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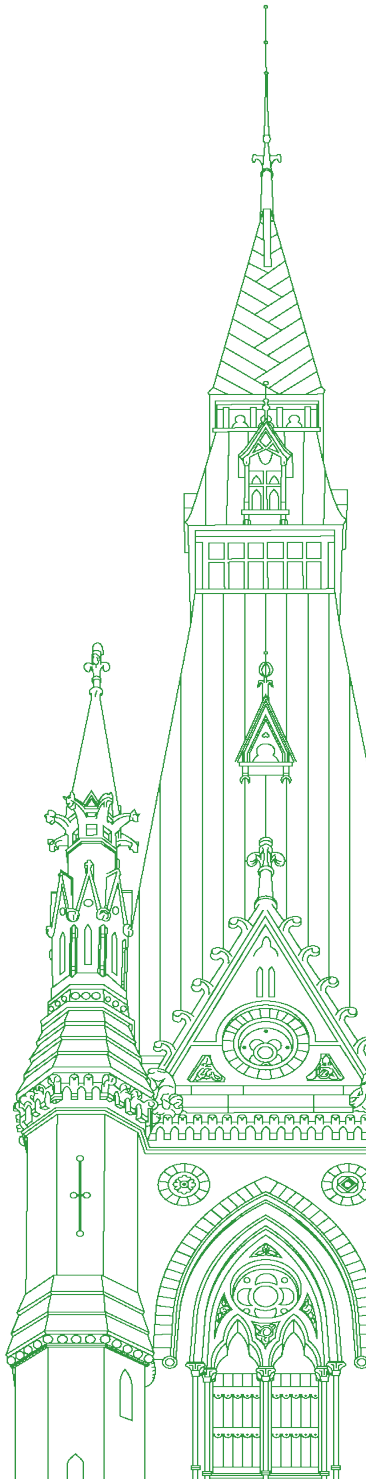

Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 22, 2024

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

● (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

VESAK

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last weekend I had the pleasure of hosting Vesak day on Parliament Hill, celebrating Buddha Day along with hundreds of Buddhist Canadians. Vesak, also known as Buddha Jayanti, Buddha Purnima and Buddha Day, is one of the most important Buddhist festivals. The festival commemorates the birth, enlightenment and passing of Gautama Buddha.

I would like to recognize and thank the spiritual leaders of Fo Guang Shan Temple of Ottawa, Ottawa Amitabha Buddhist Society of Canada and Hilda Jayewardenaramaya Buddhist Monastery for participating in and blessing the gathering. I give thanks for the artistic performances by groups from the Sinhalese Buddhist Congress of Canada and the Bangladeshi Canadian community. I also thank the children from Buddha's Light Dharma Drum Team and the choir group of the Buddha Light International Association for their wonderful performances.

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HUNGARIAN CANADIAN AWARD WINNER

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night Candace Barta-Bonk was presented with the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary by the ambassador of Hungary to Canada.

The honour is given in recognition of Candace's value-creating activities in order to preserve the identity of Hungarians in Canada and to strengthen their cultural, linguistic and spiritual community, as well as her dedicated work to strengthen bilateral relations. Candace, a fourth-generation Hungarian Canadian, grew up in Moosomin and Kipling, Saskatchewan, where her family settled after immigrating in the 1880s.

In 2021, Candace was given the role of Hungarian honorary consul in Saskatchewan, and she continues to promote and celebrate her heritage and traditions through a variety of initiatives. She was instrumental in the restoration of the Bekevar Church, a local landmark in the Kipling area that helps to preserve the legacy of the historic Hungarian community.

I congratulate Candace for her achievement and thank her for all she continues to do on behalf of Hungarians in Saskatchewan.

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● (1405)

[*Translation*]

PONTIAN GENOCIDE

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 19, we commemorated the Pontian genocide. On this day of remembrance, we pay tribute to the 350,000 lives lost and hundreds of thousands of others deported due to a tragedy systematically imposed by Turkey between 1914 and 1923. Some 700,000 people disappeared, Pontic families were massacred, a community that had been established for 2,600 years was eliminated. Pontic children, women and seniors were murdered. It was a genocide.

[*English*]

The genocide was part of the broader Greek genocide and was conducted in parallel to the Armenian genocide as part of Turkey's effort to cleanse it of non-Turkish inhabitants. It is our moral obligation to stand in solidarity with the survivors and their descendants, to bear witness to their suffering and to ensure that the truth of these atrocities is never obscured or denied.

The recognition of Pontic Genocide Remembrance Day reaffirms our commitment to truth, accountability and justice. I appeal to all Canadians to sign House of Commons petition e-4929 to officially recognize the entire Greek genocide.

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[*Translation*]

LUC SABOURIN

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the name of Luc Sabourin has resonated several times in the House. He is synonymous with integrity, courage and humanity.

Luc saw his professional life and his health destroyed after choosing to do the right thing: blowing the whistle on wrongdoing in the federal government. Alas, rather the punish the guilty, the system punished him, as it did so many others. This is a disgrace that should scandalize the House.

For a year now, in support of my Bill C-290, Luc delivered powerful testimony to better protect whistle-blowers. A few days ago, he won the Centre for Free Expression's prestigious Peter Bryce Prize. Every year, this honour is bestowed upon a person who served the greater good by courageously speaking up about wrongdoing or abuses of the public and taxpayers' trust.

I call on the House to join me in congratulating Luc and in honouring whistle-blowers. We will continue to fight for these issues.

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[*English*]

TAMIL GENOCIDE REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May 18, last Saturday, was Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day.

[*Translation*]

Fifteen years ago, on that same day, a large-scale massacre took place in Mullivaikkal.

[*English*]

Tens of thousands were tragically killed, despite the fact that the Sri Lankan government declared no-fire zones. Even today, many Tamils remain missing and displaced. In a day and age when 120 armed conflicts are currently ongoing in 35 countries, recognizing the Tamil genocide is absolutely essential.

To bring peace and stability, we need justice. It is for this reason that we recognize the Tamil genocide. It is for this reason that Canada last year applied strict sanctions against Sri Lankan officials. We all hope for a day when we have peace and security, when all live free of war.

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KYRIAKOS VOGIATZAKIS

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Kyriakos Vogiatzakis, Kyri for short, owned the Cork & Flame restaurant in St. James. He loved his customers and they loved him. He always greeted them with a smile. He loved going from table to table just to chat. At the end of lunch or dinner, a tray of desserts would often show up compliments of the house. Every Christmas he donated hundreds of food hampers to families in need. He loved the community and they loved him back.

Tragically, on January 24, Kyri was murdered in cold blood at his restaurant. His assailant was on probation, with a record that included court order breaches, drug possession, possession of a weapon, uttering threats and obstructing or resisting a peace officer. Kyri's death is a symptom of all that is wrong with our revolving-door criminal justice system.

We will miss Kyri. My condolences go to his family. May his memory be a blessing.

● (1410)

CITIZEN RESCUE IN SQUAMISH

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize a local hero. On April 10, Chris Evans was on his way to work in Squamish when he detected smoke in the distance. As he got closer, he saw a house on fire, with a car in the driveway. Fearing that meant someone may be inside the house, he knocked on the door. Hearing no response, he quickly jumped into action, breaking down the door to search the home to see whether his suspicions were true. He found ninety-year-old Armand Constantin sleeping on the second floor. Chris was able to wake up a disoriented Armand and evacuate him from the burning building.

Perhaps it is a coincidence that Chris Evans shares a name with the actor who played the Marvel superhero Captain America, because that day his actions were heroic. Armand almost certainly would have died if not for Chris's selfless bravery. I hope all members of the House will join me in applauding this extraordinary act that gives new meaning to being a good Samaritan.

* * *

THE ART OF COURAGE

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, held annually on May 25, Africa Day celebrates the continent's diversity, rich heritage and culture. At the same time, Africa Day provides an opportunity to reflect on the challenges that many regions in Africa face and how we can help.

Harnessing the humanizing power of art to be a catalyst for change, Heather Haynes founded The Art of Courage, creating a platform for storytelling through art to create awareness, educate and advocate to raise funds to change lives. Heather operates through her art and heart, and today the organization has grown to support over 1,000 people, primarily women and children in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Today we welcome Heather Haynes and The Art of Courage to Parliament Hill. The Art of Courage is on display in the Speaker's gallery from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. I encourage all members to stop by and learn of the incredible work Heather and her colleagues have been participating in for over 15 years.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the application by the ICC chief prosecutor to arrest Israel's democratically elected leaders for protecting their country from terrorism, simply put, is outrageous.

The false equivalency drawn between the elected leaders of a democracy and the dictatorial genocidal Hamas terrorists should be a wake-up call to all western countries as a willful distortion of history. Conservatives unequivocally reject it. What is even more appalling is that the Prime Minister opted against taking a clear stance in rejecting it. By playing both sides, he is allowing terrorism to win and is enabling the violence that is rampant in our streets and the chaos that is happening on our campuses.

The arrest warrant is based on a falsehood that is trying to invert history, and the Prime Minister should, just for once, take a clear position. He should have the courage to denounce the warrant and state unequivocally what side Canada is on. I know he cannot do it, and now everyone else does too.

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PONTIAN GENOCIDE

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 19, Greeks across Canada and around the world commemorated the 105th anniversary of the Pontic genocide. The Pontic genocide, which was part of the Greek genocide, was a deliberate and systematic destruction of the indigenous Greek community in the Pontus region, and was the result of an Ottoman government-issued decree that led to the systematic annihilation and brutal extermination of over 353 Pontic Greek men, women and children between 1914 and 1923.

I would like to thank the Pontian Association of Montreal, the Canadian Hellenic Congress, the Hellenic Congress of Quebec and all other associations that have been working hard to ensure that we never forget. I would like to thank the Canadian Hellenic Congress for initiating the petition to have the Greek genocide officially recognized by the Government of Canada, and I encourage all Greek Canadians to sign it to have their voices heard.

Today I rise in the House to pay tribute to the victims, survivors and families of the Pontian genocide.

[*Translation*]

May they live on forever in our memory.

[*English*]

Αιωνία η μνήμη.

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CARBON TAX

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of an NDP-Liberal government, Canadians are having to cancel their summer vacations as the price of a simple road trip is now unaffordable.

The government's inflationary deficits and high-tax agenda have driven up fuel costs nearly 50%, and now the Liberals are planning to quadruple the carbon tax and make everything even more expensive, but common-sense Conservatives are calling for the government to give Canadians a break. We are calling on the government to axe the carbon tax, the federal fuel tax and the GST on gas and diesel until Labour Day. That would save Ontario families $592 this summer and would allow for more people to be able to take a family trip.

We already know that Canadians cannot afford the costly coalition and its carbon tax, and we know that only Conservatives will bring home lower prices for all Canadians by axing the tax for everyone, everywhere, for good.

* * *

● (1415)

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the current Prime Minister, Canadians are struggling just to put food on the table. Food insecurity continues to worsen across this country, and today, Food Banks Canada's poverty report card confirms it. Nearly 50% of Canadians feel financially worse off than last year, 25% of Canadians are going hungry, and food banks have seen a 50% increase since 2021. It is the current Prime Minister's record.

The NDP-Liberal government's inflationary spending and taxes are driving up the cost of living, and the Prime Minister's plan is just to keep hiking up the carbon tax, making gas, heating and groceries even more expensive. Canadians are desperate, and the Prime Minister is not listening.

The Prime Minister is simply not worth the cost. Only common-sense Conservatives would cap the spending, axe the carbon tax and bring home lower prices for all Canadians.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TRIBUTE TO 21 PEOPLE OF HAITIAN ORIGIN

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the 221st anniversary of the creation of the flag of the Republic of Haiti, I had the great privilege of decorating 21 persons of Haitian origin here in the House of Commons of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the privilege of allowing me to participate in this ceremony with other dignitaries. These people contributed to Canada in exceptional ways over the last 60 years.

The following countrywomen were honoured: Renée Amilcar, Dominique Anglade, Nicole Baptiste, Carla Beauvais, Yvette Bonny, Fabienne Colas, Simone Méttelus, Claudie Mompoint, Ruth Pierre-Paul, Dorothy Rhau and Marjorie Villefranche. The following countrymen were honoured: Fernando Belton, Angelo Cadet, Jean-Claude Icart, Fayolle Jean, Sacha-Wilky Mérazil, Jérôme Méttelus, Harry-Max Prochette, Frantz Saintellemy, Dickens Saint-Vil and Wilson Sanon.

Avèw Map Maché

[*English*]

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, abortion rights are human rights, but the Liberals continue to deny equal access to that right. In New Brunswick, the Prime Minister has done nothing to address the total absence of abortion clinics throughout the province, and in Manitoba, we are at risk of losing our only abortion clinic.

A right is only as good as the ability to access it, but this is merely a dream in many rural and remote areas. Meanwhile, Conservatives, including the Conservative leader, voted in favour of backdoor legislation to threaten abortion rights, while other Conservatives have tabled anti-choice petitions and have spoken at anti-choice rallies.

The Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada has listed every Conservative MP as anti-choice after they unanimously supported Bill C-311. When abortion rights are under attack, words are not enough. The government must act to ensure everyone who needs a safe, trauma-informed abortion has access to receive one.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ADVANCE REQUESTS FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in February 2023 the joint committee recommended, by a strong majority, that individuals suffering from such diseases as Alzheimer's or dementia be allowed to make an advance request for medical assistance in dying.

Although 83% of Canadians support advance requests, the health and justice ministers are unequalled in their complete lack of political courage and total failure to understand the file. They still expect afflicted patients to bear the burden of having to argue their case in court.

Today, buoyed by the support of the Collège des médecins du Québec, the Barreau du Québec, the Chambre des notaires du Québec and a number of associations, we again call on the government to allow Quebec and any province so inclined to move forward with advance requests.

To those who are suffering, like Ms. Demontigny, I would just like to say that we will never forget them and we will never abandon them.

* * *

● (1420)

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today's report from Food Banks Canada is shocking, jaw-dropping and sad. Almost 44% of the population is spending more than 30% of their income on housing. The Liberal-NDP government is failing Canadians. When that much of one's income is going to housing, if one can even find housing, there is barely anything left for other necessities, like food.

Two million people a month are accessing food banks in Canada. One in three of those visitors is a child. Canadians are doing everything that is asked of them. They are going to work, and they are paying outrageous taxes, but they still cannot get ahead. Why? It is because the Prime Minister spends and then gaslights Canadians, telling them that Canada is not broken and that everything is great.

Canadians deserve housing and food they can afford. Conservatives will restore that grade from an F to an A, and we will bring it home so that everybody can afford to live.

* * *

UNITE NETWORK

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I had the honour of attending the high-level meeting on antimicrobial resistance at the United Nations in New York as a director of UNITE, an international parliamentary organization for global public health.

Antimicrobial resistance, or AMR, is one of the top ten global public health threats to humanity and causes more than five million deaths per year. Political leadership is essential for raising public awareness.

We must work together to combat AMR. This is why the Government of Canada established a PHAC AMR task force and provided an important, multi-year funding commitment of over $28 million in 2021. This government recognizes the need to continue supporting research efforts in budget 2024 by allocating $1.8 billion to core research grant funding.

I encourage everyone to work together for global public health in Canada and around the world.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of debt, taxes and inflation courtesy of the Prime Minister and the Bloc Québécois, Canadians are hungry, literally.

According to a report by Food Banks Canada, 50% of Canadians report that their situation is worse than last year. One-quarter of Canada's young adults have to rely on food banks.

Why is the Prime Minister forcing Canadians to feed his morbidly obese government when they cannot even feed themselves?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition leader would have a bit more credibility if he did not oppose our school food program, which will help 400,000 children across the country eat better.

We are here to invest in and assist families, while the Conservatives have nothing but cuts and austerity to offer. The same applies to our investments in dental care, which have allowed nearly 100,000 seniors to access dental care free of charge. This too is being opposed by the Conservatives. We are here to help Canadians when it comes to affordability.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, his school food program has provided zero meals, zero. It feeds the bureaucracy, not the children.

Let us talk about austerity. In the past three months, 25% of young adults have had to go to a food bank. That is austerity. Some 50% of Canadians say they are worse off than they were last year and 25% are experiencing food insecurity. That is austerity.

How is it that the government has money to spare while ordinary Canadians are struggling to get by?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again we see that the Conservatives are just trying to score political points by capitalizing on the challenges Canadians are facing. However, when it comes time to vote for investments that will help families—like the school food program, increasing the number of $10-a-day child care spaces across the country and dental care programs for seniors—they vote against them.

They are proposing austerity measures to avoid investing in Canadians who need it. We understand that creating economic growth means investing in families who need it.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister's taxes, debt, inflation and promises, Canadians are literally hungry. According to the Food Bank's Canada report, 50% of Canadians say they are worse off than a year ago. 25% have food insecurity, and a quarter of young adults went to a food bank in three months alone this year.

Why is it that Canadians who cannot feed themselves have to keep feeding his morbidly obese government?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would be slightly more credible to hear the Conservatives concern about the challenges Canadians are facing if they had not stood and voted against more spaces in child care and voted against our dental care program, which two million seniors have signed up for and has now delivered close to 100,000 dental appointments for seniors in just 22 days. They have also stood against our school food program that is going to help 400,000 more kids across the country have full bellies as they start their school day.

These are investments that they are opposed to and that we are there to help Canadians with.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a school food program that has not served a single solitary meal, even though it was promised three years ago. What the Prime Minister is feeding is bureaucracy, not children. If all of his spending were working, then why is it that Food Banks Canada reported today that 25% of young adults had to go to a food bank in three months alone, and two million Canadians are lined up every month?

With so many empty stomachs, is it not just a little bit wacko to be raising carbon taxes on farmers and food?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we announced the national school food program in the budget, and just after question period today, the Conservatives have an opportunity to vote in favour of that national school food program and other initiatives that are going to help hundreds of thousands of kids across this country and, indeed, millions of Canadians with the high cost of living. However, he is going to stand there and vote against it to prevent it from delivering the help Canadians need.

We will keep going on delivering support for Canadians. We will keep going on putting more money in the pockets of eight out of 10 Canadians with our price on pollution, which supports Canadian families and successfully fights climate change.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been making exactly the same promises for nine long years, yet the NDP-Liberal government has doubled housing costs, doubled the debt and increased the size of the bureaucracy by 50%. Now he wants to quadruple the carbon tax, all to deliver two million people to a food bank every single month.

If government programs were really going to solve the problem he caused, then why are Canadians so hungry?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is a perfect example of where the Conservatives stand. They stood and voted against our dental care for seniors program. As of today, over two million seniors have signed up, and in the 22 days since May 1, close to 100,000 seniors have gotten free dental care. That is in just 22 days on a program that he voted against and campaigned against across the country over the past number of months.

We will be there to invest in supporting Canadians with a national school food program, with dental care and with more child care spaces, despite him voting against them.

● (1430)

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals claim to be interested in French in Quebec and Canada. The fact is that they are subsidizing the quiet disappearance of francophones in western Canada and outside Quebec, much like the proverbial frog in a pot of boiling water. What is more, the Liberals are mobilizing dozens of unilingual anglophone members to protect their offensive member, whose comments were as underhanded as they were inappropriate.

Would the Prime Minister really have francophones believe that it is out of a love for French that they are going to stack the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie tomorrow?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, francophones across the country, including those in Quebec, know full well that the members of the Bloc Québécois are not interested in the fate of French outside Quebec. That is why they want to make Quebec their own country, to protect French.

We know that the best way to protect French in Quebec and across Canada is by investing in every francophone community from coast to coast to coast. As for protecting French in Quebec, yes, we are here to do that. We are also here to continually stand up to protect francophone minorities from coast to coast to coast. We will continue to do so.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, he is right, and I appreciate this stroke of brilliance: the best thing that could happen to French in Quebec, in Canada and partly around the world, is an independent Quebec.

Meanwhile, what did the Prime Minister of Canada say during the English debate in 2021? When I was the only one who wanted to talk about francophones outside Quebec, in English, I was told that I did not have the right to talk about French in English during his country's English debate.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this debate, as in every debate and at every opportunity, I will always stand up to defend the French fact in Canada, to defend francophone communities from coast to coast to coast. I have always done so and I will continue to do so.

Defending linguistic duality, this country's two official languages, across this country, is a core value of the Liberal Party of Canada and of the Liberal government. We will continue to do so every chance we get.

* * *

[*English*]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Loblaws is not content just ripping off Canadians when they buy their groceries. Now it is teaming up with Rogers and Bell—

The Speaker: It is important that we be able to hear the questions being asked, as well as the answers.

The hon. member for Burnaby South, from the top, please.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, again, I know the Conservatives do not like when I take on corporate greed, but Loblaws is not content just ripping off Canadians when it comes to their groceries. Now Loblaws is teaming up with Rogers and Bell to rip off Canadians with their cellphone prices. We know they are going to limit choices, and limiting choices means higher prices for Canadians. The Prime Minister promised to lower cellphone fees. They are sky-high. He promised to lower grocery prices. They are sky-high.

When will the Prime Minister finally stop greedy CEOs from ripping off Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have actually seen cellphone bills decrease across the country by 25% over the past number of years, and we are going to continue to stand up for Canadian consumers. Indeed, I know the minister is looking into the Competition Act to see if there are needs to be referred on a number of things that have come forward.

We are going to continue to stand up for the middle class and people working hard to join it, which is why we raised corporate taxes, why we asked the wealthiest Canadians to pay a little more so we can invest more in younger Canadians and why we are continuing to step up on creating fairness for every generation with this budget, with the investments we are making and with further investments as well.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he acts like he does not have the power to stop these greedy CEOs, but he does.

[*Translation*]

Apparently, ripping people off at the grocery store is not enough. Today we learned that Loblaws is teaming up with—

● (1435)

[*English*]

The Speaker: Colleagues, I know it is Wednesday and everybody is a little more primed for action, but it is really important for us to hear the questions and answers.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, you act like you do not have the power to stop these greedy CEOs, but you do. I know the Conservatives do not like it, but we need to take on corporate greed.

[*Translation*]

Apparently, ripping people off at the grocery store is not enough. Today we learned that Loblaws is teaming up with Rogers and Bell to block other companies from in its stores. That means less choice and higher cellphone bills. The Liberals are just standing on the sidelines.

Will the Prime Minister finally stand up to the CEOs and support an investigation into these allegations?

The Speaker: I would like to take this opportunity to remind all members that when they ask or answer questions, they must do so through the Chair.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows full well that we have made changes and improvements to give the Competition Bureau more power. We know that ensuring competition between various companies will lead to better prices and better results for Canadians.

We also know that it is important to continue monitoring these issues. That is why the minister is asking the Competition Bureau to look into what is happening with cellphone plans and Loblaws. This is an issue that we will always take seriously.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, normally the NDP leader is well worth ignoring, but I just cannot help myself. He says that the Prime Minister acts like he has no power to stop all these greedy CEOs from ripping off consumers. Who else has the power? Well, it is the guy who joined the government two years ago. He has been in power during the worst food price inflation in over four decades.

Will the Prime Minister agree with me that his carbon tax coalition is nothing more than an anti-competitive price-fixing scheme that is costing Canadians at the grocery store?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Once again, Mr. Speaker, we see that the Conservative Party's opposition to the price on pollution is ideological and not concrete. Their opposition to the price on pollution means they do not care about fighting against climate change. Even as wildfires are already raging in different parts of the country, they have no plan to fight against climate change. They do it in the name of affordability while ignoring the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who actually showed that eight out of 10 Canadian families do better with the money put in their pockets from the Canada carbon rebate than it costs them with the price on pollution.

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has concluded that 60% of Canadians pay more in carbon tax costs than they get back in the phony rebates. One hundred per cent of middle-class Canadians pay more than they get back in the phony rebates. Now the Prime Minister wants to quadruple the tax, all at a time when he is preparing to hand over power to carbon tax Carney.

Will the Prime Minister confirm if carbon tax Carney will follow through on his plan to hike the tax to 61¢ a litre?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has confirmed that eight out of 10 Canadian families in jurisdictions where the carbon price federal backstop applies are better off, with more money in their pockets through the Canada carbon rebate cheques that land in their bank accounts four times a year. That is money in their pockets that goes to the cost of groceries, the cost of rent and the cost of everything they need to raise their families. That is money in their pockets that the Leader of the Opposition would take away because of an ideological crusade against climate action.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's wacko carbon tax obsession is not just costing Canadians at the pumps; it raises the cost of home heating and groceries, because, of course, if we tax the farmer who produces the food and the trucker who ships the food, we tax all who buy the food. It is a housing tax, because it raises the cost of building materials that go into homes.

With the report out today that 25% of young people had to go to a food bank in just three months, will the Prime Minister accept the common-sense Conservative bill to take the tax off the farmers who produce our food?

● (1440)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition continues to make that argument even though he knows full well that farm fuels are 95% exempt from the price on pollution right across the country. That is something he ignores because of his ideological opposition to take any action in fighting climate change.

Well, I can tell the Leader of the Opposition that, in Conservative ridings right across the country, people are worried about droughts, people are worried about floods, and people are worried about wildfires that are more and more severe. Canadians need a clean plan to fight climate change, which is something he has not put forward. We are fighting climate change and putting money in people's pockets.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's carbon tax applies on barns, on grain drying, on fertilizers and on off-farm vehicles. It costs literally tens of thousands of dollars for many individual farmers, all of which gets passed on.

However, the Prime Minister, instead of defending his taxes, resorted to a really wacko and unhinged claim that, if Canadians just paid more taxes, there would suddenly be fewer fires. I thought that water and not taxes put out fires.

Can the Prime Minister clarify how high his tax would have to go for forest fires to stop?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are facing the impacts of extreme weather events that come from climate change that are, unfortunately, getting worse and worse every year. That is why our government, from 2015 onwards, has stepped up in the fight against climate change. Not only are we reducing Canada's emissions to the lowest level outside the pandemic in 25 years, but we are also stepping up in the jobs and technological innovations that the world needs to successfully fight climate change.

We will continue to fight climate change and put more money in people's pockets while the Leader of the Opposition sits with his arms crossed and has no plan.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did not answer my question. Now he says that his taxes are going to make Canada a high-tech wonderland. Before his claim was that it was going to stop forest fires. It is he who made the link, not me. Obviously, I think the link between the two is absolutely ridiculous. His tax is not an environmental plan; it is a money-collecting plan. It is a plan of government greed.

I will ask the question again. The Prime Minister wants to hike the tax to 61¢ a litre. If it gets that high, and people are all starving in the streets, will that stop the forest fires?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the Leader of the Opposition's desire to make clever rhetorical points, he actually completely ignores the basic facts.

The price on pollution is revenue-neutral for the federal government, which means that the money that comes in for the price on pollution, for the carbon tax, gets returned to the jurisdictions. That is why the Parliamentary Budget Officer found that eight out of 10 Canadian families in jurisdictions where the carbon price applies do better with the Canada carbon rebate, which comes in four times a year, than the price on pollution costs them. That is a plan to fight climate change and put money in people's pockets.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to be too clever for the Prime Minister, but he is the one who made the argument that high taxes would stop forest fires, and now he cannot tell us how high the tax would go to put all the fires out. He went on, now, to say that his tax is revenue neutral. One does not have to be too clever to read the government's own published documents, which show that he has collected $2 billion more in taxes than he has given back in rebates. That is why 100% of middle-class Canadians pay more than they get back.

Once again, will he tell those middle-class people how high the tax would have to go for the fires to stop?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we just saw is climate denialism at its finest. The fact is that, as global emissions rise, as carbon intensity in the atmosphere increases, extreme weather events like wildfires, droughts and floods will simply become more and more frequent. His plan is to do nothing and let future generations fend for themselves. Our plan is not only to reduce our emissions but to create the solutions that the world needs while we lead on fighting climate change, bringing down emissions and growing the economy.

● (1445)

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a brand new study by the Office québécois de la langue française shows that the proportion of young Quebeckers who use French as their language of work 90% of the time has dropped from 64% to 58%.

Will the Prime Minister admit that his language policies are not slowing the decline of French one bit, and that his opposition to Bill 96 is weakening the French language, or will he in turn start hurling vicious and vulgar insults at Quebec scientists?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are the first federal government to acknowledge our special responsibility to protect the French language in Quebec.

We are concerned about the decline of French seen across the country, including in Quebec. That is why we are there to invest, to partner with the Government of Quebec and to protect the French fact in Quebec and official languages across the country.

We will continue to be there to defend the French language, not for political purposes, like the Bloc Québécois, but because it is the right thing to do for our country and for our future.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one day we will have our own country and our own future.

The Liberals have admitted responsibility but their actions go against that responsibility. They sent money to the anglophone community in Quebec so it could protect itself, of course, from being assimilated by francophones.

If the Prime Minister is so concerned about Quebec, can he stop opposing the Quebec government's Bill 96 and let Quebec govern its own language laws?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Official Languages Act protects linguistic minorities right across the country. A big part of that, of course, is protecting francophone minorities everywhere outside Quebec. It also includes our responsibility to protect both official languages in a bilingual country and to protect all linguistic minorities. We will continue to do so. That does not prevent us from doing everything we can to protect the French language.

It is not the anglophone minority in Quebec that poses a threat to the French language in Quebec. We will continue to fight to protect French everywhere in Quebec and right across the country.

[*English*]

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that, after eight years, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost of housing, which has doubled. Today, the Parliamentary Budget Officer released a damning report that showed that after the Prime Minister promised he would eliminate chronic homelessness, it has actually gone up 38%. The number of people living in unsheltered locations is up 88%. This is after he spent half a billion dollars on homelessness programs.

If it costs half a billion dollars for him to drive up homelessness, how much would it cost to drive it down?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, whether it was the pandemic, whether it was global inflation, whether it was international economic situations, we have seen more and more Canadians suffering, including from the opioid and toxic drug epidemic that the Leader of the Opposition continues to attack and vilify.

The reality is that we have invested billions in countering homelessness. We are going to continue to invest in eliminating encampments and supporting Canadians in communities and in vulnerable communities across the country. The Leader of the Opposition's solution is to do less to fight homelessness, to invest less in vulnerable people. That is what he is doing when he votes against our current budget.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister brags about his billions in spending. People cannot live in "billions". They live in homes, and his billions build bureaucracies that block those homes. In 2015, there were 284 homeless people in Halifax. Now, there are 1,211. There are over 30 homeless encampments in Halifax alone. Ten years ago, there were 3,000 Quebeckers who were homeless. Now there are 10,000.

Why is it that the more he spends, the worse things get?

● (1450)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has chosen to invest to support Canadians through difficult times. We saw it through the pandemic where we stepped up to put money in Canadians' pockets, money in community organizations, money in businesses and restaurants, in mom-and-pop shops right across the country. We came out of it stronger economically. We restored full employment faster than the United States.

We know that investing when people need supports is the right way to build for the future. Confident countries invest in themselves. What the Leader of the Opposition is proposing is austerity and cuts to programs at exactly the time that Canadians need them.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are already experiencing austerity, according to a report by the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who showed that since the Prime Minister's promise to end homelessness, it has in fact increased by 38%. The number of homeless people in Quebec has increased, going from 3,000 to 10,000. Yes, it is true, he is spending a lot more money and that is making everything more expensive.

When will he realize that a morbidly obese government in Ottawa is never going to end homelessness?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no one in this country thinks that a Conservative government that does nothing but offer cuts and austerity is going to help address the homelessness crisis in the country. That is not how it works. It takes investment in affordable housing. It takes investment in programs to support the people who are homeless. It takes investment in programs that are rooted in compassion and backed by data to deal with addictions. Those are the investments that are needed. He is proposing nothing but cuts and austerity while Canadians are suffering. We are here to invest in vulnerable communities.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three devastating reports in one day demonstrate the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost. First, we had Food Banks Canada and the Salvation Army that said that record numbers are forced to go to food banks and that over half of people are worse off than they were a year ago. Now the PBO says there is more homelessness. There is more homelessness and hunger.

