



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 337
Tuesday, September 17, 2024

Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, September 17, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), and consistent with the policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Agreement between Canada, of the one part, and the European Union, of the other part, on the Participation of Canada in Union Programmes”, which includes the “Protocol on the Association of Canada to Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027)”, done at Montreal on July 3.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, entitled “Failure to Respond to an Order of the Committee”.

[*Translation*]

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities entitled “Issues and Opportunities: High Frequency Rail in the Toronto to Quebec City Corridor”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to respond on behalf of my common-sense Conservative colleagues on the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities with our supplementary report. We too thank the staff, the analysts, the clerk and the committee chair.

In the motion that gave rise to this study, we were specifically asked to look at high-speed rail proposals in Alberta, but that was not done in the course of this study. In fact, there was no real consequential study or recommendations outside the Toronto to Quebec City corridor. Therefore, we recommend that this be tackled in the future.

Our second concern is that, while we are pleased that the Conservative motions to ensure transparency on the costs and to protect taxpayers from cost overruns were adopted, we are still concerned because many of the aspects and costs of this project remain undefined. We table the supplementary report.

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following two reports of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

[*English*]

The 42nd report is entitled “Report 6, Sustainable Development Technology Canada, of the 2024 Reports 5 to 7 of the Auditor General of Canada”. Specifically, it was passed in the committee that we report it to the House; it asks the Auditor General to undertake a value-for-money and performance audit of the work done by SDTC since Monday, January 1, 2017.

The 43rd report is entitled “Report 6, Sustainable Development Technology Canada, of the 2024 Reports 5 to 7 of the Auditor General of Canada”. Specifically, the committee expressed extreme concern with the blatant disregard for taxpayer funds. Therefore, it calls on the Government of Canada to recoup these funds for Canadian taxpayers, following the adoption of this motion that the committee report this matter to the House.

*Routine Proceedings***PRIVILEGE**

ALLEGED FAILURE OF GOVERNMENT TO PRODUCE DOCUMENTS

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Before my colleague rises to speak, I wanted to respond to a question of privilege raised by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle yesterday. Our spot to intervene was reserved by the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, who identified that we would like to reply.

I want to say that the matter of privilege follows from a House order made in June to ensure that the documents related to SDTC be compiled and provided to the RCMP to ensure that they have access to all information on this issue. Canadians deserve to know how their tax dollars are spent and, specifically, how those dollars were awarded to SDTC.

As I said at the time, New Democrats believe that this is broader than just the SDTC issue. For decades, Liberals and Conservatives have appointed friends to positions of power to be rewarded with taxpayers' dollars. We saw that yesterday at testimony, where both Liberals and Conservatives competed in a challenge over who was more corrupt versus the other. That happened just yesterday, if we want to watch the tapes. It was actually at the industry committee. This is just the latest example.

For that reason, we supported the motion in June to order these documents for clarity. In fact, New Democrats have been calling for more information to be released through reform of our system internally. This has yet to be done by either the Liberals or the Conservatives. It is actually borne through legislation of Crown copyright that goes back to 1909 and has yet to be reformed.

As outlined by the Conservative House leader, responses to this order have been inconsistent. While we appreciate the unusual nature of this order, the House indeed ordered the documents. As such, it is up to the House to decide whether it is satisfied by the nature of the response. I would be remiss if I did not point out that there is an element of hypocrisy again in this, as the Conservatives were not consistent on this issue when they were in government. In fact, I have sat in this chamber many times when they did not do what they are now requesting.

As such, we want to make sure the documents are actually released and are provided to all of Parliament. More importantly, New Democrats support that process because it only sheds light on the hypocrisy of the Conservatives now requesting what they often have denied in their past practices in this chamber.

* * *

● (1010)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, I move that the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, presented on Friday, February 16, be concurred in.

I will be sharing my time with my good friend, the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

I want to quickly jog the House's memory about the 13th report from the Standing Committee on Government Operations and what I believe is so important that we discuss today. However, before I give the details of that report, I want to provide a bit of context about what the situation is in Canada today.

This summer, Statistics Canada released just devastating numbers about what we can expect this fall for food bank usage. One in four Canadians is going to be relying on food banks to feed themselves and their families. That is 25%. What is so interesting and truly heartbreaking about this is that we do not have a 25% unemployment rate. The unemployment rate is about 6% in this region; we know that it is high among new Canadians and students, at about 12%. The reason I bring this up is that, with 25% of people using food banks, it means that we have people who are working one and two jobs but are still not able to feed themselves and their families.

In my community, the Brockville and Area Food Bank, the South Grenville Food Bank and the Gananoque and Area Food Bank have seen their use double, and this is the trend across the country. Canadians are struggling. We have food banks extending their hours to be able to serve people when they get off their shift, before they go into their next job. With this as the backdrop, let us take a look at what the government prioritized.

We uncovered, through the work of common-sense Conservatives, the grift and corruption that has festered after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government. We saw a very public case of that with the arrive scam and GC Strategies. Here, these two grifters working out of a basement were taking 30% of multi-million dollar contracts and adding no value for Canadians. Now, this report was done on the request to the AG to conduct a performance audit, and this came out of the GC Strategies scandal, the NDP-Liberal government's arrive scam. It is devastating for Canadians to see that.

The government makes all kinds of claims about being compassionate or wanting to help Canadians. The Canadians they are helping are Liberal insiders. They are the elite, making millions of dollars. What I think is shocking to Main Street Canadians is that, when this was uncovered, the Liberal government did not say, "Oh my goodness, we are so surprised. We agree, and we want to get to the bottom of this so that we can ensure it never happens again."

Routine Proceedings

The member for Carleton, the leader of His Majesty's loyal opposition, put forward a motion almost two years ago to have the Auditor General investigate. However, what did the Prime Minister do? He voted against. What did his cabinet do? It voted against. What did all the Liberal members do? They voted against having the Auditor General get to the bottom of this \$60-million arrive scam.

The Liberals like to talk about this app. We have famously heard that it saved lives. However, it also put 10,000 people under house arrest because of a glitch.

● (1015)

If the Liberals had spent some money credibly developing a product that Canadians knew they needed and knew worked well, which did not send 10,000 people into house arrest, they might have had a little goodwill, but the app was broken. Canada Border Services Agency frontline officers said that the government took resources away from them and that they were not consulted on it. The experts, the boots in the boxes at our border, told us they did not want it as it impeded them from doing their job of keeping Canadians safe.

However, the government knew better. Why did it insist on the \$60-million boondoggle if frontline border service officers said they did not need it? It was because its buddies were getting paid. Liberal insiders were lining their pockets. Remember the Canadians lining up at food banks.

This is an incredibly important issue. It is emblematic of nine years of the NDP-Liberal government. This is what happens when you have a Prime Minister twice found guilty of breaking the law. It has never happened in this country before. That is the standard from the top down that we have seen under the Prime Minister, so it is no surprise that Canadians are calling for action. Canadians are speaking out. Canadians are expressing their disapproval of the government.

Conservatives, in response to those calls, have said that we want to have a carbon tax election. We want to give Canadians the choice between an out-of-touch government that rewards its friends and raises taxes on Canadians when they can least afford it, or the common-sense Conservatives who will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

It was a pleasure yesterday to welcome in our new colleague, the member for Toronto—St. Paul's. There is a message in that for the Prime Minister as well. We need to have that carbon tax election. That is going to be up to the Conservatives. We have said we are going to put forth a motion of non-confidence in the government at the first available opportunity. It is going to be up to the NDP and the Bloc to make a decision on whether they stand with a government that rewards insiders or stand up for Canadians who are working hard taking care of their neighbours, just desperately trying to provide for their families and have a better life.

That was the promise in this country, that if we worked hard, we would be able to have a good life and afford a home. We always thought that as Canadians we would be able to welcome people into our country, that we would be able to work together, that we would be able to afford homes and we would be able to do better than the generation before us. Nine years of the NDP-Liberal government

has broken the immigration system. The government is bringing people here under false pretenses, telling them there is going to be a home and a doctor for them. There is neither of those things, nor are there jobs.

This is why we need to keep doing the important work of exposing the economic vandalism, the vandalism to trust in our democratic institutions that has happened after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government and the Prime Minister. We will keep doing that every single day until we have the election, because that is what Canadians are counting on. That is what I heard from the thousands of Canadians I talked to this summer, and I know that is what my colleagues heard.

It is important that we have this conversation, this debate, about this important subject today. I look very forward to the comments from my hon. colleague, the member for Mégantic—L'Érable, because his community, the residents of his province, are suffering terribly. He knows that. He was connecting with them this summer. I look forward to his perspective as well, because Canadians deserve better than a corrupt NDP-Liberal government, and common-sense Conservatives are going to bring home real change.

● (1020)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the introduction of his speech, the member said that the current government is not interested in helping Canadians. Over the summer, I met an individual named George. George ran up to me with his brand new Canada dental care plan card, showing it so proudly to me and pointing to his two missing top front teeth and saying he could get his teeth fixed now because of the plan. George probably did not even really understand, or care for that matter, who was responsible for the plan or how it got there, but he knew that he could finally get his teeth fixed after years of not being able to do so because he could not afford to, as he told me.

I want to know whether my neighbouring colleague can tell George whether he can still expect to be able to rely on a dental care program if Conservatives form government. Every Conservative asked that to this point has evaded answering the question. Will the member tell George that he can rely on that program or not, if Conservatives are elected?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, there have been nine years of an NDP-Liberal government with multiple cabinet ministers. The Liberal member heckling, the one who just asked the question, voted against the Auditor General investigations into the scandals perpetrated under the Prime Minister. It is a shocking failure of the Liberals' responsibility to Canadians, their fiduciary and moral responsibility to uphold the trust the Canadians put in us when we come here.

Let us get to it. Let us talk about the Liberals' failure to protect Canadians from the corruption of the Prime Minister.

*Routine Proceedings**[Translation]*

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes for his speech. Here is the problem I have with his speech: I get his point, but the miserable situation he described with such over-the-top zeal made me think he was talking about Kazakhstan, only worse.

I would like the member to tell me where in Canada one might witness the vision he painted today.

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, the vision that I paint about what happens in Canada is evidenced on the streets in communities across this country, in every province including Quebec, where people are lined up at food banks and there are tent cities, devastating destruction, despair and even death. This was not something that happened before the destructive policies of the NDP-Liberal government, and Conservatives are going to fix it.

I am very hopeful for what our country has in store, because it is built on such a strong foundation. The Liberals have not been able to destroy it in nine years. Life was not like this before the Prime Minister and is not going to be like it after him.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, whenever the Conservatives talk about fiscal responsibility, all we hear from other parties is that Conservatives are going to cut, when really it is just their not admitting that they do not care about the future of the financial stability of our country at all. They do not want to balance the budget. They do not care how much they are burdening future generations.

I ask the member where a Conservative government would find savings. It is really important that Canadians understand that Conservatives will take the financial responsibility of this country very seriously, so I would like to hear the member's remarks about where he thinks we can save taxpayers some of their hard-earned money.

● (1025)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, it is a real pleasure having the member for Kildonan—St. Paul back in the House. It is really great to see her here.

We talk about what Conservatives are going to cut. We are going to cut the Liberals' \$60-million arrive scam. We are going to cut their billion-dollar slush fund. We are going to cut all of the waste that we keep exposing. This weekend, they committed \$2.14 billion to a company. Who is someone who has a real strong interest in that? Mark "carbon tax" Carney has a big interest in that company.

Instead of providing Canadians who need it with high-speed Internet, for example, by the end of this year, they are going to take a decade more to not get it done, but they are going to make sure Mark "carbon tax" Carney gets rich while Canadians suffer.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech and for the opportunity he is giving us today to examine the Liberal government's incompetence and inability to govern the affairs of the state and of all Canadians. The motion before us reads as follows:

That, in light of new reports that GC Strategies and other companies incorporated by the cofounders have received millions of dollars in government contracts, including a number of sole-sourced contracts, the committee request the Auditor General of Canada to conduct a performance audit, on a priority basis, of all payments to GC Strategies, and other companies incorporated by the cofounders....

It is very technical, but that is important because, sometimes, if one does not ask the right question, one does not get all the answers. Now, thanks to my colleague's motion, we will be able to get the answers, but only if we have the support of enough MPs to proceed.

I will keep reading:

...and all contracts with the Government of Canada, including all departments, agencies and Crown corporations, including all subcontracts which GC Strategies and the before mentioned have been awarded under those contracts and that the committee report this request and these findings to the House.

With hundreds of thousands of Canadians lining up at food banks after nine years of this Liberal government's inflationary policies and inflationary spending that has doubled the cost of housing and food since 2015, Canadians and Quebecers might expect the government to manage their money efficiently.

Unfortunately, as we saw in the case of GC Strategies and the Liberal green fund, or the "green slush fund" as many now call it, and as we saw in the case of the \$21 billion in subcontracts awarded to outside consultants, the Liberal government sees its responsibility to Canadians and to government finances as a mere triviality. However, it is no trivial matter for Canadians who are unable to make ends meet at the end of the month. It is no trivial matter for families who cannot afford groceries and who are forced to make hard choices to feed their children or forced to decide between driving themselves to work or the kids to school. That is the new reality now, after nine years of this Prime Minister.

The GC Strategies case illustrates the way this Liberal government operates, which, I would remind everyone, has caused Canadians to lose all confidence in this Prime Minister's ability to control both himself and the affairs of state. The example is being set from the top, and that is the problem. When the example is set from the top, when we have a Prime Minister who has twice been found guilty of ethics violations and his sole explanation and response to the Canadian public is that he takes full responsibility for his actions, yet he faces no financial penalty and no consequences other than having to utter that statement in the House, what sort of message does that send to the rest of the government, to all the deputy ministers, to all the people whose job it is to manage the public purse? It sends the message that they can cross the line and there will be no consequences.

Routine Proceedings

That, unfortunately, is what happened in the case of GC Strategies. I would remind members that the ArriveCAN app should have cost \$80,000 but ended up costing \$60 million. From \$80,000 to \$60 million: what a perfect illustration of the indolence this Liberal Prime Minister has infused into the workings of government since he was first elected nine years ago.

• (1030)

Let us consider the situation as a whole. I too was out and about in my riding. Over the summer, I met with hundreds, if not thousands, of residents, and every one of them told me they struggle to pay their bills at the end of the month and asked me how things got to this point. There was GC Strategies, the use of consultants, the Liberal green fund and the \$500 billion in inflationary spending supported by the Bloc Québécois. This spending inflated the economy, made more and more public funds available and drove up costs across the board. That is what happened. Unfortunately, I hear people laughing, but this is no laughing matter. There is nothing funny about people struggling to understand why they can no longer pay their bills when they used to be able to a few years ago. There is nothing funny about people getting their paycheque and discovering there is less and less money left over to pay their bills at the end of the month.

This government, which has been propped up by the Bloc Québécois in recent years, has made things harder for people, even in Quebec. I am not referring to the wealthy or those receiving billions of dollars in contracts from this Liberal government. I am not referring to bankers or those who make money off of other people's money. I am referring to people who have to work hard in a factory, school or hospital. These are the people who are finding it harder to cope. These are the people we need to work for. These are the people we are here for, and it is for their sake that the Conservatives intend to introduce a common-sense plan to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

I hear my Bloc colleagues saying “yeah right”. It seems they could not care less about what is going on. What I just heard is insulting. Needless to say, they have no clue what is going on. For them, there are no tent cities in Montreal and no spike in violent crime happening in Montreal and in regions across Quebec. Those things simply do not exist. The Bloc Québécois seems to be ignorant of Quebeckers' current realities. The Bloc will try to downplay the gravity of the situation because they want to keep propping up the Liberal government. They need to downplay the damage the Liberals have done over the past nine years so they can justify their support for this Liberal government.

Given the comments I just heard, I cannot get over the way these people claim to stand up for Quebeckers' interests when they cannot even recognize that all Quebeckers are suffering after nine years under this Liberal government. I listened to the speeches that the Prime Minister and the ministers gave right before the House returned. They said that they would keep on doing what they are doing, that they would stay on course, but staying on course means even more street crime. It means more and more Quebeckers having to rely on food banks at the end of the month. It means fewer and fewer young families being able to afford a home. Fewer and fewer young families will be able to have a home, and fewer and fewer families will have access to housing, period. That is what

will happen if the Liberal government stays on course, and that is what the Bloc Québécois wants.

Standing up for Quebeckers' interests means making it possible for them to own a home, access housing, put food on the table at the end of the month and have bigger paycheques that enable them to make the right choices for their family. That would serve all Quebeckers' interests, not just the interests of Bloc Québécois supporters. That is why we are going to fight for the interests of all Quebeckers. That is why it is important to get to the bottom of the scandals in which this government is embroiled. That is why it is important that the Bloc Québécois and the NDP support us when it comes time to denounce the government and vote for a non-confidence motion against it so that voters can finally elect a common-sense government.

• (1035)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is no surprise that the Conservatives have used day two as a way to prevent debate on legislation. We have seen this consistently over the years, and I will expand on that during my comments.

Today, we were supposed to be debating the Citizenship Act. It would have been day two of the debate. It was in anticipation that, hopefully, the Conservatives would join the Bloc, the NDP and the government in recognizing the importance of the legislation.

Does the Conservative Party have any intention of looking at legislation and making some suggestions with respect to the legislative agenda items it would like to see passed, or is it purely going to filibuster from this day forward?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, divide and distract is the Liberals' mantra. While I am talking about problems that affect all Quebeckers and all Canadians, namely the ability to put food on the table, find a place to live and pay rent, the only thing the Liberals and the government want to do is change the subject and pretend that these problems do not exist in Canada or Quebec.

We need to shine a light on this Liberal government's corruption. We need to shine a light on this Liberal government's ineptitude and incompetence, and we need to do so in collaboration with every party in the House. We need to do it in collaboration with the NDP and the Bloc Québécois, who must vote in favour of a non-confidence motion to stop the Liberals from continuing with business as usual.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, that is a bit ironic.

Routine Proceedings

First of all, let me offer a correction. The French word for “support” is “soutenir”, not “supporter”. It is obvious that my colleague works a lot in English. I will reassure him right away that that is not what we are doing. Our job is not to support the Liberals or to replace them with Conservatives. Our job is to work for Quebeckers and defend their interests, and despite all the disinformation my colleague spread, we agree 200% with the basic facts, namely that people are having a hard time making ends meet and that we need to do something about it.

That is why, rather than trying to usurp power, we decided to focus on one priority, which is to increase old age security as of age 65. Strangely enough, ever since the new Conservative leader took over, we have not heard any more commitments from the Conservatives on this subject. I think that, as deputy leader, my colleague should be able to make a formal commitment.

I would like him to give me a real answer, not just accuse me of changing the subject. Can we work together on old age security? Can we get this done quickly? Can we also get a guarantee that a Conservative government will not make cuts the day after the election?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, my colleague wants a real answer. Here is one that is simple and straightforward. We voted in favour of the Bloc Québécois bill on this matter. We voted in favour of it. To suggest otherwise would be false. Unfortunately, apart from claiming that I said things that were inaccurate, he could not identify a single one.

On the contrary, all I said in my speech was that the Bloc Québécois has supported \$500 billion in inflationary spending by this government. That is true; those are the figures, and everyone can see them. The Bloc Québécois does not want to commit to defeating this government at the earliest opportunity. That is also true. Quebeckers are struggling. Groceries are expensive. Housing prices have doubled. They increasingly cannot make ends meet. It is getting harder and harder for families to buy their first home. That is all true.

Unfortunately, Bloc Québécois members do not seem to want to talk much about the problems, because they want this Liberal government to stick around a while longer. I do not think that is the best solution for Quebeckers.

• (1040)

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, with respect to affordability, his party brought in the GST. Later, under Stephen Harper, it brought in the HST, bribing other provinces to the tune of \$6 billion in historic deficits and borrowing. Maybe my colleague can explain how the HST helps seniors with affordability, because it is a tax that was put on consumers instead of the businesses to which it gave corporate tax cut reductions.

Could the party responsible for the GST and HST please explain how that has helped consumers by putting that debt on them versus the companies?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, the reason we are in this situation today, with housing prices doubling, food prices doubling

and Canadians unable to make ends meet, is because the NDP signed a coalition agreement to support spending, thereby creating the current situation with the Liberal government.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, listening thus far to the debate this morning has been interesting. As I indicated in my question, I am not surprised that the Conservatives have decided to take a path of playing that destructive force on the floor of the House of Commons. That is not new. The Conservative Party has been very much focused on doing that for years now, and it is unfortunate.

The Prime Minister indicated yesterday about the importance of listening to what Canadians were actually saying. Take a look at the questions that were being asked of the member, whether it was my question, or the Bloc question or NDP question. We will see that they were not necessarily directly on the report itself and concurrence in that report. Rather, they related to issues that Canadians would actually be concerned about at this point in time.

The Conservatives are masters at spin. They are masters at these single, simple messages. Even when the Prime Minister was the leader of the third party, they have consistently targeted character assassination as their first priority with respect to developing issues on the floor of the House of Commons.

We saw it yesterday, when there was the personal attack on the Minister of Finance. It is not the first time we have seen that. It happens time and again with the Conservatives.

Today, they want to talk about GC Strategies and the ArriveCAN app. For them, it is all about the issue of corruption and character assassination. Canadians, on the other hand, are having a challenging time in dealing with a wide spectrum of issues, issues that the government of the day has been addressing, in good part.

In introducing the motion, what was the first thing the member did? He talked about statistics coming from Statistics Canada and doing what the Conservatives do so well. They travel the country trying to convince people that Canada is broken when it is not broken. It is still the best country in the world to live, but we would not know that by listening to Conservatives. Every opportunity they get, the Conservatives are more focused on spreading misinformation. To their credit, they are being somewhat effective at doing that. The introducer of the motion talked about Statistics Canada and then tried to emphasize how Canada was broken. What he did not talk about was the report by Statistics Canada on the inflation rate.

Routine Proceedings

The inflation rate is 2% today. Canadians are very much concerned about the inflation rate. I would compare Canada's performance to any other G7 or G20 over the last number of years, especially postpandemic. Even though we have done exceptionally well as a nation, Statistics Canada, the organization that the introducer of this motion brought forward, can reinforce these types of statistics. If we look at the inflation rate and interest rates, we are going in the right direction and it is having an impact. These are the types of issues that I think Canadians want us to talk about, but not the Conservatives, because they do not want to share their ideas. That is giving them credit, assuming they have some.

What were we supposed to be talking about today instead of ArriveCAN? The Citizenship Act. There are individuals in Canada, second-generation Canadians, who do not have their citizenship.

● (1045)

We will see that there are New Democrats, Bloc members and members of the Green Party who recognize that we need to pass this legislation. In fact, before the summer, a New Democrat stood in her place and made the suggestion that we pass each of the stages through unanimous consent, and yesterday, we tried to get it passed.

That is what we are supposed to be debating today, but we have come to learn, by listening to the debate yesterday, that the Conservatives have absolutely no intention whatsoever of passing that legislation. Even though a clear majority of members of the House have decided that this is good legislation that should pass, the Conservatives do not like it, and they do not want to be thrown off topic, so today they introduced a motion on the ArriveCAN issue.

They want to talk about ArriveCAN. ArriveCAN was there as a direct result of a worldwide pandemic. It was upon us. Actions were being taken by the government to support Canadians every day. Billions of dollars were being spent. The majority of that money was supported even by Conservative members, not to mention New Democrats, Bloc members and others, as Canada was coming together to ensure that the interests of Canadians were going to be served. As a House working in a co-operative fashion, we were able to make a difference. We brought forward programs that positioned Canada well, going into the postpandemic era.

We were there to support Canadians and their disposable income through programs such as CERB. We were there saving literally tens of thousands of jobs through the wage subsidy program. We were there to support small businesses through business loans. We were there to support our seniors through one-time payments and support individuals with disabilities with payments. We were there to support non-profit organizations to ensure that they could support Canadians at the grassroots level. We were there to support provinces, territories and indigenous people. As a national government, we were there in a very real and tangible way, and that meant we spent billions and billions of dollars.

Today I look at our independent AAA credit rating. Canada is still financially strong, and even during those difficult times and in the postpandemic, we still had the Conservatives taking the cheap shots with the character assassinations. I will give a couple of examples, including ArriveCAN. They say those Liberal friends got all these contracts. They are kind of right, in the sense that Conser-

vatives got contracts, New Democrats got contracts and even some Bloc members got contracts, and when I say "Bloc", I am not identifying the parties. I am talking about the individuals within those political parties. Yes, there were some individuals within the Liberal party. There are entrepreneurs, businesses and Canadians of all political parties who have dealings with the Government of Canada, but to try to give the false and misleading information that Liberals were given an advantage is just wrong.

They try to give impressions about ArriveCAN. I think about ArriveCAN. Let us focus a bit of attention specifically on ArriveCAN.

● (1050)

Anthony and Firth, between 2010 and 2015, were part of another small firm called Coredal, which was later amalgamated into GC Strategies. Coredal was awarded a number of contracts. Actually, one or more of these individuals received federal contracts from the Conservatives. Members can imagine that. The Conservatives gave contracts to at least one of the two individuals, possibly under a different name. They try to say that the Government of Canada said, "We want you", when in fact it was done through the public service. There was a protocol in place.

The Auditor General actually found that the government has appropriate contracting rules in place, but in this situation, the rules were not followed. If the rules were not followed, then it begs this question: What was done in regards to it? The minister and the government took immediate action. There were audits, both internal and external, to deal with this issue. The minister and the government have been very clear. If there were abuses, as it appears there has been, there will be consequences to that. That is something that we would expect for anyone sitting in this chamber or any individual that we represent outside of this chamber. We do not condone in any way, in any fashion, inappropriate behaviour with respect to the procurement process. In fact, the Auditor General came back with a report. We have accepted the recommendations of the public auditor, whether they concern Canada border control, the CBSA; the Government of Canada; or the minister. However, the Conservatives say the government is bad.

