the most efficient ways to reduce emissions.

[*Translation*]

What is more, this way of proceeding means that the price on pollution remains affordable to Canadians. We sometimes hear, particularly in the House, that putting a price on pollution costs Canadians too much. I can assure members that this statement is completely false. In fact, in the provinces where the federal pollution pricing applies, people get back a large part of the revenues generated, and low-income earners benefit the most.

[*English*]

This means our system is helping with the cost of living for a majority of Canadian families, while encouraging choices that will help Canada lower its emissions. Our price on pollution ensures that eight out of 10 households in these provinces are receiving more money back through quarterly Canada carbon rebate payments than they pay. Thanks to our government's pollution pricing mechanism, a family of four living in one of these provinces can receive up to \$1,800 in 2024-25. As members can see with our plan, we are not only fighting climate change, but we are also returning money to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The government does not keep any direct proceeds from federal pollution pricing. Instead, the government returns the money collected to households, small and medium-sized businesses, farmers and indigenous governments. International experts agree that our pollution pricing mechanism is an effective way to fight climate change.

[*English*]

With this approach, we are sending a clear message that pollution has a price, and as we know, it absolutely does. Putting a price on carbon pollution encourages reduction across the economy, while giving households and businesses the flexibility to decide when and how to make changes. Removing pollution pricing, as the Conservatives have called for, would eliminate its powerful incentive to encourage people and businesses to pollute less. Removing pollution pricing, as the Conservatives have called for, would only confirm that they do not want to fight climate change and they do not have a plan.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I have two words: false and failure. That describes exactly what the member just said. It is false that families get more back than they pay into it. The Parliamentary Budget Officer made that very clear. When the net cost, which is the impact the carbon tax has on the economy, is calculated, 60% of Canadians end up paying more. There is also the negligible cost for many who do receive a rebate, but it certainly does not have the impact that the member is saying it has.

It is a failure when it comes to addressing the environment. It is not working. Why does the member, and the Liberals, propped up by the cowardly NDP, continue to blame single moms driving their kids to soccer practice, families that want to go on vacation, and grandparents who want to see their grandkids? Why are they blaming those people for the challenges facing the country and making them pay more? Why not adopt our common-sense proposal, which is to axe the taxes on fuel this summer—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, is the member calling into question the opinion of over 300 experts in Canada who have clearly demonstrated that pollution pricing is the right way to go? What we are doing is protecting people from the dangers and costs of climate change and ensuring that Canada continues to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

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Not only does our price on pollution help combat climate change, but it is also giving more money back directly to Canadian families at a time when so many need it the most.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted.

[English]

Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until later this day at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:29 a.m.)

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