The Prime Minister has three explanations: One, he can blame the rest of the world for his mistakes; two, he can promise more of the spending that caused the problem or; three, he can own up and admit that he caused the misery Canadians are living.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservative leader likes to go around saying Canada is broken, we choose instead to invest in Canadians, invest in supporting food banks, invest in community organizations that are on the front lines supporting vulnerable Canadians and invest in the kinds of programs that are lifting Canadians up, like the two million vulnerable seniors who are now accessing health care and dental care for the first time.

One hundred thousand people in just 22 days got dental care despite the Conservative Party, which has consistently voted against it and, indeed, tried to block it both in this House and across the country. We will continue to be there for Canadians.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Ireland, Spain and Norway announced that they will soon recognize the state of Palestine. This is a crucial step towards peace and justice for Palestinians and Israelis, but Canada is missing in action. In February, New Democrats asked the government to recognize the state of Palestine. The government refused and turned its back on Palestinians and Israelis who are looking for peace and justice in their region.

The Prime Minister can take a stand today. Will he join the consensus of the international community and recognize the state of Palestine?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we urgently need to build a credible path toward lasting peace. We oppose efforts by the Netanyahu government to reject a two-state solution. At the same time, Hamas, a terrorist group, currently controls areas in Gaza and has not laid down its arms or released its hostages. We are prepared to recognize the state of Palestine at the right time, not necessarily as a last step along the path. We were pleased to be able to support the NDP motion of a number of months ago. We will continue to work on promoting peace and work toward stability in the Middle East.

* * *

● (1455)

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, last week, I met with the Tumikuluit Saipaaqivik day care in Iqaluit, a day care that provides culturally appropriate care in Inuktitut. Because of a lack of funding, it is on the verge of closing.

In 2022, the Liberals promised millions of dollars to Nunavut day care. The funding is taking too long to make its way to Tumikuluit Saipaaqivik day care. Will the Liberals ensure Tumikuluit does not fall through the cracks and get the urgent funding it needs to stay open?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, investing in early learning and child care right across the country that is affordable, that is high quality and that is available for families is one of the cornerstones of this government's policy of the past few years. We have worked closely with provinces and territories to make sure that money is delivered on the ground where it is needed the most. I will follow up on this particular case and make sure that the Government of Nunavut is passing through the money and is accessing all the funds necessary so that child care in the north, and indeed right across the country, continues to be delivered as the social program and economic program that it is.

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WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a family doctor who delivered close to 500 babies, I am concerned about access to reproductive choice. Claiming to support reproductive choice is not enough. We must pass legislation that makes it fully accessible to all. The pharmacare act is a start. It would provide free contraception to over nine million patients. Unfortunately, our Conservative colleagues oppose it. They also oppose access to safe abortion. Will the Prime Minister reaffirm his government's promise to defend a woman's reproductive rights in spite of the opposition's efforts to deny it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Vancouver Centre for her decades of leadership. We will always support a woman's right to access reproductive health care, both in our words and in our policy. The Leader of the Opposition pretends to be pro-choice, but supports his Conservative caucus members tabling anti-abortion legislation. He cannot have it both ways. If the opposition leader truly believed in the right to choose, he would condemn any effort to restrict reproductive choice and freedom, including from within his own caucus.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost of housing, which has doubled because of his inflationary spending and because the bureaucracy he is funding is blocking construction.

In today's edition of Le Soleil, we learned that, since mid-May, panic has been starting to set in for those who have not yet found a place to live. One worker has warned that a large number of people may be forced to camp outside.

After doubling the cost of housing, is the Prime Minister's plan to provide tents for those who will be forced to camp outside?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to talk about our plan, which ensures fairness for every generation.

Our housing plan will build 3.87 million new housing units across the country by cutting red tape, reforming zoning, lowering construction costs and using public lands and vacant government offices.

We are going to put the dream of home ownership back within reach of young Canadians by helping them to save up, tax-free, for a down payment and by allowing renters to use their monthly payment history when they apply for a mortgage. We will help those who are struggling to afford housing and put and end to—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

* * *

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister's inflationary and centralizing spending caused the inflation that is hurting Canadians. That is no surprise.

The surprising thing is that the Bloc Québécois voted for $500 billion of that spending. These budget appropriations are not going to health care or to seniors, since those expenditures are already set out in legislation. No, that money is being spent on bureaucracy, or to double up on payments to consultants, as in the arrive scam case.

Does the Liberal Party realize that more money for the federal level means less money for Quebeckers?

● (1500)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Conservative leader completely ignores the facts and the data in every political argument he tries to make.

In reality, the global inflation phenomenon has not hit Canada as hard as it hit many other countries, and inflation has remained within the Bank of Canada's target range for the past four months in a row. That is due to this government's investments and prudent, responsible fiscal management.

We will continue to be there to invest in Canadians while working to lower inflation. That is something that the Conservative leader does not understand.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, housing inflation in Canada is the worst of all the G7 countries. Among the nearly 40 OECD countries, Canada ranks second last.

However, the question was about the inflationary and centralist spending that the Bloc Québécois keeps voting for.

The Bloc Québécois has become a socialist party that wants to expand the government, but its main focus is the federal government. That means a bigger federal government and less autonomy and money for Quebeckers.

What is happening? Are the Conservatives the only ones standing up for Quebeckers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, can anyone remember what the Conservatives did in Quebec? They cut care and social services. They cut transfers. They cut arts and culture. For the Conservatives to rise today to attack the Bloc Québécois for not standing up for Quebec is a bit much.

The reality, as we know, is that the Bloc Québécois is there to stand up for Quebeckers. They do not do it as well as we in the government do, but the Conservative attacks against Quebeckers are a bit ridiculous.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Bloc is a beautiful coalition.

The Prime Minister, supposedly a federalist, is saying that the Bloc Québécois stands up for Quebeckers. Then we have the Bloc Québécois voting for centralist spending here in Ottawa. What is going on? Everything is backwards.

Is it not time to forget about this senseless coalition and replace it with a common-sense Conservative government?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the leader of the Conservative Party thinks, I fundamentally believe that every member of this House is here to defend their constituents' interests. That is our individual and collective responsibility, and every single person here is doing that.

People know very well that I do not agree with the aims of the Bloc Québécois. At the same time, we find opportunities to work together, respectfully, to protect the French language and create economic growth in Quebec.

We are here to work together, not to play political games and attack each other, which is what the Conservatives do every time.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, only one fishery is still operating fully in the western Gulf of St. Lawrence, specifically, shellfish, in other words, crab and lobster. All the others are in serious jeopardy, and now even that fishery is in crisis too.

The industry is in distress, but the member for Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine and Minister of Fisheries is closing vast fishing areas off Chaleur Bay, the Gaspé Peninsula and Acadia.

What does the Prime Minister have to say to the fishers who have to remove their traps, return to port and see yet another season compromised?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the difficulties and distress facing fishers in eastern Canada. People are going through some extremely difficult times because of climate change and dwindling marine populations.

We will always be there to support fishers. Part of that support also means protecting our international markets and fulfilling our scientific responsibilities in accordance with the laws and rights that have been put in place. We will be there to help fishers, but we will also be there to protect species at risk as well as our trade for the future.

● (1505)

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are going to give him a chance. The fishing areas were closed because of right whales.

Everyone wants to protect the right whale. The government is actually endangering it more by opening up areas to offshore oil drilling. Fishers have suggested ways to protect whales, and so have scientists and the Bloc Québécois.

The department is not listening, the minister is not listening and the fishing industry is facing an unprecedented crisis. Some people have doubts, but does the Prime Minister still think that his minister is worthy of fishers' trust and of the role he assigned her?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working closely with industry, scientists and our international partners to manage an extremely unique situation. We understand how difficult this is for fishers. We will continue to be there for them. We will ensure that the steps we are going to take and the decisions we are going to make will be in the interest of the industry, the fishers and, of course, the environment and species at risk.

This is a complex issue, but we will be there, not with simplistic solutions, but with the necessary assistance to ensure the sustainability of our resources.

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TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this Prime Minister and the Bloc Québécois, Canadians are exhausted. They are out of money, and some are going hungry. They need a vacation, but it costs too much. When the Prime Minister doubled the national debt, he inflated prices across the board. Interest rates also went up. That is why the common-sense Conservatives are suggesting that he suspend the taxes on gas and diesel to give Quebeckers a break.

Will the Prime Minister have enough common sense to agree to this cost-cutting measure?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Quebeckers know only too well what Conservative austerity leads to when it comes to affordability and the cost of living.

That is why we will continue investing in families. We will continue to be there to help our seniors. We will continue to be there to help children with a school food program. We will be there to create more child care spaces. These are all proposals the Conservatives voted against. They will cut programs, services and family benefits in the name of austerity ideology. We will continue to make investments for Quebeckers and for all Canadians.

* * *

[*English*]

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister has implemented a wacko and radical drug decriminalization and handout program. He has literally handed out tax-funded opioids. The result has been tragic, with nearly a tripling in the number of overdose deaths. Where the policy has been most deeply implemented, in B.C., there has been a 300% increase in overdose deaths. The Prime Minister did a last-minute reversal on decriminalization in that province, only to vote back in favour of decriminalization yesterday.

Is it not the Prime Minister's plan to decriminalize across Canada if he is re-elected?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is we will continue to be there responsibly with a science-based, evidence-based approach that works with jurisdictions on the tools they need to counter the growing opioid and toxic drug epidemic.

I understand the ideological desire by Conservatives to simply look at every problem as if it is a nail because all they have is a hammer. We are going to continue to be there to invest in community supports. We are going to be there to continue to work with jurisdictions that want to help people struggling with addictions. We will continue to be there, grounded in science and evidence.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, imagine a young couple in a hospital welcoming their newborn into the world, and all of a sudden they smell meth or crack smoke coming from down the hallway. That was the reality up until just a few weeks ago in British Columbia because the Prime Minister and the NDP decriminalized crack. If those parents had asked the nurse to stop it, the nurse would have said no and that it cannot happen. These drug uses are now legal.

Conservatives are introducing the safe hospitals act to ban all hard drugs from hospitals. Will the Prime Minister support it, yes or no?

● (1510)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to be clear, those things are already illegal in hospitals. We know that nurses and hospital staff need to feel safe in their work environment, and it is our government that has invested billions of dollars into the health care system to ensure Canadians have access to the best care possible, and into supports for our frontline health workers.

The important difference between the Conservatives and us is that while they look to criminalize the most vulnerable struggling with addictions, we are rolling up our sleeves and working with all levels of government to put an end to this crisis and help the most vulnerable Canadians.

* * *

[*Translation*]

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for many, cost is a barrier to accessing health care, particularly reproductive health care.

The right to access abortion is under threat in Canada. An anti-abortion march made its way through the streets of Ottawa, encouraged and followed by Conservative MPs who promise to further restrict access to health care. Young people in Ottawa—Vanier are concerned and want to know what the government is doing to combat these threats to women's rights.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank the member for Ottawa—Vanier for her hard work and leadership.

On the other side of the House, Conservative MPs are proposing anti-choice laws and attending anti-abortion rallies. Not only does the Conservative leader refuse to challenge his caucus, he even voted with it in support of a bill that would have classified a fetus as a person.

Women in this country have the right to decide their own future. That is why we are making prescription contraceptives free, and that is why we will always defend the right to choose.

[*English*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this NDP-Liberal Prime Minister's wacko crime policies, extortions are up 218% nationally, 263% in Ontario, roughly the same in Alberta, and roughly 400% in British Columbia.

The Prime Minister passed a law that would allow extortionists out of jail faster after they have used a gun. Will he reverse himself and support my common-sense Conservative deputy leader's bill to crack down on extortionists and put them behind bars to stop the crime?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the problem with the Conservative leader's approach on crime is that it consistently gets struck down by the courts. That is what we saw through eight years of Stephen Harper, which actually left Canadians worse off than before.

The reality is, our approach is cracking down on criminals while at the same time making sure our communities are safer by strengthening the gun laws the Conservatives are continually voting against in the pocket of the gun lobby, which is not keeping Canadians safe. That is why we worked with the provinces on bail reforms that are going to make sure we are keeping Canadians safe while making sure we are charter-compliant.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was not forced by the courts to allow career car thieves to do their sentences in their living rooms playing Grand Theft Auto. He chose to do that through his Bill C-5. He chose to bring in catch-and-release bail through Bill C-75. He chose to pass a law allowing Paul Bernardo out of max pen.

Now, the Prime Minister can make another choice. Instead of trying to ban Grandpa Joe's hunting rifle, will he put extortionists who use machine guns in jail?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has continually pledged to make assault-style weapons legal again. We have banned them for the past four years, and we will continue to make sure that they stay banned in this country, while the Leader of the Opposition wants to bring back assault-style weapons to our communities and to Canadians from coast to coast to coast. That is not how to keep this community safer.

On top of that, in the name of protecting Canadians from crime, the Leader of the Opposition is willing to suspend their fundamental freedoms by using the notwithstanding clause to override the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That is not responsible, and it makes us wonder what other rights he is going to come after on Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, military-style assault rifles have been banned since the seventies.

The Prime Minister held a press conference with a big scary gun on the front of his podium four years ago and still has not been able to figure out how to ban that scary-looking cartoon gun. With 1,500 guns under amnesty to this day, he says he will not be able to figure out how to do it for at least another three years.

Will the Prime Minister stop his made-in-Hollywood approach to crime and actually lock up the hard criminals so that we can stop the crime?

● (1515)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the past four years, it has been illegal to buy, sell or use assault-style weapons in this country, and that is exactly what the Conservative leader has promised to overturn if he gets elected to government in this country. The reality is that he wants to bring back assault-style weapons in this country after we banned them back in 2020.

We are going to continue to be there to make sure Canadians are safe while the Conservative leader stays in the pocket of the gun lobby. That is not what Canadians want. That is not even what Conservative Canadians want, but he is going to do it anyway.

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WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while our government works to provide pharmacare, expand child care, introduce a national school food program and build housing, Conservative MPs are giving speeches at anti-abortion rallies.

Reproductive health is health. Women have the right to choose when and if they start a family. With members of the House threatening to take this right away from Canadians, what is the government doing to strengthen reproductive rights?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Davenport is right. Reproductive health is health. Abortion is health care.

The Leader of the Opposition pretends to care about freedom, but whose freedom was he defending by threatening to suspend Canadians' charter rights, by voting to restrict abortion or by removing the right to vote from thousands of Canadians when he was minister of democratic institutions? That is the very opposite of freedom. We will never back down from defending all Canadians' fundamental rights and freedoms.

* * *

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two years after the illegal border blockade at Ambassador Bridge, the Liberals are stiffing the City of Windsor by not paying back the city for the costs of handling the mess.

Canadians are used to being ripped off by big grocery stores and big telecoms, but now they can add the Liberals to that list. Where were the Conservatives while this happened? They were on the sidelines, cheering on this harm.

The Prime Minister asked Windsor to protect our country, so why is he rewarding this attack on the economy, on public safety and on frontline workers by not paying Windsorites back the money they are owed?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that we paid back a significant amount of the costs incurred by the City of Windsor during the Conservative-supported convoy. There is a matter of a dispute around whether its legal fees were to be covered by the federal government.

I know the Minister of Public Safety is meeting with the mayor of Windsor tomorrow, and I am sure that this will be in the discussion. In the meanwhile, we have continued to stand up for Windsor with historic investments in jobs and opportunities for Windsorites that, quite frankly, Conservatives continue to stand against. We will continue to be there for the people of Windsor.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, the University Network for Human Rights published a 100-page report concluding that Israel's actions in Gaza constitute genocide. The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor is now seeking arrest warrants for both Hamas terrorists and Israeli leaders. There is no equivalency being made. These individuals may simply be accused of breaking international law, which the court is tasked to uphold.

Will the PM support the ICC's process, as is the will of this Parliament from March 18?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously, we are closely monitoring the processes as they unfold at the ICC. We respect the independence of the court. There is no equivalence between Israel and Hamas. One is a state. The other is a terrorist organization. As we have said from the beginning, all parties have a necessary obligation to comply with international law.

In the meanwhile, an immediate ceasefire is urgently needed. A lot more humanitarian aid needs to get in, and hostages need to be released. We will continue to stand for a two-state solution. We will continue to call for peace in the region.

* * *

● (1520)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of members in the gallery to the presence of the Hon. Paul Calandra, Government House Leader, Minister of Legislative Affairs and Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for the Province of Ontario.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2024, NO. 1

The House resumed from May 21 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.

The Speaker: It being 3:20 p.m., pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 21, 2024, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-69.

Call in the members.

● (1550)

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

(Division No. 765)

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
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	Kmiec
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
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
Shipley
Steinley
Strahl
Thomas
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer– — 115

Shields
Soroka
Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

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)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Davies
Desbiens
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser
Fry
Gainey
Garrison
Gazan
Gill
Guilbeault
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos

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)
Coteau
Damoff
DeBellefeuille
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fisher
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaheer
Garon
Gaudreau
Gerretsen
Green
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Joly
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lamoureux

Lapointe
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Michaud
Morrice
Murray
Noormohamed
O'Connell
Pauzé
Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Sajjan
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Sousa
St-Onge
Tassi
Therrien
Trudeau
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vignola
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi– — 203

Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lemire
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Normandin
Oliphant
Perron
Plamondon
Qualtrough
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sahota
Saks
Savard-Tremblay
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Thompson
Trudel
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Villemure
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

PAIRED

Members

Desilets
Fast
Ng
Small

Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Jones
Sarai
Thériault– — 8

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main motion.

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, Conservatives request a recorded division.

● (1600)

[*Translation*]

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

Government Orders

(Division No. 766)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Beech
Bittle
Blaney
Boissonnault
Bradford
Cannings
Casey
Chahal
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Coteau
Damoff
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Fry
Gainey
Gazan
Green
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Joly
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
O'Connell
Petitpas Taylor
Qualtrough
Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Battiste
Bibeau
Blair
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Carr
Chagger
Champagne
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Davies
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaheer
Garrison
Gerretsen
Guilbeault
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lapointe
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Morrice
Murray
Noormohamed
Oliphant
Powlowski
Robillard
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sahota
Saks
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Singh
Sousa
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Trudeau
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo
Rogers
Rota
Sajjan
Samson
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara
St-Onge
Tassi
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi– — 174

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blanchet
Block
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Chabot
Champoux
Cooper
Dancho
DeBellefeuille
Desbiens
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Findlay
Gallant
Gaudreau
Genuis
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Jivani
Khanna
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lehoux
Leslie
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
Maguire
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Carrie
Chambers
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
Deltell
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Ferreri
Fortin
Garon
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kelly
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Lawrence
Lemire
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Majumdar
Mazier
McLean
Michaud
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Patzer
Pauzé
Perron

Plamondon
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Scheer
Seeback
Simard
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Therrien
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer– — 143

Poilievre
Reid
Richards
Rood
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shields
Sinclair-Desgagné
Steinley
Stewart
Stubbs
Thomas
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

PAIRED

Members

Desilets
Fast
Ng
Small

Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Jones
Sarai
Thériault– — 8

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

PROTECTION AGAINST EXTORTION ACT

The House resumed from May 21 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.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-381 under Private Members' Business.

● (1610)

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

(Division No. 767)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blanchet
Block

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon

Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Chabot
Champoux
Cooper
Dancho
DeBellefeuille
Desbiens
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Findlay
Gallant
Gaudreau
Genuis
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Jivani
Khanna
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lehoux
Leslie
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
Maguire
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Plamondon
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Scheer
Seeback
Shipley
Sinclair-Desgagné
Steinley
Stewart
Stubbs
Thomas
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

Brock
Calkins
Carrie
Chambers
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
Deltell
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Ferreri
Fortin
Garon
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kelly
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Lawrence
Lemire
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Majumdar
Mazier
McLean
Michaud
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Patzer
Pauzé
Perron
Poilievre
Reid
Richards
Rood
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shields
Simard
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Therrien
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer– — 144

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
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)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gainey	Garrison
Gazan	Gerretsen
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Joly	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
McPherson	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Miller	Morrice
Morrissey	Murray
Naqvi	Noormohamed
O'Connell	Oliphant
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Robillard
Rogers	Romanado
Rota	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Singh
Sorbara	Sousa
St-Onge	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thompson	Trudeau
Turnbull	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo

Zuberi– — 173

PAIRED

Members

Desilets	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Fast	Jones
Ng	Sarai
Small	Thériault– — 8

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1615)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 21 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the reports of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, respecting its participation at the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Accra, Ghana, from September 30 to October 6, 2023, and the bilateral visit to Guyana, November 13 to 18, 2023.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two reports to present.

I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities in relation to Bill C-58, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code and the Canada Industrial Relations Board Regulations, 2012. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 22nd report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled "Main Estimates 2024-25: Vote 1 under Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Votes 1 and 5 under Canadian Accessibility Standards Development Organization, Vote 1 under Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, and Votes 1 and 5 under Department of Employment and Social Development".

Mr. Speaker, while I am on my feet, I move:

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

The Deputy Speaker: If a member participating in person wishes 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. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, in the defence of democracy, I would ask for a recorded vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1700)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 768)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Beech
Bittle
Blaney
Boissonnault
Bradford
Cannings
Casey
Chahal
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Coteau
Damoff
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Drouin
Duclos
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaheer
Garrison
Gerretsen
Guilbeault
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lapointe
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
May (Cambridge)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
O'Connell
Petitpas Taylor
Qualtrough
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sahota
Saks
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Singh
Sousa
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Trudeau
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo
Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Battiste
Bibeau
Blair
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Carr
Chagger
Champagne
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Davies
Dhaliwal
Diab
Dubourg
Duguid
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Fry
Gainey
Gazan
Green
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Joly
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Morrice
Murray
Noormohamed
Oliphant
Powlowski
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Sajjan
Samson
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara
St-Onge
Tassi
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi– — 172

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blanchet
Block
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Chabot
Champoux
Cooper
Dancho
DeBellefeuille
Desbiens
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Carrie
Chambers
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
Deltell
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)

S. O. 57

Falk (Provencher)	Ferreri
Findlay	Fortin
Gallant	Garon
Gaudreau	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Hoback	Jeneroux
Jivani	Kelly
Khanna	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	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	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Normandin
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perkins
Perron	Plamondon
Poilievre	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Savard-Tremblay	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shipley	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Soroka
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Therrien
Thomas	Tochor
Trudel	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vignola
Villemure	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zimmer– — 144

PAIRED

Members

Desilets	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Fast	Jones
Ng	Sarai
Small	Thériault– — 8

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[*English*]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill, to which the concurrence of the House is desired: S-16, an act respecting the recognition of the Haida Nation and the Council of the Haida Nation.

[*Translation*]

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 Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, Correctional Service of Canada; the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Diversity and Inclusion; the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Innovation, Science and Industry.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 39—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-64

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in relation to the consideration of Government Business No. 39, I move:

> That debate be not further adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question and answer period.

[*English*]

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the government side why it felt the need to do this, to shut down debate on a gag order, because Motion No. 39 is a gag order being directed at the Standing Committee on Health. I will also remind members, before they give me talking points, that just two days before Motion No. 39 was tabled before the House, the Minister of Health said, "there will be time for the committee to conduct a study." He continued to say, "Yes, it is important to debate. However, there is plenty of time for debate in committee and during the rest of the House process."

What is the truth? Why is the government moving to a gag order on the gag order?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the proposed programming motion contemplates several hours of committee study. What is also important for the House to understand and for Canadians who are watching to understand is that when we are talking about pharmacare and a precedential expansion of the medical system envelope provided in this country, we are talking about a significant feature that will help promote better health care outcomes, more equality for Canadians and specifically give women reproductive rights and reproductive control over their bodies through the provision of free contraception.

● (1705)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague would join me in imploring the Conservatives to actually stand up for their constituents. There are 18,000 constituents in each and every Conservative riding in the country who would benefit from the diabetes aspect of the pharmacare program that the NDP has pushed forward and forced the government to put on the table. There are 25,000 people on average in each Conservative riding who would benefit from contraception. We are not asking Conservative MPs to even lift a finger. They do not have to do any work at all for all these benefits to flow to their constituents. All we are asking is for Conservatives to stop blocking legislation that is going to save lives and is going to help people. We are not asking them to do any work. They do not have to do anything at all. All they have to do is stop blocking.

Will Conservatives stop blocking stuff that actually helps their constituents, thousands of their constituents?

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, certainly there are many reasons to get behind this kind of legislation, but there is also an economic reason. I appeal to the red Tories who are standing opposite right now. On the diabetes stats alone, unnecessary costs are incurred from lost productivity and elevated health care system use due to diabetes and its complications, which include heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, blindness and amputation. If we provide diabetes medication free of charge, we can save an estimated $27 billion to $39 billion in our health care system in this country by 2028. That makes fiscal sense, not to mention ethical sense.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that if we take a look at the whole concept of a national pharmacare program where diabetes is being highlighted and the many different benefits that society would receive, it is there, and it is very tangible, as the minister just made reference to. The concern that I have is that the Conservatives have made it known that they do not support it, which means that they are prepared to do whatever it takes to prevent the bill from passing. I am wondering if the minister could provide his thoughts on the importance of the legislation passing.

Without using this particular tool within the government, the Conservatives would not allow the bill to pass.

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his contributions today and every day in this chamber. What I would say is that it is critical. It is critical for basic equality. It is critical for basic things such as women's control over their own bodies and their reproductive rights. I know that that this can sometimes be a divisive issue on that side of the House and, in particular, within that caucus.

On this side of the House and among progressive parties that are represented in this chamber, it is not controversial whatsoever. We stand by a woman's ability to control her body, to control her reproductive processes, and if that means providing free contraception, that is exactly what we will do with this bill, and we will proceed with haste to achieve that goal.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yet again we see the government seize an opportunity to block debate on an important bill. We could have analyzed the government's intention to once again interfere, through this bill, in areas of jurisdiction that belong to the provinces and Quebec. However, by blocking debate and cutting our time short with a closure motion, the government is stopping us from having these very important conversations.

It is one more opportunity for the government to encroach on health care, which is Quebec's jurisdiction. Quebec is perfectly ready and able to take responsibility for its own social, health care support and insurance programs.

I would like the minister to reassure us. I know this is a topic that the Bloc Québécois comes back to a lot, but interference in Quebec's areas of jurisdiction is a concern for many Quebeckers. Although the debate will be cut short, will the minister still listen to Quebec's demands? Quebec demands the right to opt out with full compensation from programs like the one we are discussing today, namely pharmacare, and any others that constitute federal interference in the jurisdictions of the Government of Quebec.

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I completely disagree with everything my colleague across the way just said.

I want to stress that, when we talk about the health care budget we give to Canadians in Quebec and all across Canada, it is not about interference. It is about equality. It is about control and independence, especially for women, whether they are Quebeckers or Canadians. They have the right to control their own reproductive system, and contraception will help them do that. It is as simple as that. This is crucial for gender equality.

I hope all the Bloc Québécois members vote in favour of the bill so it can go to the committee mentioned in the motion we are now studying, because it is time to act.

● (1710)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am all in favour of the purpose of Bill C-64, but I take issue with rushing through the work, because we must participate in the debates.

[*English*]

I really wish we had time. I understand the pressure, as things in this place seem to face so many obstacles. The concern of the government is that things will get bogged down

As the leader of the Green Party, we have been, in every platform for I cannot remember how many elections, calling for a universal single-payer pharmacare that actually means that Canada will properly be a country with universal health care. We are the only country in the world that has a nationalized health care system that does not provide for universal pharmacare.

The big pharma industry in this country, and globally, makes indecent levels of profits over drugs that it has not had to put investment in for research. There are a lot of issues to discuss with pharmacare. The Hoskins report scratched the surface of the ways we could, in this country, save billions of dollars for our health care system, but not with a piecemeal approach. I very much fear the piecemeal approach to what I support: absolutely, diabetes medications, absolutely, contraception available for free. However, I fear that we may be setting up a system where, because we do not see savings, we may even see an increase in costs.

Universal, single-payer pharmacare would save our health care system billions of dollars a year, and this is not it, not yet. I want to support getting the bill through, but I really object to seeing a constant loss of our opportunity to thoroughly debate issues because of the need to bring down *le bâillon, toujours la guillotine*.

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I have several responses.

First, there has been 10 hours of debate thus far.

Second, this is not just about contraception and diabetes. It is also about establishing, within 30 days of royal assent, a committee of experts to make recommendations to the minister regarding the operation and financing of a national universal single-payer pharmacare. Are we proceeding incrementally at the start? Absolutely we are.

With respect to the financing component, that member is from the Saanich—Gulf Islands. In her own province, the estimate on the financial savings to the system just in B.C., from a UBC study, is that no-cost contraception has the potential to save the B.C. health care system approximately $27 million per year. As I said earlier, and I will say again, there is an ethical case for proceeding with pace. There is also a financial case for proceeding with pace.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think part of the difficulty is that the costly coalition fails to recognize that their continued spending on behalf of Canadians is costing Canadian lives. We know that, under the health care system that exists under the government's watch, between 17,000 and 30,000 Canadians die every year because of a procedure or a consultation they cannot get. The government still continues to spend money in a hand-over-fist fashion. With the support of the costly coalition partners behind me, what we are seeing is another bill being rushed through, much like the botched dental care plan, which we know should have taken several years and is now failing Canadians.

The other misconception that the government wants to peddle to Canadians is that this is a free plan that already exists. We already know there is no plan. This is a simple pamphlet or idea, again for photo ops, that is going to cost Canadians money. The minister spoke already about how the government is going to set up a specialist committee to talk about it a bit more. After that, it is going to create another Canadian drug agency, which is going to cost hundreds of thousands of dollars every year.

What we need is a responsible government. Whenever the Liberals are ready to allow us to take over, we are more than happy to.

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, the choice of government is for Canadians. It is not for the member, nor me.

First of all, as the member is a medical professional, I found some of his interventions quite astounding. The notion that investing in the health care system is somehow inappropriate is not what his province advocated for, nor did any of the other 10 provinces and three territories when we struck an almost $200-billion deal.

What I would also say is that it is really fundamental to get straight what we are talking about here. We are talking about delivering health care for Canadians by investing in their medication. As the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands rightfully pointed out, we are alone in the OECD in being a state that provides medical care coverage without providing medication coverage. That is an anomaly that we are curing with this important step. Why is it important? Because it deals with reproductive rights for women and medication for diabetes, which affects 3.7 million Canadians. Those are two cohorts that desperately need our support.

That is what we are providing through this legislation and that is why we are moving with pace to implement it.

● (1715)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister about concerns that we share with him about all the blockages the Conservatives have been putting up on bills like dental care that would help Canadians across the country. They seem to think that they deserve dental care here as MPs, yet needy families in the rest of Canada should not have dental care. They believe that we should not have single-payer pharmacare that would save us billions of dollars a year.

Canadians seem to think the Conservatives are good on the economy, but the Conservatives have no concept that this measure to create a single-payer pharmacare plan that would include coverage for contraceptives, as well as the dental care plan and all the other things that we talked about, would save us money.

I am just wondering if the minister could comment on that.

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I think the fiscal case for proceeding in this manner is quite remarkably already laid out in studies, such as the one at UBC that I cited, and studies that we have seen in other areas with respect to diabetes. If there was no need for these kinds of services, I would query the Conservatives why 1.9 million seniors in this country registered for the Canada dental benefit, if no actual need existed.

I would put to the Conservatives, also, that if there was no need for extending that coverage on dental care, why we have already had 100,000 appointments set up, in literally the first three weeks of the program. It expresses to me, on a simplistic analysis, that the need is acute.

We are addressing the need with the program. Does it cost money? It absolutely costs money. However, that is an investment on the front end that cures costs to the system on the back end, which is something that a traditional red Tory would normally get behind.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is a fairly simple dictum in politics that everyone knows, and it is that adding is better than subtracting. We try to add to the number of people who are willing to support our positions. By the same token, when a bill as momentous as this government bill is introduced, the aim is to get all the provinces to buy in and consent. This is not the case for pharmacare, however. The government never negotiated with the provinces and Quebec to secure their buy-in. It decided to implement a one-size-fits-all pharmacare program throughout Quebec, without having the necessary jurisdiction. That is why, today, it has to impose closure.