One of the largest scandals that we have seen was the ETS scandal. That was a procurement scandal. There were direct links and indirect links to the Conservative government at the time. What did the Conservatives do? They avoided any sort of public accountability on the issue. They went out of their way to hide information connected to the ETS scandal. Do colleagues want to know about the ETS scandal? If they do a quick Google search, they will see the hundreds of millions of dollars at issue. While in government, whether it be the federal government or a provincial government, sometimes problems arise. Yes, at times getting the Auditor General or a provincial auditor is necessary because it is good for all concerned. The same principle applies here.

Routine Proceedings

Here we have a situation that is concerning, not only to Conservative members. I would like to think that every member of the House of Commons is concerned about it, as I am. I want to ensure that there is a consequence for the inappropriate behaviour of individuals who inappropriately use tax dollars because I value those tax dollars, as I know my colleagues do. We recognize the true value of spending tax dollars to the benefit of Canadians. Let me cite a few examples.

There was a question put forward by the member for Kildonan—St. Paul to her colleague asking where the Conservatives would save money. His response was a little bit modest of where the Conservatives would be saving money. Let me talk about where the Conservatives are looking at saving money, based on the question that was being posed there, while understanding the value of a tax dollar and a progressive government that is here to make a difference.

• (1055)

We know there is the child care program that supports children every month. It is estimated that, every month, over \$9 million goes into Winnipeg North alone because of the Canada child benefit. Imagine the impact that has on the local economy in Winnipeg North alone. It is something which we as a government established shortly after forming government in 2015.

Think of the progressive policies that we have been able to elevate and put into place, such as the dental care program. Where are the Conservatives with respect to the dental care program? Maybe that should have been the question that the member for Kildonan—St. Paul asked her colleague because I can say there are literally hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are very much interested in the Conservatives' actual position on the dental care program. We know that the Conservatives oppose it. Are they going to flip-flop with respect to it?

We hear often from constituents, and I can say that the number one concern that constituents raise with me, in my over 30 years of personal parliamentary history, is health care. Health care, in my books, is number one. As a government, we have spent those valuable tax dollars on things such as generational commitments to future health care. We are talking about \$198 billion over 10 years. We are talking about bringing forward, in a gradual way, a national pharmacare program. We are talking about improving the standards of long-term care for our seniors.

I made reference to the dental program. When the member for Kildonan—St. Paul asks her colleague, in regard to this motion, where we can save money, and the member said that we can save it from the ArriveCan, I would suggest that is a bit of a flippant answer because what Canadians are more concerned about is the Conservative right-wing MAGA agenda for Canadians. That will come out in time. We will see that.

Instead, the Conservatives like to amp up the issue of character assassinations and spreading of misinformation. Here is a lovely quote. I am going to say something and members will be able to figure out who said it right away. The Conservative Party had a caucus meeting over the weekend, and their inspirational leader had this to say to the caucus—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the members are feeling really excited because of the misinformation they have been spreading about the tax cut.

What did the leader of the Conservative Party have to say? He tried to paint this picture during a Sunday morning speech to his caucus, saying that “the Liberal government's plan to increase the price would cause a 'nuclear winter' for the economy.” He said “nuclear winter”. Get that. Wow. He said, “There would be mass hunger and malnutrition with a tax this high...our seniors would have to turn the heat down to 14 or 13 C just to make it through the winter”. He also said, “Inflation would run rampant and people would not be able to leave their homes or drive anywhere.”

What is he going to say next? Will he say that refugees are eating cats and dogs? Seriously, this is something that the leader of the Conservative Party today is saying, trying to scare Canadians. He is spreading misinformation consistently. I would welcome a debate anywhere in Canada with the leader of the Conservative Party because his ideas are so much out of this world that I do not think he would be able to stand his ground in front of any university grouping, and I would welcome that particular challenge. I appreciate being allowed to share those few thoughts.

• (1100)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am a bit worried because the member seems to be the only one who is able to respond to very serious questions. We are debating concurrence on a report that has to do with the basic level of accountability that a government should be able to provide for the dollars it spends.

The dollars spent are not the government's money. They are hard-earned dollars paid by Canadians in the form of taxes. What does the member do? He is the only member who seems to be given permission by the PMO to be able to speak on that side. He seems to be able to say, with many words, very little. He talks about character assassinations. To assassinate character, someone has to have some.

We are looking for the basic levels of accountability that Canadians expect the government to have when it comes to spending. Does the member not find it concerning that time and time again, the government is plagued by scandals to the point where Canadians from coast to coast to coast are simply saying the government cannot be trusted with the public purse?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am very content knowing about all the internal reviews and external reviews regarding the ArriveCAN issue. We always have to put it into the perspective, as I attempted to do, of the many things that the government was responsible for during the pandemic. That is not to say there was not any misspent money. The government is, in fact, ensuring that there is a consequence where tax dollars were abused. That is an absolute.

Routine Proceedings

We continue to ensure that there is a high sense of accountability and transparency with every tax dollar. The real challenge we have found is that the Conservative Party is reluctant to discuss its ideas. It is just constantly attacking personalities, which I classify as character assassination.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is important to assume responsibility for being accountable with tax dollars. What we are asking for in our report from the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates is that accountability. Where do things stand? How was the money spent?

The Liberal, Conservative, NDP and Bloc members voted in favour of this report in committee. I get the impression that my esteemed colleague is against it. I would like to understand the disconnect between what happened in committee and what we are seeing today.

• (1105)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am absolutely in favour of accountability and transparency, and ensuring that there is a consequence where there has been abuse of tax dollars. That is what I believe and will continue to advocate for, whether it is through the Auditor General of Canada, the standing committees or the RCMP.

I look at what is happening in that particular environment and expect, like my constituents, that there will be accountability. Those who were abusive with our tax dollars will be held to account in many different ways, everything from potential criminal charges to having to pay back tax.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am glad that my colleague from Winnipeg North mentioned the wild statement about nuclear winter, made by the Conservative leader, coming from the carbon tax. The carbon tax is scheduled to go up 17¢ more by 2030. In six years, it will be 17¢ more. That would put gas prices at the pump, in my riding at least, at around \$1.75. We have had prices over two dollars a litre because of corporate greed and the work of the big oil companies.

Will the Liberals attack those excess profits with a wealth tax to bring those prices down? That is what is hurting Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I look forward to the fall economic statement, where we will be able to get into more of those details.

I want to pick up on what I believe is the biggest misleading information out there today with respect to the carbon tax versus the carbon rebate. I could talk to a number of random people and what I would find is the following. A vast majority of Canadians, 80%+ plus, receive more money back through the carbon tax-carbon rebate system, yet that message is not necessarily getting through. At the end of the day, that means the collective disposable income in Winnipeg North, under this administration, is actually higher with that policy, and we are dealing with an environmental issue. If Conservatives were to come into power, I can say that collective dis-

posable income in Winnipeg North would go down because of that one single policy itself.

The carbon rebate matters. It is helping people. Why is the Conservative Party not as blunt on that as it is about the carbon tax?

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to be back in the House and hopefully debate things that are of real concern to our constituents. This summer I spoke to many of them, and not one person talked about ArriveCAN, other than to say that they had used it when they came back from a trip and that it actually facilitates re-entry into the country.

We heard from the member opposite that this is hard-earned taxpayers' money, and I agree wholeheartedly with that. I wonder if my colleague could address the costs to Canadians of this kind of filibustering and what the Conservative Party has done over the past year in this House, such as having us sit late to hear ridiculous debates on issues that do not matter to most Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I know that many of my colleagues, if not all my colleagues, are very much concerned about the finite amount of time that we have here on the floor of the House. What we have witnessed over the last number of years from the Conservatives is what I classify as a destructive force. They do not want legislation passed, even legislation that is good for Canadians, the people we represent. Whether it is with respect to dental care or what we were supposed to be debating today, the Citizenship Act, the Conservatives are an obstructive force. They do not want legislation to pass. They show no remorse for not recognizing that, as members of Parliament, there is a responsibility to appear to work with government legislation and the government's agenda to at least try to advance it. There is a responsibility for all members with respect to that, but the Conservative Party completely disregards it. All it wants to do is focus on character assassinations. It ties anything and everything to the words "corruption" and "scandal", and ultimately says nothing about its own policies. Shame on the Conservative members.

• (1110)

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always interesting to hear from the hon. colleague across the way, who truly is a workhorse in this House. He is here almost every day the doors are open. I commend him for that.

I will say this. I find it quite humorous when he talks about disinformation and misinformation and starts to go on these wonderful tirades about these things. I always seem to find that whenever the government disagrees with the opinion of the opposition, it immediately slaps a label on it to try and intimidate and bully into silence anyone who dares to have a different opinion. It does not mean that it is misinformation or disinformation; perhaps it just means that they have a different opinion that needs to be heard, and I think most Canadians share the opinion of the official opposition in this House.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, let me provide a quote that the member's leader said to him and his caucus colleagues. He stated:

Privilege

There would be mass hunger and malnutrition with a tax this high... Our seniors would have to turn the heat down to 14 or 13 C just to make it through the winter

If we want to talk about misinformation and lies, I will leave it up to members—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I believe I have a point of order from the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED FAILURE OF WITNESS TO RESPOND TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am rising on a question of privilege concerning the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics following the notice that I gave you earlier today after the report was tabled.

Here we go again. Because the time of the House is valuable, I have prepared concise remarks. We find ourselves dealing again, though, with another witness showing blatant disregard for another committee.

Earlier this year, we dealt with the woes of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates with Kristian Firth, the key contractor in the Liberals' arrive scam. Today, we have the ethics committee's challenges with the employment minister's sketchy business partner, Stephen Anderson.

Recognizing there is significant overlap between the two cases and that you listened very carefully to my detailed submission on Mr. Firth less than six months ago, Madam Speaker, I am going to refer you to the authorities cited in my March 20 arguments on the failure of a witness to answer questions and adopt them for the present purpose. That said, there are some key points to emphasize and some differences between the two cases noted. While Mr. Firth dodged and weaved questions as a witness, Mr. Anderson also did that and defied document production orders.

Since this has been a dizzying file, even for those of us who have followed it carefully, because there have been so many carefully scripted denials, which are then smashed to bits by yet more bombshell revelations, a brief chronology might be in order. I am sure that my hon. colleagues are going to be very interested in this chronology.

This past spring, Global News broke an explosive story about questionable business dealings, ethics and lobbying centred around the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages and his recent business associates. Understandably, the ethics committee wanted to get to the bottom of the issue and, on May 7, agreed to invite the minister and the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to appear as witnesses at that committee.

On June 4, Global News reported on text messages that it had obtained, showing that Mr. Anderson had written, "Randy" told him to "be available in 15 for a partner call." After the minister's appearance that day, when he denied being the Randy in question, the committee agreed on June 11 to extend the study by inviting the minister's business associates, including Mr. Anderson, as witness-

es. The committee also adopted a document production order directed to the minister and Mr. Anderson for all "phone records, text messages, iMessages, and all instant messages and call logs from all applications from September 8, 2022", to be produced within seven days.

On June 18, the committee reinvited Mr. Anderson to appear during the week of July 15. On July 17, Mr. Anderson did appear as a witness and trifled with the committee in his answers. A central area of concern was the identity of the so-called "other Randy". In the September 8 text messages and, as it would turn out, several others sent the same week, Mr. Anderson blamed autocorrect, which struck no less than nine times, and claimed that he could only provide the real name in camera, in secret. The committee disagreed.

By the end of that meeting, the committee unanimously agreed to "order Stephen Anderson to produce all of the previously requested documents, in addition to the name referenced in today's testimony, and if those documents are not received by Friday, July 19 at 12:00 p.m., the Chair prepare a report to the House outlining the questions that Stephen Anderson refused to answer in writing and during testimony." Mr. Anderson failed to provide that information, including the supposed identity of the infamous "other Randy", though he did provide a bunch of other documents that were unresponsive to the ethics committee's orders, so here we are.

While I think we have all lost track of the Ethics Commissioner's revolving door of an investigation into the minister, it is patently clear that Mr. Anderson failed to answer questions and failed to produce records required by the ethics committee. I will also add that there are concerns about the truthfulness of some of the testimony from Mr. Anderson, which may well be a matter for a future report from the committee. Indeed, he freely admitted to the committee that he had lied to Global News, so that much is certain. For today's purposes, we are, of course, concerned with Mr. Anderson's refusal to provide information.

● (1115)

Your predecessor ruled on May 11, 2021, on page 7021 of the Debates, about the role of committees in questions of privilege concerning witnesses' evidence, and held that committees must first do the work of considering the issue and then inform the House of their conclusion. That part is now done.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, third edition, at page 82, borrowing from a list of established contempts laid out in the 1999 report from the Parliament of the United Kingdom's Joint Committee on Parliamentary Privilege, enumerates established areas of contempt, including "engaging in other misconduct in the presence of, the House or a committee", "without reasonable excuse, refusing to answer a question or provide information or produce papers formally required by the House or a committee" and "without reasonable excuse, disobeying a lawful order of the House or a committee".

During his July 17 testimony, Mr. Anderson was asked but failed, or refused, to name the “other Randy”, or otherwise protested that he could only provide that information in camera, about 10 times. I asked him. The hon. member for Brantford—Brant asked him. The hon. member for Hamilton Centre did too. Even the hon. member for Ottawa Centre tried and got stonewalled.

The hon. member for Steveston—Richmond East asked Mr. Anderson if he would provide the answer in writing, and Mr. Anderson agreed. Then he resiled from his agreement when the member for Ottawa Centre followed up with his own questions. The committee then deliberated on whether to yield to Mr. Anderson's demands and sit in camera. The committee decided not to, but instead adopted the order for him to furnish the written responses that he had once offered to provide.

No answer from Mr. Anderson has been received to date, and certainly not before the committee's deadline of July 19. I will note that it is September 17. In fact, the Liberal employment minister's sketchy business partner did not provide responsive records concerning the balance of that document production order or the committee's original June 11 order.

In adopting these orders, the committee was exercising its authority, which Bosc and Gagnon described at pages 983 and 984 as follows:

The Standing Orders state that standing committees have the power to order the production of papers and records, another privilege that is rooted in the Constitution and which is delegated by the House. In carrying out their responsibility to conduct studies and inquiries, standing committees often have to rely on a wide array of papers to aid them in their work...

The Standing Orders do not delimit the power to order the production of papers and records. The result is a broad, absolute power that on the surface appears to be without restriction. There is no limit on the types of papers likely to be requested; the only prerequisite is that the papers exist in hard copy or electronic format, and that they are located in Canada. They can be papers originating from or in the possession of governments, or papers the authors or owners of which are from the private sector or civil society (individuals, associations, organizations, et cetera).

Bosc and Gagnon, in the immediately following passage, get to the heart of the ethics committee's current predicament:

In practice, standing committees may encounter situations where the authors of or officials responsible for papers refuse to provide them or are willing to provide them only after certain portions have been removed.... Companies may be reluctant to release papers which could jeopardize their industrial security or infringe upon their legal obligations, particularly with regard to the protection of personal information.

These types of situations have absolutely no bearing on the power of committees to order the production of papers and records.... The House has never set a limit on its power to order the production of papers and records. However, it may not be appropriate to insist on the production of papers and records in all cases.

● (1120)

In cases where the author of or the authority responsible for a record refuses to comply with an order issued by a committee to produce documents, the committee essentially has three options. The first is to accept the reasons and conditions put forward to justify the refusal; the committee members then concede that they will not have access to the record or accept the record with passages deleted. The second is to seek an acceptable compromise with the author or the authority responsible for access to the record. Normally, this entails putting measures in place to ensure that the record is kept confidential while it is being consulted. These include in camera review, limited and numbered copies, arrangements for disposing of or destroying the copies after the committee meeting, et cetera. The third option is to reject the reasons given for denying access to the record and uphold the order to produce the entire record.

Privilege

In Mr. Anderson's case, I believe it is fair to say that the ethics committee, in the end, attempted to reach a compromise, one that Mr. Anderson had, initially at least, agreed to, to get his answer about the identity of the “other Randy”.

With respect to the balance of the documents, which had not been produced in response to the June 11 order, Mr. Anderson raised objections, which he vocalized during his July 17 appearance. In response, the committee renewed its order. As such, it is fair to say that the committee chose the third option, rejecting his reasons and insisting on full production, as is its right.

That leaves us with the situation that Bosc and Gagnon describe at page 138:

If a committee's request that it be given certain documents is met with resistance or disregarded, the committee may adopt a motion ordering the production of the requested documents. If such an order is ignored, the committee has no means to enforce the order on its own. It may report the matter to the House and recommend that appropriate action be taken.

The House is now fully up to speed on the matter, and appropriate action is being sought.

That brings me, Madam Speaker, to the point where I say that if you agree there is a prima facie contempt, I am prepared to move an appropriate motion. I will not keep the House in suspense. As in the case of Mr. Firth, I intend to move a motion that would find Mr. Anderson in contempt and order his attendance at the bar for him to be admonished and to answer questions. This motion would also incorporate the unanimously negotiated and agreed upon procedures for questioning Mr. Firth. One addition would be to include a requirement for Mr. Anderson to deliver up the as yet unproduced records.

As you said in your March 22, 2024, ruling at page 21,946 of the Debates:

While it is perhaps true that the suggested remedy is not something we have seen for some time, I am of the view that it is procedurally in order. As with the case cited from June 2021, the motion provides for a call to the bar in order to be reprimanded, and a specific remedy to the offence.

We must all recall that the House is possessed with truly awesome power and authority to vindicate its role as the grand inquest of the nation. Citations 123 to 125 of Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, sixth edition, elaborate:

123. Privilege grants considerable punitive powers to the House of Commons. The mildest form of punishment is a simple declaration that an act or an article is a breach of privilege. When an individual has been present at the Bar it has been customary to deliver this conclusion to the culprit in the presence of the House. On such occasions, censure of the individual is usually added to the conclusion that privilege has been offended.

124. Occasionally the individual at the Bar will be given an opportunity to purge the contempt and promise better conduct in the future....

125. For more serious contempts the House may proceed further.

Routine Proceedings

In my March arguments, I quoted extensively from the 1993 to 2013 reports of the United Kingdom's Joint Committee on Parliamentary Privilege about the need for Parliament to find the institutional confidence necessary to vindicate its authority and impose sanctions in cases of breach, lest accountability to Parliament be reduced to a pious aspiration and institutional weakness cynically exposed. In the end, the House rose to the challenge and unanimously agreed to sanction Mr. Firth, despite some subsequent weak knees and queasy stomachs from some hon. members. I trust that the House will not start giving out free passes to those who think they can trifle at will with Parliament and parliamentary investigations.

● (1125)

In conclusion, the 12th report of the ethics committee outlines, I respectfully submit, a contempt of Parliament committed by the Liberal employment minister's sketchy business partner, Stephen Anderson. Parliament deserves to know who the other Randy is. All Canadians, especially those in Edmonton Centre, deserve that answer. We must get that answer.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I thank the hon. member for submitting the motion. We will take it under advisement.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, today we are here to talk about the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

The report is on the GC Strategies contracts. It requests that the Auditor General conduct a full audit of those contracts. In other words, we want to know what we got for our money. The auditor has already produced a report based on samples of the contracts, but she did not—

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the NDP reserves the right to reply to the question of privilege.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There will be time for that as soon as possible.

The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, before I start, I would like to point out that I will be sharing my time with my esteemed and extraordinary colleague on the team investigating ArriveCAN and GC Strategies, my colleague from Terrebonne.

The Auditor General's report noted omissions in the processes for awarding and monitoring contracts with GC Strategies. We are requesting an additional step: verifying whether taxpayers got their money's worth. I will remind you of a few elements concerning GC Strategies, which also concern everything surrounding ArriveCAN.

This reminder is important because it will help us better understand why we are talking about the report, as well as the request it contains.

In recent years, the Government of Canada has been awarding more and more contracts to consultants. The number of contracts awarded for consulting services, coordination or outsourcing and the total amounts associated with these contracts have significantly increased, not to say skyrocketed.

ArriveCAN was one of these contracts. ArriveCAN got under way between 2015 and 2017. When the pandemic hit, the machinery of government went on overdrive to help Canada Border Services Agency officers manage our borders and travellers once the borders reopened. The problem was that, instead of looking to government employees to see if there was anyone specialized in programming, the work was outsourced. Perhaps we did not have the necessary internal resources. I would be surprised, because a lot of money has been spent in recent years on cybersecurity services, updating the cloud and building telecommunications and Web infrastructures.

Still, let us say that no one was available and that we had to outsource. Apparently, not only did we not have any employees specializing in web applications programming, whether Android, iOS or website platforms, but we also had no employees who were capable of searching LinkedIn or other networks to find such specialists. Therein lies the problem.

Beyond the fact that millions of dollars were given to a company, it is the shortcomings we must bring to light. It is the process for hiring and monitoring employees. It is about making sure to have the right person in the right place, and ensuring that their competencies are recognized, even if the person is not necessarily where they should be based on their skills. For example, an officer working for employment insurance may well have programming skills, but they were not hired for that. It is quite possible that another officer working for employment insurance has archives-related skills but they were not hired for that. If we do not consider these people's skills from the outset, then, when they are needed, we will be out of luck. We will then hire a consultant who ends up doing a search on LinkedIn and receive 10% to 30% of the total contract amount just for finding people who are sitting around. Are we truly getting our money's worth when this happens?

With ArriveCAN, there were problems. Perhaps my colleagues will say that, for the number of downloads and uses, the number of problems was minimal, and in percentage terms that is true, to be sure. Then again, try talking to the 10,000 people who were stuck in a hotel or at home for two weeks and who lost wages because the thingamajig made a mistake and the human being in charge of the thingamajig failed to check whether there was a problem with the machine or whether the person made a false declaration.

• (1130)

We should keep in mind that every app is prone to errors. I know that artificial intelligence is all the rage right now, but let us not forget that although AI can learn by itself, it was programmed by a human being, and human beings are fallible. The same was true of ArriveCAN.

There is also the fact that this app was imposed on Canada Border Services employees who had not been properly trained, and that this was over and above their other duties. This caused problems at the border, which comes under federal jurisdiction.

Earlier, my colleague mentioned the official opposition, which is against anything having to do with social programs, such as pharmacare or dental insurance. We may oppose the way these programs were rolled out, for instance, the fact that they do not respect the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, and still agree with the principle of insurance. However, if we wasted less money consulting people and recognizing their competencies, the provinces that accept these intrusions into their areas of jurisdiction might have more money.

Consultation, particularly when it comes to ArriveCAN and other contracts, like GC Strategies, causes other problems and raises other questions. I mentioned these briefly earlier in my question. The issue is responsibility. Who is responsible? Do we put enough money into training public servants and managers? At some point, a manager needs to manage. If they do not manage, is that one of the reasons why we end up with situations where money seems to fly out the window, as if we thought it grew on trees? Money does not grow on trees; it comes directly out of the pockets of taxpayers who earned it by the sweat of their brow.

Let us get back to requesting the Auditor General to do a complete analysis of the situation. She is responsible. She seeks transparency. She seeks accountability. She does not try to point fingers at a guilty party. She works to make sure that processes are applied properly and that taxpayer money is managed responsibly. Responsibility does not mean that someone will lose their job because they made a mistake. Responsibility means that an individual is able to recognize they made a mistake and to present a solution to improve the situation and become more responsible.

That is what the 13th report requests.

• (1135)

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, let me first take a moment to congratulate the new member for Lasalle—Émard—Verdun, Louis-Philippe Sauvé. I suppose I can use his name since he has not yet been sworn in. I congratulate him warmly. He is a very good friend of mine. There is absolutely no doubt that the people of Lasalle—Émard—Verdun now have an excellent representative, and that Louis-Philippe will be an asset in ensuring that our own country, Quebec, finally comes to be.

Now to my question for my colleague. I was listening to the Liberal members earlier. They were speaking against the official opposition and talking about dental insurance in a debate about GC Strategies, and that made me think of the City of Montreal. At the

Routine Proceedings

time, the city had a mayor who was never around. He was never in the places and rooms where things were happening.

I think about that and I wonder: When it comes to responsibility, what are all these shenanigans telling us?

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, in response to the question from my esteemed colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, I would like to share a story. During my career, when I became vice-principal of a school, I was given two pieces of advice that I did not follow. The first was to never admit having made a mistake. I did not follow it. I am the first person to admit when I am wrong. That is what it means to be accountable. If I never admit that I have made a mistake, I wonder how I could become a better person.

The second piece of advice I did not follow was to believe that one cannot be accused of something one has no knowledge of. I have never followed that advice, because if I know something, I would rather say it, take responsibility and ensure, once again, that things get better.

Human beings are one of the things that get better, and they also need to improve on a daily basis. The ultimate goal in life is to keep learning every day. To do that, we have to recognize our responsibilities and acknowledge our mistakes.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am interested in getting the member's perspective in terms of the scope. How far back does one actually go? For example, we know that before it was GC Strategies, some of the same individuals were involved in Coredal, and Coredal had also received government grants. In trying to get a fair perspective on how things evolved to the point they got to, how far back does the Bloc believe we need to go with respect to the individuals and the companies that were involved?

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, yes, the report does include Coredal without mentioning it. However, it should be noted that it was Coredal when these two individuals took ownership. Before Mr. Firth and Mr. Anthony took over, Coredal had its own owner with its own contracts. Therefore, we are going back to the point where these two people became the owners of Coredal.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my honourable and extraordinary colleague from Beauport—Limoilou. It is always difficult to speak after her, given her vast knowledge of the subject. I would also like to congratulate Louis-Philippe Sauvé on his victory this morning. I send out 8,884 thank yous to the people who placed their trust in Louis-Philippe and the Bloc Québécois. They do not have to worry, we are there for them.

Routine Proceedings

A few months ago, the Office of the Auditor General submitted a report on the management of the ArriveCAN app. To quote the Auditor General, management of the app was the worst she had seen in her career. The ArriveCAN app, which was to have cost \$80,000, ended up costing taxpayers \$60 million. In the same report, we learned that one company composed of two people was paid \$19.1 million for ArriveCAN. That company is GC Strategies. We also learned that the ArriveCAN affair is only the tip of the iceberg. After putting several questions to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, of which I am a member, the comptroller general revealed that GC Strategies and its former incarnation Coredeal had obtained contracts worth almost \$108 million since 2011. Manual searches show that there were probably other contracts as well. In other words, at least \$108 million was paid in recent years to a two-person company that did not deliver any services.

We also learned from the Auditor General's report on ArriveCAN, as well as from several witnesses, that there were whiskey tastings, dinners and golf tournaments, dozens of events attended by public servants. Kristian Firth stood here at the bar of the House of Commons. We called him in. I asked him how many gifts in cash or in kind he had offered public servants. In an arrogant tone, he replied that he had not offered any gifts to public servants. I challenged him. Do whiskey tastings not count? Do dinners not count? Do golf tournaments not count? Mr. Firth replied that yes, there had been certain events.

That is what we got from Kristian Firth. We never got a clear answer from him. Worse yet, the government never admitted to any real problems with our procurement system. We are still waiting. That admission should have been made as soon as the report on ArriveCAN was published. A decision should have been made to reform the procurement system. To get back to Kristian Firth, he refused to answer several questions. I gave an example. He compromised the parliamentarians' work by not submitting the documents requested on time. He even lied in committee. In particular, he refused to submit the list of public servants with whom he had worked, a list we have since received but that is incomplete.

Clearly, if it has come to this, there are huge problems with procurement. The government has been operating this way for at least 15 years. It is so difficult to do business with the government, to enter into contracts with the government, that some companies—we are talking about GC Strategies, but we know there are others—set up a kind of unit that signs the contract but then delegates the work. In some cases, it is not even the company, it is not even GC Strategies that finds the expertise, but the government itself.

Take the case of KPMG, which was considered as a company that could provide services needed by the government. KPMG was called by a government official who told them that the government was not going to sign the contract directly with them, even though it could. The government was going to go through GC Strategies, which ended up pocketing a commission for doing absolutely nothing.

What we have here is a company that profited from a broken system and pushed things to the extreme. GC Strategies received most of its contracts from the Canada Border Services Agency for the ArriveCAN app. It was awarded a number of these contracts unten-

dered, while others were obtained via a rigged tendering process. We now have the evidence. A tendering process was rigged so that GC Strategies would be the only successful bidder. In the case of KPMG, GC Strategies received \$84,000 while offering absolutely no service as part of the contract between the government and KPMG. Why did the public servant do this? Why does the system allow this?

The motion presented for our consideration calls on the Auditor General to conduct a performance audit, on a priority basis, of all payments made to GC Strategies and Coredeal, including all contracts with departments, agencies and Crown corporations. As we know, it can be difficult to see what is going on in these agencies and Crown corporations.

• (1145)

They consider themselves independent, even though they receive taxpayer money. This makes it difficult to obtain information from them, but that is why they are included in this motion. They too must be accountable.

In the case at hand, we would like to know how many other cases there were. The ArriveCAN app is just the tip of the iceberg. For example, we know that there was the KPMG contract I just spoke about, but how many other cases were there like that? How many other times did the government find a company that could provide a service, consultants or people who could truly provide the product the government needed, only to end up with GC Strategies? That is theft.

When someone provides no service and receives money for doing absolutely nothing, that is called theft. It is theft of taxpayer money, something the Liberals seem to forget on occasion.

Kristian Firth justified his hourly rate of \$2,600 by the fact that he was not doing a nine-to-five job. He claimed to have issued over 1,500 invoices per month, maintaining that the amount suddenly increased in the case of ArriveCAN. The contract we are talking about went from \$2.35 million to \$13.9 million, and again, no service was provided.

Routine Proceedings

According to the witness, in the entire history of federal contracts with GC Strategies, the gross margin for all 65 contracts signed with the federal government is approximately 21%. I gave a few examples. GC Strategies was just a shell company that enabled the government to enter into contracts. We do not know why the government used GC Strategies, but the company was pocketing an average of 21% a contract. The two owners of GC Strategies, Kristian Firth and Darren Anthony, met when they were both employees of Veritaaq Technology House, where they worked until 2010. The witness was therefore working for that company when its directors pleaded guilty to bid-rigging in 2009. At that time, the judge ordered that all employees, including Mr. Firth and Mr. Anthony, be given training on bid-rigging. However, we now know that they engaged in bid-rigging to win a multi-million dollar contract from the CBSA for the ArriveCAN app.

From the motion and from everything I said, it is clear that we urgently need to know the extent of the damage caused by GC Strategies for the government. GC Strategies obtained at least \$108 million. How much of that can we potentially get back? In the case of GC Strategies, there has obviously been a breach of trust and theft. That is a strong word that I am using.

However, the following is clear. In the report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates that we are discussing today, we may be asking the Auditor General of Canada to study the issue and conduct a performance audit to get a clearer idea, but we are obviously not directing the Auditor General, far from it. We cannot make repeated requests like others do all the time and like a certain party enjoys doing by bombarding the Office of the Auditor General of Canada with requests for studies when it already has so much on its plate.

I am therefore adding a bit of nuance because, as the Auditor General of Canada pointed out, she does not have additional funding for all the extra studies she is being asked to do. Nevertheless, and this is the most important point of my speech, the report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates was unanimously adopted because it embodies the feelings of our constituents, the taxpayers who felt cheated in this matter. It epitomizes the anger, it must be said, of the people who talk to us back home on the ground about the story of ArriveCAN and GC Strategies. No one understands how this could have happened. We were cheated by a procurement system that needs to be overhauled. It is the right thing to do.

I would really like the government to truly take responsibility, as my colleague from Beauport-Limoilou said, and acknowledge the fact that GC Strategies is a perfect example of the fact that there is a real problem in the federal procurement system.

• (1150)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to pick up on the member's last statements and go to the Auditor General's comments. From what I understand, there was a clear indication the Auditor General found that the government has appropriate contracting rules that are actually in place. The problem is that the rules were not properly followed.

When that occurs, there is an obligation for the government to take action.

When the government did discover this, there were actions. Internal reviews were done. The Auditor General was brought in. The RCMP is also now looking into the matter. I do not know exactly where it is at in regard to it, but there seems to be a great deal of attention being brought to the issue, and justifiably so.

The government has not been shy in terms of recognizing the need for transparency and accountability on the issue. The government believes that there have to be and will be consequences for those who have broken the rules and taken advantage of taxpayers.

I wonder whether the member could provide her thoughts in regard to the Auditor General's comments that we seem to have the right system.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, I simply do not agree with my colleague opposite. I think that the government did not do enough, to be sure. Here is an example: At the Canada Border Services Agency, one of the people who partook in whiskey tastings with Kristian Firth was promoted. Is this what taking action means? No.

There is a problem in the procurement system. Fiddling around the edges, which was more symbolic than anything else, has done nothing to repair a problematic procurement system. It is too complex, and thus requires a number of firms to go through companies like GC Strategies, which do absolutely nothing. Lastly, we pay far too much for what we get at the federal level.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the problems we have is the constant outsourcing of communications, studies and consultant groups instead of having those done within the house of the public service. I would like the member's comments with regard to how much outsourcing has been done. It is a significant problem, and if we did those things in-house, we would have more control and, more importantly, accountability.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, there is indeed a problem, but it does not necessarily involve hiring consultants. It is normal to hire consultants. Experts are occasionally needed to assist the government on an ad hoc basis.

The problem is that the size of the public service increased dramatically. A huge number of public servants were hired, and many more consultants were hired as well. Consulting expenses went through the roof.

Routine Proceedings

How is it that this expertise is lacking within the government? Have we not created a sort of federal dependency on consultants, who end up having their contracts renewed, while internal expertise falls by the wayside? This is what I mean when I talk about a procurement problem.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I completely agree with the comments made by my colleague from Windsor West, and those from my colleague from the Bloc Québécois. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate my Bloc Québécois colleagues.

It is clear that the public service had eroded. Work was contracted out to big companies, sometimes foreign ones. Billions of dollars were paid to companies such as Deloitte, KPMG or McKinsey, who are profit-driven, and this resulted in the erosion of our own services and our public service.

Further to that point, Kristian Firth's testimony here in the House was dreadful. We need to call for a change in how things are done. A tremendous effort needs to be made to rebuild the public service so that it has the capacity to provide the services that Canadians need.

● (1155)

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, I can only reiterate what I said earlier. The problem is that the size of the public service exploded, but so did the number of contracts awarded to consultants.

Finally, we are potentially paying twice for the same services. We know that sometimes a department is equipped to provide a service and another department hires consultants to do it. This happens regularly within the federal government.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to talk about this issue with regard to the Auditor General of Canada conducting a performance audit. It is ironic that the Conservatives have brought this forward. It was the party that attacked the Auditor General and sought to defund the Auditor General under the Harper regime. I was here during the debates on that.

The Conservatives not only did it behind closed doors but also did in here. We can watch the video. We can watch all the different things in the past that took place. They sought to defund the Auditor General and they did that at the expense of Parliament. That was done under Stephen Harper.

The Conservatives are asking the Auditor General to do more work and more investigation after they attacked the Auditor General very publicly. On top of that, they cut the budget, defunding the Auditor General. The Conservatives now run back to the Auditor General. I wonder about that in terms of their secret plans that could come forward later on. If they ever were able to get into government again, would they defund the Auditor General even more?

Using this as a motion is rather curious. It really comes at the expense of other accountability that took place, because the Conservatives defunded the Auditor General in the past and the Liberals never really restored that. It has been an attack on that house of inde-

pendence for overseeing Parliament on many other issues that have consequences.

The Conservatives are asking the Auditor General to do more work for their political agenda right now, and it is a political agenda with regard to their attack on ArriveCAN. I will get into what they have not talked about in this motion and what they have asked for versus the results that we can get for Canadians. There are a couple things to point out specifically on that.

In the motion and in the talking points of the Conservatives, we will never hear them question or raise concerns related to personal privacy, the expenditure of resources and the effects on CBSA officers at all. They call it arrive scam. They have their slogans that they package up into a little box, but they really do not get to some of the things that are germane.

When we look at GC Strategies and what it has done with the money it received, there is a very legitimate discussion to be had. How did it get so much money? How was there so little accountability? How did all this happen? At the same time, what is not discussed is why we even outsourced such an important provision that was being sought in the first place?

The Harper regime cut the public service and CBSA officers. It cut frontline officers, and it cut off other types of systems in place that dealt with gun smuggling, drug smuggling and so forth. Over \$100 million of cuts to our border services took place under the Harper regime. It was one of the first things it did.

Then later on in Parliament, they come back and we see an outsourcing by the Liberals, because that is a convenient way to do it for an application that deals with personal privacy and border management, which is significant. I come from a border region, the busiest border in North America, where we need that commerce to run efficiently.

During COVID, we had a blockade at the Ambassador Bridge. The Conservatives basically stood by and they denied all the different consequences that took place for the auto industry. They denied the consequences for the tool-and-die industry and mould-making industry. They denied the consequences of people not being able to get to their jobs. They denied the consequences of kids not going to school. They denied the consequences of people, including children, going to their health care appointments, including cancer treatments. They stood down as this illegal blockade took place to the point where we had to put Jersey barriers all along Huron Church Road.

Routine Proceedings

• (1200)

Why is that important and germane to this? They have been part of this outsourcing that took place to GC Strategies and others to deal with an application that would have helped us potentially deal with COVID. The problem was that it manifested itself into a blockade and disgruntlement. Now the Conservatives continue to have that disgruntlement with regard to their focusing solely on GC Strategies, something they probably would have employed, or a different strategy organization, themselves because they love outsourcing.

The Conservatives love the fact that they cancelled and defunded our in-house capabilities when it came to creating applications and processes related to the border crossing. ArriveCAN was about that. It was an attempt to deal with COVID, the complications of the border and so forth. The Conservatives will not talk about how it really related to the exposure of personal privacy and the inefficiencies that it created for the industry and other economic issues that we had.

This motion focuses on the priorities of GC Strategies and the payments of contracts and all those different things that took place. It is important to note that both the Liberals and Conservatives feel differently about how we can deal with these contracts and this information in the future. Had we done that in house, had we had the capability for the public service to do those things, we would have had more control.

Let us remember that we have lessons for that, lessons created in the past with the Phoenix system, when we outsourced, again, potential in-house applications that could have been done by public servants even with regard to payment. The government turned the switch on that, despite knowing that it would cause a problem, and it has cost us billions of dollars and has been a scandal. It has caused anguish among the public service and other people who are looking to get a paycheque. That is sad because those things were totally avoidable.

One of the things I want to touch on, which is important with regard to this issue and beyond it, is that we can have this on GC Strategies but I am just not convinced, whether it is the Liberals now with their friends in the GC Strategies group or whether it is in the past or later on with the Conservatives and their friends getting these contracts and these types of things, that we have really learned anything that systemically will change what is taking place. That is what we really need, because, if not, we will be spending another day in the House of Commons talking about another strategy, or another scandal or another type of problem related to a practice that functionally we have not changed.

One of the things I do want to talk about is the accountability of government information and contracting that could be different, and which is different in other industrialized nations, and we are not even dealing with it. That is Crown copyright.

Crown copyright in our country is done differently than in any other place. Crown copyright is the availability to the public of documents, studies and information that is done in house. Both the Liberals and the Conservatives have opposed reforming Crown copyright from the early 1900s. Our law has been in place since 1926, and it is different from that in the United States, the U.K and every-

body else across the board. Why is it important? Because if it were done in house, if it were done by the public servants and if it were done by taxpayers, the New Democrats believe that information, those studies and those accountability documents that are being sought after now would be public information.

Under the best circumstances, when we contract those information pieces and we get them done, they are very helpful for businesses, academics and a number of different things for our economy and accountability. We would not have to spend time in the House of Commons debating that because it would already be available. That is what the United States does. That is what the Americans have done since the 1800s. However, in Canada, we have a system in place right now that is protected by sensitive so-called information by the government, where people cannot see when the Liberals or Conservatives do those types of studies from by public servants. Why? Because some of that information that the Conservatives and Liberals have done over the past have been polls, research opinions and other types of information to guide their principles and other things. That should have been paid by their political parties but taxpayers have paid for it.

• (1205)

If people cannot get their head around why they would, as taxpayers, pay for all those different things and never get access to them, it is because of the power interests that have taken place here. That needs to be changed significantly. If we did this materially and if we did these studies that GC Strategies did, that would be automatically available to the public.

Today's discussion to get the documents, to get the contracts that have been through a committee, and it is on the Auditor General now to actually deal with these issues, all would be readily available anyway. How much money does it cost the taxpayers to run Parliamentary committees, run discussion in the chamber, make the Auditor General do something after the Auditor General's budget has been cut in the past and then try to get a document back into our system, to talk about that accountability and complain about it? The Conservatives will use arrive scam and then the Liberals will try to defend it and all those different things, but the solution is right in front of us.

Had we actually done that with in-house and Crown copyright, which every other industrialized nation actually has in a different fashion than Canada, it would not even have been a fight. It would have been automatically available. Why is it okay, and I cannot believe the motion does not even talk about this, that we can allow a continuation of a whole bunch of companies, this one being GC Strategies, which appears to be done in somebody's basement, to get millions and millions of dollars on the whim, with the least accountability, and then we do not get that information to the Canadian public?

Routine Proceedings

Coming from a border region, I would have been interested, as I am sure our chamber of commerce and others would have, with any real application like this ArriveCAN app, in having the data and information they used to create an application, which was unnecessary and has huge flaws. That is almost beside the point in many respects. We saw that on a regular basis at the border. However, why are we even fighting to get that, when the solution has been in front of us? The reason is because of the continuation of control of public information and the control of the civil servants.

There is disenfranchisement of the public, because people cannot get the information on a free and regular basis from GC Strategies, which should have been available from the start. The reason is that it is better to continue with that issue right now. The Conservatives do not put that in the motion here because they are hoping they can get over on that side and get the same access to the public purse strings and public money to do whatever they want on these accountability issues. Then later on it will be up to the opposition or others to expose that.

Over the years, I have seen that so many times, especially under the Harper administration. There have been so many different issues with regard to accountability that have never been answered. Sadly, I am looking at the situation back in the time when I sat closer over there, and I sat a couple seats across from the now Prime Minister. They supported Stephen Harper on confidence votes without a single concession from Stephen Harper. Over 100 times, the Liberals agreed with the Conservatives and did not get a single thing for Canadians.

That is important, because this motion, which we are going to agree to because it is an improved situation, still would not change the fundamental problem that we have, which is the outsourcing of that accountability and on top of that, ensuring that businesses, the public and others have access to the information before we have to fight for it in the House of Commons.

● (1210)

I know the Conservatives do not want to hear that, and that is okay. I can tell members that it is not the norm in other democracies. In fact, the United States fixed part of the problem by not outsourcing some of the material, the studies and so forth, and by setting up its information-sharing system. It goes back to 1895. I know the Conservatives do not want to hear this, but their predecessors, in many respects, actually agreed with me. In Canada, there were attempts in 1981, in 1993 and so forth to try to make some of these changes, but the 1980s seems like a long time ago. People forget that today's Conservatives used to be called the Progressive Conservatives. Then they were taken over by the Canadian Alliance party.

An hon. member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I just heard a “hear, hear”. If we look behind the veil, we see exactly what I have said.

I remember those days. I remember Peter MacKay and David Orchard. I remember all those behind-the-curtain deals that took place as Erin O’Toole and others were running out the door. The Conservatives want everybody to forget about those things, but it is interesting that when I talk about those things here I get heckled with a “hear, hear”. They are happy about those days, because those

days are still here. A takeover took place, and that is why they dropped the “Progressive”, I suppose. I do not know. At any rate, it is interesting.

This is important, because the motion does not get to the fact that there is still a responsibility thrust upon the Auditor General. It would be interesting to see what the Conservatives would have put in there. They could have put in there that they would reinstate the cuts they made to the Auditor General’s office. That would have been helpful. It would have been really good if they said the money they took out of the Auditor General’s office under Harper, and was voted on, including by the now leader of the official opposition, who was there at the cabinet table when they decided they were going to attack and defund the Auditor General’s office, could specifically be used to go after this issue. They could have done that, which would have been really helpful, because we know the Auditor General is taxed, in many respects, with regard to what has taken place on the Liberal side.

As I conclude, I want to focus on this. If we want a real and responsible solution, we will simply make sure our public service is funded properly, that it can do the research and that the research is then open to the public, businesses, employers and so forth so it performs well for our economy with respect to Crown copyright renewal and reform. However, we do not have this. Instead, what we have is a systematic problem of outsourcing continually, not having control and spending lots of money. However, it has gone to the government side in the past, whether Liberal or Conservative. It does not matter whether it is blue, red or whatever; governments will find a way to pass that public money on to their friends. That has been the consistency of what is happening here. It is time to end that consistency with respect to Ottawa and pass it on properly back to the taxpayers to ensure they are not involved in this boondoggle or any other in the future.

● (1215)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to questions and comments, there was a lot of discussion being had in one corner or in the middle of the chamber by a variety of individuals. I know someone is pointing, but that individual was also part of the discussion. If members are not interested in hearing what is being said, I would just ask them to please be respectful. If they want to have conversations or are not interested in the debate, then they should step out, have those conversations there and then come in.

There were other members who were making signs to indicate it was noisy in the House. I did not interrupt because nobody got up at that time. However, I want to remind members again to please step out if they want to have conversations.

The hon. member for Guelph.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed working on copyright legislation with the hon. member for Windsor West in the 42nd Parliament, on the industry committee. He brought up the issue of Crown copyright. One example that Canada can look to is Crown copyright in the U.K., something that goes back to, I think, the Statute of Anne in 1710. I think the U.K. is currently under legislation from 1988.

Routine Proceedings

We could talk about copyright, but I am really interested in the member's comments about trade and how important it is for us to look at technical advances we can make to have goods and services move more freely across our border and how this was intending to do that.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, it was interesting as we all toured throughout Canada for a full year on copyright. I appreciate the member's interventions. It is a highly complicated and tough issue that still resurfaces. He made a good point that there can be innovation on the border. To bring it back to what is really important, that is what the ArriveCAN application was to do: to make things flow better and so forth. ArriveCAN was a problematic application.

I want to focus also on making sure we have boots on the ground with regard to the CBSA officers. We are short right now, because of COVID, by over 2,000 to 3,000 officers at the border. Even with an application like ArriveCAN, or a new one, and there has been some advancement on a number of different things, if we don't have the right equipment and enough officers then it is a huge problem.

A good example we hear about is auto theft. They actually moved the equipment from Windsor to Montreal because they could not, or would not, fix the equipment in Montreal. We have to fund the border properly. We still need boots on the ground, so to speak.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, we have just witnessed a rather amusing scene. Our Conservative colleagues were not listening at all and were speaking almost as loudly as our colleague who was making his speech. However, when he said “Canadian Alliance”, all of a sudden the Conservatives snapped to attention. I think it was almost erotic. They listened, said, “Hear, hear!” and went back to their conversations. Perhaps my colleague should use the words “Reform Party” and “Canadian Alliance” more often in his speeches to make sure he gets their attention. There are variations as well, but I will let him choose. I am sure that he will have the originality to come up with them.

That said, multicultural Canada has often been described as an incoherent aggregate of communities. The same can be said of the Canadian government. There are a bunch of governments within the government, sub-governments and sub-sub-governments. Unlike the hydra, the many-headed creature of Greek mythology, here there is one that is centralized and sends money to everyone, feeding these little creatures that are getting out of control.

Why is it that no one is ever accountable when it comes time to ask questions?

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I remember. I got here when there was the Canadian Alliance party and the Conservative Party. Actually, Joe Clark used to sit close to me. Later on, we saw the Canadian Conservative Reform Alliance party emerge, which had “CCRAP” as its acronym, as we know. That disappeared shortly thereafter, and there were other machinations that took place. I was here.

I have a lot of respect for Joe Clark. He was screamed at by the Alliance party at that time. I remember those things very clearly. People can watch the video. He used to have his green folder and would ask the questions. I was really impressed by his stature.

To quickly respond to my colleague's question, if we had in-house accountability with documents about Crown copyright reform, we would not even have to try to do motions like this and so forth because they would be available to the public and a part of the process. We would not need procedures here to do it.

• (1220)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would just remind the member to be careful with the acronyms he uses. There are certain acronyms that are just not acceptable to say, no matter what they sound like. We know there are unions that do not like acronyms used for them either.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask my colleague from the NDP a question. My colleagues and I are very curious to know whether the NDP is willing to assert the supposedly new-found independence that it is talking about and vote non-confidence in a corrupt government that has such disregard for tax dollars and for the public service. I know he mentioned this is something that should have been done in-house. ArriveCAN could have been done in-house, by our professional public servants, but instead there was the mismanagement, the corruption, the scandal that plagues the government. However, the New Democrats refuse to commit to voting non-confidence in that corruption.

Can the member clarify today that they will vote non-confidence in the Prime Minister and the Liberal government, and show whether they are actually tearing up the so-called agreement?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I have no idea what that has to do with the motion the Conservatives put forth, but that is not surprising from the member and from the way the members opposite are behaving. I am glad to have the floor.

If I had unanimous consent, I could go on longer, because I have, right here, the Harper government's record in scandals. I have the last 10 years of Stephen Harper scandals. I have the Conservative collection of Harper government scandals as well. I have lots here to go on.

I want to go specifically to the motion. Here is the Auditor General's office, to cut 60 jobs, a reduced number of audits, thanks to the Conservative government, thanks to Stephen Harper, thanks to their agenda, which they never told the public when they went to the polls. They never told the public they were going to raise retirement from 65 to 67. They never told the public they were going to cut \$100 million from border services. They never told my community they were going to close the veterans office and the recruiting office, which they did. They never said any of those things. I would love to have the floor to talk about those things more.

Points of Order

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I think what the Canadian public is screaming about is the sense that there is never any accountability, that millions of dollars can be wasted and that we can have someone like Kristian Firth sit here and say he is not ashamed, that he just took millions of dollars from Canadians and he is walking away with it.

I think the hon. member for Windsor West is absolutely right. We have to get back to where this started as a trend of taking work that should be done by our public civil service and farming it out to for-profit consultants. I would like to put a finger on the beginning of it, and maybe if we had accountability for that, we could get accountability now. I put my finger on the Phoenix pay system and the decision to hire IBM. We should have sued IBM when it was not delivering, instead of shovelling hundreds of millions of dollars more to it, and then to McKinsey, to help the Phoenix pay system work when it could never work.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, that is exactly it, because if not, we are going to be back here again on a different motion and a different type of scandal and a different problem. That is fixable. That is what we want to do as New Democrats, to fix that systemic problem: Crown copyright reform and also not outsourcing sensitive information that includes our personal and private information and sharing that. That information even goes outside the country through an application done in somebody's basement by somebody known to them on that side, whoever occupies that side, versus in-house with lower cost and higher accountability.

• (1225)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague. I think it is ironic when the Conservatives try to talk about respect for the civil service when all they ever do is denigrate the civil service. They started this trend, as the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands just mentioned. Where is it going next? In the international trade committee, we are talking about the CBSA assessment and revenue management system, a new digital system, sort of like ArriveCAN on steroids, and it is being brought to us by Deloitte, not by the civil service.