The Quebec government wants nothing to do with this version of pharmacare that the Liberal government is putting in place. The only ones who are happy with it are the members of the Liberal government, who are trying to spin it to their advantage with the electorate and preserve their alliance with the NDP. This is not the case for mere mortals. People who just want quality services can see that this bill has been botched.

If the government truly cared about health care, it would fund it at the level that the provinces are asking for, rather than cutting transfers year after year and starving our health system of the resources it needs. That is the question my colleague should weigh in on.

Hon. Arif Virani: I do not agree at all with the remarks of my colleague opposite.

First, when we created a national program for all of Canada's provinces and territories by investing about $200 billion, we launched a process to sign bilateral agreements with each province, Quebec included.

Second, I would ask my colleague to talk to diabetics and women in his riding about the cost of their medication these days. The oral contraception pill costs about $25 a month, or $300 a year. Diabetes medication can cost between $900 and $1,700 a year.

I think my colleague should support this bill so that his constituents can save money while receiving care from the health system and getting their medication.

● (1720)

[*English*]

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find the Liberal-NDP support of health care to be somewhat confusing. On one hand, they say they are providing all of these supports and building a whole new bureaucracy, but on the other hand, they are making things much more difficult and restricting choices for health care. I am thinking specifically of natural health products, which most Canadians take in one form or another. The policies and legislation they are bringing in would restrict and reduce the number of choices that Canadians could make.

I wonder if the minister can put it together. On one hand, Liberals say, yes, they want to help. On the other hand, they are not helping. They are making it harder for Canadians.

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk about the medication that would be covered under this proposal, which is diabetic medication and contraception. I am struggling to find any shred of a basis or rationale for the Conservatives' opposition to this. What I can only conclude is that the very issue of contraception is somehow some sort of sacred cow for the Conservative Party because it touches upon the very important notion, which we believe in firmly on this side of the House, in alliance with some of our progressive allies in this chamber, that women, and only women, have the right to have control over their own bodies and their own reproductive processes.

What impact would this have on women? It would have a significant impact. Not having affordable access to effective contraception can increase the risk of unintended pregnancies and impact life plans, such as going to school or advancing in one's career. By giving women this control, we would be not only helping their health care outcomes, but also helping their economic and education outcomes. Certainly, that is not something the member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge would oppose for his female constituents.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to this legislation, I believe there should be more debate on it because it is a wider bill. Right now, it takes about seven years for an oncology drug to be approved in Canada. That is partly because of the many processes it has to go through at Health Canada and through a provincial group that discusses drugs, etc. This would add to that, so we need to have more conversation about it.

Outside of that, I would like to correct the minister. It is within the purview of the government, through the regular supply process, to basically fund initiatives, and it can come to agreements with provinces to fund particular things under its fiscal power. It does not need to have legislation such as this.

Would the minister please acknowledge that the government does not need to have this legislation in place to make payments to individual provinces? British Columbia has already approved contraception through its own budget process. That is something that was debated in its legislature and passed. He does not need to do that here and now.

I am concerned with other measures within the bill. The government does not need this bill to pass to make those payments to provinces, whether it be for diabetes or for contraception.

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for offering a substantive question and comment to this debate.

We have an agreement that there are health care needs that relate to medication. That is useful progress. I would say that there is a need for proceeding in this context with this very particular piece of legislation because the program is not meant to be a checkerboard where it is done on a bilateral basis, province by province. It is meant to be national, covering all 10 provinces and all three territories. That is the first very important point.

The second very important point is that the very pressing issue the member raised about oncological medications for cancer treatment is something that deserves to be discussed and debated. By starting incrementally, we are finally opening the door towards pharmacare in this country as an important expansion of our medical care system. Through the Canada drug agency, the new formulary and the expert recommendations that would follow, we would learn more about whether oncological drugs should be the next salvo in expanding this envelope.

● (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Conservatives want absolutely nothing to do with a measure that will help tens of thousands of people in their ridings. In each Conservative riding, approximately 18,000 people could benefit from diabetes medication and 25,000 people could have access to contraception.

What I do not understand is why the Bloc Québécois is opposed to it. The Bloc Québécois wants to block this bill, even though all the major labour groups in Quebec have clearly stated that the bill is very useful and should be passed. Now, the number of Quebeckers involved with the unions affiliated with these major labour groups is far greater than the number who voted for the Bloc Québécois in the last federal election. The big question is, why is the Bloc Québécois planning to oppose measures that will help millions of Quebeckers?

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, that is another very good question. I have been wondering the same thing, given the tradition in the Bloc Québécois and Quebec of promoting gender equality, promoting women's rights, promoting women's freedom, empowerment and access to health care. It is a bit sad and dangerous when a woman in Quebec has to choose between paying the bills and paying for medication.

With this bill, we will eliminate the need to make that choice. We will respond women's needs. This is a very serious situation that affects not just Quebec women, but approximately nine million women across Canada. It is a significant problem. We must pick up the pace in order to meet their needs.

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, I can tell my NDP colleague that the Bloc Québécois never opposes progressive policies. It defends the political independence of Quebec. That is what the Bloc Québécois does.

I would also like to point out to my colleague that many unions are members of OUI Québec. OUI Québec is a pro-independence umbrella group. Does this mean the NDP does not support Quebec unions, since it opposes independence? We cannot be allies in every battle, but we are definitely closer to most Quebec unions than the NDP is, because Quebec has already proven how progressive it is.

Still, I am astounded that the Minister of Justice is drawing a link between women's rights and the fact the Bloc Québécois opposes pharmacare. No society is more progressive on women's rights than Quebec. If the Minister of Justice wants to improve gender equality, one of the best ways to do that would be to pass a secularism law, since certain religions make distinctions between men and women. I do not know if he is in favour of passing a secularism law. I would like it if he could tell us.

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, we just heard some interesting comments. I want to note that when we talk about women, there are impacts on women as a whole, but there is also a disproportionate impact on certain women.

I am talking about first nations women, Métis women, women of African heritage, as well as East Asian and South Asian women. These women are disproportionately affected by diabetes.

I hope that those who come from a progressive people and party will understand that these women are disproportionately affected by the policies currently in place regarding diabetes.

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was elected at the same time the minister was, and I remember the sunny ways and accusations that the Liberals made against the Conservatives about our use of closure and our use of ending debate here. The Liberals promised, in the 2015 election, that they would no longer do that.

Is the minister proud of himself today?

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud, as I am advancing the rights of women and the rights of diabetics in Canada.

I am a bit concerned about the member for Peace River—Westlock. About two short days after the member's leader cavalierly indicated that he would be invoking the notwithstanding clause to trample Canadians' charter rights, the member for Peace River—Westlock stood up and called for ending abortions, protecting the preborn and overturning the Morgentaler decision.

That demonstrates quite clearly who is on the side of protecting women's rights and women's reproductive rights in this chamber.

● (1730)

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time. Members may wish to refer to the Speaker's ruling from June 7, 2021, at page 8001 of the Debates where the Speaker addressed the situation and indicated to the House that "the question and comment period on a time allocation motion or closure motion will be interrupted only if there is an opportunity to conclude the proceedings in the same sitting."

Accordingly, I will remind members that there are four minutes remaining for questions and comments on the motion after Private Members' Business.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for me to introduce the bill that I planned to introduce today.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-390, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (provincial medical assistance in dying framework).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise today to introduce this important bill entitled an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding a provincial medical assistance in dying framework.

The purpose of my bill is to enable persons who have an incapacitating illness to make an advance request for medical assistance in dying, in accordance with the unanimous will of the Quebec National Assembly. The recognition of advance requests for MAID in the context of a serious, incurable, incapacitating illness would constitute an important step forward for patients' peace of mind.

The text of this bill amends the Criminal Code so that MAID can be provided under a provincial framework that stipulates that a person with an illness that could deprive them of the capacity to consent to care can make an advance request for MAID.

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

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as I have done in the past to have the questions on the Order Paper on the record, I would ask for unanimous consent to do so. I believe there was consultation done prior.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 2487, 2490, 2491 and 2497 to 2500.

[*Text*]

Question No. 2487—**Mr. Marc Dalton**:

With regard to Health Canada's (HC) authorization of COVID-19 vaccines: (a) has HC received studies about theoretical risk of Vaccine-Associated Enhanced Disease (VAED), also referred to as Antibody-Dependent Enhancement (ADE), from the manufacturers of the COVID-19 vaccines; (b) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, (i) what were the outcome of the studies, (ii) which manufacturers and independent researchers are conducting these studies, (iii) what were the timelines to completion; (c) if the answer to (a) is negative, did HC, the Public Health Agency of Canada, or the National Advisory Committee identify a need for long-term studies to examine VAED, and, if not, why not; (d) has any federal health agency, department or other government entity been monitoring for VAED ADE post-COVID-19 injections; (e) if the answer to (d) is affirmative, (i) what is the data, (ii) what are the timelines, (iii) was this active or passive monitoring; (f) if the answer to (d) is negative, why not; and (g) has any federal health agency, department or other government entity been monitoring for the potential of vaccine-enhanced infectivity?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before a vaccine is approved in Canada, the department conducts a rigorous scientific review of its safety, efficacy and quality. Submissions typically contain extensive data regarding the vaccine's safety, efficacy and quality, including results of pre-clinical and clinical studies, details on manufacturing processes, and information on adverse events following immunization. An authorization is only issued when the benefits of the vaccine outweigh the risks of its use. After authorization, Canada has a robust and well-established vaccine safety surveillance system involving Health Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada or PHAC, provinces and territories, and vaccine manufacturers.

In response to (a), Health Canada received and reviewed the outcomes from clinical studies of COVID 19 vaccines, including the assessment for the theoretical risk of vaccine-associated enhanced disease, VAED.

VAED, antibody-dependent enhancement or ADE, and severe COVID-19 cases were considered adverse events of special interest that were followed by the independent safety data monitoring boards as part of COVID 19 clinical trials. VAED/ADE is considered an acute phenomenon resulting from exposure to the virus shortly following vaccination when the immune system may have a disproportional response to the virus. In the protocols for these trials, there were prespecified stopping rules that included monitoring for the onset of severe COVID 19 cases as part of the safety surveillance for the potential of VAED/ADE events during the conduct of the clinical trials.

The available data from the clinical trials suggested no evidence for VAED associated with COVID-19 vaccines. Research using suitable animal models for testing vaccine immunogenicity and enhanced disease did not demonstrate evidence of enhanced disease following vaccination. This has been tested with several different vaccine platforms, including mRNA vaccines.

In response to (b), see response to (a) and (e). While the outcomes of clinical trials did not demonstrate evidence of VAED associated with the use of COVID-19 vaccines, VAED was considered an important potential risk in all risk management plans of these products and has been monitored closely for authorized vaccines. This process allows Health Canada to assess information submitted by the manufacturer as it became available during the product life cycle and regularly assess whether there is any new safety information that may affect the benefit-risk profile of the product.

As with all health products, Health Canada continues to monitor the safety of COVID 19 vaccines. Should new safety issues be identified, Health Canada takes action, which could include communicating new risks to Canadians and health care professionals, requesting safety information from the manufacturers, or changing the recommended use of the product.

Further details about all authorized COVID-19 vaccines, including information on clinical trials conducted, can be found on the Government of Canada's website "COVID vaccines and treatments portal", at https://covid-vaccine.canada.ca/. Specifically, information about Comirnaty, by Pfizer-BioNTech, can be found at https://covid-vaccine.canada.ca/info/SBD00510-comirnaty-en.html; information about Spikevax, by Moderna, can be found at https://covid-vaccine.canada.ca/info/SBD00511-spikevax-en.html; information about Nuvaxovid, by Novavax Inc., can be found at https://covid-vaccine.canada.ca/info/SBD00581-nuvaxovid-en.html; information about Vaxzevria, by AstraZeneca, can be found at https://covid-vaccine.canada.ca/info/SBD00519-vaxzevria-en.html; information about Jcovden, by Janssen Inc., can be found at https://covid-vaccine.canada.ca/info/SBD00522-jcovden-en.html; information about Covifenz, by Medicago Inc., can be found at https://covid-vaccine.canada.ca/info/SBD00582-covifenz-en.html.

In response to (c), see response to (a) and (b).

In response to (d), following authorization, Canada has a robust and well-established vaccine safety surveillance system involving Health Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada or PHAC, provinces and territories, and vaccine manufacturers. Health Canada continues to monitor the safety profile of health products once they are on the Canadian market, to help ensure that the benefits of the product continue to outweigh the risks. The safety profile of these products is monitored by reviewing information from manufacturers and international regulators. When new safety issues are identified, Health Canada takes action, which could include communicating new risks to Canadians and health care professionals or changing the recommended use of the product. In addition, Health Canada and the PHAC have been actively monitoring and reviewing reports of adverse events following immunization, AEFI, including VAED, reported to the Canada vigilance program of Health Canada and the Canadian adverse events following immunization surveillance system of the PHAC. This information is published on the Government of Canada's website. It is important to note that these reports do not necessarily imply that a relationship between the adverse event and the vaccine has been established. However, they are an important information source supporting ongoing safety monitoring.

In response to (e), as part of the ongoing pharmacovigilance monitoring for COVID-19 vaccines, no new safety signal has been identified for VAED to date. Furthermore, the information available at this time demonstrates that the benefits of COVID-19 vaccines continue to outweigh potential risks. Health Canada continues to monitor these vaccines as long as they are authorized and marketed in Canada.

In response to (f), see response to (d).

In response to (g), as described in (b) and (d), Health Canada and the PHAC have been actively monitoring and reviewing reports of adverse events following immunization, AEFI, reported to the Canada vigilance program of Health Canada and the Canadian adverse events following immunization surveillance system of the PHAC. This information is published on the Government of Canada's website.

In addition, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, NACI, primarily evaluates clinical and post-market observational data to support the development of recommendations on the use of vaccines in Canada.

Question No. 2490—**Mr. Terry Dowdall**:

> With regard to Canada Post: (a) what was the total amount spent on fuel in the last year; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by gasoline versus diesel; (c) what is the estimated number of litres of (i) gasoline, (ii) diesel fuel, purchased in the last year; (d) how many vehicles does Canada Post currently own; (e) what is the breakdown of vehicles owned by (i) diesel fueled, (ii) gasoline fueled, (iii) hybrid, (iv) electric; (f) what is the estimated number of kilometers driven by Canada Post vehicles last year; and (g) what is the breakdown of (a) through (f) by province or territory?

Mr. Charles Sousa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a) to (c) and (e) to (g), Canada Post is a Crown corporation that operates at arm's length from the government and has a mandate to be financially self-sustaining in a highly competitive sector that includes global companies like Amazon, FedEx and UPS. The requested information is commercially sensitive and treated as confidential.

In response to (d), Canada Post Corporation owns approximately 14,900 vehicles, including trailers.

Question No. 2491—**Mr. Richard Cannings**:

> With regard to the Housing Accelerator Fund, since September 1, 2023: (a) how many applications for federal funding were rejected or unsuccessful, broken down by (i) province or territory, (ii) municipality; and (b) what is the projected number of residences that could have been constructed if funding was provided?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the housing accelerator fund, with respect to part (a), in processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the Privacy Act and the principles set out in the Access to Information Act, and as there are no agreements in place for applications that remain unfunded through the housing accelerator fund, the information has been withheld on the grounds that it qualifies for an exemption under operations of government.

To protect the confidentiality of CMHC's partners and proponents, information regarding applications or potential projects cannot be released publicly until CMHC has a signed agreement with the proponent and a public announcement takes place.

The housing accelerator fund program received 544 applications, of which 179 resulted in signed agreements, including the agreement with the Province of Quebec. For more information and progress report on the housing accelerator fund, please consult CMHC's website: https://www.placetocallhome.ca/progress-on-the-national-housing-strategy.

With respect to part (b), over 140,700 new estimated units were identified in the applications that were not selected. Under the current successful agreements, CMHC estimates 750,000 new units will be built over the next decade.

Question No. 2497—**Mr. Ryan Williams**:

> With regard to Environment and Climate Change Canada's funding of the barn swallow nesting structure project in Prince Edward Point: (a) what was the cost of the project, in total, and broken down by item and type of expense; and (b) what are the details of all contracts related to the project, including, for each, the (i) amount, (ii) vendor, (iii) date and duration, (iv) description of the goods or services provided, (v) manner in which the contract was awarded (i.e. sole-sourced or competitive bid)?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to (a) the total cost of building materials, including lumber, plywood roofing materials, caulking materials, concrete and supporting hardware, was $1,889.04.

Environment and Climate Change Canada, ECCC, staff purchased materials from local retail stores and then built the structure using a total of nine person days. The breakdown of the cost is as follows: Picton Home Hardware, February 27, 2024, $904.38; Picton Home Hardware, March 13, 2024, $530.69; Picton Home Hardware, March 13, 2024, $286.60; Picton Home Hardware, March 14, 2024, $63.68; Home Depot, March 8, 2024, $67.30; Home Depot, March 11, 2024, $36.39.

In response to (b), no contracts were issued related to the construction of the barn swallow structure at Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area. ECCC sourced specifications and the design for free from partners at Ontario Parks, and acquired the construction materials locally when possible using credit cards. ECCC technical staff then built the structure using approximately nine person days. Retail vendors of the materials and amounts are provided in part (a).

Question No. 2498—**Mr. Dave Epp**:

> With regard to the completion date on the Gordie Howe International Bridge project being delayed until September 2025: (a) was the delay related to disputes with Valard Construction; (b) to which of the four major associated construction projects are the additional $700 million assigned, and which of these projects is expected to result in more claims; (c) will the $700 million cover the overrun costs to the subcontractors until the end of 2022; (d) what additional funds will be allocated for work order charges from 2023, 2024 and 2025 until the end of the project; and (e) if there will be no additional funds allocated, will the government confirm there will be no more contractors' claims for the remainder of the project?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the completion date on the Gordie Howe International Bridge project being delayed until September 2025, with respect to part (a) no, the delay is not related to disputes with Valard Construction.

With respect to part (b), the additional money, approximately $685 million, is largely related to COVID-19 impacts projectwide and is not assigned to any one specific component of the Gordie Howe International Bridge project.

With respect to part (c), the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority, WDBA, anticipates that the additional funding will be sufficient.

With respect to part (d), WDBA has funding within its existing reference levels to address certain retained risks.

With respect to part (e), WDBA cannot confirm whether there will be more contractors' claims.

Question No. 2499—**Mr. Dave Epp**:

> With regard to the Gordie Howe International Bridge project: (a) what are the estimated costs to taxpayers associated with the new completion date; and (b) will the cost overruns, those identified and the others yet to be determined, lengthen the time it takes for Canadian taxpayers to be reimbursed through the collection of tolls, will the toll charges be increased to cover the additional costs, or both?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the Gordie Howe International Bridge project, with respect to part (a), the estimated cost to taxpayers associated with the new completion date is $507 million, which will ensure the Gordie Howe International Bridge project is delivered to Canadians safely, responsibly and in a timely manner.

With respect to part (b), several factors will impact the time it takes to recoup Canada's contribution to the Gordie Howe International Bridge project, including the toll rate, traffic volumes and overall project costs. Toll rates will be set by the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority and will be influenced by various elements, including rates at other crossings, the project's objective to facilitate economic growth and cost recovery.

Question No. 2500—**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille**:

> With regard to the Canada Post building located at 180 Victoria Street, Salaberry-de-Valleyfield: (a) what are the annual expenses related to the operation of the post office and the sorting facility; (b) what investments are planned between now and 2030 at this building and for the operations that take place there; and (c) what is the estimated market value of the building and the land?

Mr. Charles Sousa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post Corporation is a Crown corporation that operates at arm's length from the government, and its operations are funded by the revenue generated by the sale of its products and services, not taxpayer dollars. The requested information is commercially sensitive and has always been treated as confidential.

* * *

● (1735)

[*English*]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, furthermore, if a supplementary response to Question No. 443, originally tabled on May 13, 2022; a supplementary response to Question No. 494, originally tabled on June 8, 2022; a supplementary response to Question No. 628, originally tabled on September 20, 2022; a supplementary response to Question No. 891, originally tabled on December 5, 2022; a supplementary response to Question No. 905, originally tabled on December 7, 2022; a supplementary response to Questions Nos. 992, 1032, 1037 and 1054, originally tabled on January 30, 2023; a supplementary response to Questions Nos. 1164, 1176, 1177 and 1178, originally tabled on March 20, 2023; a supplementary response to Question No. 1215, originally tabled on March 27, 2023; a supplementary response to Question No. 1264, originally tabled on April 17, 2023; a supplementary response to Questions Nos. 1295 and 1297, originally tabled on April 21, 2023; a supplementary response to Question No. 1412, originally tabled on June 5, 2023; a supplementary response to Question No. 1429, originally tabled on June 8, 2023; a supplementary response to Question No. 1517, originally tabled on June 21, 2023; a supplementary response to Questions Nos. 1600 and 1620, originally tabled on September 18, 2023; and the government's responses to Questions Nos. 2488, 2489, 2492 to 2496 and 2501 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled in an electronic format immediately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is it the pleasure of the House that the aforementioned questions be made orders for return and that they be tabled immediately?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Text*]

Question No. 443—**Mrs. Tracy Gray**:

With regard to government expenditures with Amazon since January 1, 2020, broken down by department or agency: (*a*) what was the total value of expenditures, broken down by year; and (*b*) what are the details of each expenditure, including the (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) vendor, (iv) description of goods or services?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 494—**Mr. Michael Kram**:

With regard to reports of "March madness expenditures" where the government makes purchases before the end of the fiscal year so that departmental funds do not go unspent, broken down by department, agency or other government entity: (*a*) what were the total expenditures during February and March of 2022 on (i) materials and supplies (standard object 07), (ii) acquisition of machinery and equipment, including parts and consumable tools (standard object 09); and (*b*) what are the details of each such expenditure, including the (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) date of the expenditure, (iv) description of the goods or services provided, (v) delivery date, (vi) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 628—**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman**:

With regard to the government's social media accounts, broken down by department, agency, or other government entity: (*a*) how many employees or full-time equivalents are assigned to the accounts, and what are their titles; (*b*) how many accounts or profiles does the government manage, broken down by social media platform; (*c*) what are the details of each account or profile, including, for each, the (i) name of the platform, (ii) handle or profile name; (*d*) what specific procedures are in place to ensure that any information put out through the government's accounts (i) does not contain disinformation, misinformation, or misleading information, (ii) is not politically biased towards the government or the Liberal Party of Canada; and (*e*) for any procedures related to (*d*), who has final approval before an item is posted?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 891—**Mr. Philip Lawrence**:

With regard to expenditures on communications professional services (codes 035, 0351, and 0352) since April 1, 2021, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity: what are the details of each expenditure, including (i) the date, (ii) the amount, (iii) the vendor, (iv) the description of goods or services, (v) whether the contract was sole-sourced or competitively bid?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 905—**Mr. Gerald Soroka**:

With regard to government employees on leave, broken down by department, agency, or other government entity: (a) how many employees are on leave as of October 20, 2022, broken down by type of leave; and (b) how many employees were on "Other Leave With Pay" (code 699), broken down by month since January 1, 2022?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 992—**Mr. Michael Cooper**:

With regard to advertising on social media by the government since 2016, broken down by year: what was the total amount spent by the government for advertisements on (i) Twitter, (ii) Facebook, (iii) TikTok, (iv) lnstagram, (v) Snapchat, (vi) WhatsApp, (vii) Linkedln, (viii) other social media platforms, broken down by platform?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1032—**Mrs. Rachael Thomas**:

With regard to expenditures by the government on subscriptions and data access services in the 2021-22 fiscal year, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity: (a) what is the total amount spent; and (b) what are the details of each expenditure, including the (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) date, (iv) description of goods or services, (v) titles of publications or data for each subscription, (vi) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1037—**Mr. Dean Allison**:

With regard to government expenditures on membership fees, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity, since October 1, 2020: (a) how much money has been spent; and (b) what are the details of each expenditure, including the (i) name of the organization or the vendor, (ii) date of the purchase, (iii) amount, (iv) number of memberships purchased?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1054—**Mr. Michael Barrett**:

With regard to tweets made by the government that were later deleted, broken down by each instance, since January 1, 2019: what are the details of each instance, including the (i) Twitter handle and username, (ii) date the tweet was posted, (iii) date the tweet was deleted, (iv) summary of its contents, (v) reason the tweet was deleted, (vi) titles of who approved the initial tweet, (vii) titles of who ordered the tweet's removal?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1164—**Mr. Marty Morantz**:

With regard to expenditures on consulting services by the government in the 2021 and 2022 calendar years, broken down by year and by department, agency or other government entity: (a) what was the total amount spent on (i) training consultants (code 0446), (ii) information technology and telecommunications consultants (code 0473), (iii) management consulting (code 0491), (iv) other types of consultants or consulting, broken down by type and object code; and (b) for each response in (a), what is the total value of the expenditures that were (i) awarded competitively, (ii) sole-sourced?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1176—**Mrs. Karen Vecchio**:

With regard to spending on stock photographs or images by the government since January 1, 2020, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, and other government entity: (a) what is the total amount spent; and (b) what are the details of each contract or expenditure, including (i) the vendor, (ii) the amount, (iii) the details and duration of contract, (iv) the date, (v) the number of photos or images purchased, (vi) where the photos or images were used (Internet, billboards, etc.), (vii) the description of the advertising campaign, (viii) the file number of the contract?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1177—**Mrs. Karen Vecchio**:

With regard to personal protective equipment masks purchased by the government: (a) how many masks were purchased each month since January 2021; (b) how much was spent each month on the masks in (a); and (c) what is the breakdown of (a) and (b) by type of mask (N95, disposable cloth, reusable, etc.) and by manufacturer?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1178—**Mrs. Karen Vecchio**:

With regard to personal protective equipment (PPE) purchased by the government since March 1, 2020, broken down by year: (a) what is the total value of PPE purchased by the government that was (i) sole-sourced, (ii) awarded through a competitive bidding process; and (b) what is the total value of PPE contracts that were made under a national security exemption?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1215—**Mr. Andrew Scheer**:

With regard to government expenditures on appearance fees, speaking fees, hosting fees, or other similar type of fees, since January 1, 2019, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity: what are the details of all such expenditures, including, for each, the (i) date of the event, (ii) description of the role (keynote speaker, master of ceremony, etc.), (iii) name of the speaker, (iv) location of the event, (v) event description, (vi) size of the audience or the number of attendees, (vii) amount paid?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1264—**Mr. John Nater**:

With regard to information services (IS) employees (Treasury Board code 305) within the civil service, broken down by department, agency, or other government entity: (a) how many IS workers are currently employed by the government, in total; and (b) how many executives or workers, at the EX level or higher, do the IS workers report to, in total?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1295—**Mr. Dan Albas**:

With regard to expenditures made under object code 3252 (Interest, administration or service charges, and other penalty charges), broken down by department, agency, or other government entity for each of the last five years: (a) how many expenditures were made; (b) what was the total value of the expenditures; and (c) what are the details of each such expenditure over $500, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) vendor, (iv) reason for the fee (late payment, incorrect payment, etc.)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1297—**Mr. Gerald Soroka**:

With regard to expenditures related to conferences, since 2016, broken down by year and by department, agency, or other government entity: (a) what was the total amount spent on conference fees (object code 0823 or similar); and (b) what was the total amount spent on travel expenses for public servants attending conferences?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1412—**Mr. John Brassard**:

With regard to the increase in the number of public service employees between 2016 and 2023: (a) what was the total number of public service workers as of (i) January 1, 2016, (ii) January 1, 2023, in total and broken down by department or agency; and (b) what was the total number of positions added to the public service between January 1, 2016, and January 1, 2023, broken down by occupational group, level, Treasury Board classification, and department or agency?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1429—**Mr. Scot Davidson**:

With regard to reports of "March madness expenditures" where the government makes purchases before the end of the fiscal year so that departmental funds do not go unspent, broken down by department, agency or other government entity: (a) what were the total expenditures during February and March of 2023 on (i) materials and supplies (standard object 07), (ii) acquisition of machinery and equipment, including parts and consumable tools (standard object 09); and (b) what are the details of each such expenditure, including the (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) date of the expenditure, (iv) description of the goods or services provided, (v) delivery date, (vi) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1517—**Mr. Gord Johns**:

With regard to contracts awarded since the 2015-16 fiscal year, broken down by fiscal year: what is the total value of contracts awarded to (i) McKinsey & Company, (ii) Deloitte, (iii) PricewaterhouseCoopers, (iv) Accenture, (v) KPMG, (vi) Ernst and Young?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1600—**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs**:

With regard to expenditures made by the government under object code 0207 (Employee relocation in Canada) in each of the last three fiscal years (2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23): (a) what was the total amount spent each year, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity; and (b) what was the total amount spent each year for the relocation of ministerial exempt staff in Canada?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1620—**Mr. Philip Lawrence**:

With regard to government expenditures on membership fees, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity during the 2022-23 fiscal year: (a) what were the total expenditures; and (b) what are the details of each expenditure, including the (i) name of the entity for which the membership fee was paid, (ii) date of the purchase, (iii) amount, (iv) number of memberships purchased, (v) type of organization, if known (professional society, social club, golf club, etc.)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2488—**Mr. Garnett Genuis**:

With regard to the Framework for Cooperation on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism between Canada and India, signed by the current government: (a) is the framework still in effect; (b) has any information been shared between law enforcement or security agencies of Canada and India since June 18, 2023; and (c) was any information shared at any time between law enforcement or security agencies of Canada and India regarding Hardeep Singh Nijjar?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2489—**Mr. Adam Chambers**:

With regard to phone lines paid for by the government, broken down by cellular line versus traditional landline, for each part of the question: (a) how many phone lines was the government paying for as of April 1, 2024; (b) how many of the phone lines are dormant; (c) how many of the phone lines are active but have not been used or have not had any activity in the last year; (d) how many of the phone lines are considered redundant; and (e) what was the total amount spent on phone lines during the 2023 calendar year or the 2023-24 fiscal year, if known, broken down by service provider?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2492—**Mr. Todd Doherty**:

With regard to federal procurement: (a) how many cases of suspected invoicing fraud by Information Technology (IT) subcontractors have been submitted to the RCMP for investigation since January 2024; and (b) which departments are involved?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2493—**Mr. Todd Doherty**:

With regard to revoked or suspended security clearances of contractors since January 2024: what are the details of all revoked contracts, including the (i) department, (ii) vendor, (iii) value, (iv) description of the goods and services, (v) date the contract was signed, (vi) start and end dates?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2494—**Mr. Todd Doherty**:

With regard to contracts awarded through a non-competitive process since March 2020: what is the total value of contracts awarded to (i) GC Strategies, (ii) Dalian Enterprises Inc., (iii) Amazon Web Services Inc., (iv) Microsoft Canada Inc., (v) TEKsystems Inc., (vi) Donna Cona Inc., (vii) MGIS Inc., (viii) 49 Solutions, (ix) Makwa Resourcing Inc., (x) TPG Technology Consulting Ltd., (xi) Advanced Chippewa Technologies Inc.?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2495—**Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas**:

With regard to federal spending in the electoral district of Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, broken down by fiscal year since 2018–19, inclusively: (a) what is the total amount for each fiscal year; (b) what is the detailed breakdown of the amounts in (a) by department, Crown corporation, agency or organization; and (c) what grants and contributions were made, broken down by funding source?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2496—**Mr. Arnold Viersen**:

With regard to Transport Canada (TC) and the Canadian Transportation Agency data for air travel from January 1, 2018, to December 31, 2023: (a) how many in-flight medical events occurred in Canadian airspace; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by (i) flight type (i.e. commercial, private, freight, charter, other), (ii) airline, (iii) affected person type (i.e. pilots, other flight crew and passengers), (iv) year, (v) month; (c) how many in-flight medical events occurred on airplanes registered in Canada outside the Canadian airspace; (d) what is the breakdown of (c) by (i) flight type (i.e. commercial, private, freight, charter, other), (ii) airline, (iii) affected person type (i.e. pilots, other flight crew and passengers); (e) how many flights and miles were flown in Canadian airspace; (f) how many emergency landings occurred in the Canadian airspace; (g) what is the breakdown of (f) by (i) reason, (ii) airline, (iii) airplane model; (h) how many active Canadian commercial pilots, flight attendants, and air traffic controllers died; (i) what medical screening changes occurred with respect to pilots, flight attendants, and air traffic controllers (e.g. medical certification requirements changes); (j) for each medical screening change, (i) what it the reason, (ii) what is the date of the change, (iii) who are the persons and decision bodies who approved the change; (k) how many pilots, flight attendants, and air traffic controllers claimed disability; (l) how many pilots, flight attendants, and air traffic controllers applied for medical leave; (m) how many pilots underwent their annual medical examination; (n) how many pilots failed their annual medical examinations; (o) how many active pilot licenses existed; (p) how many pilots, flight attendants, and air traffic controllers lost their employment or were placed on an unpaid leave as a result of refusal to take the COVID-19 vaccines or refusal to inform their employer about their COVID-19 vaccination status; (q) how many pilots lost their license for medical reasons; (r) does TC keep data relating to the numbers of Category 1-3 medical certificates that are (i) held, (ii) temporarily suspended, (iii) permanently suspended for non-compliance with COVID-19 vaccine policy; and (s) if the answers to (r)(i), (r)(ii) or (r)(iii) are affirmative, what is the data?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2501—**Mr. Greg McLean**:

With regard to government funding of non-governmental organizations or groups, from November 4, 2015, to present: (a) how much money has the government allocated to (i) Green Economy Canada, (ii) Alberta EcoTrust, (iii) Corporate Knights, (iv) Echo Foundation, (v) Eco Canada, (vi) Ivey Foundation, (vii) Resilient LLP, (viii) Canadian Climate Institute, (ix) Ecofiscal Commission; (b) for each entity in (a), what are the details, including the (i) department, agency or other government entity, (ii) date of the funding, (iii) amount and deliverables expected; (c) of the allocations in (a), which ones were (i) sole-sourced, (ii) awarded through a competitive bidding process; (d) of the allocations in (c)(ii), what was the (i) duration of the competition, (ii) number of organizations that submitted bids for the required deliverables; and (e) what programs from each organization in (a) received government funding, broken down by year and deliverables expected?