We are undercutting the CBSA again, and I am wondering if the member could spend some time talking about that trend.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I think my colleague knows the border better than anybody else I know in this chamber, having to deal with it from an economic and social perspective, and has shown that on a regular basis. Briefly, he is absolutely correct. What is not talked about enough is the exposure of our personal information that the Conservatives and the Liberals continue to do through this outsourcing that also goes global. We have little control over that. By doing it, they reward friends and there are higher prices, less accountability and more corruption.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Brantford—Brant.

I find it fascinating that the NDP member who just finished his speech claimed to not understand the context of a question that was very direct, which was whether the member and the NDP would support a motion of non-confidence, to put a line in the sand; the

red line, I believe, is what they called it at the previous NDP convention, where NDP party members were not very happy with their leader and the direction they were going when it comes to propping up the Liberal government and the scandal, the corruption, the waste and the mismanagement that are happening. However, the member, when given a very clear opportunity to put on the record that he would vote non-confidence, refused to do so.

The reason this fits so clearly in the debate, and I know my colleagues across the way certainly do not like how by-elections certainly do not seem to be their strength as of late, is that they seem to be terrified of hearing what Canadians have to say, of hearing that there is a desire for things like accountability. That is the crux of the issue we are discussing here today.

The leader of the NDP, with great bravado, said he was tearing up the confidence and supply agreement, the coalition agreement that has defined the last two years of corruption that they have supported, yet when asked to put his money where his mouth is, he refused. The member likewise refused, just as weak and cowardly as his leader.

We have before us GC Strategies—

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ALLEGED UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will not sit here and be told I am a coward. I think that is unparliamentary and I would ask the member to retract it.

I am actually being called a coward in the chamber, when I have fought with my constituents to get representation for Windsor West and say what I feel and they believe in the chamber. I will not be bullied by the member. I will not take it here in the chamber and I will not take it behind closed doors. I am not a coward. I have been accountable. What he is raising is not even germane to the actual motion the Conservatives have put forward.

I can tell the member that I am not a coward. If he wants to test that, that is fine here in the chamber, but it is unparliamentary to call any member here in the chamber a coward.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I said his actions, like those of his leader, are weak and cowardly. He can interpret that as he wishes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind members to be very careful with the words they use. If it causes disorder in the House, they should not be using those words.

I did not hear the whole sentence the hon. member said, aside from what he has just told me. We will review Hansard and come back to the House as necessary.

Routine Proceedings

• (1230)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, now I will go back to the speech where I was talking about Liberal corruption, and in particular how over the course of the last number of years we have seen an unprecedented level of corruption take place, and that is no more true than in the case of GC Strategies. The report from OGGO specifically talks about the need for the basic level of accountability. In fact, what the motion before us does is take the politics out of it by asking the Auditor General to step in and do a performance audit on GC Strategies.

Most notably, and it has been mentioned in the discussions that have happened thus far this morning, this two-person firm is named GC Strategies not because it is associated with the Government of Canada but because it wants that perception in order to be able to manipulate the process in order to get contracts.

ArriveCAN, specifically, was originally budgeted at \$80,000, but ended up ballooning to a cost for which we do not even know the final number, other than that it is probably north of \$60 million. That is a level of corruption that is astonishing and that Canadians are demanding answers for.

What is so frustrating is that I hear from my constituents on a regular basis, and from Canadians from coast to coast, that there is a level of frustration and an erosion of trust that has taken place in the institutions that normally, historically, we could have been able to trust. There was a very poignant statement made to me by somebody who did not consider themselves that political. They did not really have a particular party that they championed; they were just a regular Canadian. What they had shared with me is that we used to be a country where if we did not like the guy in charge, we could still respect the office they held.

Unfortunately we have come to the point where the actions of the Prime Minister and the Liberals, supported by the NDP, include a refusal to commit to put their foot down, and not just do press stunts, to actually oppose the agenda they still support. What we see in this country is that there has been an erosion of trust in our institutions.

The fact is that, like the previous member mentioned, this could have been done in-house for significantly less. It could have had the basic level of accountability through the process. The Liberals are saying that they might have made mistakes but that we should just move on. I am sorry, but \$60 million spent, and close to \$100 million that went to GC strategies with various contracts, showcases the corruption and the scandal at a time when Canadians are going hungry.

Food banks are seeing record usage. We are seeing a level of an erosion of trust, because Canadians look at how the friends of the Liberal Party are getting rich while they are being stripped of everything. The fact is that I know that is the case across this country, and it is so regrettable that the NDP, when given the opportunity, refused to take a stand. I will let Canadians judge that for what it is.

We will have a vote on the issue after question period, asking the Auditor General to take a look and to dig into the details of \$100 million. I would like to, if I could, remind all members of this place that whenever the government has a dollar, whether it is the salary that we earn as parliamentarians, whether it is the dollar that goes to pay for the services that public servants provide, whether it is the dollar that is paid out in benefits, whether it goes to things like our military or the RCMP, or we could go down to other levels of government, at the core of every dollar that the government has is the fact, and this is a fact that I would hope defines the respect that needs to be shown for the dollars the government has, that it is not the government's money.

• (1235)

It is the money of taxpayers, hard-working Canadians who pay a percentage of their income and a percentage of the things they buy, whatever the case is, to the various taxes that exist, which goes into government coffers. Those are hard-earned dollars. The sweat, the work and the blood of so many Canadians go into earning those dollars, and it is bewildering how little respect those Canadians are shown, because it is Canadians' money. Therefore when we talk about a two-person firm getting \$100 million, most of which was in sole-source contracts, friends of the Liberal Party who wine and dine Liberal staffers and Liberal elites, it is astonishing the arrogance with which the government and the other parties that support it approach this lack of accountability.

There is the work that the OGGO committee has done. I know that my colleagues, including an Alberta colleague who chairs it, have done a tremendous amount of work exposing some of the corruption and the need for accountability. In the case of the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, often referred to as the mighty OGGO, there is a simple request to call in the Auditor General, the non-partisan auditor who can look at the books. I would suggest that in a country like Canada, that should not be controversial, and it is so regrettable that opposing corruption has become something that the Liberals try to turn into controversy.

I stand here as a representative of about 110,000 people, over 53,000 square kilometres in beautiful East Central Alberta, proud to stand up for accountability, for the people I represent and the hard-earned dollars they send to Ottawa to steward with the most basic level of accountability, which they and all Canadians deserve.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked about Canadians' not trusting their government and having concern over being able to trust institutions. However, I am wondering how much of a role he believes that he plays in that.

Routine Proceedings

The member comes in here and talks about corruption, that the government is being corrupt and is just filling the pockets of Liberal insiders, and he talks about GC strategies. Meanwhile, GC strategies used to operate under a company named Coredal, and it operated under that company name when the Conservatives were in government, so for the member to suggest that these are some kind of Liberal insiders is just completely false. Anybody who says that is lying, because it is not true.

I am wondering whether the member can tell the House what role he plays in bringing forward these ideas and this misinformation, and informing Canadians to purposely pit them against the institutions that he said a constituent raised a concern with him about.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I think it has become increasingly clear across this country that Canadians are sick and tired of the Liberals—

An hon member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the hon. member who is yelling out her comments that if she wishes to participate in the debate, she should wait until questions and comments.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

• (1240)

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, for the member to somehow suggest that calling for accountability is anything other than the very basic job a parliamentarian or a Parliament should do exposes to all Canadians the problem that exists within that party. Canada deserves better than the corruption that the member supports.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, in his speech, my colleague raised a number of very important points about accountability and how the government seems to think this is no big deal and not its responsibility.

That is what happens when government responsibilities are delegated to the private sector. That is essentially what happened with GC Strategies. For some time now, I have noticed everything going down a slippery slope. Take the regulation of gene editing, for example. The government decided to let the industry itself create a registry to track all that stuff, even though it is the government's responsibility.

Does the member think these kinds of bad choices can lead to even worse things in the future? Does he think the government needs to take back control and take responsibility for ensuring public safety?

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I talk a lot about the need for good governance. We often see examples from the Liberals that are the antithesis of that. I know the member and his party are open to continuing this coalition-type arrangement that exists here. I would hope the member would stand strongly against supporting the corruption we see across the way.

However, at the very base of all of this is what has happened over the last 10 or so years. Consultants have been used in government for as long as government has existed, but the proliferation of that under the Liberals, the \$20 billion that has been spent on consultants, is not resulting in good policy; it is not resulting in benefits or services being offered to Canadians. We need that basic level of accountability, but the Liberals simply refuse it.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, this is a really critical issue. I will support the motion. I want to make it very clear, though, that I do not think there is evidence for one of the comments, which was about Kristian Firth. I think Kristian Firth should be ashamed, but I did not hear any evidence that he was wining and dining Liberal insiders. He was wining and dining whatever person was within the bureaucratic chain of command, but I did not hear anything about party affiliations. Has the member heard that?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, it was certainly poignant when Kristian Firth was called to the bar in a historic moment and refused to acknowledge any shame for the abuse of tax dollars. To speak to the member's point, we have seen a breakdown of the processes that are supposed to ensure accountability when it comes to all aspects of how government is contracted. It seems as though the Liberals will move heaven and earth to benefit their friends, but they refuse to hold on to the basic level of accountability that Canadians expect.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ALLEGED UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before we go to the next speaker, I am ready to rule on the point of order that the hon. member for Windsor West brought forward. After reviewing Hansard, I want to ask the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot to rise in the House to withdraw his comments and to apologize not only to the member for Windsor West but also to the leader of the NDP.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I apologize and withdraw them.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by saying what an honour and privilege it is to rise for the first time in our fall session and speak to a topic that I have had the privilege of participating in largely throughout the summer, as well as for the past year or so in numerous committees. This is a topic that has dominated the landscape of Canadian politics. I want to pick up where my colleague just left off in terms of the themes of my speech, which will largely be about trust and accountability.

Routine Proceedings

There have been so many scandals at the heart of the corrupt Liberal government, but this scandal in particular strikes at the hearts of Canadians whom I have spoken to from across this country. It shows how poor our procurement system is and how much chaos has been created by individuals who should have taken responsibility and provided the proper oversight but clearly did not. Therefore, let us focus on GC Strategies.

I know the Liberal members will probably not like what I am about to say, because I was often interrupted in numerous committees, but from what Kristian Firth himself said, he specifically chose the name GC Strategies for a purpose. GC stands for “Government of Canada”, and it is important to highlight this here in the House and to share that with Canadians. It exemplifies the type of rotten, improper relationship that Kristian Firth has had with the Government of Canada.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Larry Brock: I do not need to hear chirping, Madam Speaker. Perhaps you want to address those individuals, who should know better. They are certainly not new to Parliament, but I sure am used to their interruptions. I will continue.

Kristian Firth was part of a two-person firm operating with no bricks and mortar and largely working out of a basement. He was essentially performing services that could have and should have been performed by Canada's professional public service. He was essentially a recruiter. He did not perform any IT work. He did not discharge any technical experience with the creation of the app. He merely connected the CBSA and other federal departments with professionals in the Ottawa and surrounding areas to create an app that had an original estimated cost to Canadians of \$80,000. He literally opened up his rolodex, his contact sheet, and found the required individuals for the government to work with.

I put that particular question on numerous occasions to a number of professionals who testified at committee, particularly the union heads of several organizations that speak to Canada's professional public service. They confirmed to me not only that the recruitment could have been done in-house but also that the actual creation of this approximately \$60-million boondoggle of an ineffective app could have been done in-house. Instead, the government claims that this was a pandemic and we had to move fast. Corners were cut, and no documentation was saved; no one is accepting responsibility. We have the Auditor General, who basically says that the pandemic is no excuse for throwing out basic accounting principles. I highlight her summary that the best she could glean with the scattered documentation she was able to receive allowed her to put out an estimate of \$60 million.

This is precisely why this motion is not only appropriate in its timing but also relevant in its purpose.

● (1245)

We need to have an accurate picture as to how many more millions of dollars were funnelled to GC Strategies to pad the pockets of other insiders, other individuals who actually did no work. We know the procurement general has already estimated that 76% of all subcontractors who were hired, who were paid by to work on the app using taxpayer funds, did no work on the app.

This is precisely why the opposition parties all voted in favour of the government providing us with a detailed blueprint as to how it would recoup the millions of dollars that were wasted, with no oversight and no accountability. The committee work we did has clearly shown and demonstrated to Canadians that there is a significant trust issue with how the Government of Canada is operating and procuring with outside consultants.

We know that, in 2015, the Prime Minister promised he would reduce the amount of outside consultants working with the Government of Canada. However, that certainly has not been the case. My colleague who spoke previously was quite accurate in stating that over 20-billion taxpayer dollars has been sent to outside consultants. That is taxpayer money that should not have been spent. It was spent foolishly, without checks and balances.

It is precisely why I have pursued a line of questioning not only to examine the wasted billions of dollars but also to explore the criminality behind the operations of GC Strategies. I just want to pause for a moment on that issue because we also heard evidence at committees that, within a couple of years after Kristian Firth's work on the ArriveCAN app, he was working with a small software company in Montreal named Botler. His handling of Botler also raised national headlines and brought to light just how inappropriate, how loose and how free Mr. Firth was with our criminal laws.

Here is a case in point: Botler was working on an app that, I believe, the justice department was interested in at the time. Mr. Firth took the résumés of the two founders of Botler and determined that their experience was insufficient; however, he wanted to justify the government's working with Botler. He admitted under oath, on a few occasions at committee, that he deliberately and intentionally altered the details of their résumés to ensure they reached a certain threshold for qualification. As a former justice participant, I can say that this is outright fraud. It is not only fraud, but it is also forgery.

I have been pushing the RCMP to investigate Kristian Firth on that point alone, in addition to his ill-gotten gains with respect to the ArriveCAN app. We can let this point sink in: A person who performs no professional work, merely makes a connection between the Government of Canada and an IT professional from the comfort of his basement, perhaps on a nice taxpayer-funded leather couch and watching television on a nice 100-inch screen, received \$20 million of taxpayer funds. As I have often said in the House and at committee, talk about hitting the taxpayer lottery.

● (1250)

It is no small wonder that when the RCMP commissioner testified at committee, he would not get into the particulars of what criminal charges the RCMP were investigating as they related to Kristian Firth and his partner on the ArriveCAN scam, but he did indicate that there was an open investigation. Moreover, he also confirmed to me that there were at least another half-dozen investigations into the ArriveCAN scam.

Routine Proceedings

• (1255)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is one fundamental flaw in what the member is trying to portray. He is attempting to mislead Canadians, quite frankly. The member knows full well that inappropriate behaviour has not been condoned in any form by this government. In fact, when it was discovered that there was inappropriate behaviour, the government acted quickly by ensuring there was a process to assure Canadians, the taxpayers, that there would be accountability and there would be a consequence for those who had violated the procedures in place to protect the taxpayer.

The member intentionally tried to give the impression that it is the Liberal Party or the government, the politicians, that has not protected the interests of the taxpayer when that is just not true. If we want to look at a scandal where politicians were trying to cover something up, look at the \$400-million ETS scandal of the Harper era, which the Conservatives across the way are absolutely silent on.

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, if the member looks in the mirror, he will see inappropriate behaviour, not only by him but by the entire government. The government has done nothing other than try to hide, obfuscate and distance itself from this scandal.

Every single member of the Liberal Party voted down the Auditor General investigating the ArriveCAN scam. That was on November 2, 2022. Over the course of numerous committees, it was the Liberal Party that routinely shut down debate, refusing to hear from the Auditor General and the RCMP commissioner.

Yes, I do blame the Liberals. They are responsible, and their ministers refuse to accept responsibility for this boondoggle.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech and his work on the ArriveCAN file. I know that he questioned the witnesses effectively. Working with him is a pleasure.

However, I have noticed a tendency in the Conservative Party lately. Additional requests to the Auditor General have increased significantly, on top of the work already being done by the Office of the Auditor General.

If the Conservatives were to form a government, would they increase the budget of the Office of the Auditor General?

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, when the leader of the Conservative Party forms government, and he will, and becomes Canada's next prime minister, we will ensure that all of these scandals are fully explored and will, indeed, ensure that resources are available to the Auditor General so she can complete her job and provide a more fulsome picture as to how much more the government has fleeced the taxpayer. We know it is approximately \$60 million, and that is the tip of the iceberg. We need to find out more.

• (1300)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to this motion to make sure that we continue to

look into this as much as we can. We have to ensure that Canadians get their eyes on it and that the government does not bury it under the floor one more time and say that while it is incompetent, it is not guilty of anything. Well, incompetence is guilt in itself.

It is \$60 million that we have identified so far of money going off the table that belongs to Canadians. This money is going from one hand to the hands of people who are well connected with the Liberal Party of Canada. This cannot continue. It is not the only instance where this has happened. It happens again and again. This is one instance where the Liberals have tried to obfuscate in the House of Commons and at committee repeatedly in order to not have this looked at.

For my colleagues across the way to pretend at this point in time that they want to get to the bottom of this is completely false and is misleading the House in the greatest sense. I cannot believe he stands up and says this after leading his caucus in voting against all of the transparency that we have tried to bring to the table and against getting this matter before Parliament and before Canadians to make sure the government has some accountability and transparency in what it does for Canadians with Canadian taxpayer dollars.

My colleague talked earlier about what Canadians contribute in taxes to run the government. Right now, they see very clearly that the government is misusing those taxes again and again. It is spending on its friends. It is spending excessively through all kinds of measures in order to whittle away the hard-working tax dollars of Canadians.

We were almost \$50 billion in deficit this past year, and getting back to balance is, of course, very important. I know that \$60 million in a sea of \$50 billion looks like a drop, but this drop is indicative of how bad and how insincere the government is as far as accountability goes. Our friends do not worry about it; it is a drop in the bucket, but it is not a drop in the bucket. It is a significant amount of money that Canadians no longer have. Canadians have contributed to running the government, and the respect the government is showing for their money and the taxes they pay is not there.

Any government has to allocate scarce resources. The number one thing, whenever we are allocating resources, is to allocate scarce resources as effectively as possible. That is not happening here whatsoever. Whenever Liberals can get money from some program or another into the hands of their friends, they will do it. That is a problem we are here to unearth. The number one role of His Majesty's loyal opposition is, of course, to make sure that we hold the government to account on what it is doing for Canadians with Canadian dollars.

At this point in time, we have seen repeated instances of misuse, this one being the most egregious we have shown so far in the House of Commons, one the Liberals have tried to hide several times. This is very important for Canadians to understand. We are doing our job. We are doing our job in holding the government to account on its misuse of Canadian taxpayer dollars, its nepotism in giving to insiders and friends and its non-delivery of real programs to Canadians.

Canadians need a government that responds to their needs. This one is not responding to their needs. It is responding to the needs of its friends, who are getting an excess return right now because they see a government that has no accountability whatsoever. While the government is here, it will just use the money printer and put a bunch of dollars in their jeans. Canadians expect much better from the House. Canadians expect much better from the people who run this country.

I have heard my colleague across the way blame this on bureaucrats. Somewhere the buck has to stop. This is the government that recently raised taxes on capital gains, so more Canadians are paying more money to the government so it can shovel more out unaccountably through the back door. When it goes out badly, that is just the bureaucrats' mistake. That is not their problem, because they do not provide leadership in this realm. What we need to do is ensure that we get some accountability, that this is exposed and that we make some procedures available so it does not happen again.

• (1305)

I have seen enough of people trying to shovel this under the rug. This is very important. We had a man brought to the bar in the House of Commons for the first time in almost a century. That was obviously an exception, so something exceptional happened here. One of the people who was very connected with this party deemed that he did not have to provide available information, which was required, at a parliamentary committee. The committee chair told him that he was in contempt, and he was brought here to Parliament to answer to the person who was in the chair at that point in time, acting as judge. He was compelled to give evidence, and in that giving of evidence, he showed absolutely no shame: "I took the money. I have the money. Tough luck."

That was the money of a bad government that has no checks and balances to make sure that Canadians' dollars are spent wisely and effectively to deliver programs for the benefit of Canadians. That did not happen here. It did not happen here in an egregious sense. We have to stand up as the opposition and make sure we expose that for what it is. It is a gross oversight of the Liberals, and they are trying to avoid accountability for it. Our job here is to make sure they own it and put procedures in place so they cannot say that while they are incompetent, they are not guilty of anything that they should go to jail for, or anyone should go to jail for for that matter. They are completely incompetent, and we have already proven that over the last nine years.

The Liberals cannot balance a budget. They cannot deliver programs. It is a government all about narrative and no execution whatsoever and it has lost the faith of Canadians. It is time to move on and get to a government that is actually accountable, provides

Routine Proceedings

transparency for Canadians and shows respect for the dollars that Canadians contribute to the tax system in Canada.

That is not happening and it is a shame. We hope to bring that to a head. We have some mechanisms in this House of Commons, and we are going to continue to use those mechanisms to hold the government to account.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, talking about extreme statements, let me give an example. This is how the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada inspired his Conservative caucus just last Sunday. He said, referencing the carbon tax, that the Liberal government's plan to increase the price would cause a "nuclear winter" for the economy. "There would be mass hunger and malnutrition with a tax this high...our seniors would have to turn the heat down to 14 or 13 C just to make it through the winter." So said the leader.

This is the extreme MAGA right Conservative Party, the reformers, who want to paint a picture that Canada is broken. We have seen extreme positions. The member spoke about Liberal friends. I do not even think that company had a Liberal Party membership. I have no idea. It is just extreme, everything that they say.

Why should Canadians believe the extreme right of the Conservative Party today? That is the question that I have for the member opposite. They are stupid ideas. It is a stupid statement.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the name-calling and vitriol. I apologize if I have gotten under his skin one more time. It seems like it is a habit here.

We need a government that is accountable. That was the entire perspective of my speech. I hope he listened to some of the words I said, rather than just speak off his cheap little talking notes.

We need accountability in government and he should stand for accountability in government. I know he tries to avoid that at every step and tries to cover up the mistakes his government continues to make. As I have said, incompetence is as bad as being complicit in the crime that has been committed.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Calgary Centre always adopts the right tone in addressing these issues, which need to be raised. They are the result of this government being worn out and the culture of cronyism that is too often part of the Liberal brand. Once again, the country will go further into debt, and this will have a very negative impact on Canadians and their trust in their government. This explains why Quebecers want to separate from this country and go their own way.

Government Orders

Having said that, I would like to ask my hon. colleague the following. How can we ensure this never happens again? Could the government, possibly a Conservative government, commit to maintaining and increasing the Auditor General's funding to ensure that these scandals can be exposed?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, that is a good question. We will have a Conservative government in the near future, and we will work in the public interest to ensure that Canadians' money is spent as wisely as possible.

I am sure my colleague will work with us to ensure that these funds are well spent.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until later this day at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

PETITIONS

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have two petitions to table quickly today.

The first petition is from constituents whom I heard from over the summer. They are very concerned with the fact that the medical assistance in dying regime has not been banned entirely for those with mental health conditions. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those with only mental illness as an underlying condition.

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition is from my constituents who, over the summer, made this very clear to me.

The petitioners are asking for the House of Commons to call for non-confidence in the government and call for an election within the next 45 days.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to table a petition again today regarding health care. This petition is dealing with the important relationship between Canadians and health care professionals, in particular nurses of all forms.

The petitioners are asking both levels of government to take the actions necessary to demonstrate their support with everything from compensation to credentials being recognized. These are all very important issues, and they are asking governments of all levels to, in essence, work together to try to resolve some of these outstanding issues.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed from September 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-71, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (2024), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to start by sharing that I put my phone on airplane mode to make sure that, if any interference were to in, it would not impact the interpreters. I just wanted to put that on the record as we go through the process of ensuring that our interpreters can do the important work that they do. I am on airplane mode in the hope that there will be no feedback.

I appreciate that we are back to debating Bill C-71 and able to have this conversation. I was on House duty all day yesterday and had the privilege of being a part of the debate. Unfortunately our time came to an end, and I was looking forward to continuing that debate today. Having observed and listened to the emergency debate that took place last night, I was impressed with the calibre of the debate and the discussion taking place in the House of Commons. It demonstrates that we are able to rise above and do important work.

Government Orders

Today, as I finish off my time, I want to come back to Bill C-71 and the fact that this is legislation that has been introduced because the Ontario Superior Court of Justice has ruled that these individuals, also known as lost Canadians, are entitled to their citizenship. These are people who were always eligible for their citizenship but were under the previous Conservative government that advanced Bill C-37. At that time, there were many members in this place, of whom I was not one, but I did get to work closely with some of them. They had advised the Conservative government of the day that we could do better, saying that the legislation, yes, would correct some spaces and some issues, but there would be some people who would be left behind. They advised that they should do it right, but no, that is not the Conservative way. We saw some of those tactics again this morning. It is either the Conservative way, which is helping Conservatives, or, if we do not believe in the Conservative mentality or the Conservative mantra, we are not Canadian enough.

Here is breaking news for Conservatives: Conservatives do not get to determine who is and who is not a Canadian. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects our rights and freedom. People sacrificed their lives for us to be able to have these rights and freedoms and with rights and freedoms come responsibilities. As the Ontario Superior Court of Justice ruled, Bill C-37, which former prime minister Harper and the Conservative government of the day passed, was unconstitutional. The Superior Court of Justice primarily named mobility rights, as people have the right to come and go, and equality rights, namely women's rights, as they are rights and freedoms that are protected in our country.

I am not going to go down the rabbit hole of why Conservatives do not support women and the fact that they are constantly trying to threaten a woman's right to choose, along with all these battles we have already had.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, I was hoping to not get the commentary from the other side, but here it comes.

I will just stay focused on the fact that this legislation is supported by a majority of members in the House. Conservatives actually sponsored a Senate bill along the lines of this bill. Members of this place expanded the scope of it, so Conservatives did not want to see that Senate public bill come to third reading.

However, Bill C-71 is government legislation. We could advance this and send it to committee. Let us discuss the amendments. Let us get it right.

The last thing I have to say is that, 50 years ago on this day, my father became a permanent resident of Canada. Today is September 17. It is a big day. I just want to remind my father, Gurminder Singh Chagger, that I love him and I am really happy that he chose Canada.