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand, and then I think we go to notice of motions after that.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers also be allowed to stand.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

The House resumed from April 29 consideration of the motion that Bill C-368, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (natural health products), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, this bill amends the Food and Drugs Act to provide that natural health products are not therapeutic products within the meaning of the act and are therefore not subject to the same monitoring regime as other drugs.

First of all, I would like to announce that the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of the bill at second reading, essentially to hear from experts in committee on the best way to regulate natural health products.

This bill follows what the government surreptitiously introduced in a schedule to the 2023 budget, through Bill C-47. There has always been a distinction between drugs and natural health products, and that was a good thing. It seems obvious that natural health products, commonly abbreviated as NHPs, differ from drugs in many ways. We are not saying that they are all harmless; people should ask their pharmacist before consuming any such products. We also acknowledge that NHPs could interact with other medications. However, these are precisely the reasons why we need to examine these products and determine the best way to regulate them.

What the Bloc Québécois wants is to be able to verify whether the decision to subject NHPs to the Protecting Canadians from Unsafe Drugs Act, or Vanessa's Law, is definitely the best way to regulate them, or whether it places an excessive administrative burden on these products. Relatively speaking, these products present lower risks and have a different impact on health than traditional pharmaceuticals.

As the saying goes, sometimes the cure is worse than the disease. Regulations could have the opposite effect to what we are trying to achieve, which is the well-being of Quebeckers and Canadians. The fact is that there are some 91,000 NHPs, 75 of which have been specifically analyzed. After checking certain sampled products, it was concluded that, since 2014, Health Canada has not been doing its job in terms of guaranteeing safe products. The government tried to gain credibility by using a bazooka to kill a fly. That is a reasonable conclusion.

The decision to subject NHPs to Vanessa's Law follows a series of recommendations set out in a report by the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development. In that report to the Parliament of Canada, the commissioner notes that the government does not have the legislative authority to compel NHP companies to identify unlicensed products and take appropriate measures to prevent them from being sold in Canada; identify unauthorized activities and take appropriate action to ensure that product labels and advertisements meet product-licence conditions; obtain the information it needs to verify and ensure that these products are no longer for sale in Canada; and force a recall or impose terms and conditions to mitigate the safety risks associated with these products.

Canada's natural health products regulations allow for licences to be cancelled to prohibit the sale of a product or to have it seized. However, there is no provision allowing the minister to force a product recall. Prior to Bill C-47, recalls were therefore voluntary. Moreover, the environmental risks are not included, so there is some data missing.

As legislators, have we done everything we can to ensure that there is a balance in terms of access to NHPs to guarantee free choice for consumers? Have we done everything we can to ensure that when Health Canada approves products, it does its job and does the necessary inspections?

One of my colleagues, the member for Montcalm and Bloc Québécois health critic, asked whether an impact study had been done on the industry and on small and medium-sized businesses, concerning the recovery costs required. He was told that it was based on Treasury Board guidelines.

I imagine that the Treasury Board's main interest is getting its money's worth. What kind of service is it going to provide when, after all this time, and with all the taxes generated by the industry, it has not even been able to ensure products are tested or inspected throughout its mandate? These are questions that need to be asked. Where are the numbers on how many adverse reactions there have been to natural health products in 17 years? What are the numbers for adverse reactions to pharmaceutical products? We did not get an answer on that either. We know that even though they are approved by Health Canada, pharmaceuticals can sometimes have very serious side effects. However, that is no reason to disqualify them or discredit an entire industry.

● (1740)

It is just a matter of doing the work, carrying out tasks and responsibilities and making sure that things are done well. That seems obvious to me.

What we see here looks like a government uninterested in working to ensure the well-being of its people. Instead, it wants to pass on a hot potato before it gets burned. For a long time now, the government's inaction on many issues has been on full display. It does not know how to work the machinery of government, so a one-size-fits-all solution often seems like the easiest way around the problem. In reality, it is a very poor option.

We have to respect people's intelligence. To properly protect them, they need to be adequately informed. They do not need to have decisions constantly made for them. No one is forced to use an NHP. Consumers who buy these products have already looked into their effects. The role of legislation and regulations is to provide them with a proper framework.

My grandfather used balsam fir gum. He used it for a good part of his life and died at the age of 103. Was this natural health product approved? Probably not. Was it dangerous? Obviously not. He lived for over 100 years. It was not a dangerous drug either. To some extent, if we let the government have its way, balsam fir gum will probably fall out of use, and my grandfather would have been deprived of his traditional remedy, which had supposedly cured him of consumption. One day, after years of searching, he found it again on the shelves at his pharmacy, in capsule form. The midwife who had supplied it to him back in the day had died. This is why NHPs deserve a legal, responsible, credible and rigorous approach. People should be able to opt for a safe, natural solution with components that are recognized and identified, and whose effects are known and accessible to all doctors and practitioners.

Here, we vote on laws. We are not experts, but we need to act responsibly and with humility to put in place the proper legislative provisions. That is what must guide our decisions. That is why Bill C-368 is now necessary. It must be sent to committee so that the parliamentary work can be done. If the government had been a bit more transparent, if it had held the necessary consultations, if we had all worked together to find a way to move forward without harming an industry that Quebeckers and Canadians have the right to access, then we would not be here today discussing this issue.

Unfortunately, the government has not held any consultations to date. The federal government has rather cavalierly dodged many debates on this topic, when the purpose of debate is to turn ambiguous questions into clearer, more appropriate directives. That is exactly why we are going to vote in favour of Bill C-368.

The information I shared in my speech provides ample justification for Parliament to refer this bill to committee. A genuine assessment of the situation is needed given the government's claim that 88% of the 91,000 natural health products are substandard or use misleading labelling. Such a claim requires verification, since the methodology used is flawed. Indeed, the products were verified after problems were reported, and were then identified as substandard. However, this approach grossly inflates the data and raises reasonable questions concerning the methodology used. In our opinion, a randomized approach would be preferable.

Need I remind the House that we have the right to do substantive work to ensure that we are making the right decisions, voting for the right things and passing legislation in the public interest? Need I remind the House that we cannot be sloppy or try to get rid of things or hide the flaws that we did not bother to tackle, things that were swept under the rug because it is easier that way and makes us look good? It is a fairly common technique used by the current government to jump to hasty and ill-considered conclusions, only to impose drastic, rigid rules, where there are often more losers than winners in the end. The Liberals just want to be able to say that they did this, that and the other thing, that they passed this bill and that bill, and they are great. They want to say that they delivered. There was a problem with NHPs, and they passed legislation. It is not enough, but that does not matter. Fisheries are being closed. The government is not listening to those who work in fisheries. Entire villages are facing a socio-economic dead end. It does not matter, as long as the Liberals look good. They say they are going to save the biomass, but they are not saving anything. It does not matter, because announcements have been made. They pass laws and set up legislative procedures to interfere in provincial jurisdictions. It is full steam ahead. Are their solutions correct? Are they being applied consistently? No, but that does not matter.

● (1745)

What matters is that they passed legislation, that they spread their tentacles where they did not belong. That is the way to gain control of everything. They announce funding that is appealing to the provinces that have become so strapped for cash over the years—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but she is well over her time.

Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-368. I would like to thank the member for Red Deer—Lacombe for bringing it forward for the House's consideration.

The reason I am very pleased is that the issue of natural health products has garnered a lot of attention in my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. I have had a lot of constituents and local businesses approach me concerning this issue in particular. I am pleased to be able to stand here, as their elected representative, and let my constituents know that I will be supporting the bill at second reading.

I was also very pleased to be able to add my name as a joint seconder to the bill. To fulfill the wishes of my constituents, I will be voting to send it to committee for further study.

What are we talking about when we say “natural health products”? I have always thought it a weird thing that they are regulated under a statute such as the Food and Drugs Act. They are not really a food, nor are they a drug. They occupy a special place for many people. We must face that humans have had relationships with natural health products dating back thousands of years. Many of these products have a very special place in human history, and a lot of cultures have very long relationships with them.

Today, in the modern world, natural health products often come in a variety of forms, such as tablets, capsules, tinctures, solutions, creams, ointments and drops. There is quite a large variety for people to pick and choose from. They are often made from plants, but they can also come from animals, from micro-organisms and from marine sources. They include vitamins and minerals, herbal remedies, homeopathic medicines, traditional medicines, probiotics and other products, such as amino acids and essential fatty acids. They are found in many everyday consumer products.

Let us come to the bill in question, Bill C-368. As shown in the summary, it would amend the Food and Drugs Act to provide that natural health products are not therapeutic products within the meaning of that act and, therefore, are not subject to the same monitoring regime as other drugs.

Before we get into the substance, we need to take a little history lesson on how we arrived here. I want to say that both Conservatives and Liberals have run into trouble when trying to regulate natural health products. In fact, the previous government, under Harper, learned this lesson very quickly back in 2008 when it introduced Bill C-51. That was also an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act. Under Bill C-51, the term "therapeutic products" encompassed a range of products sold for therapeutic purposes, including drugs, medical devices, biologics and natural health products. In the end, because of an election, that bill was never adopted. However, I believe the Harper government at that time learned its lesson because of the uproar that came in response to Bill C-51, and it did not attempt to change Canada's regulations for natural health products again while in government.

What the Harper government did do, in 2014, was introduce Bill C-17 to amend the Food and Drugs Act. It was also known as Vanessa's Law. This introduced a definition for the term "therapeutic product", but what was different this time was that the definition was worded in such a way that it did not include natural health products, within the meaning of the natural health products regulations.

We then fast-forward to the present Liberal government and Bill C-47. That bill, in a clause buried deep within a budget implementation act, again amended the term "therapeutic product" to make sure that the exemption from the natural health products regulations was actually removed. This has caused much of the uproar we see today.

I want to point out, as I said in my intro, that natural health products have a long history of use in Canada as low-risk, affordable methods of promoting well-being. It is very important that I stand here today and say unequivocally that they must remain accessible to all Canadians. I am proud to be a member of a caucus, the NDP caucus, that has long supported an appropriate regulatory category for natural health products to certify their safety and efficacy based on sound evidence, as well as to ensure that they are widely available for those who use and value them.

● (1750)

It is unacceptable that the changes to the regulatory regime under the Food and Drugs Act was snuck into a budget omnibus bill, because it did not allow for proper study. I am glad to see that, because Bill C-368 is a stand-alone, quite simple and easy-to-read piece of legislation, from reading the room, it should have enough votes to send it to committee. We can then have the proper study; hear from Canadians and businesses that sell natural health products, the practitioners involved in this every day; and, finally, get the proper scrutiny that this issue so richly deserves.

I do not want to spend too much longer speaking to the bill, but I want to talk a bit about the people in my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford who took the time to write to my office, phone me personally and come into my office. In particular, I want to recognize a few of the local businesses. Essential Remedies, Benoit and Associates Health Education, some holistic health practitioners, the Community Farm Store, Botanical Bliss, a certified homeopathic practitioner, a naturopathic physician and Lynn's Vitamin Gallery all took the time in the summer of 2023 to come into my office. We had a great round table discussion. It lasted well over an hour. It was really enlightening for me, as their member of Parliament, to hear their views on this subject and learn a little more about why it is so important.

Yes, my immediate family definitely uses natural health products, and I know that many friends and relatives in my immediate vicinity also use them. However, to hear from professionals who work with clients every day about why this issue is so important was particularly enlightening for me. It is also important to note that 71% of Canadians, which is a very big number, have used natural health products, such as vitamins and minerals, herbal products and homeopathic medicines. Therefore, it is important that, when the NHP community speaks to their elected representatives, it represents a very clear majority of Canadians. Based on a proper cross-sampling of the correspondence that I, like many other members, have received, I know that they want their elected representatives to treat this issue with the seriousness that it deserves and give the bill full scrutiny.

Finally, I want to congratulate the NHP community and industry, which have been very actively engaged on this issue through their work. I really want to single out the local businesses in my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford and the constituents who live on Vancouver Island. I congratulate them for their advocacy, for stepping up to the plate and for engaging me as their elected representative, because it has worked. I am proud to say that, in this place, as their elected representative, I will be pleased to vote to send Bill C-368 to committee.

● (1755)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a true honour to rise in the House of Commons to speak, especially on behalf of the residents of Peterborough—Kawartha and, of course, the many Canadians across this country who rely on natural health products.

I want to give a big shout-out to my colleague from Red Deer—Lacombe for bringing forward the bill. Could we have a round of applause, please, for my colleague? Members are tired at this time of the day; it is hard to rally them. However, this is a big one. Maybe they need some vitamins. Maybe that is what they need to put a little pep in their step, and that is exactly what we are talking about today.

We are talking about things that almost every Canadian uses. Maybe it is their toothpaste. Maybe it is their deodorant. Maybe it is their vitamins, melatonin, magnesium, protein bars or Chinese herbal medicine. These are things that many Canadians rely on every single day of their life to help manage their health and to help them live a better, more fulfilled life. Sadly, these products are under attack.

I got elected in 2021. There have been two instances of extreme correspondence to my office. One was regarding the invocation of the Emergencies Act. The second was regarding natural health products. It is unbelievable the correspondence that has come through my office about this. People are asking why the Liberal-NDP government would want to attack natural health products. Why would it want to go after those and make it so that business owners who offer these products, these vitamins and supplements, can no longer function?

Let us break it down and talk about what the bill is and why Conservatives are very excited to support it, as well as my colleague, as I mentioned, for putting it forward. In summary, the enactment of the bill would amend the Food and Drugs Act to provide that natural health products are not therapeutic products within the meaning of that act and are therefore not subject to the same monitoring regime as other drugs.

This is for people at home, and I always think about my sister, who watches this and asks, "What does that even mean?". It means that people's prescription drugs or big pharma or opioids, which are a massive crisis in this country, are subject to regulations and are self-funded by Health Canada. Natural health products have very strict regulations as well, but the bill before us in particular would ensure that they are safe and able to continue to be available in the stores where they are sold.

What Health Canada has tried to do is, again, kind of like Groundhog Day in this place, because it is the same everywhere with overreach. Health Canada wants to go into the pockets of the micro-businesses, often operated by women, and say that they are going to have to pay the government more money. Health Canada wants to decide what the business owners do with their products and will ultimately bankrupt them and force the products out of Canada.

I am going to provide some quick stats for members. Natural health product businesses contribute $5.5 billion to the Canadian economy and $2.8 billion in taxable revenue. Eighty-two per cent of Canadians use NHPs, and I bet that number is actually low. Over 80% of businesses in the sector are small or medium-sized. Producers of 70% of the brands have indicated that they will need to withdraw products from the market. We can start to see that if the private member's bill before us were not introduced, this would be detrimental to the industry, based on the Health Canada policy that was put forward.

Fifty per cent of small businesses in the sector have a woman CEO. One in five businesses is contemplating shutting down due to the proposed changes. One in five businesses is considering exiting Canada. According to Statistics Canada, women are much more likely to purchase natural health products to manage their health and wellness.

We all know we have a health care crisis in this country. We have folks lining up to get to see a doctor, and they do not have access to a doctor, so for many people, accessing natural health products is a big thing. I think every member of the House can stand up and tell a story of where natural health products have made a big difference in their life.

I want to read some testimonies from correspondence I have gotten, because it is critical in this place that we elevate the voices of the people who are outside the House, the people who elected us to be here to elevate their voices. These are some of the messages I have gotten about the Liberal-NDP policy that would overreach and would ultimately decimate the natural health product industry. Thankfully the bill would be able to protect them, and that is what we are really talking about today.

● (1800)

The first piece of correspondence reads, "Recently, I saw your post regarding the Liberal government going after natural health products next. Truly, I was not shocked that they would go after NHPs [as many people refer to them] because really there isn't much left for them to have their hands on. I use natural health products for a number of reasons. I do not support the tax of NHPs."

Here is another one: "many people including myself use products such as iron, calcium, B vitamins, vitamin C, and I find it appalling that the government thinks that these products should be taken off the shelves in Canada. They obviously only want big pharma products available to Canadians." We know the mess that big pharma has created in this country. I always will take any opportunity I can to tell people at home to please watch *Dopesick*. The opioid crisis and addiction crisis in this country really paint a picture of how government and big pharma destroyed the lives of so many people.

Another message says, "The new proposed laws concerning NHPs is very damaging to the future of my business. We have been in business for 20 years..., and have approximately 7,200 clients in that period of time. During that time, we haven't had a single problem related to safety and efficacy of the herbs that we use. We currently use 485 separate herbs. As you well know, the vast majority of these herbs are spices and edible plants that any consumer could grow in their own garden. How is it that Health Canada could stop the people's access to their medicinal properties? Many of these clients wish to use this mode of health care, which keeps pressure off local hospital rooms and the medical systems, which are already overloaded and backlogged."

The message goes on to say, "There are many small businesses in Ontario like mine, possibly hundreds of businesses which contribute well over $100,000 a year in HST and source deductions. Our business has five people on payroll. I feel that if these new bills are enforced and erode their ability to both buy and sell herbs, it will force us out of business."

The same message asks, "Has anyone bothered to do a total cost/risk/reward analysis to see what the actual benefits are to the constituency, the economy, and health outcomes in the long haul?". It concludes with this: "I hope that Health Canada will come to the realization that their current direction and implementation of the bills will...be a sad day for Canadians."

There is a very interesting point in there, because when we talk to the Canadian Health Food Association, we learn that there was not proper consultation ever, and we have seen this across the board in so many areas with the current government. It is just overreach, and I guess I always come back to this question: Why?

It is pretty simple. If the Liberal-NDP government overspends and recklessly spends, which we have seen, and let us take the arrive scam app, which should have cost $80,000 and cost a minimum of $60 million, or a green slush fund that cost a billion dollars, then it has to make that money up. It is just basic math. The government does not have any money; it has taxpayers' money, but wait. If it does not have enough money, who is it going to go after? The Liberal-NDP government will go after the little guy, which is what it does over and over again.

Small businesses are the heartbeat, 98%, of the economy, and they are being trashed, destroyed and decimated under the Liberal-NDP government, and these are the women-owned businesses. I want to just touch on this, because Jules Gorham is the director of Regulatory Affairs for the Canadian Health Food Association, and she gave very powerful testimony at the status of women committee, which I sit on. A big piece really jumped out at me, and I think this is a real take-home message because we have a government and a Prime Minister that are clearly fake feminists, and there is a Liberal mandate for a gender-based analysis on things they do. Guess where the Liberals did not do a gender-based analysis?

This is from Jules Gorham's testimony at committee:

> Unfortunately, it's a well-known fact that women have been historically neglected in research. There is a scarcity of data on women. Health Canada's latest regulatory reform on [natural health products] is yet another example. Prior to publishing its proposal on cost recovery fees, Health Canada did not conduct any analysis on the impacts to Canadians, including a gender-based analysis. They left it to business owners to do the math and decide if they can afford to stay in business.

This is despite having a mandate saying that the Liberals would do a gender-based analysis. They do not put women first. They do not put Canadians first. They put their big government first, and—

● (1805)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to discuss Bill C-368 with respect to natural health products, and its potential impact on the ability of Canadians to have confidence in the natural health products on their shelves.

[*Translation*]

Canadians expect the products that they buy in Canada to be safe for use and consumption.

[*English*]

This includes the natural health products we use every day, such as vitamins, herbal medicines, sunscreen, toothpaste and hand sanitizer.

I want to acknowledge the importance of natural health products. They are something that many of our constituents use for their own well-being. I have heard that from many of my constituents as well. There is no question that natural health products are lower-risk than prescription drugs, but the reality is they are not risk-free. They can actually cause serious harm in certain circumstances. In particular, if not manufactured properly, natural health products can contain unsafe levels of ingredients or be contaminated with other substances that can be harmful. They can also be advertised or labelled in a misleading manner.

Take, for example, probiotics. While they are low-risk and in fact beneficial in many cases, these products as a whole are not without risk. Over the last six years, there have been six reports of sepsis associated with one brand of probiotic, the majority of which were in premature infants, and five of which had an outcome of death. That is why postmarket safety surveillance is so important.

In fact, between January 1, 2022, and December 31, 2023, Health Canada received 930 adverse reaction reports where a natural health product was suspected of being responsible for the adverse reaction, with the majority, 692, reported as serious.

[*Translation*]

Consumers trust these products to contribute to their health and well-being. That is why we need to ensure that natural health products can be used safely and that they are not the subject of false claims.

[*English*]

However, Conservatives want to take us back to a time when we can recall a contaminated tube of lipstick or head of lettuce, but not a contaminated vitamin or supplement.

Now I want to talk a bit about the subject of the bill, Bill C-368, which is Vanessa's Law.

In June 2023, Vanessa's Law, or the Protecting Canadians from Unsafe Drugs Act, was extended to include natural health products. This action was taken to correct a gap that was left in 2014 when Vanessa's Law was initially passed for other health products. This law gives Health Canada the additional tools to take swift action if marketed products are deemed unsafe. As it stands now, Vanessa's Law gives Health Canada the authority to mandate product recalls and label revisions for unsafe natural health products where there are serious or imminent risks to the health and safety of Canadians.

The tools afforded by Vanessa's Law are important for the well-being and safety of Canadians. They protect Canadians, but not at the cost of hurting Canadian businesses. In fact, there should be no impact on businesses that are following the rules in manufacturing and selling to Canadians products that are safe. These authorities are used only if a company should refuse to co-operate in taking voluntary action to mitigate a serious health risk, as is the typical practice for other lines of health products and food.

● (1810)

[*Translation*]

Bill C-368 seeks to repeal the expanded powers granted by Vanessa's Law, which would prevent Health Canada from recalling dangerous products or adding warnings to labels when companies refuse to do it themselves.

[*English*]

The government can mandate recalls of other health products, as well as food like produce in grocery stores that is contaminated with E. coli, but with Bill C-368, Health Canada would not have the authority to require the recall of a natural health product contaminated with E. coli, which could be equally dangerous to the lives of our constituents.

Should not users of natural health products also be afforded the confidence that the products on the shelves can be used safely? Adopting Bill C-368 would leave the health of Canadians in the hands of industry to decide when it is appropriate to issue a recall or update the label with new warnings. There is just no reason for natural health products to be exempted from Vanessa's Law.

One of the main sources of problems comes from cases of deficient manufacturing practices that result in product contamination.

[*Translation*]

Before Vanessa's Law was applied to natural health products, Health Canada did not have the power to enforce recalls and had only a limited ability to remove dangerous natural health products from the market.

[*English*]

The concerns I am expressing today are not about theoretical risks. Since 2018, there have been over 300 voluntary recalls of licensed natural health products for safety issues. For example, during the pandemic, when hand sanitizer use was at its highest, Health Canada found toxic chemicals like methanol and benzine in these products but had to rely on voluntary action from companies to remove these products from the market. Other examples of product issues resulting from unsanitary manufacturing conditions include contamination with bacteria, fibreglass and other foreign materials.

Should we really rely solely on the goodwill of industry to recall a product contaminated with fibreglass or toxic chemicals?

In 2021, the independent commissioner of the environment and sustainable development highlighted Health Canada's lack of power to recall natural health products as an important gap. The commissioner reported that contaminated natural health products remained available to consumers on store shelves for many months because Health Canada could rely only on the goodwill of companies to undertake voluntary recalls. Between 2021 and 2022, Health Canada inspected 36 importers and manufacturers of natural health products and found high levels of non-compliance with safe manufacturing practices. Issues were identified in all 36 sites inspected, ranging in severity, with 42% requiring immediate action.

Issues requiring the Vanessa's Law authorities go beyond product quality problems. For example, in 2021, Health Canada conducted an online surveillance study of health claims made by natural health products and found that more than 1,600 authorized natural health products made illegitimate cancer-related claims in their advertising. Think of the impact this could have on a cancer patient who is looking for relief and puts their trust solely in a product that cannot back up its claims. This is unacceptable. In fact, it is dangerous.

Canadians expect better, and they deserve better. Bill C-368 would roll back the protections of Vanessa's Law, exposing Canadians to unacceptable risks. This includes potentially allowing unsafe products to remain on the market longer and subjecting natural health products to a different, less rigorous set of rules than all other health products and food. It puts the power to determine actions in the most serious cases of health risks in the hands of industry and not the regulator. Is that what we want?

I submit that Canadians would expect more from their government. They expect that the government is able to take action and remove natural health products from the market when they are deemed unsafe, just like it can remove a shipment of contaminated lettuce or cough medication.

Some members have raised concerns about how the extension of Vanessa's Law could impact the availability of natural health products. I want to stress that product availability will not change with Vanessa's Law. Unsafe products will be removed more quickly from the market, but safe products will continue to be available. Compliant companies and products will not be impacted.

It is not just about recalls. Vanessa's Law authorities also allow the court to determine a more appropriate fine or penalty should a company be convicted of an offence related to a natural health product that poses serious health and safety risks to Canadians, creating a legitimate deterrent for non-compliance. Canadians are counting on us to safeguard the marketplace from unsafe products.

● (1815)

[*Translation*]

We need to ensure that those who buy natural health products are able to have confidence in the safety of those products. We are talking about public health and safety here.

[*English*]

It is too important to leave to chance. It is too important and time-sensitive to rely on voluntary compliance. Vanessa's Law gives Health Canada the authorities it needs to take immediate action to remove unsafe natural health products from the marketplace if a company refuses to do so voluntarily. It is an important tool that strengthens the market and the reputation of the industry in Canada, as it helps ensure that these widely used products are safe.

I encourage all members to vote against this bill.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise. My colleague from Peterborough—Kawartha talked about this being Groundhog Day, and it seems as if we are talking about this particular topic over and over again.

My colleague from Ottawa Centre, who spoke just a minute ago, was talking about the safety of these products. It is interesting, because the reason any health warnings were found about these products was that inspections were already conducted by Health Canada. Therefore, by grabbing more money from the small and medium-sized businesses that are actually producing natural health products for the benefit of Canadians, these changes are not going to make those inspections any better or any more frequent. I find that a bit fascinating.

The other thing that is absolutely fascinating is what we have on the opposite side of the House. We have a government that had a crazy experiment, a wacko experiment we might say, to actually decriminalize opioids, which we know failed miserably. Without the Conservatives on this side of the House actually stopping the Liberals, they were on the path to wanting to legalize drugs like meth, crack, cocaine, amphetamines and fentanyl here in Canada, in our backyards, in our school grounds, in front of businesses and in front of residences all across this country.

Thankfully, there was an incredible intervention by team Conservative. We were able to make enough interventions so that people realized how bad of an idea this was. The crime, chaos, drugs and disorder that have happened across this great country have been unfathomable. It is certainly something that Canadians need to bear in mind when we talk about the incredible want on the NDP-Liberal side to take away natural health products.

I know that many of my colleagues spoke about this previously, but I do think it bears repeating. When we look at the multitude of issues that have come before this House in the last two and a half years since I have been here, the issue that people have written to me the most about and approached me the most about, just walking along the street, in our own backyards, is really related to natural health products. Canadians have made it incredibly clear that they do not want the government interfering, as it wants to do, with their natural health products.

I know some of this is a bit repetitive, but I think it bears repeating. We know from statistics that over 80% of Canadians use natural health products on a regular basis. I listened with great interest when my colleague from Peterborough—Kawartha talked about how the impacts of the changes the government is on the road to making, without the intervention of Bill C-368, are a harm to female entrepreneurs. That cannot be said enough in this House.

We hear that Conservatives are against women and Conservatives are against women's rights. We hear this every single day. It is actually quite nauseating. We actually understand that, on the opposite side, the NDP-Liberal coalition members are the ones who want to undermine the health, well-being and financial success of female entrepreneurs. We know that 80% of businesses in the natural health products sector are small businesses, and 50% of these businesses are managed by CEOs who are females.

There is no better way for people to ensure their success in this world than to be their own boss. When someone is the master of their own destiny, that creates a security and a need for nobody else. From my perspective, my wife and I have been married almost 34 years. She is a female entrepreneur. When I look at her success and the satisfaction it brings her to know that she certainly does not have to rely on me and that she is incredibly successful, that is the kind of thing I would want for my daughters as well, and for any entrepreneur in this great country. They should be able to say they are the master of their own destiny.

● (1820)

When we look at the regulations that have also been brought in, the member for Ottawa Centre went on and on about safety, etc. I know he was not at the health committee when this happened, so maybe we can cut him some slack based on that. Interestingly enough, the chief medical adviser for Health Canada was at the committee and talked about some of the disinformative statistics that the member spoke about previously. When we pressed the chief medical adviser for Health Canada on where the statistics were, the answer we were given was “Oh, you can look them up in the database.” Of course, doing our due diligence, we attempted to do so. The conflated numbers they actually presented in no way, shape, or form reflect reality.

When we begin to look at this, the safety of natural health products is beyond reproach. Are there oftentimes difficulties in manufacturing? Yes. Health Canada, to its credit, has discovered some of those things, which is important. That happens in many different industries where the manufacturing process is studied to make things better by doing this, that or the other thing. That will be important to continue, but is it necessary to attempt to kill small and medium-sized business-based enterprises in this country? When these regulations continue, if the rest of our colleagues do not realize the importance of Bill C-368, what will happen is that this industry will die. Then what will happen?

We know that 80% of Canadians use these products on a regular basis, and they will continue to use them. When they continue to use them, that means they are going to have to buy them somewhere else, other than from the great Canadian industry that we have, which we know is incredibly safe. The regulations that exist here in this country at the current time, barring the changes that the NDP-Liberal costly coalition wanted to make in the last budget, are the envy of the rest of the world. We have heard that. We did much research on this last year, when we went through all this foolishness before. Australia said it wanted to adopt what Canada is doing because it is so great. The regulations are absolutely incredible. When we tell them that the costly coalition wants to meddle with the regulations, they ask why we would want to do that, as we have a great system now.