• (1315)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I do have a concern with Bill C-71. My concern has to do with the measure that would allow a Canadian citizen to have their children be Canadian citizens if they were not born in the country, and even their children be Canadian citizens, in perpetuity.

What would happen would be that we would then have all these people who do not live in Canada and are Canadian citizens. Elections Canada allows each person who is a Canadian citizen who lives outside the country to choose on their honour system where they want their vote to count. We cannot identify how many people this could affect, and we know elections sometimes get won by maybe 100 votes or less. Therefore, how is the government planning to address this part to make sure that we maintain our democratic purity?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, I will just say to anybody who is actually paying attention to the debate and reading the legislation, that there is a substantial connection test to ensure that people do have strong ties to Canada.

I would like to take this opportunity to do a public service announcement. We just had a Conservative member of Parliament stand up concerned that Canadians might exercise their right to vote. The Conservative history has always been to suppress the vote. If they can give Canadians a reason to stay home and not vote, they know they will do well in the polls. Former prime minister Harper had two minority governments, and then Canadians trusted him with a majority. Canadians quickly learned what Conservatives do with power. They will abuse it time and time again.

Canadians, these people, have the right. As the Ontario Superior Court of Justice has ruled, they are Canadians, they should be Canadians, and we should encourage them to advance Canadian values and participate in the democratic process. Nobody, especially the Conservatives, should be scared of a Canadian exercising their rights and freedoms.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, we agree that the current bill comes in response to an Ontario Superior Court of Justice ruling that struck down provisions in the act and put pressure on the federal government.

However, the discussion here concerns a citizenship issue debated in the House over 15 years ago. It affects the lives of Canadians who arrived here after the war, and who could well be over 80 by now. Why was it necessary to wait for the court's ruling? Why did the Liberal government not show some leadership during its nine years in power while this issue was being addressed?

Instead of the current Prime Minister's mandate, we could just as easily say the Harper mandate, or the mandates of previous governments. We have been talking about this issue for decades. Why wait for a court ruling?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague. We want governments that can work and get things done. I heard several speeches yesterday. I was very proud to see that the Bloc Québécois understood that this was a citizenship issue, that we all had to work together and that it was very easy.

Government Orders

If the Conservatives or members of the other parties want to propose amendments, we can work in committee and have discussions, but now we have to vote. Yes, it took a long time, but it has always been that way. I worked with the former member of Parliament for Kitchener—Waterloo, the Hon. Andrew Telegdi. He tried to do that work when he was in government and when he was in opposition. Now we have a court decision, and we have to get this done. It is the right thing to do. I think we can all work together to make that happen.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague's dad for making the choice to come to Canada and establish Canada as his family home.

To the question around the lost Canadians bill, interestingly, yesterday, after the debate in the House, we went to committee. At the committee, there was a similar motion calling for the committee to support that Bill C-71 be deemed read through all procedures at second reading and be referred to the committee immediately.

The Conservatives moved an amendment to that motion and the amendment was to have Bill C-71 referred to the committee after the next election. I think that clearly indicates how the Conservatives intend to filibuster the opportunity for Canadians to restore their constitutional rights.

What does the member think of that? What does that indicate about the Conservatives' intention to thumb their noses at the Superior Court decision?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for the work that she has done on this file. It has been a long time coming. It is important, when we can advance important legislation, that we do it.

I do not want to consume much time trying to think about what the Conservatives think about. Every single time I think about the Conservatives, regardless of their leader, I do feel like my rights and freedoms are being threatened. They talk about freedoms, but they only want them for the people who agree with them. That is part of why I ran in 2015. I really hope Canadians are watching. I get that it has been a challenging time in the country, a challenging time in the world. I get that people might feel disengaged, but that is a strategic tactic by the Conservatives.

What is important is that Canadians remember that we have the right to participate. We have a responsibility to participate. We want to engage them. As the member of Parliament for the riding of Waterloo, I am so proud when I hear from a diversity of constituents. I want them to let me know when they agree, but I also want them to challenge me, and this government, to do more and to do better. I know, by working together, we can get it right. I respect the courts. Unfortunately, the Conservatives do not.

• (1325)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I too would like to congratulate my colleague and friend's father for making a wonderful decision. Canada has benefited greatly by that decision to come to Canada and make it their family home.

As the leader of the government in the House at one point, the member is very familiar with procedures. Yesterday my concern was that the only way we are going to get this bill to committee, it appeared, was if we use time allocation. I am wondering if my friend can provide her thoughts about looking for an opposition party to assist in advancing this legislation.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, I really enjoy and have a lot of respect for this place. I hope it does not come down to having to use these kinds of tools.

We are hearing that the Conservatives want to propose amendments. They have even tried to suggest them on the floor of the Commons to see if others might want to entertain them. All parties said, yes, they wanted to go to committee and debate those amendments, so it seems there is a willingness. The Bloc seems to support this going to committee and seeing what needs to happen to improve it. The Bloc has been clear.

This is not a partisan issue. This is an issue of Canadian citizenship and values, something we should all hold near and dear to our hearts. The NDP has been very clear. It tried to advance a motion to pass it at all stages or even get it to committee. It has been doing that work in this House, as well as at committee.

I would say to the member that I think the majority of members want to see this advance. Canadians should observe who is abusing the public purse. They are being paid by the public purse, but they do not want to do the work, all more—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have time for a brief question.

The hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to remind the member that when the original first-generation limit was introduced in Canada in Bill C-37, all parties, including the Liberal Party of Canada, the NDP, the Bloc and the Conservatives, unanimously voted twice on it, on February 7, 2008, and February 15, 2008. Australia, the United Kingdom and America all have similar types of legislation that offer a first-generation limit.

I will remind the member that in the Superior Court decision in Bjorkquist, it was found charter non-compliant because the government was found to have committed, in administrative cases involving section 5 grants of citizenship, a 50% error rate. It is the Liberals' fault it was found charter non-compliant.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, I have been quite forthright in saying this is about Canadian citizenship. We can all work together to ensure that we are protecting Canadian citizenship.

Let us look at the Conservative approach. Right away, the fingers come out. It is a pointing game. It is somebody's problem. The member might have been here or might not have been here, but what he does not realize is my grandfather came to this country. I was born and raised in this country and I have a lot of regard for this place and our rights and freedoms.

The member is yelling at me like Conservatives do at women all the time. Perhaps if a man had put forward the motion, they would have accepted it, but God forbid a woman does.

At that time, former prime minister Harper was very clear. He basically told all members in this place that if they did not support this, nothing would happen. That was the Conservative way then; it remains the Conservative way now. Canadians should be watching.

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today on Bill C-71, an act to amend the Citizenship Act. I will be splitting my time with the most hon. member for Durham.

“Broken immigration policy, dangerous loopholes”: Somewhere between abject incompetence or willful malice, these five words summarize this reckless bill. It would tragically add to an already reckless NDP-Liberal immigration policy that destroys lives and breaks apart the cohesion of Canada. It proposes granting citizenship to individuals born abroad with at least one Canadian parent who has spent 1,095 days in Canada without requiring those days to be consecutive or ensuring basic criminal record checks. The Liberals have failed to disclose how many people would gain citizenship under the legislation or how they plan on tackling the existing immigration backlog with the extra pressure that Bill C-71 would create.

Under this Prime Minister, our immigration system has become a revolving door for exploitation. Criminals and con artists take advantage while hard-working Canadians and newcomers pay the price. Over these past nine years, it is remarkable how badly this Prime Minister has failed Canadians and newcomers.

How did we get here? The answer, regrettably, is ignorance. These NDP-Liberals have always believed they know best, arrogantly so, even when the facts tell a different story. To understand the damage, let us look at their inheritance in 2015. In 2015, we were the envy of the world: a balanced budget; a roaring economy; an expanding middle class; low crime; and the most successful immigration policy in the world. Housing was affordable. When our common-sense Conservative leader was Minister of Housing, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment was \$1,172. Today that has doubled.

This was not by accident. It was intentional. It took hard work by a Conservative government that cared about the prosperity of all Canadians and that cared about ensuring that newcomers succeeded. Our immigration system was structured to ensure newcomers contributed to our economy and that by working hard and playing by the rules, the Canadian dream was theirs to realize. That promise is now broken.

NDP-Liberals ignored the principle of Chesterton's fence. That is, never tear down a fence until you understand why it was put up in the first place. Within 18 months, they tore down each fence put in place to protect our system. They increased the number of temporary foreign workers while scrapping measures to ensure Canadians had the first opportunity for jobs. They watered down language and citizenship knowledge requirements, exempting anyone under 18 and everyone over 54. They arbitrarily ramped up permanent resident targets to 300,000 a year without considering the impact on everyone's housing needs.

Government Orders

Today, housing prices have doubled; international students are packed into inhumane conditions, at times eight people to a small apartment, or worse, homeless under bridges; suicides are rampant; and housing builds have not kept pace with population growth. Last year alone, over 1.2 million people were added to the population, while Canada only built a third of the housing needed for those people to live.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation reports that we need 5.8 million new homes to restore affordability, but we are building fewer homes than we did in the 1970s, with housing starts on the decline. Nobody believes the government's so-called targets, and hundreds of thousands of human beings are paying the price. Instead of firing those responsible, the Prime Minister rewards them. The same person who lost track of one million people as Minister of Immigration is now in charge of fixing the housing hell he helped create.

The rule of law has been shattered. Since 2015, violent crime has surged by 50%, and reports this summer reveal that the NDP-Liberal government has granted both citizenship and student visas to known terrorists. Take Ahmed Eldidi, who slipped by two national security screenings before being rewarded citizenship in May. He appeared in an ISIS terror snuff video, cutting a victim into pieces in 2015. Only at the 11th hour, with allied intervention, was the RCMP tipped off to his attempt to conduct an ISIS terror attack on Canadian soil. What did our Minister of Public Safety have to say? He said that this is the way the investigative and national security system should work. No, it is not.

● (1330)

Then we learned that another terrorist, Muhammad Shahzeb Khan, was awarded a student visa. Khan was plotting what he called “the largest attack on U.S. soil since 9/11”, a large-scale attack on Jews in Brooklyn.

This is not just limited to two cases. Communities across our country are subject to attacks and crime in their places of worship, their schools, their businesses and their homes. Almost daily here at home, mobs are on the march, threatening individuals' dignity and freedom.

Government Orders

• (1335)

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I regret to interrupt. I miss the member being closer, but I am glad to see him and welcome him back.

This is a really important conversation on citizenship. I recognize the member wants to talk about immigration. I waited patiently with hope that he would come back to it. I really believe that we need to debate Bill C-71 and that we stay focused on the topic. Therefore, I would challenge him on relevance.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Yes. I hear other members trying to speak over the hon. member who is speaking. I would ask them to hold off.

As the hon. member knows, there is some latitude when individuals are making speeches. The matter that is before the House does talk about immigration, but it is specific to a certain degree. I am sure the hon. member will bring it back to that.

The hon. member for Calgary Heritage.

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar: Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the commercial break.

Almost daily here at home, mobs are on the march, threatening individuals' dignity and freedom. How are Canadians supposed to trust the NDP-Liberals with our safety and national security? How are newcomers, who want to work hard and raise a family here, supposed to have faith in the incompetent government's immigration policy? The Canadian dream is broken.

Skilled immigrants who came here in search of a better life are stuck in low-wage jobs, unable to work in their trained professions because of bureaucratic red tape. If one wants a doctor they must call an Uber. Medical professionals are being denied from serving backed-up patients. There are 10 million Canadians who will soon be without access to primary care and the caregivers they need are ironically a two-minute wait away. StatsCan recently found that 15% of immigrants leave Canada within 20 years of arrival, many because they cannot find jobs in their trained professions. International students are exploited by diploma-mill colleges and sold fake degrees and false promises of employment, residency and citizenship.

Desperate people turn to fraudulent claims of refuge, knowing the NDP-Liberals have loosened the very restrictions that protect Canadians. For what? How many destroyed lives need to be sacrificed at the altar of this horrific incompetence or actual malice? In some ways, they know exactly what they are doing. They have used the chaos of their own broken immigration system to their partisan advantage, turning a blind eye to the international students who were bussed in to vote in Liberal nominations, like they did in Don Valley North. When criticized, they clutch their pearls and decry racism. Shame on them. What is racist is pitting refugee against refugee, pitting one group against another, shilling up desperate people for cheap jobs to kowtow to corporate interests, pandering to mobs that do not share universal values and obsessively trafficking in racial identity rather than individual dignity.

Canadians at home are not surprised by the broken state of our immigration system under the NDP-Liberals. They are devastated by the division they now bear witness to after nine years of this

abuse. After nine long years of this nonsense, every Canadian knows the reality. Housing is broken. The rule of law is broken. Citizenship is broken. The Canadian dream is broken. Canadians who have worked hard their entire lives are watching their country be torn apart while new Canadians who came here with hope are discovering the dream they were promised has gone up in smoke. Families are struggling to keep a roof over their heads. Newcomers are denied their potential, while terrorists are given the welcome mat. It was not like this before the nine years of the current Prime Minister, and it will not be like this after he is gone.

Canada is one of the oldest democracies on planet Earth. We are not some postnational project; we are a promise, and ours is a promise to keep amid the gathering darkness of broken immigration, broken dreams of common citizenship, crime, chaos, drugs and disorder that roam across our streets. We will restore the promise. We will be the light. Ours is a country where it does not matter what one's name is or where one comes from, but what one can do. It is a land where if one works hard and plays by the rules, one could earn a good living, raise a family and own a home. With freedom comes a responsibility to uphold those freedoms for all. Our freedom finds expression through the rule of law and a democracy that is to shape those very laws. Ours is a promise to keep for Canadians and newcomers alike that we will never give in, never back down and never surrender to the forces that would break us.

• (1340)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate that you did try to remind me and the member why we were here, and the fact that the member did not actually talk about Canadian citizenship.

It is important for us to come back to Bill C-71 and to understand that, under the amendments under Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his government, for Canadians serving in the Canadian Forces who had their babies on a Canadian Forces base abroad, those children had their citizenships stripped from them. How are those children not Canadians when their parents are serving in the Canadian forces, proud Canadians? We really need to come back to this legislation.

I recognize and hear the concerns that the member is raising on other matters. We should discuss and debate them. The Conservatives spent the morning talking about some concurrence motion, and I am sure they will do it again tomorrow. However, right now, let us debate Bill C-71. Let us get our points on the record and then let us get to the vote so we can get the bill to committee and get this legislation either passed or not. Members can vote.

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar: Madam Speaker, in her previous interventions, the member had described a situation where her family, her grandparents had come from abroad. My family also came from abroad in the late 1960s.

Government Orders

The glorious thing about Canada is the diversity of our ideas. For many people across the way, for the NDP-Liberals, they think of diversity as multicoloured perspectives of the same ideological disposition.

In a Canada that is prosperous and free, we value freedom of debate. We value the freedom that every Canadian of every background can stand in the chamber and speak with strength to the issue of our citizenship and our immigration. Our citizenship is what unites us. Our democracy and the rule of law is at the core of who are, and it is this tradition that my constituents have advised me to uphold in the chamber today on this debate.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's speech. I wonder if he actually realizes that, under Bill C-71, what we are talking about is restoring the rights of Canadians that were taken away unconstitutionally by the Conservatives 15 years ago. This is what we are talking about. We are talking about Canadians having lost that right. The courts have said that it is a violation of their charter rights and mobility rights. I wonder if the member understands that.

Mr. Shivaloy Majumdar: Madam Speaker, my understanding is that this was a debate that was unanimously agreed to in this chamber.

Our issue is with the performative announcements that the NDP-Liberals make when it comes to our immigration plans. Without ever having a plan to deal with an overburdened immigration system, they once again present performative ideas as to how they are going to meet their targets.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I understand that these are passionate discussions, but I want to remind members that there are rules within the House, and when someone else has the floor we should not be interrupting them.

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, contrary to the false impression that the member tried to get on the record, Canada is not broken. Canada is, in fact, the best country in the world to live in and call home. That is the reality. Only the Conservative mentality and that far-right MEGA element goes around the country to give the false impression that Canada is broken.

The Conservative Party of Canada continues to play a destructive force on the floor of the House of Commons. The Conservatives do not want anything to pass. My question specifically is: Why will they not allow this legislation to at least go to committee, given that the Superior Court of Ontario has said that the law is unconstitutional and that it has to change?

Mr. Shivaloy Majumdar: Madam Speaker, the inheritance that these NDP-Liberals had when they arrived in office was an envy of the world. Across the left and the right, our immigration policy was the envy of the world. Around the world, people looked at how Canada had managed its immigration levels, its housing, its health and its economy. This is an issue in which the NDP-Liberals, over nine years, have sown wanton division across our country and irre-

sponsible government, which is a mixture of absolute ignorance or willful malice. I think it is somewhere between both.

• (1345)

Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to oppose Bill C-71. I do so wanting to recognize the context that our country finds itself in right now.

Immigration levels are too high. We are now approaching an average of 1.5 million people coming into the country per year. The reason we know that is too high is because population growth is now outpacing the job market. It is outpacing the housing market. It is also outpacing investment in social services like hospitals, schools and child care facilities. The quality of life for the average Canadian is in decline because of the stress being placed on our local economies and on public services. This is a sentiment held not just by people who may have been in Canada for many generations, but also by people who are immigrants themselves, children of immigrants and grandchildren of immigrants.

When we review Bill C-71, the ultimate question we need to ask ourselves is if this is a logical, reasonable, common-sense approach to citizenship and immigration, or is this is a continuation of an approach that has been in place for years now that is actually harming the quality of life for all people in the country, regardless of their backgrounds.

To advance a common-sense approach to immigration, I would put forward a three-part standard that we can evaluate Bill C-71 against.

The first question that any person would ask is how many people would be entering the country under Bill C-71. It is a very reasonable question, one that I imagine any Canadian would ask. It would be imperative for the government advancing this legislation to have an answer to. Unfortunately, we have tried our best to get specific numbers from the Liberal government on this legislation, and we have not gotten that number. We do not know how many more people would be entering the country under Bill C-71. Given the existing constraints we have, that is a very important question for the people of Canada to have an answer to.

The second part of this test, as my colleague, the member for Calgary Heritage mentioned, would be criminal background checks. Any Canadian, whether he or she just got here or has been here for a long time, would say it is common sense to do criminal background checks on who enters the country. It should be a no-brainer for anyone to agree to, yet, we have been advocating for the provision of mandatory criminal background checks in Bill C-71 without the support from the Liberal government or their allies in the NDP and the Bloc Québécois.

We are asking very clearly why proper vetting is not done before granting citizenship to people who do not live in our country and are only being granted citizenship through a weak and watered-down substantial connection test. The question becomes, why would anyone be surprised by this? We have seen example after example of the Liberal government not prioritizing criminal background checks in existing immigration policy.

Government Orders

We have seen examples just this summer of the Liberal government admitting into the country someone who is an alleged ISIS terrorist, granting that person citizenship while he plotted a terrorist attack on Toronto, the biggest city in the country. We have seen an example of the Liberal government granting a student visa in another incident to someone who planned a terrorist attack on New York City. It is on brand for the Liberal government to not be concerned about criminal background checks, and this is yet another instance of where Bill C-71 fails to meet a common-sense standard for appropriate immigration and citizenship policy.

The last point I will make in terms of this standard is about its economic impact. We have asked for a mandatory comprehensive economic impact assessment so that the Liberal government would share with the people of Canada what the impact would be of admitting even more people, adding to population growth, into the country. What would the impact be through Bill C-71 on our hospitals, on our schools, on our child care facilities? What would the impact be on young Canadians who aspire to own a home and are pessimistic about whether that dream will ever come true because we are not building enough houses but we are adding more people?

• (1350)

What would happen to the job market, where we are seeing increases in employment, especially youth employment? Would contributing more people to the country have a negative effect on our young people's ability to get a job and start their careers?

This is what a common-sense approach to immigration and citizenship would be seeking to answer and yet with Bill C-71 we are very far from getting answers to these questions.

Many people hearing my words today may have some questions of their own. How did we get to this point? How did we get to a point where a Liberal government can advance legislation that so clearly does not respond to the context that our country is living in? How did we get to a point where we can walk into the House of Commons and have legislation put in front of us that does not address the specific concerns that many Canadians of all backgrounds have about our current immigration levels?

That is fundamentally the result of what has been a concerted effort to stifle debate and criticism of immigration policy in the country. For a long time now, daring to ask a question about how immigration policy affects Canada, daring to criticize the Liberal status quo on immigration has gotten us smeared, labelled, name-called, fingers pointed in our face, people questioning whether we have compassion or concern for people of all sorts of different backgrounds and cultures. The reality is that they can finger-point all they want. They can do all the name-calling they want. They can do all the smearing they like. The reality is that we have a very specific purpose when we enter the House of Commons, which is to ask the fundamental question of what is best for Canada.

In order to apply that lens to Bill C-71, we would need those three critical pieces of information. Number one, how many people are entering the country? Number two, are there appropriate vetting mechanisms in place and background checks? Number three, what is the impact that increasing the population even further will have on our economy?

By not answering these questions, I have a very hard time understanding how any member in the House can say that this legislation is complete and deserving of a vote. In my view, this has failed every single measure of a logical, reasonable, common-sense immigration and citizenship standard, and that is why we must oppose it.

Last, I will say is this. Whether it is immigration policy, housing, citizenship, whatever it might be, it is imperative that we put the Canadian people first, and I do believe that this is a window into how that is not being met. Every time we vote in here, every time we come in here and debate a matter of legislation or policy, we should have at the top of mind the Canadian taxpayer, the Canadian who voted for us to be here to represent our local communities and represent our interests. The immigration status quo in our country is not doing what is best for Canada. With this legislation we are seeing a very clear example of that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this will be the second consecutive Conservative that has spoken in regard to the immigration system as a whole and has tried to give glorification to Stephen Harper, who was a disaster on immigration. What those members are glorifying is the fact that Stephen Harper, for example, cancelled the sponsoring of parents and grandparents. They literally deleted hundreds of thousands of people who were under the process of becoming permanent residents.

If we want to talk about cold immigration policies, we should go back to the Conservative years. What is important is the mixture of immigrants who are coming for permanent residence. We have annual targets that are set. That annual target is going to be coming out again. We will find that there is a great benefit through immigration to Canada. The Conservatives of late are trying to give the impression that it is us versus them. We should be proud of the diversity. Look at the immigration programs—

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do have to allow for other questions.

The hon. member for Durham.

Mr. Jamil Jivani: Madam Speaker, this is exactly what I am talking about. We have Canadians of all backgrounds concerned about the high immigration levels, the fact that population growth has outpaced jobs, housing and social services. Once again, the Liberals go back to their old and tired playbook, of trying to point fingers, smear and accuse us of not caring about people. I hear from my constituents all the time, constituents from all different racial, cultural and religious backgrounds. They are concerned about the strain that population growth is having on our quality of life. That is why it is important that we ask serious questions about Bill C-71.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, what has become clear is that the Conservatives are refusing to acknowledge that Bill C-71 would restore the rights of Canadians that were taken away from them unconstitutionally 15 years ago by the Conservatives. That is what we are talking about. These are not immigrants. They are Canadians. They were deemed to be a lower class of Canadians by the Conservatives.

The Conservatives keep saying that the NDP and the Liberals voted with them on Bill C-37 15 years ago. Do members know why? It is because Stephen Harper, at that time, put out an edict and said that if the bill was not passed unanimously, it would mean that war veterans and war brides would go to their graves without citizenship, and that was wrong.

I wonder if the Conservatives will just take a moment to understand the history and understand that by voting against Bill C-71, they are denying once again Canadians the right to citizenship, unconstitutionally.

Mr. Jamil Jivani: Madam Speaker, members can make all the arguments they want in favour of Bill C-71, but why are none of our questions being answered? How many people? Where are the criminal background checks? Why can we not do an economic impact assessment? They should put it forward as part of their legislation, and at least have the respect, have the decency, to tell the Canadian people what impact these policies are going to have on our country and our communities. At least respect the Canadian people enough to give them that information.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, that is an outrageous response. The member is talking about the very Canadians who have been denied their rights as though they are not Canadians. They do not have their Canadian citizenship because of an unconstitutional law created by the Conservatives.

Will the member recognize that second-generation family members born abroad are in fact Canadians, as recognized by the courts?

Mr. Jamil Jivani: Madam Speaker, I am very happy to recognize that the NDP-Liberals are advancing a watered-down and weak substantial connection test in Bill C-71. That is how they are rationalizing the continued population growth in our country, despite the fact that Canadians of all backgrounds believe that immigration levels are too high, that the influx of people coming into Canada is too high and that it is putting a constraint on our economy and our social services. Why will they not do what is best for Canada and stop being obsessed with making life harder for everyone in our country?

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

FALL FAIR SEASON IN KITCHENER—CONESTOGA

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is fall fair season in Kitchener—Conestoga. Our community always looks forward to the Wellesley Township Fall Fair, the New Hamburg Fall Fair and the upcoming Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival.

These fairs bring us a sense of nostalgia, connecting us with our roots and the values of hard work and community, which have defined Canadians for generations. Fairs help build connections between urban and rural communities, bridging the gap between farm and city. By showcasing the hard work and dedication of our farmers, they raise awareness about the importance of agriculture and inspire the next generation of farmers.

Statements by Members

I want to extend a heartfelt thanks to the volunteers, boards, sponsors and agricultural societies for their dedication and support. Their efforts make these events possible and bring smiles to community members of all ages.

I will be joining friends and flipping pancakes at the Wellesley Apple Butter and Cheese Festival on Saturday, September 28. I hope to see everyone there.

* * *

• (1400)

[Translation]

GOLF CLUB FUNDRAISER

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, last weekend, nearly 200 people gathered for a fundraiser for the golf club that is now called the Club de golf de Saint-Pamphile Matériaux Blanchet.

This is a first here in Canada: Four elected officials from various levels of government, namely, the mayor of Saint-Pamphile, Mario Leblanc, the reeve of the L'Islet RCM and mayor of Saint-Jean-Port-Joli, Normand Caron, the MNA for the riding of Côte-du-Sud, Mathieu Rivest, and I served as honorary co-chairs for this campaign, which raised nearly \$400,000 thanks to the generosity of south shore residents and businesses.

This fundraising campaign would not have been possible were it not for the commitment of club volunteers, led by club president Marie-Claude Lord and her team. This club also serves as a snowmobile rest stop and a community centre for Saint-Pamphile and its surrounding communities. Their pride was palpable, and this was an important day for the community, for good reason.

When we all work toward the same goal, we can accomplish great things. I wish the Saint-Pamphile Matériaux Blanchet golf club continued success.

* * *

[English]

44TH ANNUAL TERRY FOX RUN

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, millions of Canadians participated in the 44th annual Terry Fox Run. In Oakville, we were joined by retired police officer Blair Vintinner, who was driving the police car in the iconic black and white photo of Terry running into Oakville taken by Peter Martin in 1980. We celebrated 44 years of hope in Oakville by welcoming almost 2,000 people and raising over \$180,000 so far.

Statements by Members

Kim Shikaze participated in his 44th Terry Fox Run. Now an adult, Lisa Moody walked on her artificial leg, having survived the same cancer Terry had when she was just a young girl. For 15 years, Team Darrell has been our top fundraising team, raising over \$22,000 again this year, and Unifor Local 707 came out in force for its first Oakville Terry Fox Run.

I thank all the volunteers, donors and participants for keeping Terry's legacy alive and ensuring that we continue to realize Terry's dream of a world without cancer.

* * *

[Translation]

MICHEL DOMPIERRE

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the memory of a great patriot, Rimouski's own Michel Dompierre, who sadly passed away on August 28 at the age of 78.

Michel was a talented photographer who spent more than 45 years immortalizing the magnificent landscapes of the Lower St. Lawrence on film. From La Pocatière to Routhierville, travelling on foot or by bicycle or car, nothing escaped this great artist's eye. His photographs came to symbolize Quebecers' deep attachment to their regions and their nation. He showed the world the beauty of eastern Quebec, and for that, we are all very proud and grateful. His final gift was to bequeathe a trove of over 15,000 photos to Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec, Quebec's national library and archives. What a spectacular addition this will make to Quebec's regional cultural heritage.

I bid adieu to Michel Dompierre and thank him for everything.

* * *

CHÂTEAUGUAY—LACOLLE

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that understands the importance of supporting our tourism businesses and that is stepping up to help.

This summer, I saw first-hand how the federal government's support is making a difference in my riding of Châteauguay—Lacolle, soon to be known as Châteauguay—Les Jardins-de-Napierville, and how it is helping businesses like Parc Safari and organizations like Héritage Saint-Bernard improve their service offerings and attract a broader, more diverse range of visitors from outside the region, the province and even the country.

I would like to acknowledge the excellent work of the teams at Parc Safari and Héritage Saint-Bernard. These are the two biggest tourist attractions in Montérégie Ouest. Their initiatives, know-how and commitment are raising our profile.

* * *

• (1405)

[English]

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liber-

als, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. Canadians are now working harder and longer to bring home less, if they can afford a home at all. Their purchasing power is shot, and many live in fear of crime and chaos.

Our country was built on the backs of the early risers, factory workers, soldiers, nurses, bakers, servers and night shift workers, who drive main street through their diligent hard work. It is their tax dollars, earned through blood, sweat and tears, that pay for the government's out-of-control spending.

However, there is hope on the horizon, a Canada where hard work is rewarded, where there is affordable food and housing in a safe neighbourhood, where everyone gets a fair shot at a good life. A common-sense Conservative government would axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

* * *

ALLAN ANDREWS

Mr. Heath MacDonald (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the passing of my good friend Allan Andrews, also known as the "Hockey Prof".

As the founder of Andrews Hockey Growth Programs Inc., Allan impacted the lives of countless athletes around the world. Generations have benefited from his wisdom both on and off the ice and through his mentoring. His innovative curriculum has been emulated across the country and beyond. It was his unique combination of commitment to professional hockey development and personal human development that made Andrews Hockey Growth Programs Inc. successful. Numerous NHL players benefited from the program, including Sidney Crosby, Nathan MacKinnon, Brad Richards and Adam McQuaid, to name a few.

Allan Andrews' many accomplishments earned him the Order of Canada in 2017, and he was later inducted into the P.E.I. Sports Hall of Fame.

I would like to extend my condolences to his wife Lois and his family for their loss of Allan, and I thank Allan for his immeasurable contribution to the sport of hockey and to the personal development of many young aspiring athletes.

To Al I say we will continue to dream big.

MAHSA AMINI

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate Jina Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman who was tragically killed by the Iranian regime two years ago. Mahsa's tragic death lit a fire of resistance across Iran and galvanized support around the world. Let me assure members that the torch of opposing gender apartheid continues to shine bright within Iran.

As on other occasions in the last two years, large demonstrations in support of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement have taken place across Canada in the last few days. I am proud to state that more than any other country's government, our government has listened to the demands of protesters. Canada has revised a variety of policies to support courageous Iranians in their just cause. However, our work is not done. We need to continue to support the democratic aspirations of the courageous people of Iran.

* * *

TORONTO—ST. PAUL'S

Mr. Don Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the great people of Toronto—St. Paul's for putting their trust in me and standing up to be counted. I thank my daughters Leah and Charlotte for their support and making my life easy. I give a special thanks to my campaign team, led by Amanda Philp, with Sadaf Rostami, Harrison Rotman and a nationwide list of volunteers. Finally, without the encouragement of my partner Andrea, none of this would have been possible.

We have shown what is possible. Toronto—St. Paul's is just the beginning of Canadians choosing common sense. After nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. Canadians know the Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Canadians know the NDP leader is in it for his pension. While Canadians pay the price of costly NDP-Liberal policies, only common-sense Conservatives would axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I ask all hon. members, while members are making their very special Standing Order 31 statements, to please not interrupt them. They use this opportunity to reach people in their homes, and I know everyone will want to extend this courtesy to others.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

* * *

MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, we join millions around the world in celebrating the mid-autumn festival, also known as the moon festival or moon-cake festival. Not only is it an important celebration in Chinese culture, but similar celebrations are held by Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese and other Asian communities.

This special day brings together family and friends. Thousands of people in Scarborough—Agincourt will be celebrating by lighting beautiful lanterns and sharing delicious moon-cakes, which

Statements by Members

symbolize unity, gratitude and prosperity. I can confirm that our local retailers are always well stocked to meet the demand. Come and support our local businesses.

I wish everyone a joyful and peaceful mid-autumn festival.

[Member spoke in Cantonese and Mandarin and provided the following translation:]

Happy mid-autumn festival.

* * *

• (1410)

[Translation]

BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers are still wondering what the Bloc Québécois is good for. The Bloc Québécois voted with the Liberal Prime Minister nearly 200 times, keeping Canada's most centralist government ever in power. Giving the Liberal Prime Minister a blank cheque does not benefit Quebecers in the slightest. The Bloc Québécois's inconsistency is blatantly obvious here in Ottawa. It says one thing and does another. It says it wants to stop sending money to Ottawa, but it voted in favour of more than \$500 billion in inflationary spending by this Liberal Prime Minister. The "Liberal Bloc" voted in favour of adding 100,000 new public servants to the payroll while bringing about no improvement in Canadians' day-to-day lives. There is more spending than ever, more public servants than ever, more scandals than ever, all being paid for with Quebec's money, our money.

Who is the Bloc Québécois good for? It is good for the Liberal Prime Minister. What is the Bloc Québécois good for? Unfortunately, it is not good for Quebecers.

The only party that can stand up for Quebecers is the Conservative Party of Canada, the party of common sense.

* * *

[English]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years under the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up.

Statements by Members

The NDP leader claimed he would be an opposition voice, but promptly hooked up to help the Liberal Prime Minister hike taxes and food costs, double housing costs, and unleash crime and chaos in once-safe Canadian streets. That is the definition of selling out workers, voters and communities everywhere. Their own policies make it so Canadians cannot afford to house, heat, feed and drive themselves. The truth is that the NDP sellout supported the Liberal Prime Minister every way and every day to hike carbon taxes by 300%, all the way up to 61¢ a litre.

The NDP-Liberal carbon tax vandalizes small businesses and charities. In Lakeland, the Two Hills Ag Society is just one example: a non-profit forced to pay over \$18,000 in just six months on top of the cost of power. The choice is clear: There is the NDP-Liberal-Bloc coalition that taxes our food, punishes our work, takes our money, hikes our rent and risks our homes or the common-sense Conservative Party that will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Canadians need a carbon tax election now.

* * *

[Translation]

MATHIEU MILJOURS

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate and honour the life of Mathieu Miljours, a man who touched the hearts of everyone who knew him.

As the former president and CEO of the Vaudreuil-Soulanges chamber of commerce and industry, Mathieu worked tirelessly to support local businesses and foster growth, collaboration and opportunity. His warmth and sincerity made people feel seen and appreciated, in both his personal and professional lives. His love for our community was second only to his love for his friends and family, especially his children.

Although his time with us was too short, he had an enormous impact. Let us remember him for the joy, kindness and passion he brought to the world.

May our friend Mathieu rest in peace.

* * *

[English]

ELMWOOD—TRANSCONA

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people of Elmwood—Transcona have spoken. They saw right through the phony working-class cosplay of the Conservatives and elected Leila Dance, a strong New Democrat who stands up for workers and their families.

Conservatives are no friends of workers. Their leader can borrow a hard hat and pretend he is in it for the working class, but he has never spent a second on the picket lines when workers needed it most. In fact, Conservatives voted against anti-scab legislation eight times to help out the big bosses. They will always cut deep and back-stab fast, leaving workers behind. However, the people of Elmwood—Transcona chose hope, Leila Dance and the NDP over

Conservative fears and cuts. The big bosses' and CEOs' time is up because it is the people's time.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

MARILYN CASTONGUAY

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, actor Marilyn Castonguay made us proud at the Gêmeaux awards gala on Sunday.

She was already known for her talented performances alongside the biggest stars in theatre, film and in countless television shows. She has now joined the ranks of Quebec's great artists by winning the award for best lead actress in a drama series for her iconic portrayal of housewife-turned-crime boss Huguette Delisle in the hit Quebec TV show *C'est comme ça que je t'aime*, known as *Happily Married* in English.

What a superb actress. What a natural talent. What a woman.

Congratulations to Marilyn, a true “Marsouine”. A Marsouin is what we call people from L'Isle-aux-Coudres. Forgive my bias, but us Marsouins, and all Quebecers, are pretty proud of our Marilyn Castonguay.

I am thrilled for Marilyn, who happens to be my distant cousin on the Garcette side, descended from the famous Grand Louis of Cap à Labranche. We are all so proud of her.

* * *

[English]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “conflict of interest, carbon tax” Carney has officially joined the corrupt Liberal government as the de facto finance minister, here to ram the Davos agenda down the throats of Canadians. This global elite jet-sets around the world, claiming the carbon tax scam is a global example that no one should be exempt from, including Atlantic Canadians. Carbon tax Carney sits on boards of multinational corporations with interests in foreign oil and foreign governments, opposing Canada's good, clean, responsible oil and gas. The Prime Minister has shielded him from Canadian disclosure laws by making him an adviser instead of replacing the lame-duck finance minister.

Carbon tax Carney is here for carbon tax Carney, here for all the power and money and none of the accountability. He could not care less about Canadians who cannot afford to feed, heat or house themselves.

Common-sense Conservatives are calling on the Prime Minister to force carbon tax Carney to be sworn in as a public office holder so that he has to follow Canada's conflict of interest laws. It is time for "conflict of interest, carbon tax" Carney to come clean.

* * *

DONALD MARSHALL JR.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on September 17, 1999, Donald Marshall Jr. stood victorious in his case, which affirmed that the Mi'kmaq had a treaty right to sell fish according to the terms of the Peace and Friendship Treaties. This historic case changed the economic future for the Mi'kmaq. Not only could treaties be used to survive, but now people were also able to thrive. Thousands of Mi'kmaq jobs have been created within the fisheries, allowing Mi'kmaq to become major players within the Atlantic fisheries.

As a government, we have a long way to go in full implementation of the Mi'kmaq treaties, but we continue to work with Mi'kmaq communities to ensure that they can exercise their right to a living while balancing conservation and safety.

We remember the Marshall case as a turning point for the Mi'kmaq and how it cemented the legacy of Donald Marshall Jr. as a hero for our people. Today, I remember my late friend Junior and honour all those who continue to advocate for their treaty rights moving forward.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, voters in the former Liberal strongholds of Toronto and Montreal have given their verdict. After nine years, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost. During the nine years of this Bloc-Liberal government's reign, we have seen the largest expansion of the federal government in history and the most expensive and centralizing government that is inflating the cost of housing and groceries for Quebec.

How can the Bloc Québécois keep a government and a Prime Minister that are so bad for Quebec in office?

• (1420)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so glad I get to answer a question about Canada's economy because it gives me the chance to celebrate the good news that we got this morning. Inflation was at 2% in August. It is back down to where it was before the pandemic. That is real progress for our country, and the Conservatives should be celebrating that.

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that people wait-listed for food banks or living in tents and homeless camps will be celebrating today. However, the government is trying to take credit for the fact that, after inflation reached a 40-year high, prices are still going up, not down.

My question is this. Why is the Bloc Québécois supporting the most centralizing and costly government ever, which has no respect for Quebec's jurisdictions or Quebecers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Conservative leader is displaying his incompetence as far as the economy is concerned. In reality, 2% is where Canada was before the pandemic. In reality, inflation has been within the Bank of Canada's target range since the start of this year. In reality, wages have been rising faster than inflation for 19 months now.

The Conservatives are not happy, however. They wish we had bad news for Canadians.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians in the former Liberal strongholds of Toronto and Montreal have now given their verdict. After nine years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Taxes are up, costs are up, crimes are up, and time is up. Is it not time for Canadians to have a chance to render their verdict right across the country and elect a common-sense Conservative government that will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime?

The Speaker: I would ask members, especially members on the far side of the House, to please not take their microphone until they are recognized by the Speaker.

The hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so glad to have the chance to talk about the economy. That is because today we had good news for Canadians. Inflation is back down to where it was before COVID hit. Inflation has been within the Bank of Canada's target range this whole year. Wages have outpaced inflation for 19 months in a row. However, Conservatives do not want to talk about it. They are so weak and spiteful that, for them, good news for Canadians is bad news they want to ignore.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the incompetent finance minister would tell us that we should celebrate that, after prices have been rising faster than at any time in 40 years, they continue to rise, just not as quickly. I am sure the people living in tent encampments, the record-smashing two million people lined up at food banks or the one in four kids going to school hungry after nine years of the current government will be celebrating.

Oral Questions

What we now find out is that it is worse than we thought. According to a document that was just released, the government's second carbon tax will cost \$9 billion in lost GDP. Why would we not have a carbon tax election to decide—

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we all know why the Conservatives are so panicked about an election; it is because they can see that the economic news is good. They can see that we are now back to exactly where we were before COVID hit. They can see that the Bank of Canada has lowered interest rates three times in a row. Wages have been ahead of inflation for 19 months. That is good news for Canadians. It is bad news for Conservatives.

* * *

● (1425)

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the bad news is that there are now 1,800 homeless encampments in Ontario. There are 35 in Halifax alone. Two million Canadians are lined up at food banks after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government. We now learn that, on top of the \$25-billion annual hit of the first carbon tax to our GDP, the second carbon tax will subtract another \$9 billion a year, over \$35 billion in lost GDP. That is almost \$2,000 per family.

Why will the costly NDP-Liberal government not allow Canadians to vote on the carbon tax?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so glad to have the chance to talk about housing, because there is more good news Canadians should know about, and that is that we have extended to 30-year amortizations for all first-time homebuyers. That means more young Canadians can buy a first home and afford a mortgage. We have extended to 30-year amortizations for all new homes. That is to encourage what we know we all need: more homes built faster. However, the weak and spiteful Conservatives cannot celebrate good news for Canadians, because it is bad news for their partisan interests.

* * *

[Translation]

SENIORS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would have liked to answer the leader of the official opposition's questions, but I will answer them with this. His party came fourth in LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, with 12% of the vote.

That said, nothing has changed, except that we will have to make room for one more seat. We continue to work on the seniors file. Will the government follow through on its vote in favour of Bill C-319 and implement this legislation, which everyone in the House voted for?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. Our government understands the importance of support-

ing seniors. That is what we have been doing all along. That is what we did after 10 years of the Conservatives punishing seniors. That is why we added measures to support our seniors, especially the most vulnerable. We will continue to do just that.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-319 is a Bloc Québécois bill that eliminates discrimination in the retirement benefits granted to seniors 65 to 74 and those 75 and over. It allows them to earn \$6,500 instead of \$5,000 without losing the guaranteed income supplement.

In committee, the Liberals voted in favour of the bill, the Conservatives voted in favour of the bill and the NDP voted in favour of the bill. Now we need to ensure that the bill is implemented with something called a royal recommendation. Will the Liberals secure the royal recommendation and help seniors?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we obviously recognize that older seniors, people 75 and up, face higher costs. They are more vulnerable and that is why we added measures to support them. I share the Bloc Québécois' concern for our seniors. That is why I am calling on the Bloc Québécois to support us on dental care. It is an important program for all Quebecers, especially vulnerable seniors.

* * *

● (1430)

[English]

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have let people down again and again, and they are done. That is clear from the results of the elections last night. The Liberals are done. Maybe it is because they keep teaming up with the Conservatives to let greedy CEOs continue to rip off Canadians. In fact, inflation numbers show that grocery greed has driven up food prices more than 21% in the past three years.

Why did the Liberals team up with the Conservatives to protect greedy CEOs from a price cap on food essentials?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope the NDP and indeed all members of the House will set partisanship aside for one moment to congratulate Canadians on the light at the end of the tunnel, on the fact that after an extremely challenging time with COVID and its economic aftermath, inflation is back to where it was before COVID first hit. When it comes to taxes, we believe that those who have the most capacity should pay their fair share. We have acted on that.

*Oral Questions***HOUSING**

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have continued to team up with the Conservatives to let grocery greed drive up the price of food, and that has to stop.

[*Translation*]

Yesterday, people showed that they are fed up with the Liberals. Clearly, this is because the Liberals worked with the Conservatives to let real estate moguls raise rents by more than 22%.

Why do the Liberals continue to work with the Conservatives to let the giants gouge people?

[*English*]

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think anybody listening to question period today, or frankly any day, imagines that the Liberals are teaming up with the Conservatives or that we agree with them about very much at all. They are the party of privilege and austerity; we are the party of people. That is why we have asked those at the very top to pay their fair share so that we can support Canada and Canadians.

* * *

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is day two in the House as the first female finance minister again has been publicly humiliated by the fake feminist Prime Minister. What is worse is that she has been replaced by an unelected man outside her own caucus, whom her boss is now shielding from conflict of interest laws that allow him to take her job and keep his money, a man who works against our resource sector and who exports jobs to China while championing higher carbon taxes on heating and eating for Canadians.

Why will the finance minister not talk to her boss about ending the personal attacks on her own credibility?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so glad to have the chance to talk about feminism, because I know what a feminist government looks like. A feminist government builds the first national system of early learning and child care in this country. A feminist government makes contraceptives free, and a feminist government ensures that every single woman in Canada has full control of her body.

Until the Conservatives stand up for that, they have no right to talk about feminism.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fake feminist Prime Minister has thrown his finance minister under the bus with all of the other ministers. The real record of the finance minister is record smashing: A million people are visiting a food bank in her province in Ontario. One in four Canadians is living in poverty. Canadians now spend more in taxes than they do on housing, food and clothes combined.

No wonder they are putting the training wheels back on for her. She can tell that to the Prime Minister.

• (1435)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have stood up to Trump and I have stood up to Putin. Juvenile playground insults from the wannabe MAGA, “maple syrup” Conservatives do not frighten me at all. What I think is really interesting is that they do not actually want to talk about the economy, and that is because good economic news for Canadians is bad news for them. How pathetic it is that they put their own partisan interests first.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government, taxes are up. Costs are up. Crime is up. Now time is up. The self-proclaimed feminist Prime Minister has repeatedly shoved aside strong women who have stood up to him. Now the Prime Minister is replacing the first-ever female finance minister with an unelected Mark “carbon tax” Carney.

Why is the finance minister allowing herself to be publicly humiliated in this manner?

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a bit rich to hear a member of the Conservative Party pretend to care about feminism, when their own leader was using misogynistic hashtags on videos to attract men who hate women.

It was anything but feminist when the Conservatives brought forward backdoor legislation to ban abortion and to take away a woman's right to choose, or when they all voted against increased funding to combat gender-based violence or support survivors. Their leader does not care about women or equality; he cares only about himself.

* * *

FINANCE

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are not even allowing the finance minister to answer her own questions, because they all know that the carbon tax is a failure. Canadians are suffering. There are over 1,800 homeless encampments in Ontario alone. Twenty-six per cent of Canadians are saying that they are considering leaving the country because it is too expensive. A single mother in Kingston reported paying 100% of her income in rent.

Will the finance minister admit that the Prime Minister has lost confidence in her and that Canadians have lost confidence in the government?

Oral Questions

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives keep talking about women, but they do not support policies that support women. Why are they against affordable child care? If they care about that single mother, they should be supporting affordable child care. If they care about women's economic freedom, they should be supporting child care. If they care about women's rights, they should be supporting a woman's right to choose. The real fake feminists are the people who sit on that side of the aisle.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, taxes are up. Costs are up. Crime is up, and time is up. The Prime Minister's new de facto finance minister, “carbon tax” Carney, has massive conflicts of interest, including multiple foreign investment firms. Canadians do not know how much he personally stands to profit from the advice that he is giving to the Prime Minister. It is more blatant corruption from the NDP-Liberal government.

Will the Prime Minister simply have “carbon tax” Carney sworn in as a public office holder so that the full extent of Canada's disclosure laws apply to him too?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservatives, we do believe in listening to experts from across the country. Let us talk about where the Conservatives get their ideas. The Conservative leader gets his advice on helping Canadians with their grocery bills from a Loblaws lobbyist. He gets his advice on Ukraine from Elon Musk and Tucker Carlson. He has courted the support of misogynists and cozied up to the far right. Those are the advisers Canadians should be really concerned about.

• (1440)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle has stood in this place and understands the importance of calling members to order so that those who do have the floor have the opportunity to address the House.

The hon. member from Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely absurd to hear the finance minister give anyone lessons about who they are taking advice from. Archliberal elitist, Mark Carney, has more conflicts than the twice-guilty and convicted Prime Minister of their party, and they are letting carbon tax Carney keep all the money and all the power by covering up his massive conflicts of interest while giving away that finance minister's job. He makes millions from foreign investment firms and now he is advising the Prime Minister.

Why is the Prime Minister letting carbon tax Carney keep the money and the power, and serving as the real finance minister?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely shameful what the Conservatives are doing. When there is a Canadian who does not agree with their vision for Canada, what do they do? They attack the person. Whether it is anybody who does not agree with

what the Conservatives do, the only thing they know how to do is denigrate that person.

We should be able to disagree without being disagreeable. We should be able to hear advice from a whole wide range of actors without attacking their character and bringing down fellow Canadians. They should be ashamed of their actions.

* * *

[Translation]

SENIORS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify something for the government, the entire House and everyone else, something that is not going to happen. The Bloc Québécois will not be told, “Help us interfere in areas under Quebec's jurisdiction, then give us this, then give us that, and then maybe...”. That is not going to happen.

The Liberal government will have to be consistent and implement a law that it voted for. Otherwise, it will have to either get back together with the NDP or start getting a bus ready.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, speaking of clarity, can the leader of the Bloc Québécois clarify exactly what he is saying to the hundreds of thousands of Quebecers who are currently benefiting from dental care, which he voted against?

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, “which he voted against”, “maybe”, it is not clear. I have never voted in favour of interfering in areas under Quebec's jurisdiction.

The Liberals voted in favour of a bill introduced by the Bloc Québécois, but then there was the minor matter of a royal recommendation. They figure they will just withhold the royal recommendation so the Bloc Québécois bill will never go through and seniors will never get their money.

If they want to play that little game, if they did not catch on to what I meant by “getting a bus ready”, it means there is going to be an election.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois leader is raising the spectre of an election instead of delivering results for Quebec's seniors. It is a bit much. This is not the only thing we would like some clarity about. What I would say to the Bloc Québécois leader is that a vote is very clear. He does not vote often, as we just read, but when he does vote, the Bloc Québécois leader votes against lowering retirement age to 65. He voted against increasing the guaranteed income supplement for poor seniors in Quebec. When we set up dental care, he voted against it.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we will say it again. The Bloc Québécois votes against all interference against Quebec, whether it is on its own or mixed into a tasteless salad.

Oral Questions

The Liberals voted for Bill C-319; let them take responsibility and implement the legislation so that retirees are no longer the victims of an injustice they created. I may vote a little less often, but I am voting a little more intelligently and consistently.

• (1445)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois has spent his life putting the Canadian pensions of Quebec seniors at risk. When he votes against lowering the retirement age to 65, it is not about interference in jurisdictions, he is voting against seniors. When he votes against increasing the guaranteed income supplement, he is not voting on a jurisdictional issue; he is voting against the well-being of Quebec seniors and for poverty among seniors.

The leader of the Bloc Québécois needs to take responsibility and explain his votes against Quebec seniors.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up, and the pressure on the “Liberal Bloc” is mounting.