We look at increasing the cost of products by 50% to 75%, and we see 20% of small businesses in Canada having to close. We see some of the other kind of ridiculous regulations, such as increasing the label size to put more warnings, words and cautions, etc. The anti-plastic crew over here is increasing the amount of plastic that is going to have to be used to do it, at a cost of about $200,000 per product. It has often been said that this is regulation looking for something to regulate, as well as looking for another way to fuel the Liberals' ridiculous spending.

Let us look at another industry, the prescription drug industry. I know some of my colleagues briefly talked about this. We know that the prescription drug industry harms seniors every year. The cost to the Canadian economy is about $2 billion every year due to the harm created by prescription drugs. Do we hear the NDP-Liberal coalition saying that we need to have more regulations related to that? No, we do not hear that.

I think the other thing we need to know is the reason the government is going after this. The reason, of course, is related to an easy target to get more money to fuel its spending, which is costing Canadians greatly. We know that more and more Canadians, sadly, are going to food banks. We saw Food Banks Canada's 2024 report that came out showing that 50% more Canadians feel financially worse off compared to last year and that 25% of Canadians are experiencing food insecurity.

This is a bill to fuel the government's spending habit, which is a sad commentary on a government that is out of ideas and out of time. We will continue to see these things, which will negatively affect the health of Canadians and their confidence to make the right decisions about their health care at the right time on their own terms.

● (1825)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it was interesting to listen to the Conservative doctor across the way. After listening to what the Conservatives say, I want to ask them about expressing concern about Canadians and their well-being. When I think about what is being talked about today, why would they oppose a government having the authority to protect the health of Canadians?

It was misleading information when the member said that we would see businesses close down and the industry would be devastated if this legislation does not pass. What garbage. That is what it is. We just heard a lot of garbage and misinformation. Industry representatives see the value of what is happening and what is being provided.

An interesting statistic came to my mind when reading about this. In 2021, Health Canada found that more than 1,600 authorized natural health products companies made illegitimate cancer-related claims in their advertising. After listening to members opposite, one would think that there are no issues at all. If anyone wants to put together some sort of recipe, compress it into a pill format and sell it, Canadians do not have to worry because all those entrepreneurs are not interested solely in money, but in the health and well-being of average Canadians.

I say it does not work that way. The government does have a role to play. I do not quite understand why opposition parties would look at this legislation and say that they are not concerned about the government not being able to get something recalled. I think there are legitimate concerns. It is a wonderful industry, and I do not question that. There are many natural health products out there, and we should look at ways to incorporate them into our health care system. Many of my constituents use the products, as I know many Canadians do in all regions of the country.

We are not saying that there is no role or no place for the products in society. In fact, I would suggest there is absolutely nothing wrong with them, but, equally, there is nothing wrong with ensuring there is a mechanism in place that protects the health and well-being of Canadians, whether it is through a product that might proclaim that it does *x*, when in fact there is no science to substantiate it or when it is completely misleading. We know that does take place. Even in terms of medications, government has the ability to enforce some form of recall. Why would we not allow for something of that nature with regard to natural health products? I would think it just stands to reason.

The biggest concern I have is the misinformation that is being provided across the way, giving the impression that entrepreneurs and business people in communities throughout the country would shut down the industry if this legislation does not pass. I believe we would find that a vast majority of people see the merit in making sure that there is a safe supply and that there are opportunities for this industry to do well. Having some form of regulation is not a bad thing. It has nothing to do with the government trying to raise additional money.

● (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe for his right of reply.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank all my colleagues for their support and for speaking to Bill C-368, but I want to remind people how we arrived here.

There seem to be some forgetful folks. Even though I am thanking the NDP for its position, I would like to remind people how we arrived at this place. We are at this point with natural health products because of a budget implementation act, Bill C-47, which was passed for budget 2023. The authority for that came from a promise made by the leader of the NDP in March 2022 to form a coalition, a supply and confidence agreement, with the Liberal government, which meant carte blanche. It was going to support every budget and every budget implementation act that it had not even seen, discussed nor been party to. It gave that power to the Liberal government, and that is why we are here today.

While I appreciate the NDP's revisionist history on this, it is the reason this change happened in the first place. I am glad it is supporting this bill, which would take the legislative framework back where it was with the previous Conservative government under Stephen Harper and where we had the best natural health product regulations, framework and industry in the world. There is no need to tamper any further with the natural health product industry.

I want to talk about freedom of choice in health care, as this is a huge issue. Over 80% of Canadians, and I suspect it is even more, are using natural health products. This is about that freedom of choice and losing that choice. I believe the Canadian Health Food Association, the Natural Health Product Protection Association, the Direct Sellers Association of Canada and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business when they say that the changes being proposed by the Liberal government, through Health Canada's changes to the definition of therapeutic products to include natural health products, is going to kill and stifle business. I believe them when they say that because we have a nine-year track record of the government doing nothing but harm to the economy of this country. The government is going to continue to do it to this beautiful, wonderful industry that gives Canadians the choice they need to look after their own personal health.

Finally, I want to thank all the Canadians who have reached out to members of Parliament in a very active campaign to let MPs know how important this is to them. I want to thank the mothers out there who look after their families. I know my wife is the same way. She had a full-time job on top of her full-time job of raising the family while I was here in Ottawa. She wanted to help our kids, to help our family and to keep us healthy. She wanted to make sure we had the best possible health outcomes that we could have. I want to thank all the women who make up the largest part of the workforce and the entrepreneurship in this beautiful industry. The fact that there was not a gender-based analysis on this is striking.

I want to thank the seniors and those with chronic conditions who are scared about losing their access to these health products. When these organizations I mentioned before said that they are going to lose these products, I believe them. These seniors believe them, and these people with chronic conditions believe them. This is how they manage. This is how they cope with their ailments, and we should be enabling and empowering that, not scaring away investments, businesses and opportunities.

I want to thank the wonderful people in the industry. I want to thank the beautiful people I have met from coast to coast who are part of this industry. I have never met a group of people who are more conscientious, more thoughtful, and more creative and innovative. I want them to know that I am very thankful for the work they do.

For those who are going to be voting in favour of this, we are going to be voting on this next Wednesday night in a recorded division. I want to thank my colleagues for sending this to committee so that we can hear from the experts and from Canadians about this because this was snuck through in Bill C-47. The Liberal government is doing it again, right now, with Bill C-69 in this place. It is making even more changes to Health Canada and giving it more powers. Why are we not talking about this in a separate piece of legislation so that we can actually have a proper debate about it? Now we are, with Bill C-368.

It is time to pass Bill C-368. It is time to get back to basics. It is time to get back to making sure that Canadians have access to the health products they deserve. I want to thank my colleagues who are brave enough and who have the courage to do what their constituents want them to do, and vote for Bill C-368.

● (1835)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

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. Blaine Calkins: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 29, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

S. O. 57

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 39—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-64

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will return to the debate on the gag order for the Standing Committee on Health. I want to remind the Minister of Justice that he makes the same claim that the Minister of Health makes, which is that we need to quickly rush this through the process. This has been a promise that has been lingering for years from their side. There have only been three days of debate, April 16, May 6 and May 7, according to what I see in the House of Commons record. The proposed bill was tabled on February 29.

What the Liberals want, basically, is for the House of Commons and members of Parliament to ratify this, and we have already had a vote on it to send it to committee, without knowing the full contents of those secret negotiations that they had between the NDP and the Liberal minister. His claims were that there was enough talk, because those two parties had talked to each other; therefore, that should be sufficient for the rest of us, and that a potential five hours at committee, not necessarily five hours of witness testimony at the committee, is enough because that is what the programming motion says would happen.

Why does the minister want to gag order the committee so that it can only have five hours of witness testimony to hear about the contents and the impacts that the proposed legislation would have?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would just politely remind the member opposite to take a look at the text of the actual proposed programming motion. It talks about the committee meeting for five hours a day on two further sitting days, so that would be ten hours of hearings. There would be a third sitting day for actual clause-by-clause analysis. There has also already been ten hours of debate on this important bill. I think it is important for Canadians to understand why we believe this is important because Canadians should not have to choose between paying for their bills and paying for their health care.

We know that cost has consistently been identified as the single most important barrier to accessing medications and that cost is unevenly borne by women and gender-diverse Canadians; that is on the contraception piece. With respect to diabetes, one in four Canadians with diabetes has reported not following their treatment plan according to the cost and their inability to pay those costs.

That is significant because, as I said earlier in this debate, people with diabetes that goes untreated end up having more significant health care consequences, which include things like stroke and amputation. The knock-on health care costs to our system are very significant, let alone the hardships those people endure. Through this legislation, which we are putting an emphasis on passing quickly, we can improve the health care outcomes and the economic outcomes for those Canadians.

● (1840)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, the reality is that the Conservatives were wrong in blocking dental care. We have seen the success already. The NDP put in place dental care, forced the government to initiate the program, and over two million seniors have already signed up. Over 100,000 seniors have already had access to dental care, including in so many Conservative ridings, so we have seen that success already.

With pharmacare, the NDP, the member for Burnaby South and the entire NDP caucus, pushed to put that into place. That would help, on average, 18,000 people in each riding in the country. That is 18,000 in every single Conservative riding. Another 25,000 would access contraception. That means between those two elements of the NDP's pharmacare plan, over 40,000 Canadians would benefit in every single riding in the country. In every single Conservative riding in the country, 40,000 people would benefit.

Why are Conservatives blocking something that would help 40,000 of their constituents, many of whom are at risk of their lives if they do not take the medication?

Hon. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, the short answer is that I am not sure why the Conservatives would block access to health care and medication being covered for their own constituents, who include nine million women and 3.7 million people who are suffering from diabetes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

[*Translation*]

The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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. Tom Kmiec: I would ask for a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Call in the members.

● (1925)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 769)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bibeau

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Bittle
Blaney
Boulerice
Brière
Carr
Chagger
Champagne
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Davies
Dhaliwal
Diab
Dubourg
Duguid
El-Khoury
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaheer
Garrison
Gerretsen
Guilbeault
Hardie
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lapointe
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
May (Cambridge)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Miao
Morrice
Murray
Noormohamed
Oliphant
Powlowski
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Sajjan
Samson
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara
St-Onge
Tassi
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Virani
Wilkinson
Blair
Blois
Bradford
Cannings
Casey
Chahal
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Coteau
Damoff
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Drouin
Duclos
Dzerowicz
Erskine-Smith
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Fry
Gainey
Gazan
Green
Hanley
Hepfner
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Joly
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendicino
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
O'Connell
Petitpas Taylor
Qualtrough
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sahota
Saks
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Singh
Sousa
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Trudeau
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Weiler
Yip
Zahid
Zuberi– — 166

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blanchet
Block
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Chabot
Champoux
Cooper
Dancho
DeBellefeuille
Desbiens
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Findlay
Gallant
Gaudreau
Genuis
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kelly
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Lawrence
Lemire
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Majumdar
Mazier
McLean
Michaud
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Patzer
Pauzé
Perron
Poilievre
Reid
Richards
Rood
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shields
Simard
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Therrien
Tochor
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Carrie
Chambers
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
d'Entremont
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Ferreri
Fortin
Garon
Généreux
Gill
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Jivani
Khanna
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lehoux
Leslie
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
Maguire
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Plamondon
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Scheer
Seeback
Shipley
Sinclair-Desgagné
Steinley
Stewart
Stubbs
Thomas
Tolmie
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Vis

Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zimmer– — 144

PAIRED

Members

Desilets	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Fast	Jones
Ng	Sarai
Small	Thériault– — 8

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

[*English*]

CONSIDERATION OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 39

The House resumed from May 10 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, just to confirm, now that the motion has passed regarding Motion No. 39, I lose my unlimited time and I now have a 20-minute slot. Therefore, I will have to share my time with the member for Cumberland—Colchester, even though I would have enjoyed continuing to speak to an issue that I hold very dear to my heart, which is the approval of drugs for rare diseases in Canada and how patients can get access to them. Those two words actually only appear once in the legislation.

People with a rare disease are some of the most needy patients in Canada. As I said during the debate on Bill C-213 back in 2021, the hardest medication to get in Canada is the one that is not approved and not available because the manufacturer will say that Canada is too complicated, too difficult and it is not worth its time to try to get it onto our market. That is because of all the regulatory hurdles and steps that exist that make it very difficult for patients with rare diseases to get access to the drugs they need.

We saw this with cystic fibrosis drugs for patients who were trying to get access to Trikafta. It took many years from the time when it was available to patients in America to when it was available in Canada, and it was regulatory hurdles that made it much more difficult to do so.

Now that the government has passed this gag order on the gag order, it will direct the Standing Committee on Health on how it will consider the matter.

I want to draw the attention of the House to the debate on May 6, page 23051, where the Minister of Health responded to a question from the member for Berthier—Maskinongé about the timelines and why the Liberals were limiting debate. At the time, the minister said, " there will be time for the committee to conduct a study." I would put to members and constituents back home that a potential 10 hours of witness testimony at a committee is insufficient time to consider this pamphlet of a bill that the NDP-Liberal coalition is pretending is pharmacare. I have read the legislation in full, so I will comment on its contents as well.

The minister went on to say, "Yes, it is important to debate. However, there is plenty of time for debate in committee and during the rest of the House process. It is time to get on with it and move forward." With this programming motion, the Liberals have essentially ordered the MPs on the committee to only consider it for a few more hours and then send it back here. In fact, after this bill has passed, there is now only one more day left for amendments to be considered. How can amendments be proposed without hearing from officials and witnesses who might bring forward amendments that would be of value to be considered by parliamentarians on that committee? It seems this is completely backward.

I want to comment on the issue of Conservatives delaying the bill, because this is a favourite talking point now of the Liberals and their colleagues in the NDP. I want the member for New Westminster—Burnaby to pay close attention to this. The bill was tabled on February 29. I would suggest that almost three and a half years into this mandate, this bill was not a priority of the government. Second of all, this bill was considered on April 16, May 6 and May 7, three days of consideration by the House of Commons. There were secret negotiations held between the Minister of Health, because he actually said it on the record, and whichever person on the NDP side who was negotiating so they could cobble together this particular piece of legislation.

I would put to members and my constituents back home, who deeply care about patients with rare diseases like I do, that there is nothing in this particular piece of legislation for them. It is not the job of the House of Commons or members of Parliament to simply ratify a secret deal reached between the Minister of Health and the NDP negotiator or negotiators. Our job is to debate, to bring forward ideas and potential amendments from expert witnesses, stakeholder groups and individuals back in our ridings who deeply care about this issue.

I will also mention that although Quebec has been mentioned several times, there is another province that has said openly it will not participate in this pamphlet of a pharmacare plan. It is Alberta, where I am from. Successive ministers of health have said they will not participate in it. One of the talking points I have heard is that we have a patchwork system right now in Canada. Saying "patchwork" is a way to kind of denigrate the hard work of the public servants in the different provinces in Canada who work for these public insurance plans. They are all over.

In fact, in Alberta, Blue Cross is available to anyone who wants it. There are lots of different public insurance plans. There are lots of public servants who work for them, and they work very hard to make sure they cover as many Albertans as possible. My province has said no and Quebec has said no, so we still have a patchwork. Even if this bill passes, even if it were to follow through on all the principles, the highfalutin language that I hear from the Liberals and the NDP on this, there will still be a patchwork in this country. We cannot force a province to participate.

As clause 6 of the pharmacare legislation clearly states, nobody's medication will be paid for. There are separate agreements that would have to be reached with each province. It says very clearly in subclause 6(1) of the pharmacare legislation, "in order to increase any existing public pharmacare coverage". That would suggest that every single province has to either create or drastically expand a plan or successive series of plans that are single-payer, because that is one of the principles referred to again in that section.

If a province does not do that, it cannot negotiate a deal for future medication to be covered. No medication will get covered for either diabetes or contraceptives when this legislation passes. There will be none because no agreements have been signed yet. Alberta has said no, Quebec has said no, but the patchwork will continue.

I will move on to the legislation as I do want to mention this. Like I said before in a prior debate, there is a Yiddish proverb I used after listening to the minister's speech when he introduced Motion No. 39. He seems to think that pearls flow from his mouth because when I compared his speech at second reading on pharmacare, Bill C-64, and his speech on Motion No. 39, they were almost identical.

● (1930)

The minister actually used the exact same three anecdotes to make the case for why this plan is necessary. In the summary of the legislation, when the contents are reviewed, it gets into a lot of areas of provincial jurisdiction. This should be exclusive provincial jurisdiction. It is starting to interfere with how the provinces manage their public health care plans.

I will mention here that nobody with a rare disease will be covered by this piece of legislation. Nobody will be covered, whether someone has phenylketonuria, PKU, whether someone has cystinosis and needs Cystagon, or whether someone has MS, which is, I would say, the most common rare disease in Canada. None of their medication will be covered. If someone's kids have a rare disease, or a family like mine has Alport's syndrome, none of their medication will be covered by this piece of legislation.

The "Funding commitment" in clause 5 reads, "beginning with those for rare diseases. The funding for provinces and territories must be provided primarily through agreements with their respective governments. Then it goes on to talk about "payments" in clause 6 and completely contradicts clause 5 because it says, "for specific prescription drugs and related products intended for contraception or the treatment of diabetes." In fact, there will be no payment plan for anything else. There cannot be because this legislation will not do any of those things. Nobody with a rare disease will be covered once this legislation passes.

I have been, I hope, consistent in this place about rare disease patients for the past nine years. That is the focus of my opposition to national pharmacare because it will not help them. Like I said, the hardest medications to get in Canada are the ones that are not approved in Canada. All the changes the government has done to the Canadian Agency for Drugs & Technologies in Health, CADTH, as well as all of the changes made to the Canadian Drug Agency, the PMPRB and the PCPA have been repetitive. The same mistakes are being repeated here.

The government says it is going to do bulk buying. Bulk buying is already done. It is done by the provinces through the PCPA. The government has an agreement for generics as well, which are not covered in this particular piece of legislation. There is no direct reference to generics. There is no direct reference to patented medication. It does not talk about those things. It takes years to get those drugs approved in Canada.

I would put to members and my constituents back home, who have emailed me because they are all so worried about this, that this is a pamphlet of legislation. The substance will be in the agreements that may come in the future. There are already two provinces that have backed out and other provinces are considering doing the same. Why is it that, since 2019, when the government announced it was going to fund drugs for rare diseases at $1.5 billion, it has done nothing? Not a single medication prescription has been filled for anyone I know with a rare disease in Canada. That money is just sitting there. The government has only started to put out RFPs to consider creating registries for rare disease patients. Registries, not medication. Most of the money remains unspent. The government has not done anything. That is the same thing that will happen here: a series of broken promises, unkept promises. The Liberals are being helped by the NDP to do this, giving people false hope.

I tell people who enter my office that the last thing I want to do is give false hope. I have two serious rare diseases in my family. Families who have rare diseases like mine cannot wait for the government to get its act together again.

● (1935)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is truly amazing just how the Conservative Party does not get it. We are talking about millions of Canadians who will directly benefit from the passage of this legislation. The member wonders why it is that we have to bring in some form of a closure motion. The member himself is the one who started the debate. He has already been debating it now for well over a half hour. It is because the Conservatives do not support pharmacare, unlike the Liberal Party that understands its true value. Millions of Canadians are going to benefit by this program.

Can the member be very clear and explain to his constituents, to Canadians, why the Conservative Party does not see the benefits of supporting people who have diabetes? Think of the seniors on fixed incomes. Why does the Conservative Party not support pharmacare?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, if my constituents or members of this House look at my speaking time in this chamber and compare it to that member's speaking time on government bills, they will see that he has delayed more government bills than any Conservative in this House.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague on one thing, and that is about the member for Winnipeg North. I do not agree with him, however, on the reasons why the Bloc Québécois opposes the pharmacare plan. We oppose it because it directly interferes in Quebec's jurisdictions.

I would like to point something out to my colleague, because he spoke at length about rare diseases. In the early 2000s, there were seven major pharmaceutical companies doing research in Canada, six of which were based in Quebec. There was a program at the time that gave them access to tax credits. If I remember correctly, it was called technology partnerships Canada.

The government that shut it down was Stephen Harper's in 2007. In hindsight, does my colleague think that was a bad idea?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, I think that the reason why the Bloc Québécois is opposed to Government Business No. 39 and this bill is, of course, that this falls under Quebec's jurisdiction. We should put our trust in all the provinces. They know how best to manage their health care system and health insurance for the patients and families in their own territory.

We are talking about programs that existed 24 years ago. Many changes have been made since then through bills and regulations passed by the government. I am basing myself on what is happening today and not what happened 25 years ago.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I like my colleague and I appreciate his fluent bilingualism.

I have to say that Conservatives are very consistent. Sixty years ago, they opposed universal health care, and they fought in the House to block universal health care. Today, it is our most cherished national institution. Last year, they fought dental care, and now we see two million Canadian seniors signed up, and 100,000 who have already received services in the first few weeks. They were wrong on dental care as well. The trial balloons the member throws up on pharmacare indicate that, again, the Conservatives are wrong on health care. The reality is, in the member's riding, more than 18,000 people will benefit from the diabetes medication and more than 25,000 will benefit from the contraception.

The member pointed out that there are two provinces that oppose it, although all of the central trade unions in Quebec support this. The reality is that the most unpopular government in the country is in Alberta right now where we have a premier who has been very erratic. However, there are advantages to Albertans in signing the deal and in passing this legislation. Why are Conservatives holding up and blocking this legislation?

● (1940)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, I would like to correct the member. I think the most unpopular government today is the NDP government in British Columbia. Premier Eby is now going to be facing the electorate after going along with the Liberal plan to basically approve all hard drugs and just spread them across the streets of Vancouver.

I have door-knocked in the member's riding, I have met church groups in his riding. I have gone door-to-door in several Burnaby-area ridings and this does not come up. What comes up is the carbon tax and how much people are paying, how punishing it is and how grocery prices are out of control. That is what they are actually talking about, not pamphlet pharmacare that has been the dream of the elites in the NDP. By the way, it is a plan that will also go after unions that negotiate hard at the table for the benefits that they get. Sometimes they give up pay increases for better insurance benefits, which are going to be taken away by stuff like this.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise and speak on behalf of democracy and common-sense Conservatives here in the House of Commons.

What we see over and over again, presented by the costly coalition, are failures: failed plans, failed opportunities and a failure for Canadians. It is very sad to see a government in the last throes of its mandate, which has been here for nine incredibly long and difficult years on the backs of Canadians. We have a failed dental care plan and a failed opioid experiment. Sadly, we have a failing health care system, which pains me to no end. Now we have a failed pharmacare pamphlet. Why do we call it a pamphlet? It is because it promises to potentially do something, when, in essence, it is doing absolutely nothing. There is nothing here. It is another photo op.

When I am back home on our break week to go and visit those who have supported us and those who perhaps have not, people ask me about this great pharmacare program, wondering when they can get their free medications. I have to explain to them that what we see is a photo opportunity to announce a program that has to go a consultative route with an expert panel. Sadly, another government agency then has to be created. Already, my colleague from Calgary Shepard rightly spoke about the numerous agencies that are created and the opportunities that have been lost. Then there also have to be consultations with the provinces to see if this is something that fits into their framework, since they deliver health care and are responsible for that delivery. We continue to see this opportunity being lost because of the crazy spending and wacko politics we see across the aisle over and over.

I spoke briefly about the failed dental care program. My colleague from the other part of the costly coalition wants to tout how many people in my riding might benefit from a dental care program. However, when we go out and speak to dentists, as I have done, we know this plan is so bad that dentists will not even sign on for it. I have spoken to every single dental association across the country.

The Liberals are doing a bit of gaslighting, which we see over and over, when they talk about how many dental professionals have signed up. There are dental hygienists, who are independent from dentists. However, we know that Canadians want access to a dentist, much like they want a primary care provider in the health care system. The government also promised 7,500 doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners. On this side of the House, we know that is not in the purview of the federal government, but be that as it may, that is something it promised over there. We all know it has not delivered. In addition, the number of people who do not have access to primary care continues to climb. I know my colleague from Winnipeg Centre will get up and say, "Now you're talking out of both sides of your mouth to say that this is not the purview of the federal government, but that of the provincial government, because I have heard him say it before." The difficulty is that it is his government, his side of the House, in concert with the costly coalition, that promised to deliver 7,500 doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners. Therefore, when we see the system failing on the backs of the promises the Liberals continue to make, we know that they are continuing to fail Canadians.

I talked briefly in my opening remarks about the opioid experiment, which is another failure. The NDP-Liberal coalition, for some reason, made that decision; we hope it will finally walk back on that and make it law to not continue these types of experiments. Interestingly enough, on behalf of Canadians, we know that there is reasonable evidence that the opioid epidemic that exists in North America was probably started because of access to OxyContin. Purdue Pharma and the Sackler family were successfully sued in the United States for their complicit nature in this epidemic that has existed. Because of that, we now have an opioid epidemic that is often related to fentanyl. The interesting question is this: How could a government believe that decriminalizing that drug could possibly fix this crisis that was started originally because of too much OxyContin being easily accessible? Doing so has meant adding more of it, and other drugs like it, such as hydromorphone, on the street; in this case, there is often so-called safe supply for zero cost. It is another failure the government has supported.

● (1945)

It pains me to no end to have to talk about the failed and failing health care system. Certainly, the former president of the Canadian Medical Association, Katharine Smart, said it very concisely. She said we have a system that is now, sadly, on the brink of collapse. Why is it on the brink of collapse? As Canadians know, the entire health care system in our country is predicated on having access to primary care. This then gives us access to other services we need, other procedures, other laboratory tests and specialist care.

When we do not have that access, several things happen. Someone does not get any access at all, their health suffers because of that and they give up; otherwise, they end up trying to access the system through episodic care, which is often related to visiting emergency rooms, and we know they are incredibly clogged up. At this point in the history of our great country, approximately seven million Canadians do not have access to primary care, because of the failure of the health care system on the promises, as I have already mentioned, of this costly coalition.

What are the effects? We know these effects happen on an everyday basis in the ridings of every member of Parliament across the nation. We know that, incredibly sadly, people are dying while they are waiting for care in emergency rooms. We know that emergency rooms are clogged up for hours on end. There are many stories about people waiting 12 and 24 hours. The most atrocious story I have heard lately is the sad story of a gentleman who was a quadriplegic. He waited for innumerable hours in an emergency room, got bedsores and then chose MAID over trying to improve his health.

When we hear these drastic and unfathomable stories of the health care system, we begin to wonder why an NDP-Liberal coalition wants to spend more and more money on health care. It wants to spend $1.5 billion, on this particular occasion, on contraceptives and diabetes medication.

We see that the Liberals have failed at dental care and their opioid experiment; now they are failing at a health care plan and at pharmacare. We also understand that this is not a plan. This is like someone saying they built a mansion when they do not even own the land on which to build said mansion. It is a pamphlet, it is a photo opportunity, and it is going to be another failure, sadly, on behalf of Canadians who are already demanding their free medications. We know the plan the costly coalition created is many years down the road.

We also know, because of the Liberals' desire to ram this piece of legislation through, that there are already studies planned in the health committee. We are finishing the study on opioids, which we know is a disaster. We are looking at breast cancer screening, which would help save the lives of many young women here in Canada. It is because of the ram-down-one's-throat nature of the motion on the bill that those studies will be missed.

Do I believe that we need more time to study this in health committee? Yes, I do. I do not believe that having 10 hours of witnesses, when we have 10 to 20 witnesses who want to appear and talk about this, is going to be a significant problem.

Therefore, I move:

> That the motion be amended by adding to paragraph (a) the following: "(vii) the Minister of Health and his officials be ordered to appear as witnesses for no less than three hours."

● (1950)

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, I am not surprised by the member across the way, because he is someone who has consistently demonstrated the contrast between the government and the official opposition, the Conservatives. The Conservative Party does not believe in Canada's health care system, and their record will clearly demonstrate that. When I take a look at a holistic approach to health care, we have made a $200-billion commitment over the next 10 years that future generations can see. We have negotiated health care accords with all provinces and territories. We continue to look at a dental program that is a success. The bill is an expansion of the pharmacare program. This is a government that truly cares and values our health care system, and we are working with governments to make a difference. The Conservatives, on the other hand, just criticize, because they do not support a national health care system.

My question for the member is this: Why?

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, I had the great opportunity and privilege to be educated in this country as a family physician and to work as a family doctor for 26 years. I take great umbrage at what the member across wishes to say about my feelings around the health care system. I would go so far as to say that one of the main reasons I had my resident take over my practice was so that I could come here and have the opportunity to work inside this system to make the health care system better.

What I do not support is a health care system where we see somewhere between 17,000 and 30,000 Canadians dying every year because of a lack of access to it. I place that squarely at the feet of the costly NDP-Liberal coalition.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a lot of respect for my colleague, whom I work with at the health committee. However, he has really made the case for passing the legislation. First, he did talk about the Harper cuts and the slashing of health care funding that has led to the crisis we still see today. The Liberals have not been quick enough to actually restore the funding that the Harper government cut, but the Harper government was the major instigator of the problems that we have in the health care system today. It is not just that, though.

As members know, emergency rooms across this country are populated by people who do not have access to dental care. The NDP offered dental care; the Conservatives voted against it. The Canadian Nurses Association tells us that there are hundreds of people who have to go to emergency rooms because they cannot afford to pay for their medication. Again, the NDP offers pharmacare, so I guess the question is this: If he is aware of the problems in the health care system, does he apologize for the Harper cuts, and is he willing now to understand that dental care and pharmacare are actually key elements in trying to bring down the number of people in emergency rooms and give better health care to all Canadians?

● (1955)

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, sadly, the member is obviously misinformed and trying to present disinformation to Canadians. We know of the Harper government, and I am quite glad that the spirit of Mr. Harper lives rent-free in the head of the NDP's costly coalition all the time. They love to bring him up, but on this side of the House, we also know that the funding for health care went up every year under the Harper government.

The other thing that we know, again, is of the misinformation and disinformation provided by the member, sadly. I sometimes enjoy working with him as well, but the majority of people in emergency rooms are not showing up because of dental problems. That is just an absolute non-truth, and if they did show up because they could not afford their medications, then presenting to the emergency room is of no benefit. Someone does not get free medications in the emergency room, so it is just a bunch of foolishness to try to keep the government in power.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, earlier I was listening intently to my colleague, who is a doctor, talking about the shortcomings of the health care system. However, I have never heard his leader clearly state whether he supports the provinces' request to increase health care funding from 22% to 35%. This government has not agreed to that request. I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that.

Does he agree with that? Would his leader be willing to increase the federal share of health care funding from 22% to 35%?

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition spoke to the media nine or 10 months ago. The answer to that question is that we want to uphold the existing transfers. I think that is very important. We also need to think of other ways to improve the health care system here in Canada, while respecting the provinces.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate, but I think it is unfortunate that I will not have much time to do so. With the help of the NDP, the government has limited the time for debate. That means that, today, I will not be able to share absolutely everything that I would have liked to share and debate with my colleagues because time allocation has been imposed on an important bill that has consequences for the provinces.

This bill will have consequences and it will infringe on provincial jurisdictions. It may also cause disruptions in the existing system. I think it would have been only reasonable for us to take the necessary time to debate this bill and to shed light on some of its inherent problems. We think that this shows that the government and the NDP are in a hurry to tick a box on their platform so that they can have people believe that they implemented a universal pharmacare program, which is not the case.

Today, we are debating a bill that sets out a series of principles. If those principles are adopted and if the provinces are willing, then one day there may be a pan-Canadian pharmacare program. However, there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip.

First, Quebec has unequivocally stated that it will not support this bill or work with the federal government to set up a Canadian pharmacare program. In fact, Quebec has had a hybrid pharmacare program since 1996, meaning that no one in Quebec lacks drug coverage. Everyone is covered, either through their job—with a collective agreement or a contract that allows them to access a private company—or through access to the public pharmacare plan, which is administered by the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec.

The bill we have before us blatantly encroaches on Quebec's jurisdiction. The government is suddenly swooping in to play the leader in a program that already exists in Quebec.