After nine years of this Prime Minister with the support of the Bloc Québécois, some people in Saguenay are living in campers because they cannot find a place to live. One man from Saguenay said, “If I rent an apartment, I will have to use all four of my monthly paycheques to cover it. How will I afford to eat? How will I pay for electricity? How will I pay for my insurance and registration?”

That is the harsh reality after nine years of this Prime Minister with the support of the Bloc Québécois. Does the “Liberal Bloc” realize that going on like this is only making life harder and harder for Quebeckers?

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone in the House can see how hypocritical the Conservatives are being when they say they are concerned about putting a roof over people's heads. The only thing they want to do is cut funding for housing construction and tear up the dozens of agreements that we signed with cities across the country.

On this side of the House, we will make sure to build the housing that people need.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up, and the pressure on the “Liberal Bloc” is up. After nine years of this Liberal government, supported by the Bloc Québécois, the consequences for Quebeckers have been disastrous.

I am talking about Moisson Haut-Saint-François, which is pleading for help. To quote from an interview on Sherbrooke radio, “small food banks are hungry”. Imagine, a food bank going hungry. It is unbelievable, but true. The fast-with-the-cash centralist “Liberal Bloc” wants to carry on.

Does the “Liberal Bloc” hear the cries for help coming from Quebeckers who want the chance to choose a common-sense Conservative government as soon as possible?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to answer an expert on austerity infrastructure and measures.

Here is what the Conservatives did to the fisheries industry in the regions. Under Harper, they cut the budget of Fisheries and Oceans Canada scientists by \$80 million. They voted against investing in small craft harbours. They voted against helping families and against programs for seniors. All they have to offer Canadians is austerity.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no sooner were we free of the NDP-Liberal coalition that resulted in the most disastrous government in history, than we were caught up in a new saga with the Bloc-Liberal coalition.

What is the point of the Bloc Québécois, when we know that it voted in favour of \$500 billion in inflationary spending by this Prime Minister, who fattened up the bureaucracy in Ottawa with Quebeckers' money, adding 100,000 more public servants to the machinery of government?

The “Liberal Bloc” is just more of the same. We saw that yesterday in the by-election in Montreal. What, then, is the point of the “Liberal Bloc” and who does it serve?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague can yell as loudly as he wants, but Quebeckers remember only too well what the Conservatives did when they were in power. They made cuts to science and to programs that help families, and they cut just about everything they could, because the only thing they know how to do is austerity. They do not know how to invest in the potential of Canadians. That is exactly what they are promising to do yet again.

No, that is not true. Quebeckers want nothing to do with the Conservatives. No matter how loudly the member yells, they no longer hear him.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I would like to remind the member for Mégantic—L'Érable that he had the opportunity to ask a question. It is important to give others a turn.

The hon. member for Lévis-Lotbinière.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is a costly proposition to Canadian taxpayers, but especially to Quebec taxpayers. What use is the Bloc Québécois when we know that it voted for the the largest-ever expansion of the federal government, for more spending than ever, for more public servants than ever and for the most scandals ever?

Aside from keeping the Liberal government on life support for the next year, what is the “Liberal Bloc” good for?

Oral Questions

● (1450)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be back, but I am not happy to hear the Conservative voice of austerity.

People watching at home know what the Liberal Party is all about. With the Liberal Party, investments are up, jobs are up and the economy is up.

Quebeckers know that we are building the future. Whether we are talking about the automobile industry, batteries, semi-conductors or biomanufacturing, we are building the Canada of the 21st century. Quebeckers and Canadians know full well that we will always be there for them. We will stand up for them.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over the span of 19 days, seven indigenous people were killed by police. Communities are disturbed, but unfortunately these tragedies are known all too well by indigenous people. This is colonialism and systemic racism that continues to persist under consecutive governments.

First nations, Métis and Inuit have the solutions to end this violence: No more indigenous children getting a bullet instead of help.

Why will the Minister of Public Safety not act to ensure accountability and justice for these families?

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the passion from my colleague. I agree that we need to do more in the country around indigenous policing. That is why the Liberals, including myself, put forward a motion at the INAN committee in April saying we should study this. The NDP has the ability put this in the queue. They have the entire ability to put forward a unanimous motion here that asks us to address this.

I am talking about tangible solutions. I would love to see the NDP join us with those tangible solutions, study this and hear from indigenous leaders.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, Johannes Rivoire sexually abused Inuit children in Nunavut for years. Canada refused to charge him for 30 years and he died protected.

The daughter of the late Marius Tungilik has asked the RCMP for his file, but it refuses to release it. The government must honour families, especially those who suffered during residential schools.

Will the Minister of Public Safety provide the documents or will they help to keep the files hidden from this family?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ensuring that justice is done for victims and their families is crucially important. It is something I know the minister takes incredibly seriously, and we will continue to work on this specific case with her.

When it comes to dealing with systemic racism in policing, this is a crucial issue that we are focused on addressing. It is something we have made progress on, but by no means is it complete. There is much more work to do, and we are committed to doing it.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship introduced Bill C-71. As Canadians, we can never take our rights for granted. We must remain vigilant, especially when the Leader of the Opposition suggests he would use the notwithstanding clause if given the chance. Like the first generation limit introduced by the Conservatives, it is a concrete example of them taking away the rights of Canadians.

Could the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship explain to the House the importance of Bill C-71?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we are debating before the House is a bill that would fix the egregious breaches of the charter that the Conservatives, including the Leader of the Opposition, perpetrated on women and on children of people born abroad. This is something that we as a House need to fix. It is a charter violation. It is a particular instance of the Leader of the Opposition, supported by his previous government, in breaching charter rights.

When Canadians say there is nothing to worry about, that is not the case. There is lots to worry about with the Leader of the Opposition.

* * *

● (1455)

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is the purpose of the “Liberal Bloc”? It serves to keep the Liberals in office.

Do people know that the Bloc voted to save the Liberals nearly 200 times? Do they know that the Bloc Québécois voted for \$500 billion in spending to expand the public service by 100,000 employees? How are they paying for all of that? They are paying for it with Quebeckers' money. The Bloc needs to stop pretending that it is helping Quebeckers and support us in changing this government.

What did the Liberals promise the Bloc Québécois?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have the best public service in the world. Every time, we continue to invest in Canadians, in the most vulnerable members of our society, in families, in children and in seniors. What are the Conservatives doing? They vote against those measures every time. We are here for Canadians and to build a really strong country.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois and the Liberals are fighting the same fight to save the Liberals and keep them in office. Because of the Bloc Québécois, over the past nine years, this government has spent a record amount, failed to balance the budget, doubled the debt and hired an additional 100,000 public servants.

The Bloc Québécois is voting to waste Quebeckers' money. It is our money. The Bloc Québécois voted for the biggest expansion of the federal government in history. How did the Prime Minister manage to convince the Bloc to support his government, which is the costliest, the most disastrous and the most centralizing government in Canada's history?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hidden agenda has come to light. People are worried about tens of thousands of public service layoffs, and we just got confirmation of that from my colleague opposite. The Conservatives' hidden agenda is to lay off, to fire, tens of thousands of public servants here in the Ottawa-Gatineau area and across the country.

What are those people doing? They are helping Canadians to get dental care. They are protecting us. They are getting our infrastructure built. Our public servants work really hard. This member just gave away the Conservative Party's game.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up, grocery prices are up and time is up. According to Feed Ontario, more than a million people were forced to go to food banks just to feed their family. This is a record-shattering increase of 25%. This stark reality is fuelled by the Liberal-NDP carbon tax, which is driving up grocery prices. Canadians are struggling to put food on the table. Will the Prime Minister end this suffering and call a carbon tax election?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all suffer when we know that some of our fellow Canadians are suffering. We have made historic investments as a government, delivering programs and investing in the well-being of Canadians. However, let us not kid ourselves. Conservatives would cut these very programs that Canadians are relying on. They would cut child care. They would cut the food program for kids in schools. They would increase the retirement age. They would cut, cut, cut.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yes, we will cut. We will cut the carbon tax. The government's own statistics show that more than nine million Canadians are suffering with food insecurity, struggling to put food on the table. After nine years, the number of Canadians who are facing food insecurity is up a staggering 111%. These are not just statistics, but millions of parents who cannot feed their kids. This is a result of the costly Liberals' carbon tax and their NDP coalition partners. They are driving up the costs on farmers, truckers and food production. Let us stick a fork in the current government and call a carbon tax election.

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives have just admitted they would cut the very programs that Canadian families are relying on, families who are benefiting from—

● (1500)

The Speaker: It is very difficult for me to hear the minister respond. I am going to give the minister 30 seconds to respond to the question.

Hon. Jenna Sudds: Mr. Speaker, there we have it. Conservatives have just confirmed they will cut the programs that Canadian families are relying on, the \$10-a-day child care that is saving families thousands of dollars, the national school food program that is ensuring that children are not at school hungry. We heard it here. They plan to cut the supports that Canadian families need.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the asylum seeker issue is going nowhere. The Liberals promised that Quebec would finally stop being the only one making a superhuman effort to welcome asylum seekers with dignity. They promised a fair resettlement strategy by this fall.

Fall is here, but there is still no plan. Quebec is still taking on an utterly disproportionate share of responsibility for welcoming asylum seekers, while some provinces refuse to help. Let us be clear: Quebeckers will keep doing their part, but they are getting fed up with having to do it alone. When can we expect a resettlement plan?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course we need a plan that makes sense for all of Canada. Two provinces are contributing more than their fair share: Ontario and Quebec. The other provinces have to get on board. The federal government is offering financial and organizational incentives.

We are here to work, regardless of the efforts by certain provincial premiers to exploit this issue for their own re-election campaigns.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the provinces that are refusing to help Quebeckers in welcoming asylum seekers: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Alberta. What do these provinces have in common? They have Conservative premiers.

Those Conservatives are telling Quebeckers to deal with it themselves, to take care of the asylum seekers for them, while they continue to mock them. To be clear, the resettlement plan is the responsibility of the Minister of Immigration.

Would it not be helpful if the Conservative leader told his gang to stop dumping their responsibilities on Quebeckers?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, without further comment, it is certainly dangerous to see politicians scoring points on the backs of asylum seekers.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up, and after nine years, time is up. Over the summer, I heard too many heartbreaking stories of folks struggling to get by. The NDP-Liberals' carbon tax is making life unaffordable. Now, after voting for it 24 times, the NDP is even saying that it is abandoning the carbon tax.

So, my question to the minister is simple. Will the Liberals join their coalition partners to axe the carbon tax?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the price on pollution and the Canada carbon rebate are an affordability measure. Eight out of 10 Canadians get more money back than they pay in the price on pollution, and the price on pollution is also an effective and efficient way to fight climate change. That is why progressives, including many who voted for the New Democratic Party in the last election, were shocked at the position that was taken by the leader of the New Democratic Party, walking away from a plan on climate change. Shame on them. They will have to explain that to their voters down the road.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the PBO disputes those very things.

The carbon tax is, by design, meant to raise prices, and the consequences are devastating. Red Deer, Alberta, a city of only 100,000 people, has seen food bank usage skyrocket in recent years to 30,000, and this year, it is on track to have 40,000 individuals who need help from the food bank. That is in a city of fewer than 100,000 people.

My question is simple. Will the Liberals call a carbon tax election so that Canadians can decide to axe the tax?

• (1505)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said a moment ago, the Canada carbon rebate and the price on pollution are in fact an affordability measure that helps those who live on modest incomes the most. It is certainly true that 300 economists in this country have validated that to be true.

The leader of the opposition and his minions across the way can make up facts, they can talk about untruths, but at the end of the day, it is very clear that this is a progressive policy that helps us to fight climate change and address affordability concerns. I would ask the hon. member across the way to actually do his homework.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up, and guess what? Time is up.

This costly coalition is hurting Canadians. Over nine million Canadians do not know where their next meal is going to come from. That is a 111% increase of Canadians facing food insecurity, and quadrupling the carbon tax will only make things worse. Canadians cannot afford any more media stunts from this costly coalition. Will the Prime Minister just end the suffering and call a carbon tax election?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have just returned from the summer break, I would like to take a moment to talk about the programs that a Conservative government professes to want to cut. Over the summer, we have made a number of announcements on new, affordable, \$10-a-day child care spots. Look at this: 600 new spots in B.C., 950 new spots in Manitoba, and here we have 5,000 new spots over the next year in Saskatchewan. What do the Conservatives say? They say, "No more affordable child care."

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have been expressing their concerns about auto theft over the past year and have asked for solutions.

We took their concerns to heart and we took action. We updated the Criminal Code and provided funding to law enforcement through budget 2024 and our national action plan on combatting auto theft.

Can the Minister of Justice outline some of the progress we have made in protecting communities with regard to this issue?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the first six months of this year, vehicle theft in Quebec decreased by 36% compared to last year.

This improvement came after we increased penalties, introduced new offences and allocated funds for border and police forces.

After the last Conservative government's budget cuts for ports, we are pleased that things are getting back to normal. We will continue to work for Quebeckers and for everyone in Canada.

[English]

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. Under their watch, women and children are being victimized and violated by criminals who, under Liberal policies, are being let out on bail, house arrest and parole. After nine years, the results are truly terrible. Sexual assaults, for example, are up 75% and sexual violations against children are up 120%, under their watch.

When will the Liberals put the needs of the victims first and ensure jail, not bail, for repeat violent offenders?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take community safety extremely seriously. It is my top priority. Since I have taken office, we have increased the penalties on people who target individuals, including people who target people's automobiles. We have funded police to the tune of \$161 million to assist them in their important work. I can advise the member opposite on three important things. The people who are making decisions on bail are provincially appointed justices of the peace or provincial judges. The people who decide to appeal decisions on bail are provincial crown attorneys. As for the people who decide whether offenders have a place to go when they are denied bail, those are provincial correctional facilities. The member should talk to the provinces.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of NDP-Liberals, tax is up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up, and so are job losses because of the incompetent Liberal fisheries minister. She does not listen to Atlantic Canada's fishing communities. The industry is left in the dark. Even former DFO scientists say that she is playing politics with lives and livelihoods. In July, the fisheries minister cut the Bay of Fundy herring quota by 24%. The result was over 100 job losses.

Will she do her job and reverse the cuts—

• (1510)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard.

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure my colleague that we are working closely with scientists.

For several years now, herring stocks have been struggling in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. To avoid a repeat of what happened with shrimp in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, we are making smart decisions, unlike the Conservatives, who would gladly scrape the sea bottom clean. That is out of the question.

We reduced herring stocks to save the regional economy.

[English]

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, taxes are up, costs are up, fisheries crime is up and the time is up. The situa-

Oral Questions

tion in Nova Scotia's fishing communities, which has previously been described as lawlessness, continues to deteriorate. In spite of repeated warnings, the incompetent Minister of Fisheries and Oceans refuses to do anything. There is significant concern that the situation will spiral out of control.

When will this woefully inadequate minister realize the importance of the Atlantic Canadian fishery and the very real threat to lives and livelihoods and do her job?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think my colleagues across the way have a very short memory. I just want to remind them what the groundfish moratorium did to our coastal communities. I want to remind them what happened with shrimp last winter and how catastrophic it was for our regions. I also want to remind them how climate change in the Gulf of St. Lawrence is affecting all fish stocks. What I am hearing from the other side is truly shameful. Then again, I am not surprised because the Conservatives do not believe in climate change.

Our decisions will always be based on science.

* * *

[English]

SPORT

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, millions of Canadians tuned in to CBC and Radio-Canada to cheer on Team Canada at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris. Our athletes pushed limits, set new records, and brought us all together via the power of sport. In Kings—Hants, we are deeply proud of the Kennetcook kid, Wyatt Sanford, who won Canada's first Olympic bronze medal since 1996 when he took home the bronze. I even had the chance to spar and throw punches with him and the Prime Minister this summer.

Can the Minister of Sport let the House know how we are supporting athletes like Wyatt so they can keep representing Canada with pride and excellence?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians from coast to coast proudly celebrated the exceptional performances of Team Canada this past summer. Canadians won a record number of medals, inspired the next generation of Olympic and Paralympic athletes, and made us deeply proud.

Tributes

Our government supports athletes. We increased the amounts of the athlete assistance program, which supports over 1,800 athletes monthly in 94 disciplines. Our athletes dream big and work hard, and we have got the results to prove it.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, \$200 a month is not enough to live on, yet that is what the Prime Minister has decided is enough for people with disabilities. While he caves to rich CEOs, he fails to protect the human rights of Canadians. Then there are the Conservatives, who always cut the supports people need. Both the Liberals and the Conservatives care more about their rich corporate donors than they do about Canadians.

When will the Liberals get real, increase the Canada disability benefit and respect Canadians with disabilities?

• (1515)

Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we put forward over \$6 billion to create the first ever Canada disability benefit, but we will not take any lessons from the NDP, which has started to take orders from the Conservative Party and abandoned its commitments to delivering progressive policies.

On this side of the House, we are focused on delivering this historic benefit to Canadians.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the city of Windsor is tired of being abused by the Liberal government when it comes to the border. A private American billionaire now wants to run hazardous material on the Ambassador Bridge. This is bad for the environment, bad for the economy and an unnecessary risk for public safety. The Liberals tried passing the buck to the province, but Doug Ford does not care.

My community deserves answers. It deserves a government that stands up for them, not for the American billionaire who owns the bridge. Will the Liberals stop caving to the billionaires and put an end to this disaster waiting to happen?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will tell the member what Windsor is about. Windsor is about a revival. With the investment we have brought to Windsor, Windsor will never look the same again. We have brought generational investment in this town. We have given hope to people. We are providing opportunities. We are providing training for the people. Windsor will be at the centre of the auto sector again. That is thanks to the Liberal government of today.

We should all cheer for Canadians, for Windsor and for the auto workers in this country.

The Speaker: Colleagues, this brings Oral Questions to an end.

It being 3:15 p.m., pursuant to order made on Monday, September 16, I invite all hon. members to stand to observe a moment of silence in honour of our former colleague the late Hon. Chuck Strahl.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

* * *

HON. CHUCK STRAHL

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to tributes in memory of our former colleague, the late Hon. Chuck Strahl.

[*Translation*]

Colleagues, it is an honour to rise to pay tribute to our former colleague, the Hon. Chuck Strahl. He was a force of nature.

[*English*]

The historic 1993 election brought winds of change from Canada's west to this place, and with them came Chuck Strahl with his tall stature, his booming voice and his inimitable work ethic. He made friends everywhere he went and found common ground through intelligence, kindness and, of course, his trademark sense of humour.

[*Translation*]

He was named Deputy Speaker of the House and Chair of Committees of the Whole in October 2004. In that role, he earned the respect of all parliamentary groups and the esteem of Speaker Miliken and all the table officers who had the privilege of working with him every day. As a member of Parliament, he served the people of Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, and before that, Fraser Valley, for 18 years, through six consecutive elections.

[*English*]

He was guided more by principles and by faith than by politics. Those qualities made him an extraordinary leader who never shied away from what he knew to be right, what he knew to be just. He served many years in cabinet and was notably Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians. He was by the side of the former prime minister, the Right Hon. Stephen Harper, during the historic statement of apology to former students of Indian residential schools in the House of Commons on June 11, 2008.

[*Translation*]

His love of Canada and his dedication to his constituents came second only to his devotion to his wife, Deb, and his children. He was also a man of deep faith who was always guided by his love and trust in God. He stayed so strong for so many years after being diagnosed with cancer.

[*English*]

His determination and courage in the face of adversity says so much about his love of family, his devotion to Canada and his dedication to public service. A man like Chuck Strahl inspires, and we have only to see his legacy live on in his son, the hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope, who serves so ably in this place.

Tributes

Chuck Strahl left us too soon, but he will always be remembered as an exemplary Canadian and a wonderful parliamentarian who had a lasting impact. I extend my deepest condolences to Mrs. Strahl, his wife of almost 50 years, our esteemed colleague from Chilliwack—Hope, his other children, grandchildren and his many friends.

● (1520)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Conservative caucus, I would like to thank you for those very kind words and a fitting tribute to a man who held a position in the Speakership during part of his tenure here.

This is a difficult task, to try to sum up in just a few minutes the impact that a man like Chuck Strahl had on Parliament, on politics and on not only the Conservative Party but the Conservative movement as a broader whole. However, it is truly an honour for me to do that, as imperfectly as I may.

We all know Chuck's official biography, of course. He was first elected to Parliament in 1993 and re-elected another five times. Over his 18 years as an MP, he served as a third party critic, a whip, a House leader for the official opposition, a minister of the Crown and a Deputy Speaker. Chuck knew that if a position he filled was important, it was first and foremost a reflection of the awesome responsibility of the position. There is such a difference between a man of great integrity and others who view titles and positions as ways to aggrandize themselves and make it a reflection of the individual rather than the position.

Chuck, despite the high offices, never lost touch with his roots. He was a logger from the B.C. interior. He brought a healthy dose of common sense to public life. Speaking of logging, Chuck was a builder. I would often look with great envy at the pictures the current member for Chilliwack—Hope would send me of the latest project he and his father were working on around the house. Being someone who was not gifted with those types of abilities, I would always feel great awe and admiration that Chuck was able to do that.

However, he did not just build things out of wood and metal. He helped build a movement. Chuck was one of the major architects of the wonderful experience that was the Reform Party of Canada. Even though he was from B.C., he helped light that prairie fire that kept burning and spread eastward to help give Canadians hope that power in Canada could one day truly be restored to the people and out of the hands of the elites who had caused so much damage at the time.

We think today, in our modern lives as members of Parliament, about what that was like back then. We all know how hard it is sometimes to organize events, but we have wonderful tools like texting and social media. We can post things on a website. Chuck and the Reform Party team were able to pack church basements, town halls and legions with hundreds and hundreds of people just by using the telephone, maybe some radio messages and those famous newsletters we all got through fax machines. It was incredible. It speaks perhaps not so much to their technological prowess, or the organizational abilities of people like Chuck, but of the mes-

sage they were carrying and the hope they were giving to Canadians in every corner of the country.

Chuck was a strong family man, a gifted communicator and a natural-born leader who projected honour, integrity and faithfulness in all that he did. We could chat with Chuck for hours and he would rarely brag about any of his political achievements or the offices that he filled. Instead, he was most likely to brag about his province, his community or, most often, his family. We could tell what motivated Chuck just by talking to him for a few minutes.

Chuck inspired so many young members of our movement to take up the fight. He was a happy warrior. It was easy to follow someone like Chuck because he did it with a smile on his face, motivated more by hope and what was possible than by what riled him up. However, if we ever did rile him up, we would know about it.

During my first Parliament, Chuck was the Deputy Speaker. I was a new MP at the age of 25. Let me say that Chuck's deep, baritone voice would leave us in no doubt if we ever found ourselves on the wrong side of the chair.

It was wonderful to work with him in his next role, as minister of agriculture, as he started the process to give western Canadian farmers the freedom to market their own agricultural products.

● (1525)

For those of us who may have come to politics a little later, it is sometimes hard to imagine that for decades, western Canadian farmers had no control of the product of their summers' worth of labour. Instead, they had to trust the government to do that for them. However, Chuck, as was long a part of his mandate, helped lay the groundwork for what would eventually be the successful abolition of the monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board.

Chuck played a pivotal role as minister of Indian affairs, as it was called then, building the path for Stephen Harper's momentous 2008 apology to former students of Indian residential schools. While there has been the outpouring of messages of support and condolences that we would expect from many people in politics, the tributes from first nations communities across the country are, I know, also very meaningful to the Strahl family, as a reflection of the sincere and deep relationship that Chuck made with the people with whom he worked so hard to address their issues.

As minister of transport and infrastructure, Chuck played the role of builder once again, as he was instrumental in delivering much of Canada's economic action plan. A lot of Canada's recent infrastructure may well have a link back to Chuck the road builder.

He leaves behind Deb, his loving wife of almost 50 years, and four children, Karina, Loni, Kyla and the hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope, someone who, as all of us know, has inherited that deep baritone voice.

Tributes

When we talk about integrity, I think it is important to think about what that meant for Chuck. Chuck would often say that sometimes politics can get complicated because we make it overly complicated, and often what we need to do is just take a step back and think about our first principles: why we got into it in the first place or what we told our constituents at the first meeting, maybe when we were running for the nomination, or on our first election night.

Ottawa can twist and turn things. The bubble is real, and it can affect how we look at things. Chuck would always be able to slice through all that, simplify the complicated and bring it right back to what it would mean for the Canadian people. That shone through every single thing Chuck did.

I know we are all going to miss him, those of us who were wise enough to seek his counsel. Having Chuck on speed dial or as a contact was a smart thing to do for anybody in a leadership position. Chuck was very kind to chair my campaign when I was running for the leadership of the party. I would often call him for advice or wisdom or to run things by him. There was great comfort in knowing that I had someone like that in my life, almost that I could offload some of the stress or overthinking on various issues.

Once again, my deepest sympathies and condolences go to Deb, Karina, Loni, and Kyla. I am going to break protocol here; Mark, I give our very deepest condolences and best wishes to your family as you recover from this tremendous loss.

● (1530)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to pay tribute to my old colleague the hon. Chuck Strahl. I am deeply saddened by his passing.

Although I sat across the aisle from him for 18 years, I always had a deep respect and admiration for him. That is really the beauty of this place. There is a time for lively debate and different opinions, but we are all here to represent our constituents back home, and Chuck understood that as well as anyone else.

In addition to serving as a member of Parliament from 1993 to 2011, he also served as minister of agriculture, minister of Indian and northern development and minister of transport. These jobs can often be challenging, but he stepped up in service to his country, and I thank him so much for that. Being Minister of Agriculture myself, I know full well what the job entails. Serving our farmers, producers and ranchers has been one of the greatest honours of my life, and I am sure Chuck felt the same way.