The NDP will not have a chance to ask me the question, so I will provide the answer I would have given if my colleagues had asked it. We know that in Quebec, the unions, who for the most part represent public sector workers, pay big medicare and pharmacare premiums on their paycheque. We in the Bloc Québécois agree that there is an imbalance. The government should talk to Quebec and the unions to find an answer to this situation, because there is indeed a problem. However, what my NDP colleagues fail to mention is that at the National Assembly, which is the democratic assembly of Quebec, all the parties, namely Québec Solidaire, the Parti Québécois, the Liberal Party and the CAQ government, unanimously adopted a motion saying that this is out of the question, that this does not interest them, but that it might interest them if the federal government were willing to give them the money to improve their own programs, with no strings attached.

We are not being bad sports. We are simply asking the government not to disrupt the way we manage pharmacare in Quebec. That said, we are prepared to talk, take the money, improve our program and, perhaps, find a solution to the issue of public sector workers paying unreasonable premiums. I say this because, before becoming an MP, I was a public sector worker. When I looked at my paycheque, I saw that I was paying huge premiums. This is due to the fact that pharmaceutical groups now finance their medications in a certain way. A small number of us finance the costs of increasingly niche medications for very specific patients. That means a very small number of us are paying the costs of research.

● (2000)

Public system workers are the ones paying a large share of it. Since we agree on that, what stopped the government and the NDP from agreeing to Quebec's request? Quebec is not against pharmacare. It is not unwilling to explore ways of improving it. However, the government should not try to tell Quebec how to do it, what recipe to follow, and so on.

This bill contains all sorts of steps that need to be taken before people can get a full refund of their drug costs, including diabetes medications or contraceptives for women. That is going to take a long time. The government wants us to believe that if this bill is passed, people will have access to a free, universal Canadian pharmacare program by the next day. We do not think that is possible, because it will take quite a while before Quebec reaches an agreement with the federal government. I heard my colleague say that Alberta, like Quebec, has also voiced opposition.

I know that time is running out and that the time I am taking to talk is delaying the next vote, but I still have a lot more to say about how we, the members of the Bloc Québécois, do not understand why we are being accused of blocking a bill like this one, when Quebec has jurisdiction and is responsible for managing everything related to health, including pharmacare.

As we know, the provinces have created an alliance so that they can buy prescription drugs in bulk. Quebec's health minister, along with a team of experts, determines the list of drugs that are covered by the public plan. We also have a system that enables doctors to ask the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec for exemptions, so that a person who really needs a drug that is not on the formulary can get reimbursed for it.

Imagine if Canada came up with a formulary that was completely different from Quebec's formulary. Imagine the utter confusion that would cause. That is already happening with the dental insurance. We do not need another pan-Canadian program to tell us how to manage our health and social services. What is more, the federal government is not in the best position to tell us what to do, since it already has enough trouble managing its own affairs in areas under its own jurisdiction.

We are calling on the federal government to leave it to Quebec and the provinces to provide the service. The best way to help Quebec and the provinces is to give them the money with a right to opt out with no strings attached. That would prove that what matters is not making political gains, but ensuring that people have access to a pharmacare program.

What we are seeing is simply a PR exercise where two political parties are hurting in the polls and they want to be able to tick a box on their record and build their electoral campaign on it. Speaking for myself, I am going to be very uncomfortable when people ask me when they will be able to get their drugs for free in Quebec. I have no date to give them. I really have no hope of giving them one either because, based on what we are seeing right now, this is just a PR campaign that is misinforming the public. I find that shameful.

● (2005)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 8:07 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of Government Business No. 39 now before the House.

The question is on the amendment.

Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to House*]

● (2010)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If a member present in the House wishes that the amendment be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded vote, please.

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

● (2055)

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

(Division No. 770)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blanchet
Block
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Chabot
Champoux
Dalton
Davidson
Deltell
Desbiens
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Findlay
Gallant
Gaudreau
Genuis
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Jivani
Khanna
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lehoux
Leslie
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
Maguire
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Plamondon
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Scheer
Seeback
Simard
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Therrien
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer– — 141

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Carrie
Chambers
Cooper
Dancho
DeBellefeuille
d'Entremont
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Ferreri
Fortin
Garon
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kelly
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Lawrence
Lemire
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Majumdar
Mazier
McLean
Michaud
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Patzer
Pauzé
Perron
Poilievre
Reid
Richards
Rood
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shipley
Sinclair-Desgagné
Steinley
Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Battiste
Bibeau

Alghabra
Anand
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Beech
Bittle

Blair
Blaney
Blois
Boulerice
Bradford
Brière
Cannings
Carr
Casey
Chagger
Chahal
Champagne
Chatel
Chen
Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)
Cormier
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
Hanley
Hardie
Hepfner
Holland
Housefather
Hussen
Hutchings
Iacono
Idlout
Ien
Jaczek
Johns
Jowhari
Julian
Kayabaga
Kelloway
Khalid
Khera
Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk
Kwan
Lalonde
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lapointe
Lattanzio
Lauzon
LeBlanc
Lebouthillier
Lightbound
Long
Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Martinez Ferrada
Masse
May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod
McPherson
Mendès
Mendicino
Miao
Miller
Morrice
Morrissey
Murray
Naqvi
Noormohamed
O'Connell
Oliphant
Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski
Qualtrough
Robillard
Rodriguez
Rogers
Romanado
Rota
Sahota
Sajjan
Saks
Samson
Schiefke
Serré
Sgro
Shanahan
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Singh
Sorbara
Sousa
St-Onge
Sudds
Tassi
Taylor Roy
Thompson
Trudeau
Turnbull
Valdez
Van Bynen
van Koeverden
Vandal
Vandenbeld
Virani
Weiler
Wilkinson
Yip
Zahid
Zarrillo
Zuberi– — 167

PAIRED

Members

Desilets
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Fast
Jones
Ng
Sarai
Small
Thériault– — 8

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main 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.

● (2100)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded vote, please.

● (2115)

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

(Division No. 771)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Alghabra
Ali
Anand
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Arya
Ashton
Atwin
Bachrach
Badawey
Bains
Baker
Barron
Battiste
Beech
Bibeau
Bittle
Blair
Blaney
Blois
Boulerice
Bradford
Brière
Cannings
Carr
Casey
Chagger
Chahal
Champagne
Chatel
Chen
Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)
Cormier
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
Hanley
Hardie
Hepfner
Holland
Housefather
Hussen
Hutchings
Iacono
Idlout

Ien
Johns
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
O'Connell
Petitpas Taylor
Qualtrough
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sahota
Saks
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Singh
Sousa
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Trudeau
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo
Jaczek
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Lalonde
Lapointe
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Morrice
Murray
Noormohamed
Oliphant
Powlowski
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Sajjan
Samson
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara
St-Onge
Tassi
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi– — 166

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blanchet
Block
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Chabot
Champoux
Dalton
Davidson
Deltell
Desbiens
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Findlay
Gallant
Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Carrie
Chambers
Cooper
Dancho
DeBellefeuille
d'Entremont
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Ferreri
Fortin
Garon
Gaudreau
Genuis
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Jivani
Khanna
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lehoux
Leslie
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
Maguire
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Michaud
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Patzer
Pauzé
Perron
Poilievre
Reid
Richards
Rood
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shipley
Sinclair-Desgagné
Steinley
Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kelly
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Lawrence
Lemire
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Majumdar
Mazier
Melillo
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Plamondon
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Scheer
Seeback
Simard
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Therrien
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer– — 140

PAIRED

Members

Desilets
Fast
Ng
Small
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Jones
Sarai
Thériault– — 8

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

[*Translation*]

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services on a point of order.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Madam Speaker, I would ask that the first division be amended. I made the wrong choice.

I am requesting the unanimous consent of the House to vote nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): To seek the unanimous consent of the House, all the whips must be consulted and they must notify the Chair. I have not received any such notice.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

For clarification, we would be prepared to give the unanimous consent to allow the member to have his vote changed so that he is voting in favour.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I understand that the hon. parliamentary secretary is prepared to do that, but the rules basically say that the whips have to be notified first, and the whips have to notify me. All the whips have to notify me.

Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, February 28, I regret that I have not received notice from all recognized parties that they are in agreement with this request. Should all recognized parties provide such a notice to the Chair, the member would be able to make the request at a later time.

As such, again, I would just ask members to go through the proper procedures first, and then we can entertain such a request.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023

The House resumed from May 21 consideration of the motion 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. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be here this evening to finally give this speech, which I have been looking forward to doing for quite some time. I would like to start by saying that there are some good measures in Bill C-59. As everyone knows, this is an omnibus bill. It would have been terrible to not have anything to sink our teeth into. Of these good measures, I have identified a few that I think are worth highlighting in the House.

First, Bill C-59 seeks to make it more difficult to use tax havens by cracking down on two schemes. The Bloc Québécois has wanted to crack down on tax havens for a long time. It is not perfect, but the government is nevertheless tackling two schemes, specifically interest deductibility between subsidiaries and hybrid mismatch arrangements. This measure was recommended by the OECD working group on tax evasion.

One of the schemes involving tax havens is the creation of financing subsidiaries. Simply put, the primary function of a subsidiary in a tax haven is to lend to the Canadian parent company. The interest paid by the Canadian company is thus diverted to a tax haven where it is essentially not taxed. That is the loophole that Bill C-59 aims to close. This is a good measure. As for the implementation of rules on hybrid mismatch arrangements, this is consistent with the OECD and the Group of Twenty base erosion and profit shifting project recommendations regarding cross-border tax avoidance structures.

This bill also picks up on the idea of Bill C-323, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act regarding mental health services, which was sponsored by my colleague from Cumberland—Colchester and passed unanimously at second reading. The Bloc Québécois supports that bill. Quebec is a pioneer in psychotherapy legislation and has inspired several provinces, like Ontario, to regulate psychotherapy. Anyone who wishes to offer psychotherapy services in Quebec and who is not a doctor or psychologist must obtain a licence from the Ordre des psychologues du Québec. However, the different tax treatment afforded to the various professional associations is unfair. For doctors and psychologists, psychotherapy falls within their scope of practice and is therefore not taxable, but all other categories of professionals must charge tax on the services they provide. The bill would address this unfairness and would come as a welcome change, given the growing need for mental health services. The bill also includes a review of the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act. At first glance, this is a small step in the right direction.

In the House, if a bill is good for Quebec, then the Bloc Québécois votes in favour of it. If a bill is bad for Quebec, then my colleagues and I vote against it. As I said in the beginning, there are some good things about Bill C-59, but mostly it is a bad bill. That is why the Bloc Québécois will be voting against it. Bill C-59 is an omnibus bill that is almost 550 pages long. It sets out 60 different measures and amends or creates 31 laws and regulations. I would like to remind the House that there are some good things in the bill but that the Bloc Québécois will be opposing it at second reading because of two measures.

There are two things that the Bloc Québécois still does not like about the bill. That will not change, regardless of the political party sitting on the other side of the House. The first thing is that this is the umpteenth time the federal government has tried to infringe on provincial jurisdictions. The second thing is the subsidies that the government is giving to oil companies at Quebeckers' expense. This bill gives $30.3 billion in subsidies to oil companies in the form of tax credits. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change is telling us that his government has put an end to oil subsidies, but he should have read his government's bill because that is not what it says. We are talking about $30.3. billion that is being taken out of taxpayers' pockets and given as a gift to oil companies so that they can pollute less, when they obviously do not need that money. One thing is certain, I highly doubt that the official opposition will do much to oppose that, even if it is “wacko”, as they say.

Another crazy idea in this bill is the creation of a federal department of municipal affairs called the department of housing, infrastructure and communities, which will lead to more federal attempts at interference, more endless discussions and more delays, when the housing crisis requires swift action.

● (2120)

On top of these two very bad measures, the government made no attempt to address the Bloc Québécois' priorities, priorities that reflected the real and urgent needs of Quebeckers. When my colleagues and I are on the ground, in our ridings, we connect with our constituents and take calls every day at our offices. People talk to us about these needs.

Worse yet, in response to Quebec's requests, the federal government decided once again to disregard provincial jurisdictions. Housing, local infrastructure, land use, municipal affairs: none of that falls under federal jurisdiction.

Nevertheless, Bill C-59 creates the department of housing, infrastructure and communities. By creating a designated department, Bill C-59 gives the minister the capacity to interfere even more. This department will allow the federal government to impose even more conditions on the provinces and municipalities and, of course, make the delays even worse.

Former prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau tried a similar stunt when he created the department of urban affairs in 1971, and it failed miserably. To prevent the federal government from meddling in municipal affairs, the Quebec government amended its Act respecting the Ministère du Conseil exécutif to prohibit municipalities, RCMs, school boards and crown corporations from dealing directly with Ottawa. That law remains in effect.

The department of urban affairs caused endless bickering between the federal government and the provinces for its entire existence and never managed to deliver anything useful. It was finally shut down in 1979, which was good for Quebeckers, under pressure from a certain PQ government led by René Lévesque.

Despite this disastrous experiment, the federal government is trying something similar today. After the national housing strategy was announced, it took more than three years for an agreement to be signed between Quebec and Ottawa. Just recently, the federal government refused to give $900 million to Quebec to create housing, with no strings attached. It is hard to imagine that negotiations will be streamlined under a new department.

The picture is not much brighter if we look at the other federal parties. The government is essentially proposing more and more centralization. The Conservatives display the same centralizing tendency, only they are also threatening to cut investments if housing construction targets are not met. This is a disturbing trend among all the federalist parties in the House.

It will come as no surprise to learn that we will not support the creation of a department whose main mission is to interfere in Quebec's jurisdictions. We will not support Bill C-59 either. The Bloc Québécois will continue to oppose all forms of federal interference in Quebec's jurisdictions for as long as it takes, for one very simple but exceedingly important reason: Quebec never has been and never will be dictated to by the federal government.

Once again, we have proof that this government, this institution, the federal Parliament, does not respect the Quebec nation. It will not respect the Quebec nation until the people of Quebec decide to create a true nation with all the tools needed to achieve Quebec's sovereignty and independence.

When that time comes, we will congratulate them on creating a new department of no consequence to us.

● (2125)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to reassure my colleague. Our agreements with the Government of Quebec are going very well.

Last week, I had the opportunity to visit the riding of our colleague from Salaberry—Suroît to make an announcement regarding housing. The provincial MNA for the riding, Claude Reid, was also there, as was the mayor. It was a great announcement about social housing. At the same time, we have made a plethora of other announcements.

Does my colleague not think that is a good thing?

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, what I have to say is that it is great if an announcement was made with my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît, who I always refer to as my treasured whip.

When I am told that the federal government is working hand in hand with the Government of Quebec, then I want to know why the federal government is funding the court challenge against a law that was passed by the Quebec National Assembly. The federal government cannot tell me that it is working hand in hand with the Government of Quebec when it is challenging one of Quebec's laws and funding a court challenge of that law. It is impossible.

When the Government of Quebec asks for $1 billion to cover the costs associated with taking in asylum seekers and the federal government does not answer the call, then the federal government cannot tell me that it is working hand in hand with Quebec. When the federal government challenges Bill 96, a French language law that was passed by the Quebec National Assembly, using Quebeckers' tax dollars, then it cannot tell me that it is working hand in hand with the Government of Quebec. The day we work hand in hand will be the day when we are sitting side by side at the United Nations, each in our own seat.

● (2130)

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean. I also have a treasured whip, but not the same one.

According to my colleague, the federalist parties—whether the governing party or the Conservative Party on this side—have supposedly not been advocating for Quebec. As he said, the people of Quebec will decide. I think he is in the wrong Parliament. I think that if he wants to ask the people of Quebec to undo the Canada we know today, he should run for the National Assembly.

Partisan comments aside, I would like to know what my colleague thinks about including registered massage therapists in Bill C-59.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, the bill is 550 pages long and my colleague zeroed in on something very specific. I thank my colleague for asking that question, but I will come back to what he said.

Am I in the wrong Parliament? No, I am not. If he wants to fight for a united Canada, I strongly suggest that he run for the National Assembly. Now, since Quebeckers voted 32 members of the Bloc Québécois into the House of Commons, no one can dispute the legitimacy of our postion in the House, just as I will never dispute the legitimacy of members of the other parties who are seated here in the House. Democracy has spoken.

If Quebeckers did not have a sovereignist option in Ottawa, then only one vision of this issue would be presented in the House. That is unthinkable. Democracy is representation. I represent the people of my riding who put their trust in me. I thank them every day and I thank them again this evening. As for massage therapists, I will talk to my colleague about that in the antechamber.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation on a point of order.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, I made the wrong choice during the first vote. I therefore seek the unanimous consent of the House to have my vote recorded as a "nay". An agreement was reached with the whips.

The Deputy Speaker: I received notice from all recognized parties that they are in agreement with this request.

Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to change his vote?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the member who just finished his speech. I would like to say at the outset that the number of Quebeckers already registered for the NDP's dental care program is in the hundreds of thousands. We also know that thousands of Quebeckers are getting their NDP dental care card every week. I think that is extremely important.

Pharmacare is another topic of discussion. All of the major unions in Quebec say that they view the NDP's pharmacare bill, Bill C-64, in a very positive light. It is important to mention these two things. The NDP is the one proposing measures in the House to improve the daily lives of people across Canada. That is extremely important.

● (2135)

[*English*]

We are supportive of the fall economic statement, Bill C-59. I will talk about some of the measures the NDP has inserted into it, but I will start by saying that this is not an NDP budget.

Of all the governments in the country, the two most popular are the government of British Columbia and the government of Manitoba, and they are two NDP governments. They have both been very effective. The Manitoba NDP government is new, but it is extraordinarily popular. This is because the NDP really knows that the essence of good stewardship, of managing a democratic government, is ensuring that it is not the rich who are taken care of but, rather, regular folks. We have formed government provincially, of course, in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Nova Scotia. All those governments have been governments that have made a difference in the lives of people.

The simple reason the two most popular governments in the country right now are NDP governments is the financial statements that are issued by the federal ministry of finance. As members well know, the federal ministry of finance is not a hotbed of social democrats or democratic socialists, but it does publish the fiscal period returns. If members look through them, and I hope they do before the end of the evening, they will see that, over the last 40 years, the best governments, in terms of managing money, paying down debt, expanding education services, expanding housing services and expanding health care systems have been, systematically, over the last 40 years, NDP governments. That is why the two most popular governments in the country right now are NDP governments. It is because the NDP is not beholden to lobbyists.

The corporate Conservatives are run by lobbyists. Their national executive is run by lobbyists. There are lobbyists permeating the Conservative headquarters. The Conservative caucus and the campaign team are all lobbyists for the corporate sector. When the Conservatives were in government we could see how badly they performed. They do not understand the issue of stewardship. The infamous Harper tax haven treaties have bled over $30 billion, each and every year over the last 17 years, out of this country. That is $30 billion that could have been used for health care and housing. It could have been used for a variety of services for veterans, seniors and youth. It could have lowered post-secondary education costs. It could have made a big difference, but that was not what the Conservatives chose to do.

The Liberals, when they came to power, kept many of the tax breaks that had been given to the richest of Canadians, the wealthiest of Canadians, who have never paid their fair share, and the most profitable corporations. The NDP's approach is different, which is why the fiscal period returns to the federal ministry of finance show conclusively that the NDP and NDP governments are the best at managing money.

This is not an NDP budget, by any means. There are elements that the NDP forced into the budget that would make a difference in the lives of working people. The reason we are supporting it is the amendments we have achieved, in the same way that we brought dental care to Canadians. There are two million who have signed up already, including 100,000 seniors. There are many who are, for the first time in their lives, getting access to dental care, and this is just in the first two weeks of this new NDP program. NDP dental care is making a difference.

Earlier tonight, we moved the pharmacare bill to the health committee, which is where it should go. I am looking forward to those hearings over the next couple of days. People have been waiting for decades to have pharmacare added to our health care program and our health care strength in this country.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall in this House, as I am sure you have a great depth of historical memory, that 60 years ago in this House of Commons, just a few feet from this temporary house in the West Block, in Centre Block, Tommy Douglas, as the founding leader of the NDP, brought forward universal health care, which was viciously fought against by Conservatives at the time, who did not want to see people getting health care. However, it was a minority Parliament and Tommy Douglas was able to successfully deliver universal health care to Canadians.

Tommy Douglas always thought that we needed to make sure that health care was available from the tip of our heads right to the soles of our feet. He always envisaged that we would move to pharmacare, that we would move to dental care and that Canadians would have access to the full range of health care services that all other countries with universal health care enjoyed. Fortunately, we have the member for Burnaby South as our leader who feels the same way, and this has been a hallmark of NDP leaders over the decades. Every time there has been a minority Parliament, the NDP has stepped up as the worker bees of Parliament, as the adults in the room. We have gotten things done that have made a difference for Canadians, from universal health care to a whole range of other things like the Canada pension plan, employment insurance and all those things that make a difference in people's lives. All of them come thanks to the NDP, because that is our role in Parliament.

Therefore, when we look at the fall economic statement, we can see already that NDP stamp that makes a difference, but unlike the corporate Conservatives and the lobbyist Liberals, we do not believe in spending enormous amounts of money on the wealthy, on the pampered and on big corporations. We do not believe in funding massively the corporate sector. We believe in negotiating with the corporate sector. The reason we are pressing so hard for pharmacare is that countries that have universal pharmacare are able to have the bulk-purchasing negotiating power that forces down the price of drugs. New Zealand is a great example, where there is a reduction of 90% in the cost of certain medications because the New Zealand government was able to say to the pharmaceutical companies that if they wanted to come into that market, they would have to pay New Zealand's price. Currently, with the patchwork of plans that the corporate Conservatives and the lobbyist Liberals have put into place over decades, it is the pharmaceutical company executives who decide what the prices are, and that has to change.

The fall economic statement does contain some measures that we believe would make a difference. First off, we believe firmly in starting to adjust a taxation system that has become profoundly unjust and unequal. We have said that when we look at the infamous Harper tax haven treaties that cost us $30 billion a year, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, and we look at the range of other loopholes that exist, it is important to take steps to ensure that those loopholes are closed. The real taxation rate for Canada's largest corporations is single digits because of the loopholes. Because of the corporate executives' ability to write off and because of their ability to take money overseas where they do not have to pay taxes on it, their real taxation rate is in the single digits, less than 10%.

Why not ask Canadians what their taxation rate is? Middle-class Canadians pay their taxes expecting that they will get services and supports in return, but instead, under the Harper regime, we saw that the Conservatives slashed services to those taxpayers who had paid money into the federal government and they gave that money away. They gave it to tax havens. They gave it to the banks. Unbelievably, the Harper regime gave $160 billion to the banking sector so that the banks could prop up executive bonuses and corporate dividends.

● (2140)

The Conservatives have never apologized for that, and Liberals have never apologized for the $750 billion, again, in liquidity supports that they offered to the banking sector just a few years ago. It took 96 hours to provide $750 billion in liquidity supports. Between the two, the corporate coalition of Liberals and Conservatives, over the past 15 years, has given, unbelievably, in current dollars, over a trillion dollars in liquidity supports to the banking sector to prop up dividends and profits and executive bonuses.

We look at the health care problems that we are experiencing, the housing crisis and other problems that exist. We had, today, the member for Nunavut, who is an extraordinary member of Parliament, asking about day care that is not being adequately funded in Iqaluit, yet for Liberals and Conservatives, between them, giving a trillion dollars to the banking sector is no problem.

We can look at the tax havens over the last 15 years. That is half a trillion dollars. That is $30 billion a pop, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, given away to overseas tax havens without a penny of return to Canadians, yet we look at people with disabilities. Half of those who have to go to food banks to make ends meet, half of those who are sleeping outside in the parks and main streets of our country, are people with disabilities. They are not getting what they need in terms of support, but between Liberals and Conservatives, the corporate coalition, for 15 years, half a trillion dollars went to offshore tax havens.

We can look at oil and gas CEOs. Between both the Harper Conservatives and the current Liberal government, over the last 15 years, we have seen $100 billion given to oil and gas CEOs. There is a ton of money that goes to the wrong places in this country. That is why NDP MPs are here fighting on behalf of Canadians, delivering on pharmacare and affordable housing, finally. We had to push the Liberals hard on that over the last couple of years.

We are delivering on dental care, anti-scab legislation, a clean energy strategy and all those things, because, as worker bees in Parliament, we believe firmly that the investments need to happen with families and regular people right across this country, not the rich and the pampered. That is where the corporate Conservatives love to spend tons of money. That is where we have seen, sadly, the Liberal government spend tons of money. We believe that money needs to go to regular people.

When we look at this fall economic statement, there is a first step. Again, the NDP pushed hard for that. We finally will get an annual tax of 3% on types of digital services. This is earned by larger companies with more than $1.1 billion in revenue. This is an important step that we support. Again, is this an NDP budget? No. Does it take an important first step? Yes, it does.

As for the investments in housing, the apartment construction loan program, $15 billion, and the affordable housing fund over the next three years for non-profit and co-op and social housing, we support those as well. In fact, the member for Vancouver East fought hard and so did the member for Nunavut, to make a difference in terms of housing.

I do need to mention the anti-scab legislation for a moment and the work of my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, who did a remarkable job in making sure that, finally, replacement workers will be banned at the federal level, and Parliament will be called upon to get a final vote on that in the coming weeks. This is vitally important.

The NDP MPs work as a team. Our leader is the member from Burnaby South. We have made an enormous difference in this Parliament. We made an enormous difference in the last Parliament. We will recall, at the height of the COVID crisis, that it was the NDP that was pushing the government, fortunately in a Parliament where I think it is fair to say that all parties did work together, to invest more than $40 billion to ensure that people, families, people with disabilities, seniors and students were taken care of. Small businesses actually had the wherewithal to keep that shingle out as part of their small business by some rent relief.

● (2145)

All of those things came as a result of the NDP fighting hard on behalf of people. There have been two consecutive minority Parliaments where the NDP has made a difference.

Let me get to the crux of what is in Bill C-59 that we can support. The amendments that were brought originally by the member for Burnaby South, the leader of the NDP, would finally enhance the Competition Bureau. This is fundamentally important. We have had no consumer protection in this country. The corporate sector, the lobbyists, have really been paramount. We have seen, over the decades, how successive Liberal and Conservative governments have refused to do anything to enhance consumer protection.

The member for Burnaby South, the national leader of the NDP, brought forward enhancements to the Competition Act that would ensure that we can crack down on food price gouging and gas price gouging that we are seeing. It has happened with impunity because the Competition Bureau has not had the tools to take action against it. Members will recall that the member for Burnaby South tabled a bill in this regard. The NDP fought hard. We negotiated hard. We did our work as the worker bees in Parliament.

As a result of that, many of the enhancements to the Competition Act are now in this legislation. This is important because despite the protestations of the member for Carleton, who tries to pretend that putting a price on pollution has led to the difficulties and challenges around the rise in food prices, we know that most Canadians understand, unlike the member for Carleton, that it is actually food price gouging that has taken place. We are seeing massive profits in the grocery industry. We are seeing record CEO bonuses.

We have a Conservative Party that is absolutely inundated with lobbyists. Lobbyists run its national party and run its campaign team. This is no surprise because of all the corporate Conservatives have done. Their past track record is giving massive amounts of money to the corporate sector, without ever asking for anything in return. It is like they are not even trying to get any benefits for Canadians. They just hand it out. There were the infamous Harper tax haven treaties, $30 billion each and every year handed over to the wealthiest of Canadians in the corporate sector, and they never asked for a thing in return.

The role the NDP plays in Parliament is so important because the Competition Act amendments that we brought in would mean that we could start cracking down on the egregious food price gouging Canadians are experiencing when they go to the grocery store, and gas price gouging. Just a few weeks ago, my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni signalled this. I know my colleagues in British Columbia, like my colleague from South Okanagan—West Kootenay, can attest to this. The prices in British Columbia all of a sudden skyrocketed by 30¢ a litre. There was no explanation because the companies can do that now. They can do gas price gouging.

The companies do this when we have peak season in terms of travel in British Columbia. It is a beautiful province. We like to get around in British Columbia. The gas companies can gouge with impunity because the Conservatives have allowed them to do this and the Liberals have allowed them to do this. Finally, with these enhancements, the Competition Bureau and the Competition Act would be able to crack down on this gas price gouging that has inflicted so much pain on British Columbians and Canadians right across this country.

These are two important elements that are part of this bill, and it is why we are supporting it.

I wanted to give a shout-out to my colleague from London—Fanshawe. She presented a private member's bill waiving the GST on counselling and psychotherapy. The NDP has also put that into this bill. That would make a difference for all those who need counselling and psychotherapy. Those who have experience with mental illness, mental challenges and mental health know how important it is to be able to pay for those services. This is another innovation that would make a difference.

The NDP has achieved a lot to improve the bill, and we will support it.

● (2150)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight one of the aspects that is very important for us to take into consideration. The Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister made reference to it in presenting the budget, and that was the degree to which we are getting direct foreign investment. If one takes a look at the first three quarters of last year, we were number one on a per capita basis in the G7 and, in fact, the G20. When a worldwide comparison is done, I believe we were somewhere around number three.

Foreign investment does matter. It creates all forms of jobs and opportunities. I wonder whether the member could provide some thoughts on that particular issue.

● (2155)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite.

I would suggest that what the NDP believes in is stimulating investment here at home. This is something we believe very strongly in. It is the partnering of public investment and private investment. This is something we have lost sight of over the last few decades. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has pointed out that the infrastructure deficit in this country is now approaching a quarter of a trillion dollars, for sewage plants, bridges, roads that need to be reconstructed, schools and hospitals.

After the Second World War, there was a fair taxation system that asked the rich to pay their fair share and asked the profitable corporations to pay a certain level of tax. As a result of that, we were able to build a society that had massive infrastructure and allowed us to build schools, roads and hospitals. We have moved away from that. It was eroded by Conservatives, including the Harper Conservatives, and was unfortunately not picked up by the Liberals. After the 2015 election, they should have put in place a fair tax system that would have allowed for the public investments, partnering with private investments, to have allowed our economy to really take off.

These are all reasons why an NDP government would be the best choice for Canada.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, there is much in my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby's speech that I want to support, but I was particularly drawn to his reminiscences, believe it or not, of a better time that I think of quite often: the degree of co-operation that happened in this place during COVID.

I distinctly remember the work we did. There were all of the finance critics from every party, including me for the Green Party and the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby representing the NDP as finance critic. The member for Carleton was, at the time, finance critic, but he is doing something different now.

We all met on a regular basis with a former colleague, the hon. Bill Morneau, who was minister of finance. We met every other week. We brought news from the ground of what was not working for our businesses locally, and what was working. As we could not vote in this place, every bit of the $80 billion in emergency spending to help Canadians was passed unanimously every time.

I want to stop for a moment and thank all of our colleagues for the ability to pull together to help Canadians in crisis. Please, let us do it again.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, who is a good friend, for raising that point.

It is true that during COVID we saw the best of parliamentarianism in this country. All members of Parliament were working together. We will recall that we did not have the virtual Parliament to start. We had a scant number of MPs in the House because of social distancing. At the same time, we were able to agree on a variety of supports that made a big difference in the lives of Canadians.

I would suggest, and I think my colleague would agree with me, that the climate crisis now calls upon that same level of co-operation. We need to work together. There are the wildfires in northern Canada. The fire season is starting earlier than ever. In British Columbia, we lived through the heat dome that killed 600 people, including 60 people in my riding. Atmospheric rivers have cut off portions of Canada from other portions of Canada. There is absolutely no doubt that the climate crisis is at hand. We all need to work together, and I would hope that we would find a renewed sense of co-operation among all members of Parliament to combat this crisis that requires a degree of co-operation never seen before in our country's history.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

It is interesting to hear my hon. colleague speak, because even during question period today, his leader rose and talked about greedy CEOs. He got quite a reaction, because it is fairly well known that, despite the fact that the NDP leader constantly speaks about Loblaw and the connections that he makes, his brother is lobbying on behalf of Metro.

NDP members, particularly their leader, take shot after shot at the Liberal Party. Then what do they do? They vote with the Liberals time after time. They have not seen a single solitary thing, in my view, that the Liberals themselves have not taken credit for. At what point will the member start providing the opposition that I have seen him provide in the House to the Liberals, in the form of tangible opposition, and by that I mean voting against them when they are providing poor governance?

● (2200)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I think the member errs in one respect. I go to Kamloops quite often, and I know that the people of Kamloops now are benefiting from the NDP's dental care program. In fact the member should be talking with his constituents. There are hundreds of them who have already received the support in Kamloops, which is wonderful.

Now, of course, I would hope that the member would vote for the NDP pharmacare plan, because there are about 18,000 people in his riding who would benefit from the diabetes medication and about 25,000 people in his riding who would benefit from the contraception.

However, when the member says that we vote with the Liberals, I think it is actually the contrary: When we are talking about pharmacare, dental care and anti-scab legislation, the Liberals have been forced to vote with us, and I think that is a very good thing.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, my colleague's intervention was excellent.

I will ask the member about the Competition Act and Bill C-59, particularly because it is the NDP that is the only party that is fighting corporate greed. I would like to give a specific example.

I am a member of the indigenous and northern affairs committee, and it was my motion that got the North West Company, a grocery company that is subsidized by the Liberal government, to offer subsidies to alleviate poverty. However, instead of using the subsidy to alleviate poverty, the North West Company is helping to feed corporate greed. For example, the CEO, Dan McConnell, would not answer my questions regarding his salary, his benefits or the bonuses that he gets. Instead, he said that he would give me the responses in written form, which he has now provided. That CEO, in 2023, earned $765,000 and in the same year received a bonus of just over $1 million.

How would the Competition Act and Bill C-59 help to address that kind of corporate greed?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Nunavut, who is an extraordinary voice for Nunavut, for northern Canada and for indigenous peoples. She brings so much to the floor of the House of Commons and has been such a remarkable fighter for her constituents and for people right across this land.

It is appalling to me to hear these figures. The member is talking about nearly $1.8 million dollars paid in salary and bonuses to the CEO of a company that has been part of what can only be described as massive food price gouging in northern Canada and Nunavut. I have been to Nunavut, and I have seen the prices, which are unbelievable for any regular family to try to afford to put food on the table. If it were not for country food, people simply would not be able to survive. This is why it is so important to have NDP MPs in the House, and ultimately to have an NDP government.

Simply, Liberals and Conservatives will never take on the corporate CEOs who gouge Canadians. NDP MPs and an NDP government will.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to be able to address the issue of budgetary measures, because I like to think there is a lot of contrast, a big difference, between Conservatives and Liberals. Maybe one of the ways I can highlight the difference is to talk about some of the things that a caring government does.

I can say that, virtually from the very beginning, in 2015, the government in essence recognized the valuable role Canada's middle class and those people aspiring to be a part of it play in giving us a healthier and stronger economy. All the way through there were tax breaks to the middle class, enhancements to child care programs and increases to the guaranteed income supplement, programs that literally lifted hundreds of thousands of people out of poverty. Carried into a worldwide pandemic, we were developing programs to support Canadians at a time when the government may have needed to step up.

Fast-forward to what we see today. I believe, when we do a comparison, we get a really good contrast in terms of what type of government we have and what type of government we would see if, heaven forbid, Conservatives were to win the next election. I think of the types of programs and investments we have put in that demonstrate very clearly that we want to have an economy that works for all Canadians. We recognize the importance of fairness. Think of generation X and the millennials, and the issues they have to face.

The budget we are talking about today is really and truly a reflection of what the values of Canadians are and what their expectations are of the national government. We know this because the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister and my colleagues within caucus who work within their constituencies are bringing the feedback that is so critically important here to Ottawa so that the budget reflects the interests of the constituents we represent. I do not say that lightly, because I believe it is a reflection of what we have been told as parliamentarians. That is why what we see in this budget and have seen over the last couple of years is serious investments in people in a very real and tangible way.

It is interesting to look at who it is the leader of the Conservative Party is talking to. Contrast that with who it is the Prime Minister is talking to. I have made reference to some of the events that have taken place in my home province of Manitoba. Just last week, the Prime Minister was in The Maples in Winnipeg. We were talking about the budget and how, in this budget, we would be spending money to support 400,000-plus children in all regions of the country by ensuring there would be a nutritional program for children who need food when they are going into the classroom.

We were at a school with the provincial minister of education, who was a former principal, from what I understand. It was a great opportunity to be in front of children, child care providers, teachers and educators to see first-hand the benefits of providing nutritional foods. The Province of Manitoba also saw the value of the program and is investing, I believe, about $30 million itself.

What our constituents want to see is governments working together, which is what we saw just last week with respect to the national food program for children. It is hard for a child to learn on an empty stomach. It is an issue that has existed for many years. When I was first elected in 1988, as I made reference to in my comments, Sharon Carstairs was talking, as a former teacher herself, about how difficult it was for a child to learn on an empty stomach.

● (2205)

The government is actually delivering on a program that is going to have a real, tangible impact. The Prime Minister is working with the provincial minister, highlighting and amplifying how valuable that program is going to be. We listen to the Conservatives, and they do not support the program. It is unfortunate, but it is not the only thing.

We invested $198 billion over 10 years in health care for future generations. I would tell every member of Parliament to talk to their constituents. We love our health care system. This is a commitment from the Prime Minister and the government to ensure that we have quality health care. We talk about mental health care and long-term health care. We talk about all sorts of needs to be met, with family doctors and so forth, and this is materializing in a substantive way.

It was not that long ago, a number of months ago, that the Prime Minister was at the Grace hospital with the premier of the province, who was saying how Ottawa's financial contributions were going to make a tangible difference in terms of staffing, whether doctors or nurses, as well as wait times and so forth. As a government, not only did we commit the billions of dollars to preserve the health care that Canadians love, but we also made health care agreements with the different provinces and territories. There has to be a higher sense of financial accountability. Canadians have an expectation. Again, the Conservative Party opposes it; Conservatives believe that Ottawa does not need to play a role in health care. We saw that during the Harper years, when the current leader was part of that cabinet.

Last year, the Prime Minister was with me in Tyndall Park, where—

● (2210)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Mégantic—L'Érable on a point of order.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for allowing me to make this little special request to the members of the House.

I am seeking the unanimous consent of the House to change the votes from the members for Calgary Midnapore, Perth—Wellington and King—Vaughan, which were votes against the amendment to Motion No. 39, to votes in favour.

I would also ask to add a vote against the main motion from the member for Perth—Wellington.

The Deputy Speaker: I have received notice from all recognized parties that they are in agreement with this request.

Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: It is agreed.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we should think of the progressive programs that the government has put in place over the years, including in the current budget, to support Canadians, as well as why the Conservative Party continuously and consistently votes against those programs.

I referred to health care and $10-a-day child care. In Tyndall Park, the Prime Minister talked with child care workers about the benefits of that particular program. All provinces are on board, working with the federal government.

We can talk about housing. The Prime Minister, again not that long ago, was in Manitoba with not only the premier but also the mayor of Winnipeg. They talked about investing hundreds of millions of dollars, recognizing the important role that the government plays in providing housing. The leader of the Conservative Party was minister of housing; we barely need two hands to count the number of houses that were built when he was in that role. He built six units.

At the end of the day, as a government, we are working on building a substantial number of houses. Over the next number of years, it is going to total close to four million homes. The Conservatives will laugh at the premiers, the mayors and the other municipalities that are working with the government, but at the end of the day—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (2215)

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

I know it seems at times that we are having a conversation here, but the hon. member for Winnipeg North has the floor, so I will ask the chamber to listen attentively to the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, time goes by really quickly here. I am trying to demonstrate to my friends across the way that, whether it is with health care, child care, housing, a national food program, pharmacare, a dental program or the first-ever disability benefit, the government is taking progressive measures to support Canadians and to support constituents across the country in all regions.

However, the Conservative Party consistently votes against these.

Its members do not quite understand that, to build a strong, healthy economy, we need to support Canadians. Over the years, including in the budget, we have brought forward programs to do just that. We brought in programs to support individuals, whether they are seniors, people with disabilities or many others. At the end of the day, what do we hear from the Conservatives? They constantly vote "no". They go around the country saying how Canada is broken.

It was not that long ago that there was an extreme right group the leader of the Conservative Party actually met with. It was the Diagolon group. These are the individuals the Conservative Party is actually listening to—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I understand that sometimes the rhetoric and hyperbole can go a little bit awry here, but at the end of the day, the parliamentary secretary is suggesting something very serious when he says that the member for Carleton met with people from an organization that has espoused hateful language and—

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the conversation tonight, but that is descending into debate, so the hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect that a number of Conservative members might be a little upset with the fact that their leader actually met with that group. He actually went into the trailer and met with members here on Parliament Hill. This is not a disputable issue. At the end of the day, that is fine for the MAGA right Conservatives, that far-right element.

I would suggest that the Conservative Party is more like the former Reform Party than it is conservative. Members do not need to believe me. Listen to what former prime ministers have said. Joe Clark said that he never left the Conservative Party; the Conservative party left him. Kim Campbell has said all sorts of unparliamentary words about today's Conservative Party, especially with respect to the leader. Even Brian Mulroney was very critical of the Conservative Party. He said it is not a progressive party any longer. That aspect was amputated. Do not just listen to me. This is what people within the progressive conservative movement have been saying about the Conservative Party today. It is not a conservative party; it is a far right party like the Reform Party.

I talked about the social programs. There are many different progressive social programs that we have brought forward, but I want to emphasize them from an economic point of view. To have a healthy country, we need a healthy economy. We can take a look at the economy and what we have been able to accomplish by working with Canadians, by working with other entities. I would suggest to members that it goes so much further than what Stephen Harper ever did. We can take a look at the job numbers as an example. In 10 years, almost a million jobs were created under Stephen Harper. When it comes to our government, we are talking about over two million jobs after eight and a half years.

When I think of jobs and opportunities, at the end of the day, one of the most powerful messages that was in the budget document was the fact that Canada, on a per capita basis, has more foreign direct investment than any other country in the G7 or the G20. If we want to look at it from a worldwide perspective, we are number three.

Why do people around the world look at Canada as a place to invest their money? I would suggest that it is due to a number of factors. In Canada, the government has actually signed off on more free trade agreements than any other government has. That is a fact. As a result of such things, by recognizing the value of trade and the value of receiving foreign investment, we have actually hit significant records, unlike the Conservatives, who oppose government involvement in investments.

I would tell my Conservative friends to look at the battery industry. We can talk about Stellantis, Honda and Volkswagen. The current government, working with Doug Ford in this particular case, has actually had substantial investment in an industry that was virtually non-existent in the past. It will be providing tens of thousands of direct and indirect jobs into the future. These will be good, middle-class jobs. They will be green jobs. This is having an impact. From being absolutely nowhere in the world in regard to EV battery production, Canada is now in the top two or three in the world, in terms of that sort of production. This is something that is making a difference.

Even on economic matters, the Conservatives are offside. They do not support the Volkswagen investment. Even though Doug Ford recognizes its value, today's Conservative reformers do not support that. It was the same thing with Stellantis, and now the Conservatives are out there criticizing the Honda investment. I understand that it will be Honda's largest investment in North America. When we talk about the Volkswagen battery plant, in terms of size, it will be somewhere in the neighbourhood of 200 football fields. It will be the largest manufacturing plant in Canada, possibly even in North America.

● (2220)

When Stephen Harper was prime minister, we literally lost tens of thousands, going into over 100,000, manufacturing jobs. This is a government that is bringing back manufacturing jobs. These are the types of things that, as a government, we have been proactive in dealing with.

We recognize that there are issues that Canadians are facing. When we look at things such as inflation, inflation is something that is happening around the world. Even though Canada, in comparison to other countries, is doing relatively well, as a government we were focused on inflation. Back in June 2022, the inflation rate was over 8%. Today, it is at 2.7% and it has been at a far better rate over the last few months, to give us reason to believe and have hope that we will actually see the interest rates go down. We understand the affordability issue. We understand why it is so important that we make sure that Canada continues to have that AAA credit rating, unlike what the Conservatives try to say to Canadians.

Consistently, they try to give the false impression that Canada is broken. If they genuinely believe that Canada is broken, by God, that would mean the world is broken, because, at the end of the day, when one contrasts Canada's overall performance over the last nine years, I would challenge them to show what G7 country has done better, what G20 country has done better. It is because we support Canadians in a tangible way, lifting Canadians out of poverty, providing investments in apprenticeship programs, ensuring that there is a healthy economy and building infrastructure.

No government in Canada's history has spent more real dollars in infrastructure builds than this government has. We understand the importance of a healthy infrastructure, a healthy economy, investing in people. That is the way in which we will be able to grow Canada, and Canada has been growing as a direct result. It is a country that we believe in. Not only do we say it, but we also invest in it, in many different ways, not just through social programming, by having the backs of Canadians and supporting them, but also by developing a stronger, healthier economy, while at the same time recognizing that, yes, the economy matters but so does the environment. That is why it is so important that we keep having the price on pollution and that we do not buy into the misinformation that the Conservatives put out on the price on pollution.

Quite frankly, more constituents of mine actually receive more money through their rebates than they pay in the carbon tax. That is a fact that has been highlighted on many occasions. There is still much more to do, and we will continue to work day in and day out in the different regions of the country to improve and have a fairer and healthier country.

● (2225)

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, I typically say, but on this occasion I rise with the difficult task of pointing out just what this member has done. He has spoken about a far-right group, and I am reading from a Global News story that talked about sexually assaulting the spouse of a member of the House. The member across the way just compared the leader of His Majesty's opposition to that group, when the leader of His Majesty's opposition himself called them “odious” and “losers”.

Made aware of disgusting comments made, I am not even going to use this man's name. This person, who continually carries water for a Prime Minister who invited a Nazi into this House, who said that a woman experienced it differently, who has done all sorts of things, who pressured the first indigenous attorney general in this country's history into obstructing justice, has the audacity to do that. He should be ashamed. He should apologize and withdraw right now.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I will try to get a copy so the member can actually respond to one of the news articles on it. It seems that the Conservative Party is a little sensitive to the fact that I made reference to Diagolon and the fact that the leader of the Conservative Party actually went out to a trailer to meet with them and have discussions.

I am saying the leader of the Conservative Party did it. If he did not do it, then maybe the member should be a little more clear on that particular point. Did the leader not go out to the rally? If the member is offended, he should not be offended at me, he should be offended at the leader of the Conservative Party, who chooses the company he keeps. If the leader is consulting with the far right, if he is starting to adopt policies from the far right, do not blame me, blame the leader of the Conservative Party. Obviously the member is very upset about it. I will see if I can find the information and provide it to him directly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see the Liberal government letting the member for Winnipeg North speak. It is not often that we get a chance to hear him in the House.

I simply wanted to remind everyone that, at the height of the pandemic, when a major social crisis was happening, the member for Carleton went to visit the protesters who were illegally occupying downtown Ottawa, threatening our democracy and threatening this Parliament. He even went to hand out coffee and donuts to them.

Two weeks ago, members of his party, the Conservative Party, met with protesters who are questioning women's right to control their own bodies and the right to abortion here in Canada. Then we learned that, a few weeks ago, the leader of the official opposition stopped by to meet with members of a far-right group, taking the time to chat with them and shake their hands. I would like him to remind us, just for clarity, what the group's name is.

● (2230)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is Diagolon, but I warn the member that the Conservatives are very sensitive on this issue because they do not want to be called out on it. However, the leader of the Conservatives has met with them, talked with them and gone to their trailer. Look at the protests out here during the pandemic and who was out there shaking hands, having a dinner and so forth.

I am just reminding members across the way of the degree in which the Conservative Party has gone so far to the right. It is not just me saying this. That is the reason I made reference to Progressive Conservative prime ministers. It is not just me and it is not Liberals. It is other individuals who have noticed the Conservative Party is a reform party. It is a very far-right party. Take a look at their voting pattern. Take a look the types of posts they put on their social media. Take a look at the behaviours and what we witness day in, day out inside the House. It all amplifies the fact that the Conservatives have taken a far-right turn.

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the speech given by my colleague and juxtaposing that with what I learned in a previous role when I sat on the Emergencies Act committee for this Parliament, what we learned about that far-right extremist group is that a weapons cache was found at the Coutts border crossing and the logo for the Diagolon group was found at that weapons cache. In fact, members of that group were charged with conspiracy to commit murder against RCMP officers.

What I find most troubling about this lack of judgment on the part of the Leader of the Opposition is he purports to stand for law and order and law enforcement officials and yet is meeting with, quite intentionally, people who have now been charged with conspiring to kill law enforcement officials. I wonder if the member could comment on that juxtaposition.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's contribution. It highlights something I have said.

I would like to remind my colleagues of these quotes, and if they do not have the actual quotes, I am more than happy to provide them. I would like to refer to individuals like former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, who, in essence, said that the Conservative Party today has "amputated" progressiveness out of the Conservative Party. There is no progressive nature to the Conservative Party. We have individuals like Joe Clark, a former Conservative prime minister, who said that he never left the Conservative Party; the Conservative Party left him. We have Kim Campbell. Some of the words she used I cannot repeat, but she was referring to the leader of the Conservative Party.

Members do not have to believe me. They can listen to what Progressive Conservatives have been saying. Look at the behaviour. Listen to what the leader of the Conservative Party is saying. Look at the people he is actually meeting with, and the role that they are playing inside the chamber.

It draws me to the conclusion that it is and has become a far-right, extreme party in the House of Commons. There is enough out there to clearly demonstrate that this is, in fact, the case.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is supposed to be a debate on the budget. We can see the Liberal Party is dragging us into its goofy debate about far-right extremists and everything else. It is very disappointing. I am going to allow the member for Winnipeg North to refocus. I am going to talk about how upside-down things are in my riding.

The member spoke about the carbon tax, and we know the carbon tax disproportionately affects rural Canadians. My riding of York—Simcoe, of all things, has been classified as Toronto. We have a first nation in the middle of Lake Simcoe, 70 miles from Toronto, where we cannot even see the CN Tower, that does not get the rural top-up.

The member talked about announcements. It was funny that government members were in my riding to announce money for Lake Simcoe, but the only thing they came for was to let people know that they can possibly apply for money. The government is all talk, no action. People in York—Simcoe have had enough of this.

• (2235)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to recognize all sorts of wonderful things that have been happening. Last week, the Prime Minister announced a $1.6-billion investment in Port Colborne, Niagara, that will strengthen Honda's EV supply chain. We are a government that understands where future green jobs are going to be and how we can contribute to creating better opportunities and good-quality jobs.

I would say 85% of my speech was talking about the progressive aspects of our budget, whether it is health care or housing, and the list goes on. I also mentioned the many economic strengths we have been putting into the budget to build upon Canada, create more jobs and make a healthier country overall.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be sharing my time with the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, who, I am sure, will happily rise and comment about how proud he is to represent people from his riding.

Now, after 20 minutes of absolute fiction from the member for Winnipeg North, I thought I would continue with a bit of fiction that describes, so well, Bill C-59 and Liberal financing. It is by Hemingway, from *The Sun Also Rises*. It goes like this. "How did you go bankrupt?" Bill asked. "Two ways," Mike said. "Gradually and then suddenly."

That is exactly the Liberal government.

There is another great line, which is not fiction. I wish it were fiction, but it is not. It is actually from the Prime Minister himself. It is a great line: "The budget will balance itself." Does everyone remember that? What do we get with the Liberal Prime Minister saying that the budget will balance itself? We end up with $1.4 trillion in debt. That is $93,000 for every single household in Canada; $3,400 per year, per household, just for interest on the Liberal debt.

We think about it like the GST. It is 5% on everything purchased. People go out to a restaurant, have a beer or go to a Blue Jays game. Perhaps they would go to the Edmonton Oilers game, but not the Vancouver Canucks game because they are gone. They pay 5% tax on the ticket. This year, we expect the GST is going to raise about $52 billion. The equivalent of every single penny of the GST collected is going to go solely to the interest on the debt. It will not go toward health care or toward any of the fantasy things the member for Winnipeg North brings up; it is just for interest.

The interest on the debt next year is going to be so bad that the GST will actually have to rise to almost 6% just to cover the interest. That is more than we give for health care to the provinces and more than we give to defence. Over the next five years of the budget, it is going to be $338 billion of interest payments.

Do members remember the Prime Minister, when questioned about interest costs, condescendingly saying to Glen McGregor, "Interest rates are at historic lows Glen"? Guess what? Interest rates are not at historic lows, and the Liberals, when they actually had a chance to lock in those interest rates that supposedly were at the historic low, did not. The Liberals actually borrowed vast sums, almost a half a trillion dollars, on a short-term basis. This debt is coming due, and the government is going to have to refinance, so instead of paying 0.25% on that $454 billion, it is going to be a lot more. Billions of dollars are added every year, just in interest.

Let us imagine that someone who is buying a house is at the bank, and they are negotiating a mortgage. A bank officer tells them that he has an all-time low for interest rates and that they can lock it in for a long time at 1%, and the customer says that they are going to roll the dice because they do not think the rates are going to go up. Then, boom, all of a sudden, they would end up with 5% to 8% when they renew. People would not do that. No one would be foolish enough to do that, but that is what the Liberal government has done. It has just basically said that it does not want a long-term, locked-in rate and it is going to roll the dice. Then what happens? We end up with massive increases.

What could we actually buy with that $338 billion that the government is going to pay just in interest costs alone for the next five years? The government could buy 5,600 ArriveCAN apps, not at the $80,000 it was originally going to be, but at the $60 million that the government paid for it. It could buy 17,000 contracts with GC Strategies to develop apps and to not actually do any work on them. The government could do a half a million studies from contractors such as KPMG to advise the government on how to cut back on contracts from the government. The government famously paid KPMG $670,000 to provide advice on how to cut back on contracts to people like those at KPMG. It could buy 42,000 luxury barns, like the $8-million barn it put up at the Governor General's property.

● (2240)

Do members remember the Liberal cabinet spending $1.3 million on three luxury getaways to talk about the affordability crisis? The Liberals could actually afford 260,000 of their luxury getaways to discuss the affordability crisis. They could buy 37 million nights at the $9,000-a-night luxury plaza where the Prime Minister took his Christmas vacation, but was just staying with friends like every other Canadian.

Now, I say some of these things just to show how ridiculous this spending is, but in real terms, we could actually build, with that $338 billion, just on interest, a new hospital for the 100 largest cities in Canada. So, basically, for every city with more than 35,000 people, we could actually build a brand new $3.5-billion hospital. We could increase health care transfers to the provinces by about 700%. We could buy 482,000 houses across the country at the current average house price of $700,000. Instead, it is going to interest, but that is okay, the budget will balance itself and "interest rates are at historic lows, Glen". We do not have to worry about it. We could actually afford 800% of the current outlay that all Canadians are paying on pharmaceuticals, not a fake pharmacare plan of the Liberal government, for contraceptive and diabetic medication. That is not pharmacare; that is two items. The government could actually pay for everything with just 12% of what it is paying on interest right now.

Now, I want to get to Bill C-59 itself, the fall economic statement, with just a couple quick items from the Parliamentary Budget Officer. This is from his highlights. He says, "Revisions to the...economic outlook and fiscal developments...lower the outlook for the budgetary balance by [$19] billion." So, the PBO is saying that things are getting worse by $19 billion.

He goes on to say, "Government announced [$23] billion in new spending that was partially offset by [$3] billion in 'refocusing". So, lots of added spending.

The fall economic statement claims to expand the budget commitment to "refocus government spending, with the goal to identify an additional $2.4 billion in savings" over a four-year period. Now, that is out of $465 billion a year in revenues, about half a trillion a year, and costs about a $2.5-trillion spending budget over the five years. The Liberals are going to save $2 billion, including half a billion this year, even though it is money that they are saying now is not needed, but it went through the Treasury Board process as needed.

He continues, "There is currently little information available on the status of the $15.4 billion in Budget 2023 spending reviews" and savings announced by the government. "Further, there is currently no publicly available information related to the $3.6 billion spending to be reallocated in 2023-24."

Now, one of the things the government has promised to cut back on in this $3 billion is outside consulting. Of course, if members remember, in 2015, as the member for Winnipeg North, I am sure, will tell us, the Liberals promised to cut back on outside contracting, consulting. What has happened instead is that it has ballooned to $21 billion, including, as I mentioned, $670,000 to KPMG to advise the government on how to stop spending so much money on companies like KPMG.

I have a couple other favourites that the Liberals spent money on through outside contracting. They gave Deloitte a quarter of a million dollars to give a four-page report saying not to buy sophisticated IT security equipment from despotic regimes. They paid a quarter of a million dollars also to Deloitte for a fairness study on an RFP for a security contract for something that they sole-sourced under government policy. There are 50,000 people in the public service whose job is to make sure that the contracts are fair, but they decided they had to give money to Deloitte.

● (2245)

It is clear the government has no clue what it is doing with the economy. It is clear it has no clue what it is doing with the budget. The budgets will not balance themselves. A Conservative government, however, will balance them.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that Canada does have a AAA credit rating from more than one credit agency, which is better than other G7 countries. When we take a look at our debt-to-GDP ratio, it is the lowest of the G7 countries. We continue to recognize how important it is to invest in Canadians, something which the Conservatives do not invest in.

The Conservative Party actually voted in favour of our spending billions of dollars in supports during the pandemic for small businesses. Does the Conservative Party regret that support?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague. I will not say "my friend" because after his disgraceful speech earlier, I do not know if I will ever be able to call him that again.

I will say a couple of things. First, we do not have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio. We have the lowest net, but that includes if the government were planning on raiding the CPP. The truth is that we do not have the lowest; Germany actually does. The government should stop misinforming Canadians.

Second, regarding spending, at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Revenue Canada told us it begged the government to leave fencing for all of the money being given out. We heard from Bill Morneau. Instead, the government made a political decision to override the finance minister and CRA on protecting Canadians.

What happened was that we ended up with the Auditor General's saying that about $27 billion, at the bare minimum, of taxpayers' money went to companies and individuals that did not qualify for the money. That is the result of the government's playing politics instead of following the advice of the then finance minister or the Canada Revenue Agency, for political reasons.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. I always enjoy listening to my colleague speak. I have learned a lot from him. He is actually the person who went through every line of the budget one year, did some addition and realized that the government had gotten its own numbers wrong. If only the government were as scrupulous as its critics with its army of workers. I commend the member for being somebody who really cares about the numbers and is prepared to get into the minutiae.

If the member could distill one point that he wishes the NDP-Liberal government would just figure out as far as missing the mark when it comes to the budget and the fall economic statement, what would it be?

● (2250)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, if I could distill one thing for the government, it would be for it to understand that the budget does not balance itself, and that Canadians will have to pay for its errors and overspending.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is something in the bill we were debating tonight about tax evasion, but there is nothing in here about the tax avoidance that goes on legally every year and that costs us billions of dollars. I could go on about Vancouver mining companies that do not pay any taxes in Canada. They should pay hundreds of millions of dollars of taxes, but they have a post office box in Luxembourg.

Can the member comment on why we need to cut down on tax avoidance measures, make them illegal and bring the money back to the people of Canada, where it belongs?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, the member and I have a bit of a philosophical difference, and maybe it is just the wording. If I invest in an RRSP, like many Canadians do, or a TFSA, it is a form of tax avoidance. Companies will do what they can to reduce their taxes. If the member is suggesting that we need to close loopholes to avoid taxes not being paid legally, I agree with that a hundred per cent.

I also agree with my colleague that we need to make our tax code a lot simpler and more straightforward. We need to reform the tax system. We have to have a very fair but competitive tax program in Canada. Capital is very fluid. We do not want to have a system like we see right now where, despite what the members opposite are saying, we actually have a net outflow of investment capital from Canada. We do need a simpler, fairer tax code.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. It really is a pleasure. I always joke that I am not sure how a kid from North Kamloops ended up in the House of Commons, but here I am.

Before I begin, I want to recognize some people from my riding. The first is Bruce Barrett. Mr. Barrett, as I called him, was my art teacher at Westsyde Secondary School. I just saw that he has passed away. Bruce Barrett had a very gentle heart. I did not get to know him well, but I knew him to be a very good person. I send my condolences to his family. May perpetual light shine upon him.

I also want to recognize the life of Pearl Bostock. I went to high school with some of Pearl's grandchildren. I see that she has recently passed away. I send my deepest condolences to her family. May perpetual light shine upon her.

Lastly, I want to recognize the life of Marlene Campbell. I went to kindergarten with Marlene's son. To this day, I would often call her Mrs. Campbell because I had trouble calling her by her first name. I was in her daughter's wedding party. I have known her for over 40 years. I still have not come to grips with the fact that she recently passed on, and there are some lessons that she taught me that I am going to touch upon in this speech. I offer my condolences to her husband, Bruce, to her daughters, Claire and Joan, and to sons, Matthew, Luke and John. May perpetual light shine upon her.

I was speaking about Mrs. Campbell, and one of the things that I learned from her, and sometimes we would agree and sometimes we would disagree, was the value of simplicity, frugality and transparency. I walked into her house a couple of years ago, and I said that it felt like I was back in 1986 because the house was exactly the same.

There is a part of me that thinks government should be like that. Why does government have to be flashy? The whole point of the government is to get the job done. If the government is actually getting the job done, we should not need a 400-page document, and it really looks like a mini phone book now, telling us how great the government is, that we have never had it so good.

This is a government that is creating board after board, tribunal after tribunal, making government bigger and bigger. I believe the public service has grown by 42%. However, is the passport service any better? Is immigration any better? The former immigration minister and now housing minister lost track of what, a million people? Is he a potential leadership candidate? He lost track of all of these people, and with this inflation, not only in finances, but with government just building upon government.

Perhaps the question we have to ask ourselves is not why we are spending but how we should be spending efficiently. The reason I say that is because I have frontline government workers that come to me day after day, it feels like, saying that they get told from the top, but nobody talks to them about efficiency. They are actually being told to cut because the government has promised so much.

We chuckled when the member across the way talked about building four million houses. This is a government that cannot even plant two billion trees. Planting a tree is a problem. Staying out of the penalty box with the Ethics Commissioner is a problem. They cannot even do that. They cannot plant a tree. They are actually double counting. I filled in at a committee, and the government was double counting from two different programs to make it look like it was meeting different targets in planting trees. These are not the lessons of simplicity and frugality.

● (2255)

The government can extol its programs all it wants and say something is a success. I received a letter from a dentist who services my family saying to hold on a second when it comes to dental care. He said this is not what we think it is. In fact, I would love to bring the letter to the House. Perhaps I could bring it to the House to give it to the member for Winnipeg North. We could table it. Liberals are so confident that dental care is the be all and end all.

What about the people who cannot find child care services? What about that? Unlike Mrs. Campbell, the government does not fashion itself on simplicity, transparency and frugality. In fact, it is a government that said it would be open by default, yet all it does is attempt to obfuscate when the going gets tough.

Members can look at ArriveCAN, where Liberal friends got rich, and they do not want people to know that. They are fine spending money, but more concretely, these Liberals are fine spending our money, Canadian's money and my family's money, the tax money.

I love pasta as much as the next person. I will admit it. My mom makes the best gnocchi out there. For those who do not know, gnocchi is a little dumpling. She makes them by hand using two fingers and they are hand rolled. They are very labour intensive because each one literally needs to be hand rolled. I like pasta. I would like to think I even make a mean carbonara.

Here, what do we have? A private business, presumably making a profit, and the government is giving it $1.7 million for 10 jobs. It looks great. It wants to save the riding, so they are giving $1.7 million for 10 jobs. The government calls that an investment. The NDP will do cartwheels talking about corporate bailouts and corporate giveaways, and then will vote with the government on the line items that enable that very giving. I like pasta, and there is a lot of pasta to be bought. I do not know why the government is saying, to perhaps four to five families, that every dollar they pay in taxes will go to the tune of $170,000 per job.

Let us talk about these auto contracts the government loves to talk about. There are some estimates that we are subsidizing to the tune of $1 million a job. I drive an electric car. I drive it, but what I am seeing is that demand is going down. I really like my vehicle. I do, but demand is going down, and they are saying they are investing. I have made some bad investments in my day, and when the stock went down, we suffered from it.

This budget talks about protecting farmers from the cost of climate change. If Liberals want to do something for farmers, they could pass Bill C-234 in its original form, rather than obfuscating and the member for Winnipeg North telling us we have never had it so good.

At what point will the government wake up and realize the budget does not balance itself, that it has doubled the debt, and now with interest rates being double, and in some cases triple, Canadians are hurting. Its members talk about school programs. How many students are going hungry because of their policies? I could go on for hours about this. I could go on for hours about what the member from Winnipeg said, but I am going to move a motion, seconded by the member for Edmonton West. It is 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:

"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 not now read a third time, but be referred back to the Standing Committee on Finance for the purpose of reconsidering all of its clauses with the view to amend the bill so as to give Canadians a break this summer by eliminating the carbon tax, the federal fuel tax, and GST on gasoline and diesel."

● (2300)

The Deputy Speaker: 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.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the "Reform Party" across the way talking about investing in jobs and their opposition to it. We can talk about Stellantis, Volkswagen and Honda, directly and indirectly creating tens of thousands of jobs. There is government subsidy that is going there, and it is not only federal government subsidy but also a provincial subsidy coming from Doug Ford, who is a Progressive Conservative.

Does the member believe that Doug Ford should also be criticized? If he is criticizing the federal government, and the "Reform Party" across the way does not support this investment, would the member then be consistent and say that Doug Ford was wrong also?

● (2305)

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, the member talks about criticism; I will criticize that member. I rose in questions and answers and pointed out to him something that was disgusting; a disgusting fringe group of individuals said something awful about a member. If the Liberals want to heckle me, they can go right ahead. If they want to talk about sexual assault of the spouse of a member of the House and then equate that group with any member of the House, it is disgusting. If somebody threatened that member and his spouse, I would be standing right with him. The fact that he would not apologize and withdraw is disgusting, and I will criticize that day after day. He should stand now and apologize.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

On that particular point that the member has raised, I would ask for unanimous consent to table a document that shows exactly what I was saying. It is a news report, and if the member would like to read it, I am sure he might have a change of opinion.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: I am already hearing a number of noes.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for giving a speech in the House so late at night and sharing his insight with us. I am eager for my colleagues to listen to the questions that I am asking and to stop bickering back and forth.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: I will back up a bit, because I did not hear what the question was. The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona can start from the beginning.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, my colleague started his speech this evening by talking about how the Liberal budget was a 420-page document that was a bit of an advertisement. That brought to mind something I remembered from when Stephen Harper was the prime minister. I went back and looked, and the 2015 budget was 518 pages long, and it did not address climate change. It did not address many of those issues that are top of mind for so many Canadians now.

My colleague also talked about the idea that dental care was not important. With 60,000 people already registered for the dental care program and hundreds of seniors in his riding who are already benefiting from the NDP dental care program, it seems quite shocking to me that he is using his opportunity to speak in the House of Commons to be, not just dishonest, but not very kind to his—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

We cannot be calling one another dishonest. I am going to ask the hon. member to back up, retract that and maybe find another word.

The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, I should not have said that. The information that he was sharing with us was maybe not as accurate as it could have been, and I definitely would retract the idea that he meant to do that. I am sure it was a failure of understanding on his part. Could he talk about why dental care is important to the seniors in his constituency, why he thinks that we do not all deserve dental care and why we should not all have access to those services?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to fund so many different things.

I do not know if my colleague heard what I spoke about right at the beginning, perhaps she came in late, with respect to receiving the information from my dentist that this is not as advertised.

This is something that, in my view, is completely and overly bureaucratic and does not accomplish what it sets out to do. It would be wonderful if this program did what it actually said it did. The member wants to have this laudable point and contribute to dental care, yet consistently votes with a government that has doubled the debt and now Canadians are lined up at the food banks. I am not sure how she can reconcile that with the point of view that the NDP is fighting for the working class and the poor.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am splitting my time with the very hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

I am very pleased to rise today to speak about Bill C-59, which would deliver on key measures from the 2023 fall economic statement to advance the government's economic plan to make life more affordable, build more homes and build an economy that works for everyone. This is an economic statement that is about fairness, not just fairness for today, but fairness for generations to come.

I have been continuing to work with my constituents over these past eight years as a member of Parliament. I have a very active youth council of dynamic members who keep me updated on what is important to them in this generation. I have a very active women's council that keeps me updated on what is important for them to make sure that they are thriving within our country. I have attended thousands of events over these past number of years to ensure that I am listening to what Canadians want. I have had stakeholder meetings to listen to what people have to say, to take in that feedback and to make sure we are using it to make good policy.

Over these past eight years, I would put to the House that we have made very good, solid, sound policy. I say this because I have heard from constituents about those needs. Canadians are the backbone of our economy and when we empower Canadians we are strengthening our economy and that is what the fall economic statement is really all about and what we have done over these past number of years in government is all about.

I will share a couple of examples with the House. For example, Lisa, who is on my women's council, has a start-up with respect to the environment. She works around the world to ensure that we are representing Canada with a global framework to build sustainable development to make sure that we are fighting climate change.

Another person on my women's council is Huma, who is starting a second career by going into college at this late stage in her life.

There is a member of my youth council who is now studying in med school and is trying to get into law school.

Mechatronics is a growing industry—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I love that people are heckling. I am trying to get my point across for my constituents. If it is okay, guys, can you just settle down for a second? You will have your time with questions and answers. Is that okay?

An hon. member: What, are you the Speaker now?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: A little bit. Thank you. I appreciate that.

I was talking about Fardeen, who is an engineering student studying mechatronics—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

● (2310)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Karen Vecchio): I am really enjoying this time. I feel like I am at home with my children. This is lovely. However, if we could just come back and listen to the hon. member speak for her last few minutes, that would be wonderful.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate you in that chair.

As I was saying, Fardeen, who is studying mechatronics engineering in that STEM field has great ideas about innovation and how he is going to build Canada's economy to do better for our next generation. The reality is that the framework and how the Canadian economy is working today is changing. Young people are not following those traditional paths in how we normally had jobs. The gig economy is real. How young Canadians are working is very different from how my parents worked. We have to take into account all of that as we are building a better and stronger economy for Canadians in the future. When we talk about Canadians being the backbone of our country and our economy, we have to really make sure that we are establishing that foundation, strengthening that foundation. By strengthening Canadians, we strengthen the whole country.

I can tell members that I have read hundreds and hundreds of personal emails from my own constituents who have told me how $10-a-day child care has impacted their lives so significantly. It has allowed people to join the economy. I can tell members about how our youth employment strategy has impacted young people in my constituency who have taken advantage of it, who have been able to transition from school into the workforce. I can tell members how the Canada summer jobs program has created, in my riding, over 400 jobs every single year, not only to support young people, but also to ensure that small businesses, not-for-profit organizations, are doing well, that they are able to thrive over the summer, while also building that relationship with our next generation of workers within our communities. I can tell members about the countless efforts that seniors in my community have made to connect with us to ensure that the old age security and the guaranteed income supplement that they receive are comparable to their living costs.

Having heard all of that feedback, I can tell members that the fall economic statement is a step in that right direction, to make sure that we are strengthening the foundation of Canada, strengthening the people of Canada. When we strengthen our people, we strengthen who we are, not just as a country on the international stage, where we have one of the best economies in the G7, where we have one of the lowest inflation rates in the G7, but also internally to ensure that we are creating new jobs.

We have created two million new jobs over these past eight years. That is nothing to sneeze at. The plan is working. That plan is to strengthen who we are as Canadians. When seniors in my riding told me that we need to strengthen our dental plan, that we need to make sure that we have access to dental care, that was a consultation I was more than happy to advocate for. When Afia, from a not-for-profit on my women's council, came to me and said that they needed a youth nutrition program in our schools to make sure that kids do not go hungry, to give them the best that they can have, I was more than happy to advocate for that, and successfully.

We have a job to do as a government. We are not in the business of making money. We are not in the business of austerity. We see that Canadians are struggling. Canadians are the strongest part of our economy, individually, our middle class, our youth, women, seniors, our amazing workers, tech support, nurses and health care workers. When we strengthen them, we strengthen our country. That is what the fall economic statement has been about. That is what our budget 2024 is about. That is what we have been doing over these past eight years to strengthen Canada and be a competitor on the world stage. Do members know what that has done? It has made sure that Canada is competitive. We have the most trade agreements across the world with G7 nations.

● (2315)

This is historically the best time for people in my riding to be able to invest, not just here in Canada, but across the world. We have seen so much investment come directly into Canada, and it is because we invest in Canadians. It is because we are investing into what the future of our country is going to look like. We are not about slogans. We are not about cuts. We are not about austerity. I am proud to stand up and support the fall economic statement and proud of the work that this government has done over these past eight years.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was very interesting for me to hear the member talk about her youth councils and the women's councils and all the people who are bringing their advice forward. I am wondering what they are telling her about the importance of programs like the national child care program and the national school food program, and what they are sharing with her as their thoughts about what would happen to their families if these programs were cut.

● (2320)

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, that is just it. We have to listen to what people want. When we talk to youth, their main concerns are affordability, housing and climate change. Our policies in the fall economic statement reflect that.

I have had hundreds of conversations over this year with my constituents to talk about exactly how we can strengthen our communities. That listening exercise, and then transferring it into policy, very much like the national school food program, is so important because it helps us build stronger communities and ultimately build a stronger Canada.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is the eighth birthday of my niece Ola, so I would like to wish her a happy birthday. Ola is going to inherit more debt than any other generation, as this young Canadian. I was wondering if my colleague across the way could tell Ola in what year the Liberal Party plans to balance the budget.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Reform Party member for asking that question. As I said in my speech, and I am hoping that the member would have listened, it is about making investments into our future. It is not about cuts. It is not about austerity. It is not about axing and taxing or whatever those fancy slogans are that are coming out from that party. It is about believing in the ability, the talent, and the perseverance of our young people to ensure that they have what is needed for them to be successful today, for years to come and for generations to come.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I always find it rather amusing when the Conservatives ask questions about balancing the budget. When Harper was prime minister, they ran deficits eight out of nine years. In the ninth year, they balanced the budget, but only because they urgently sold federal shares in General Motors.

However, I would remind my colleague, who was talking about young people and the future, that we are in the midst of a major housing crisis. A national strategy was created, but seven years on, it does not seem to have worked very well, despite the $40 billion spent. About $40 billion is left in this national housing strategy fund.

Does she not agree with us that we should invest in non-profit housing first, in social housing that is truly affordable for our young people?

[*English*]

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's raising this important issue, that we do need to build more homes. We are making those investments. In fact, we are on track to ensure that Canadians have the homes that they need in order to live in an affordable community. At the same time, we also need to make sure that Canadians, especially young people, have the living wage and the support systems to ensure that they can live in a safe and supportive community. We have made significant investments through our housing strategy. We are going to continue to build housing for our young people, and, at the same time, we are going to tackle issues of affordability for all Canadians and especially our young people.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just want to let the member clarify a comment that she made. She actually said this is the best historical time ever in Canada, but by every indication, this is one of the toughest, hardest times ever. I think the member just misspoke. Can the member clarify if she actually thinks this is the best historical time ever for Canada, in 2024?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, this is a time for Canada to grow. We have established amazing international trade agreements. Whether it is with the Pacific nations, the CPTPP, CETA or the renegotiated NAFTA, we have laid the foundation. We have seen the biggest growth of direct investment into Canada, whether by Honda or by so many other organizations that are coming in, such as Volkswagen or Stellantis. Ultimately, there are businesses in my riding that have seen growth themselves, which they tell me anecdotally, and I can see the growth because we are making the investments in the right place.

I am not sure why the member and his party are so against investing in Canadians. Canadians matter.

● (2325)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure and an honour to rise in the House. I want to give a shout-out to my family, including my daughters, back home in the city of Vaughan. My daughters should all be sleeping because they have school in the morning. I wish them a wonderful day tomorrow.

Before I get into my formal remarks, I will give an example that personifies how we are doing the right thing to grow our economy in this beautiful country and also invest confidently in Canadians and Canadian families, and that is the recent announcement by Honda to invest $15 billion into the Canadian auto sector and the development of electric vehicles, along with the manufacturing plants.

Last week, I was able to join the Premier of Ontario, the Prime Minister, ministers across the board and many of my hon. colleagues of the House for an announcement of $1.6 billion from a Japanese company, Asahi Kasei, to develop separators for electric vehicles. This will create thousands of jobs in the Port Colborne area of Ontario and provide bright futures for families there, something that we believe in. Confident governments and countries invest in their citizens.

A few days later, I was able to visit Vellore Corners Dentistry, Dr. Elena Panovski and her staff, to talk about the Canada dental care plan. This dentist sent out a flyer in my neighbourhood and many neighbourhoods in the city of Vaughan, telling patients that if they are eligible for the Canada dental care plan, they should go to her clinic. The dentist had also put up a billboard along a major regional road in the city. I visited the clinic and met Peter, an 80-year-old senior citizen in my riding, someone who came to this country and worked hard. He had his Sun Life Canadian dental care plan card with him and was at the dentist thanks to the program that we have implemented. That is awesome. That is progress.

We were sent here to do what is right for our citizens. In fact, as of today, over 90,000 seniors have gone to dental care providers across this country. If we do not all clap about that, I do not know what we are going to clap about. Members on the other side are not clapping. Over two million eligible seniors have signed up, have been approved and will receive their cards. Why is that important? It is important because the day I arrived here in 2015, one of the programs that I knew would make a difference in the lives of literally millions of Canadians was a dental care program, and that is what we have done.

We have done so much: the Canada child benefit, raising personal income tax rates on the wealthiest, cutting taxes for the middle class, raising the basic personal expenditure amount, signing free trade deals with countries around the world and being at the table, and we will continue to do so.

[*Translation*]

This bill will implement important and fiscally responsible measures from the 2023 fall economic statement that support our government's efforts to build more homes faster, make life more affordable and create more good jobs. Our government is working to create a better future for all generations, and Bill C-59 is essential to making that goal a reality.

With Canada's housing plan and the 2024 budget, we are taking numerous steps to help increase the supply of housing with the goal of reducing the high costs Canadians face. Bill C-59 promises to support those efforts by helping increase the supply of rental housing in Canada. About one-third of all Canadians rent their homes, but the number of available rental units has failed to keep pace with demand.

[*English*]

Bill C-56, the affordable housing and groceries act, which received royal assent on December 15, 2023, and the federal component of the HST on the cost of newly purpose-built rental housing introduced a 100% rebate on the GST. Bill C-59 would extend the eligibility for the GST rental rebate to co-operative housing corporations that provide long-term rental accommodation. Our objective, as a government, is to incentivize the construction of even more rental units, and that is what is happening in the Canadian housing market.

We know that our growing, vibrant communities also require critical infrastructure, like public transit, modern water systems and community centres, which is all infrastructure that Canadians depend on daily in their lives. That is why Bill C-59 would establish the Department of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities in the federal lead for improving housing outcomes and enhancing the public infrastructure.

● (2330)

[*Translation*]

The cost of living is weighing heavily on household budgets. Bill C-59 would make life more affordable by strengthening competition to help stabilize prices in Canada. We have heard public concerns about increasing corporate concentration and the power of private sector giants.

[*English*]

Complementing the changes introduced in Bill C-56, which I mentioned a few moments ago, Bill C-59's suite of amendments to the Competition Act and the Competition Tribunal Act would provide Canadians with more modern and effective competition laws.

As everyone knows in this House, I love capitalism and wealth creation, which lead to higher standards of living, but what I do not like is corporate concentration and measures that are introduced that are anti-competitive by organizations and companies, and that is why we need guardrails. That is why it is smart for us to introduce amendments to the Competition Act and the Competition Tribunal Act, which the opposite party had ignored for the years that it was in power, and it can remain in opposition for many more years.

Together, these amendments would represent generational changes to Canada's competition regime. More competition means lower prices, more innovative products and services and more choices for Canadians in where they take their business. The amendments are designed to empower the Competition Bureau to better serve the public in its role as watchdog and advocate dynamic markets.

Bill C-59 would further modernize merger reviews and position the Competition Bureau to better detect and address killer acquisitions and other anti-competitive mergers. The legislation would also support Canadians' right to repair by preventing manufacturers from refusing to provide the means of repair of devices and products in an anti-competitive manner.

[*Translation*]

Our plan is also focused on Canadians' well-being. Therapy and counselling play a critical role in the lives and mental health of millions of people in Canada, but they can also be costly. To ensure that Canadians can get the help they need, our government is taking the necessary steps to make these essential services more accessible and affordable. Bill C-59 would eliminate the GST and HST from psychotherapy and counselling therapy.

Our government is also taking care of young families. EI parental or maternity benefits provide essential support to new parents. The legislation would bring in a 15-week shareable EI benefit and amend the Canada Labour Code so that adoptive parents who work in federally regulated sectors have the job protection they need while receiving the new benefit. The legislation would go even further by creating new paid leave for federally regulated employees with a view to supporting families in the event of a miscarriage.

[*English*]

Turning now to Canada's fiscal position, we do know that Canada's deficit-to-GDP ratio is number one in the G7 and G20: we have the lowest deficit-to-GDP ratio in the G7. Our net debt-to-GDP ratio is also in the mid-30s range, which is top-notch. We are one of the few countries in the world with an AAA credit rating. These ratings were affirmed and confirmed after the budget was delivered by the rating agencies, one of which I spent several years working for, and covered many sectors that we talked about in this wonderful House, which continue to employ hundreds of thousands of Canadians and continue to grow our economy.

It has been an honour to rise in this House and, again, I wish all the residents of Vaughan—Woodbridge a wonderful Thursday morning and wonderful and safe travels to work.

● (2335)

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the hon. member's speech, he said that he loves capitalism. I believe those were his exact words. He loves capitalism, yet he knows that the Liberal Party has veered sharply to the left, so far to the left now that I think it can be accurately said that the Liberal Party is a party of socialists.

He knows, and he knows very well, that socialism and capitalism cannot coexist. When one looks at the Liberal government's record of allowing large companies to merge, of huge subsidies of billions, or tens of billions, of dollars, this guy asks us to believe that he is a capitalist.

If he is such a capitalist, why is he in a party like the Liberal Party, which has now gone socialist big time?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his hyperbole. I do have a lot of respect for the member for Abbotsford. I have enjoyed many conversations with the hon. member, and I thank him for some of the contributions he has made, including on CETA and so forth. I would obviously disagree with the premise of his question. I do love wealth creation. I love job creation. I believe in forming and strengthening our social safety net, and that is what we have done as a government.

We made the choice to do the Canada child benefit, $10-a-day day care, the Canada workers benefit and a Canadian dental care plan. Those are choices I fully support. That is how one creates a strong economy and a strong social net, so that we lift all Canadians and we bring all Canadians forward, as we continue to make this country the best country in which to live, raise a family, invest and work.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, continuing on this theme of talking about the economy, I was recently at committee, and one of my Conservative colleagues asked what I felt was a really good question of the competition commissioner. He asked if the government has ever blocked a corporate merger in Canadian history. The answer was no.

Despite having this competition commissioner and having these ideas around the importance of competition and the importance of stamping out anti-competitive behaviour, not a single corporate merger has been blocked or denied by the federal government.

I would ask him why that is, when we know that corporate concentration and anti-competitive behaviour are two of the driving factors behind the affordability crisis we are seeing. We are seeing these monopolies and oligopolies that are gouging Canadians every single day. The government can put a stop to that. Why does it not?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, the first thing I would like to point out to the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley is that we did, as a government, make the more than $70-million investment into Prince Rupert, into the water system and the infrastructure there. I know that I advocated for that. I know that he represents that riding. That was the city that I was born and raised in. Again, this is our government investing in infrastructure and in Canadians.

With regard to corporate concentration in Canada, there are many reasons why there is such a high degree of corporate concentration, of course, and we could have a great discussion on that front, but we did make changes to the efficiencies defence within the Competition Act. Those are the technical terms, where the Competition Bureau and the Competition Act will have much more teeth to block mergers and acquisitions or consolidations within the sector when they are not in the best interest of Canadian consumers.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, it was a pleasure to be in my hometown of Port Colborne, Ontario, along with the Prime Minister and the Premier of Ontario, making a $1.6-billion announcement by Asahi Kasei, a company that is going to strengthen the Honda supply chain, not only in Ontario, but also across the country. This is a game-changer for the Niagara region. It is a game-changer economically. It is putting people to work, as well as strengthening the Niagara Port trade corridor.

My question to the member is with respect to supply chains. How does this announcement, and how do the actions by the government, strengthen our supply chains, as well as provide an integration of our supply chains, not only here domestically, but also binationally, and equally as important, internationally?

● (2340)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, the member for Niagara Centre not only is a colleague and a dear friend, but also is a great advocate for the wine industry for the Great Lakes, which is an economic driver of his area. He was a huge advocate in attracting this multi-billion dollar investment to Port Colborne. The hon. member actually served as the mayor in that area as well, so congratulations to that member.

With regard to the supply chain, it was our government that put in place a supply chain task force. It is our government, through the Minister of Labour, that is working with the railways to ensure we continue to have a smooth transportation sector and that is continuing to make those critical investments, including in the national trade and corridors fund, which the member is well versed in as well.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time tonight.

What we heard from the last few speakers blows my mind. It is unbelievable the mental gymnastics one has to do to figure out the current NDP-Liberal government. We have a member who stated that, right now, in 2024, it is the best historic time ever. Do members believe that?

The people watching at home should ask themselves if they are better off today or if they were better off in 2015. The vast majority of Canadians are feeling the disastrous impacts of the current federal government. There are countless examples of incompetency and outright fraud, and to have members proclaim that this is the best time ever is bizarre. It is wacko. What part of our country believes this is the best time ever? It is an unbelievable statement when we look at all the suffering and hurt that is unfortunately in our country because of the Liberal-NDP policies.

Think of the inflation the NDP-Liberal government has caused with its reckless overspending. The Prime Minister has added more debt to our federal government than all other prime ministers combined. This is the best time ever for the Liberals.

Then, we hear from another member who, in answering a question from another member, brags about the nepotism of helping to get funding for a water treatment plant. The government brags about this corporate welfare that goes on to every corner of Canada, with billions of dollars here and there, and somehow, the Liberal Party still believes this is the best historic time ever.

I have to correct the record. I did bring the receipts, and I brought some emails from real Canadians in my riding who do not believe this is the best historic time ever, as the Liberal-NDP government proclaims. It is one of the darkest times in our country's history. There is suffering. We just read in the Food Banks annual report that 25% of adults are needing to access the food bank. Tell them that this is the best historic time ever.

Tell that to a family who has just renewed their mortgage. Maybe they took the Prime Minister at his word that interest rates would stay low. Now, their mortgage has doubled. Why did that mortgage double? It was the interest rates. Why did the interest rates go up? The NDP-Liberal government has been printing money and has been spending at a pace that is chasing up the price of everything. We warned the government over three years ago that this reckless path would lead to a dead end, and I am fearful of that dead end coming too soon.

This is a government that does not live within its means. A household has to manage its finances in a way that it is not going further in debt with every paycheque. Unfortunately, for nine long years, the federal government has added more debt and more spending that has ballooned the government. There are 40% more bureaucrats working in Canada. For the Canadians who are relying on services from the government, do they think this is the best historic time ever for our country? I doubt it.

There is more pain out there. Unfortunately, this is a track record we have seen over and over again around the world when governments get in trouble and start printing money. When Ottawa prints an extra dollar of money, the result is that the dollar in one's pants is worth less. The quantitative easing the government has done has driven up the price. Also, when one sprays money in every corner of the country, chasing fewer goods, it is math and economics that prices will rise. That is what we are experiencing today in Canada, unfortunately.

● (2345)

In a moment, in the best time ever, historically in Canada, we have an NDP-Liberal government that has a majority. It has enough seats in the House that it can carry on in whatever fashion it would like within the rules. It has found itself in some trouble.

This is the fall economic statement. Typically, we have October, November and December in fall. Then we are into winter: December, January, February, March. No, that is spring: March, April, May. We are almost in the summer, and the mismanagement of Parliament is at the feet of the incompetent government. The bill is about the fall economic statement, and we are almost in the fall. The mismanagement of the House is what is most embarrassing for the government.

Let us get back to Canadians, and let us hear from them. We have a few more weeks of this session, and once we wrap up, I would encourage members to go out, knock on some doors and talk to real Canadians. They can talk to people, pick up the phone. I am sure there are callbacks waiting in members' offices or emails from regular Canadians who do not feel that this is the most historic, best time in Canada. I am going to share some of the emails I have received.

Gail wrote in and said, “Hi, thank you for voting for ordinary Canadians. I hope more representatives are added to your side in the next election. Please continue all that you can to halt this rampant government spending and to work towards a balanced budget for the sake of integrity and the benefits of all Canadians. Thank you.”

I thank Gail for emailing. Gail represents many Canadians who are watching in disbelief as the government continues to blow money and rack up debt that we all know has to be paid back. The future generations are going to have to pay that debt. Every dollar that we collect from GST across Canada goes to banks and bondholders, not services. It just services the debt. It does not even pay it down, and that is a disgrace.

Randy wrote in. He said, “Good morning. As you are my MP for the Saskatoon area, I would like to make my voice heard. I'm really opposed to our Prime Minister's new budget and the mounting debt to my grandchild. The idea that [the Prime Minister] thinks it's okay to raise taxes to accommodate his spending habits is an abomination and an affront to me personally. Please keep the pressure on the federal Liberals. I can't even imagine what it will take to fix this country once the Liberals are voted out. Good luck. I'm praying for change. Regards and blessings, Randy.”

I would tell Randy to not fear too much. The Conservatives do have a plan. We have a simple plan that would axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. That is what we would do as a government. I will walk through some of those plans. I know we are going to hear more about our plans in the platform, but this is a good indication of how we are going to dig ourselves out of this hole.

The Conservatives would axe the tax. The carbon tax is a tax on anything that moves, and we have seen the disastrous effect of tripling the carbon tax. Everything costs more, because everything needs to be trucked and hauled to us. When exporting goods from Canada, we pay that carbon tax as well. It drives up the cost. The carbon tax drives up the cost of the transportation, the food that the farmers are producing and even the retail operations.

The Conservatives would axe the tax and make everything more affordable. We would build the homes. We would get the bureaucrats out of the way. We would get rid of the gatekeepers and build those homes so Canadians have a chance of home ownership, not rental forever. We would fix the budget by bringing in a law that is pay-as-you-go; for every dollar of spending, we have to find a dollar of savings. That is just a common-sense Conservative solution.

We would stop the crime. There is too much crime in our streets. The repeat violent offenders who are out on bail are conducting many of the violent crimes in our communities. If we changed the bail system back to what we had before this disaster in government, we would be better off.

● (2350)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the member talks about the passage of Bill C-59 and blames the government. What the member does not tell people who are listening is that the Conservative Party focused a great deal of attention on filibustering and preventing legislation from passing. This is one of those pieces of legislation, and their tactics were just demonstrated by yet another amendment to it. However, the member believes, or tries to give the false impression, that the government is not able to pass the bill, when it is allowing for opposition to continue in this fashion to prevent legislation from passing. Interestingly enough, this particular legislation would allow for the top-up of the rebate to be doubled for rural areas.

I am wondering why the Conservative Party chooses to filibuster all legislation and then tries to blame the government for not passing legislation, yet its members cry when we bring in time allocation.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Mr. Speaker, I had a very low opinion before tonight of the member who asked me the question, and after tonight, I do not respect him at all.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is really unfortunate that the member would have that kind of attitude. I think it is very low of the member, but it is up to him to decide whether he wants to answer questions. The Conservative Party continues to mislead Canadians consistently, and the best example of that is the price on pollution. The Conservative Party tries to tell Canadians that they are paying more, when the Parliamentary Budget Officer says that more than 80% are receiving more money back in the rebates than they are paying in the tax.

My question to the member is this: Why are the Conservative Party and the leader of the Conservative Party being so dishonest and misleading Canadians?

The Deputy Speaker: With respect to the "dishonest" terminology, I would rather that members not use that kind of terminology.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Mr. Speaker, that is okay. No one respects that man either.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it feels like perhaps it is the hour, but things are getting a bit testy, and I thought I would take this in a different direction, because bills like the one before us are always a mixed bag. There is stuff in them that some folks support, and there is stuff in them that some folks really oppose.

I am wondering whether my colleague can just pick one thing from Bill C-59, the bill that we are debating, that he supports and that he thinks would take our country in the right direction. Can he tell us what it is?

Mr. Corey Tochor: Mr. Speaker, the best thing I can say about Bill C-59 is that it gets us a day closer to the election that will change the government and save Canada from the reckless NDP-Liberal coalition government that is wrecking our country. We have a plan that will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget, stop the crime and save Canada. We will make Canada the greatest country that we all love so much, the country that was so much better before the Prime Minister was elected.

● (2355)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder, if my colleague from Saskatoon—University looks back over the last nine years, what is the legacy of the current government: two million people visiting food banks, out-of-control debt; out-of-control crime, out-of-control spending, and out of control ethics violations? What does he think the legacy of the current government will be?

Mr. Corey Tochor: Mr. Speaker, I think those are all terrible things that the government is going to be known for. I think it is the debt, though. One cannot pile on more debt than every other prime minister combined. What comes next? We have all experienced the nineties and the eighties. All political stripes overspent, then interest rates were jacked up, and it hurt ordinary Canadians. That is the legacy of the government. It is giving the next generation no hope for the future.

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if you will indulge me for a minute of my four minutes, I offer condolences to my Aunt Freddie and my cousins and their children on the passing of my Uncle Phil earlier this evening, and to my dad and his sisters, for whom he was their older brother. He was a very generous man. He worked very hard. He gave to his community and to his church community. He was loved by his family and he loved his family. He loved Canada and he will be missed.

In the short time I have, I am going to really focus on one aspect of what I was going to speak about as we look at Bill C-59, the fall economic statement from last November. Of course, we have had the federal budget since, and it has only compounded the cost of living issues and housing issues that we are seeing across Canada. Therefore, let me focus on something that I hear so often from constituents in my community and that weighs very heavy on their minds. It is the interest rate increases that have resulted as a consequence of the inflationary spending, the inflationary taxes and the inflationary deficits of the NDP-Liberal government.

Whether it is the $20 billion of inflationary spending that was piled on in the fall economic statement or the $50 billion that was piled on in the recent budget, that has an impact. We know from the report from Scotiabank that 2% of interest rate increases can be attributed to government overspending, and other banks have made the same comment. The CIBC made the same cautionary warning prior to the recent budget.

Flamborough—Glanbrook is on the western edge of the GTA, surrounding the city of Hamilton. It is made up of very fast-growing communities, where people have fled the GTA to buy a house for a more affordable amount than what they could get in Toronto or Mississauga. Communities like Waterdown, Binbrook, Elfrida and Hannon are where first-time homeowners, often young families, new Canadians or even seniors who are looking to retire on modest savings, have seen these alarming rate increases. I hear this from the mortgage brokers. I hear this from constituents. It is an absolute gut punch to see those interest rate increases that have resulted from the policies of the Liberal-NDP government.

We had the report earlier in May from the Bank of Canada, which predicted the very steep incline we are going to see in the next few years in mortgage payments. If it is a variable mortgage, the prediction is for a median monthly payment increase of up to 60%. If it is a fixed mortgage that someone is renewing, the median monthly payment could be increased by up to 20%. That has a devastating impact on household budgets, and that is, again, the consequence of these inflationary policies and the spending by the current government.

In my final few moments, I will just say that hope is on the way. The common-sense Conservative government would cap the spending, fix the budget and axe the tax so that these people in my communities and across Canada could actually afford their mortgage payments, or it is not impacting their rents, so hope is on the way.

● (2400)

The Deputy Speaker: It being midnight, pursuant to the order made on Wednesday, February 28, this House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12 a.m.)

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