I probably should not say this, but I think Chuck would understand and maybe chuckle a bit. Back in 2010, Chuck was serving as minister of transport, and as other previous and probably current ministers of transport know, I was a bit of a thorn in his side. I was grilling him one day in the House in question period about the Wood Islands-Caribou ferry service, which is vitally important to my riding. Eventually he said, "I know the member has asked this question every year for about 10 or 12 years now", which was certainly true. Even though Chuck was from far on the other side of the country, and the ferry on the eastern end of Prince Edward Island was probably not one of his top priorities, he always showed a

willingness to work with me on that issue and many other issues. He showed me and my constituents a great deal of respect, and I am deeply grateful for that.

We were from different parties, but Chuck always had time for my concerns, and I truly believe that is how ministers and members of Parliament should act. We all want what is best for our constituents and Canadians. We may disagree on how we deliver that, but the country is best served when we all communicate and work together on things.

I cannot help but look across the aisle and see Chuck's son, the member for Chilliwack—Hope. I have been in this place for quite a while, and it is quite something to be able to say that I have served with him and with Chuck. I am sure that Chuck was so deeply proud of his son, my hon. colleague, for being his successor. What a great honour the member has brought to his father.

I might just break the rules here a little bit, but to the member for Chilliwack—Hope, Mark, I want to offer my sincerest condolences. It is very difficult.

Chuck's wife, Deb; his other children, Karina, Loni and Kyla; and the rest of his family and friends are all in our thoughts. Losing a loved one is never easy, but I hope that Mark's faith, which I am sure was inherited from his father, brings him comfort in the days ahead.

I truly appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House to honour my old friend Chuck Strahl. His tremendous service to his constituents, province and country will never be forgotten.

● (1535)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, who among us can claim to have run against the devil himself? This was one of the exploits of the Hon. Chuck Strahl, a former Conservative cabinet minister who died of cancer on August 13 at just 67 years of age.

In the 1997 election, Chuck really did face off with a man by the name of Sa Tan. He had a gift for telling this anecdote in a humorous way, although it did make him wonder whether it was possible to run for office in Canada under a pseudonym.

Chuck Strahl proudly represented Chilliwack and the Fraser Valley region in the House for nearly two decades, from his first election in 1993 until 2011.

After starting his career in forestry and business, he made his mark in politics. He served in various capacities in the House before becoming a minister, taking on the agriculture, indigenous affairs and transport portfolios. He was, without a doubt, one of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's most trusted advisers.

Tributes

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to thank Chuck Strahl for his years of public service. I want to offer my deepest condolences to the woman with whom he shared his life for almost 50 years, as well as to his three daughters and 13 grandchildren. It is with the utmost empathy that I also extend my condolences to his worthy successor in the riding of Chilliwack—Hope, his favourite MP, his son Mark, who helps to keep the memory of his wonderful father alive through his presence in the House.

Although he decided not to run for office again in 2011, Chuck Strahl never really left politics. People continued to turn to him for advice. In an open letter to *The Globe and Mail* in 2011, he shared his advice with his son and successor. Although this public message was meant to be personal, every man and woman working in politics would be well advised to learn from it.

In that letter, he emphasized the importance of keeping one's word and listening to one's voters, to local residents. He believed that our constituents are always our best advisers. He also advocated solidarity. Even when debates become heated and potentially divide political families, it is essential that colleagues know they can always count on each other. Above all, he stressed the importance of family, because outside the political arena, family is our main anchor. Though the brouhaha of politics all too often requires us to live at a frantic pace, it is important that we not forget ourselves and, above all, that we never forget our loved ones.

This is sound advice that is still as relevant today as it was then, and it speaks volumes about Chuck Strahl as a politician and as a family man, as well as the values that he cherished and that live on today in people like his son in the House and his family outside the House.

I recognize the man I worked closely with and had the great pleasure of working with when we both served as chief whip of our respective political parties. I will always remember him as an affable, funny, reliable and efficient man, a man who fought tooth and nail for the values he held dear and the ideas he put forward, but always in a respectful manner.

When he left politics for health reasons, I admit that I was worried about him. Then, as time passed and I saw him make occasional public appearances, I came to believe—wrongly, obviously—that he was doing quite well. His passing came as a shock to me and to many of his former colleagues and constituents. I cannot imagine how tough it must have been for his loved ones, for whom I have enormous sympathy.

I would like to think that Chuck will continue to look down on us and inspire us with his wise counsel. I am positive he is up there now, and for good reason, because did he not beat the devil himself in an election?

Thank you for everything, Chuck, my dear friend. Now try to get some rest, because you have earned it.

• (1540)

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of my New Democratic colleagues to remember the late Chuck Strahl, whom I served with for several years.

Let me begin by extending my deepest condolences to the member for Chilliwack—Hope and also to the family and friends of Chuck Strahl. We thank them for sharing him with this place, with our Canada. We are better for it.

Mr. Strahl's legacy is well known. First elected as a member of the Reform Party, Mr. Strahl was also a member of the Canadian Alliance. He was also leader of the Democratic Representative Caucus and then a cabinet minister in the Conservative government of Stephen Harper. Mr. Strahl also served as deputy speaker and chair of the committee of the whole. That is quite a record for political parties. The fact that Mr. Strahl was elected and served under all these political affiliations is a real testament to his effectiveness as a member of Parliament and as a person who made contributions in the chamber every single day.

I also wish to point out that during his time as minister of Indian affairs and northern development, he helped negotiate the Tsawwassen First Nation Final Agreement among the first nations, Canada and B.C., which outlines the nation's jurisdiction, doing something that had not been done before.

It is important to note that Mr. Strahl served in various cabinet portfolios after he was diagnosed with lung cancer as a result of his exposure to asbestos many years prior. Upon announcing his diagnosis, Mr. Strahl said, "Cancer is a serious disease, but those of us diagnosed with cancer don't want to be rushed off the playing field and sidelined any too soon", and he did that every day as he worked here.

Sadly, he lost his fight with cancer last month, but he is respected in the chamber to this day by all political opponents. He was actually appointed as a Trudeau mentor in 2012 and joined the Trudeau Foundation board of directors in 2014, until stepping down in November of 2016.

Let me end by quoting a cabinet colleague of his, someone I also served with, John Baird, who said Strahl was "among the most honourable, decent (and) respectable people I have ever met," and that his "good nature" and "infectious humour" would be missed. I could not agree more.

I thank the Strahl family very much for sharing Chuck with all of us for Canada.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for all the tributes that have already been made. Your own words were profoundly moving. It is in this place, in moments like these, that we are united with exactly the same sense of shared humanity in paying tribute to someone we universally loved and admired.

Tributes

I know Chuck Strahl to have been, throughout his life, an honest man, doing an honest day's work every single day. His life is a profile in faith and courage. I will never forget how young he was. I think of it now and just checked the dates; he was only 48 years old when he told the world he had mesothelioma, as the hon. member for Windsor West just mentioned, because of an exposure to asbestos. People did not think about its being in the brake lines of the vehicles when he was doing honest work in the forest industry.

All those years later, he would be given a sentence from his doctor that would have stopped many people. It did not stop him. He was told at only 48 years old that he had a lung cancer that would kill him. He did not stop. He did not feel sorry for himself. He ran again. He got re-elected in 2006. We have heard from so many members about his achievements in cabinet and his hard work, that I will not repeat them.

However, we know that by 2011, he announced he would not run again. That is when I was elected, after he was not here anymore, but we had become friends before that happened. Whenever I would run into him, as we do, those of us who live in B.C. and travel to Ottawa, I would always tell him that he must be so proud of the member for Chilliwack—Hope, and he would always burst with pride. He was so proud. I know how much he loved all of his kids. He always spoke also of Karina, Loni, Kyla and his grandchildren. I thank God he defied the odds to live to the age of 67 to see so many of them.

The thing is that I am still angry. I am still angry that this country produced a product that was the single biggest occupational killer, killing hundreds of thousands of people around the world, and this year taking Chuck Strahl from us.

I want to salute his profile and courage, because it took courage. He resigned from Parliament. He did not have to put himself out there. He went on national television to say that it was time to say that chrysotile asbestos kills, time to say it out loud and time for Canada to do the right thing. With that, even as Chuck Strahl left politics, he saved lives around the world by speaking truth to power.

God bless him. We know he is with a heavenly host. We know that the Lord he loved has welcomed him home.

As one of his many colleagues who admired him, I just want to offer my deep thanks. It is people like Chuck who make this place decent. I thank him, and I thank all his family with much love and deepest sympathy.

• (1545)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my mom, my sisters and our entire family, I want to thank the members of the House of Commons for the opportunity to pay tribute to our dad, Chuck Strahl, a man who held this place in such high regard. These words have honoured him, and we will treasure them forever. It is an odd thing to have to grieve in public, and our family wrestled with how to best honour Dad while protecting some privacy during this most difficult time for us, but we have been overwhelmed by the love and support that we have received from so many people from right across the country, the people Dad

was able to connect with because of his decision to be a servant leader in this place.

We received calls and notes from former prime ministers, the current Prime Minister and the future prime minister, all of whom were generous and kind in their comments about our dad. We were touched by the public tributes from his former colleagues, staff and public servants. I thank them all. At Dad's funeral, we focused on the things that were most important to him in his life, which were his personal Christian faith, his family and his many meaningful friendships.

I do want to focus on his impact in politics in my brief remarks here today. Dad was first elected in 1993 at 36 years old, after a successful career in the logging industry. Eighteen years and six elections later, he left as a respected minister of the Crown, having served as minister of agriculture, of Indian and northern affairs, and of transport. I am not sure how many loggers have served in the House or served in the cabinet, but whether it was in the boardroom or in the bush, Dad was respected for doing the job that needed to be done while respecting those he worked with along the way.

He was a movement Conservative, a proud Reformer, who demanded better than the status quo from the old-line parties that had taken the west for granted. He was a builder who took difficult but principled stands and who risked his own career for the good of the movement and the country. He paved the way for Stephen Harper to become the leader of the Canadian Alliance and played a key role in bringing the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservative parties back together to form the new Conservative Party of Canada, a party that would go on to form a new government just a few years later.

Appointed to cabinet in 2006, his leadership was critical in laying the groundwork to deliver marketing choice for prairie grain farmers. In 2008, his work with indigenous leaders and communities helped to bring forward the statement of apology to former students of Indian residential schools here in the House of Commons and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was created afterward. He participated in many sharing circles during that time and was profoundly moved by that experience. These are just a couple of highlights among many that have been shared in the days since his passing.

While many politicians operate in a transactional way, Dad believed in the power of relationships. He created, nurtured and protected them in his personal and professional life. As his cousin said in the days following his death, if one did not like Chuck Strahl, that meant one did not know Chuck Strahl.

That was true. He was liked by political friends and foes alike, and he never took himself too seriously. He had a way of connecting with people that should be the envy of politicians everywhere. People felt like they knew Dad, even if they had only had one chance encounter or read his regular newspaper columns, where he always told a personal story and related it back to what was happening here in Ottawa.

Even after he became a minister, he never forgot that his primary job was to be his riding's voice in Ottawa, not the other way around. He brought the common sense of the common people to the House of Commons. His constituents loved him for it and he loved them back. He loved his country, and he wore that love on his sleeve.

Dad came to Ottawa with a vow that no matter how long his political career was, his family, his faith and his friendships would remain intact. He left Ottawa with a stronger family and a stronger faith. He had not only maintained his existing friendships but also created many new ones during his time here. We should all be so lucky to be able to say the same thing.

• (1550)

Our dad was a man of honour, integrity and principle. Canada is better for his service and is diminished by his loss. On behalf of my family, I thank my colleagues for honouring him here today. God bless them all, and God bless Canada.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1555)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:55, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

Call in the members.

• (1620)

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

(*Division No. 854*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif	Aitchison
Albas	Alghabra
Ali	Allison
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett

Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Bragdon	Brassard
Brière	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Caputo
Carr	Carrie
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Chahal
Chambers	Champagne
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Dalton
Damoff	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Doherty
Dong	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Epp	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Findlay	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gainey	Gallant
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gerretsen	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gould
Gourde	Gray
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hallan
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Hoback
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Jeneroux
Jivani	Johns
Joly	Jones
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Kelly	Khalid
Khanna	Khera
Kitchen	Kmiec
Koutrakis	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lake
Lalonde	Lambropoulos

Routine Proceedings

Government Orders

Lamoureux	Lantsman
Lapointe	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
Lawrence	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lehoux
Lemire	Leslie
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lightbound
Lloyd	Lobb
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Majumdar	Maloney
Martel	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinity
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLean	McLeod
McPherson	Melillo
Mendès	Mendicino
Miao	Michaud
Miller	Morantz
Morrice	Morrison
Morrissey	Motz
Murray	Muys
Naqvi	Nater
Ng	Noormohamed
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perkins
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon	Poilievre
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rood	Rota
Ruff	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schieffe
Schmale	Seeback
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Singh	Small
Sorbara	Soroka
Sousa	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's)
Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake)	St-Onge
Strahl	Stubbs
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thériault
Therrien	Thomas
Thompson	Tochor
Tolmie	Trudeau
Trudel	Turnbull
Uppal	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koevverden
Van Popta	Vandenbeld
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Vis

Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weiler
Wilkinson	Williamson
Yip	Zahid
Zarrillo	Zimmer
Zuberi— 325	

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that because of tributes and the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 48 minutes.

As mentioned in the Speaker's statement of Monday, September 16, the volume of earpieces will now be reset.

[*Translation*]

Members using their earpiece at this time will have to adjust the volume. I thank them for paying particular attention to the sound level.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1625)

[*English*]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-71, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (2024), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for London West.

It is a pleasure to rise for the first time in this House after the summer recess to represent the good people of West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. It is especially important today because we are debating Bill C-71, an act to amend the Citizenship Act. It is very important that we start our session with this legislation because it strikes right at the core of what it means to be Canadian or, rather, how.

What do Mary Pickford, Leslie Nielsen, Ricky Gervais, Jimi Hendrix, Glenn Ford and Roméo Dallaire all have in common? These folks are well known as eminent Canadians, but they are also what are known as lost Canadians. Lost Canadians are individuals who were born in Canada or believed they were Canadian citizens but who lost or never acquired citizenship due to certain provisions in our outdated and confusing citizenship legislation.

Government Orders

For instance, first-generation Canadians born abroad are unable to confer citizenship to their children, and those born to a first-generation Canadian abroad automatically lose their citizenship at the age of 28 due to a cruel and unconstitutional law passed by the Harper Conservative government. The legislation we are debating today would fix these issues by amending the Citizenship Act to extend access to citizenship to descent beyond the first generation.

Once passed, Bill C-71 will automatically confer citizenship by descent to all those born abroad to Canadian parents before the coming-into-force date of the legislation. For those born after the coming-into-force date, there would be a new framework governing citizenship where citizenship by descent can be passed on beyond the first generation if a Canadian parent is present in Canada for 195 days straight, in what is being called the substantial connection test.

Bill C-71 would also allow people born abroad and adopted by a Canadian citizen who was born abroad to have a pathway to citizenship by way of a grant of citizenship. This different process is required because to comply with the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, which seeks to protect the child's best interest and prevent abuses such as the abduction, sale and trafficking of children, an assessment is necessary to ensure that an adoption complies with international adoption requirements.

Many of those currently affected by this issue are, in fact, children who are unable to access Canadian citizenship and the benefits that we so often take for granted, such as access to universal health care and education. The consequences these children face as a result of this outdated legislation are unacceptable. Take, for instance, the story of 12-year-old Zach Hirschfeld. He was born in Mexico to his Canadian father Bert, who was born in the United States and later naturalized to become a Canadian citizen. At the time, Zach's Canadian grandmother could not confer citizenship to Zach's father due to the discrimination against women that remains embedded in the Citizenship Act, which I will get to later in my speech.

Last year, Zach applied for proof of citizenship and was denied. As a naturalized Canadian, Bert was deemed to be born in Canada and thus could confer citizenship to his son, but this was later rescinded by Conservative Bill C-37 when it became law. Under Bill C-37, Conservatives took away the right for Canadians born abroad to pass on citizenship to their children. This law not only separated families, but created an undemocratic tiered system of citizenship and a new class of Canadians.

Today, Zach does not have citizenship in Mexico or Canada, and there is a legitimate question of him being stateless. Zach's father tragically died during COVID and his family in Vancouver wants him to live with them. The problem is that Zach has no legal status in Canada and thus cannot enrol in school, get medical coverage or get a social insurance number. To access these things, he needs to become a Canadian citizen. Under Bill C-71, he would.

To be clear, this is not an issue of immigration, as some members of the opposition claim. This is an issue of citizenship. As we can see from Zach's story, it is also an issue of equality and women's rights.

• (1630)

Prior to 1977, women could not confer citizenship on their children. Instead, children were seen as property of the father if they were born in wedlock, and property of the mother if born out of wedlock. This inequality has lasting impacts on new generations of Canadians born abroad. Bill C-71 would correct this by acknowledging the rights of second-generation Canadians born abroad to obtain citizenship, including descendants of women who previously could not confer citizenship due to these inequalities. This is not only the right thing to do; it is also necessary in order to make sure the legislation is compliant with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Bill C-71 would also bring our laws into compliance with international standards set by the United Nations. Currently our legislation violates the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that all children have a right to education. It violates the UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, which outlines the measures countries must take to provide a nationality to those who are stateless. It also violates the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

While the bill is a step in the right direction, there is more work that needs to be done to ensure that citizenship remains protected. However, we know that not all parties in the House share this view. With the passage of Bill C-37 in 2009, the Conservatives demonstrated their willingness to strip Canadians of their rights and identity. In 2014, the Conservatives also passed Bill C-24, which allowed them to revoke the citizenship of dual citizens. This created an entire category of second-class citizens whose status as Canadians is insecure.

Further, we know that the Leader of the Opposition's flagship bill as the minister of democratic reform was to make it harder for indigenous people, youth and less affluent people to vote. We already know that the Conservatives would not care about being out of compliance with international law, because they have openly committed to withdrawing from the United Nations. Even more concerning is that the leader of the Conservative Party has committed to ignoring charter-protected rights and freedoms by invoking the notwithstanding clause. We would not be able to rely on the courts to protect us from the Conservatives' revoking citizenship, which can be changed on a whim.

Let us think of what those whims may be, because we know the tried-and-true playbook that the Conservatives use to ostracize minority groups to create fear in the population of people they do not know, to rally support. We know this is an effective method, but that is why we should be concerned to see the Conservative leader cozying up to white national groups, and it even filters into the anti-trans policy.

Government Orders

The complete and utter silence of the Conservatives on the plight of Palestinians over the last year has been deafening. How safe would someone feel in protesting in support of the Palestinian cause under a Conservative government? We already saw the Conservatives label environmentalists as a violent threat to Canada's security, pass legislation to spy on environmental NGOs and weaponize the Canada Revenue Agency to silence awareness that these groups were raising about the impact of fossil fuels.

How safe would someone feel speaking out about the impacts of climate change? How safe would someone feel about their Canadian citizenship? The answer is that they would probably feel a lot safer in an insurrection to overthrow the government because they might get brought coffee and donuts.

Therefore, I believe that citizenship should be enshrined as a right rather than a revocable privilege, so that we can protect all Canadians, whether dual citizen or not, born in or out of wedlock, adopted or not, from the Conservatives or any future government, from manipulating citizenship laws to exclude those they do not agree with. This risks eroding our democratic principles and turning citizenship into a privilege rather than a fundamental human right.

There also remain questions regarding when citizenship in Canada began. For many, it is assumed it began with the introduction of the Citizenship Act in 1947. However, that would mean that thousands of Canadian servicemen and women who died in the First World War and the Second World War would not be technically considered Canadian citizens. This ambiguity goes beyond just legal definitions; it influences how we remember our history and those who contributed to it.

Citizenship provides us with a sense of duty and belonging to the country we all are proud to call home. With the passage of Bill C-71, the Citizenship Act would have laws that are equally enforced and consistent with international human rights principles for the first time in Canadian history. It would grant citizenship to individuals like Zach, for whom there is genuine fear they may become stateless. It is an opportunity for us to modernize our citizenship legislation to ensure that those who rightfully deserve to be Canadian citizens do not get left behind. I hope all members of the House will support the legislation.

I want to give a special shout-out to Don Chapman, a constituent of mine in Gibsons who has worked so hard to move the legislation forward through the courts, and today through legislation we are debating.

● (1635)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just want to make sure the member understands the 1977 Citizenship Act was amended in 2009. Actually, those portions would not be amended here; that was done way before.

In 2009, Bill C-37 introduced the first-generation limits. It was supported by all parties. It was supported twice by the Liberal Party of Canada, by the NDP and by the Bloc, and yes, it was a Conservative bill.

It is interesting that the member introduces a novel argument that we would violate international treaty commitments, because that

was not an argument made at any point by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

If it is the case that it would be a violation, why are the first-generation limits in the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom not violations of their international treaty commitments?

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, today we are talking about Canada being in compliance with international law and we are talking about the rights of people who deserve to be Canadian. Whether people are born abroad first generation or second generation, if they have a substantial connection to Canada they should be Canadian citizens.

The legislation that would have been debated back in 2009 far precedes my time in the House, but I mention it was legislation brought forward by the Conservatives that was done as an all-or-nothing measure.

Today we are correcting the major damage the Conservatives did to our citizenship legislation, and that is what is important.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is rather fascinating that the Liberal government is so slow to deal with this bill. Let us be clear, there are some very historic issues in this debate. People who lived through the war ended up in a situation where they had no citizenship. Some situations had to be straightened out even after death.

Why did it take a ruling by the Ontario Superior Court for the Liberals to finally take action?

The debate was held in the House in 2007. There have been successive governments since then, both Conservative and Liberal. Why did we have to wait so long to see some leadership to address normal situations for different Canadians?

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, I do not have a good answer as to why it took an Ontario Superior Court decision. However, I do know that it is high time these things were done.

The act is discriminatory, and the bill we are debating today will help improve the situation. We need to do more.

I hope that next time something needs to change, we will not wait to go to court and for judges to tell us to take action. We have to do the right thing, and we can do it here, as parliamentarians.

[English]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really do appreciate the shout-out that was given to Don Chapman. As I mentioned today and yesterday, I came to know Don Chapman when I worked for Andrew Telegdi, the former member of Parliament for Waterloo.

I also really appreciated the member's insights at countering this false narrative by the Conservatives regarding Bill C-37, who then are intentionally choosing to forget that former prime minister Stephen Harper basically gave an ultimatum to members to either take this step that lost Canadians were fighting for or none of it would happen. People like Don Chapman were leading the charge to ask for this step to at least be taken, because we were never going to get the Conservatives to truly be inclusive. They are the most uninclusive party possible.

My question to the member is in regard to the Ontario court ruling and the fact that this legislation would make Canadian citizenship more equal, especially when it comes to kids being adopted or who are born abroad. I would like to hear what the member thinks the benefits are of having legislation that would be constitutional. What kind of value does that have when it comes to Canadians and the pride we share?

• (1640)

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, one thing Canadians are very proud of is our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is something that we hold up. Any law that we pass that is unconstitutional I think is a strike right at the core of what it means to be Canadian. Part of that as well is being inclusive: respecting people, being a welcoming society. I think that is what this legislation helps move us closer toward. The reason we are here is because so many people have fought for decades and hundreds of years to bring us here, so I want to salute all the hard work by folks who have done that.

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for this opportunity to rise and speak to Bill C-71. This bill proposes to amend Canada's Citizenship Act and restore citizenship to those individuals who lost it due to previous unconstitutional legislative amendments.

I was compelled to participate in this debate after hearing from some of my constituents on this matter. However, I was struck by recent comments made by the Conservative member for Edmonton Manning. The member mentioned knocking on doors and talking to Canadians, saying that the changes put forward by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship today, changes that the courts have clearly indicated are needed, are just making more Canadians of convenience and that this would grant citizenship to tourists. I can tell members that I have heard the contrary from constituents.

It was just a few months ago while I was door-knocking in one of our growing neighbourhoods in Whitehorse, Whistle Bend, that I had a great conversation with a woman who had lived in Canada for years. Whitehorse is her home, and Canada is her home. However, she is one of our lost Canadians, and not having citizenship for her country matters greatly to her. She was glad to hear that this bill we are considering today is in the House and that it would bring her a step closer to being a citizen in a country that she had lived in

Government Orders

for so long, that she loves and where she will spend the remainder of her days. I want to thank this constituent for sharing her story with me. She pressed us to help neighbours, colleagues and families who are lost Canadians. I thank her. I will do my part to support this bill, which will help lost Canadians. I also thank her for introducing me to her very cute dog, Pete.

Another constituent of mine has shared with me about a family member of theirs. This family member was born outside of Canada while their parents lived abroad working for a non-profit organization. Their dedication to service obviously ran in the family. This individual who was born abroad chose, as an adult decades later, to go into much similar work and now lives abroad working for a Canadian registered not-for-profit organization. This individual now has children while working abroad. A few years after that first child was born, they applied for their child's citizenship and passport, but they were denied based on the young child being from the second generation born outside of Canada.

My constituent's cousin asked why his children being punished with refusal of citizenship due to the service of their parents and grandparents in a not-for-profit organization. There are special considerations for members of the Canadian military but not for citizens in other areas of service.

Here is what I heard: "Not only does it hurt to know that my kids are not citizens, but it also calls into question how I end up feeling about my own Canadian citizenship. I feel very much like a second-class citizen as a result. Although I do not live in Canada, I do feel very much Canadian. I would love to be able to give that gift to my children."

Families like those of my constituent, and the constituent I spoke with directly a while ago who is personally one of those lost Canadians, have been put into very difficult situations following the 2009 law passed by the last Conservative government. While the Conservative opposition filibustered a bill for 30 hours, a bill put forward by one of their Conservative senators, it is my hope that this new bill can bring some relief and justice to these families placed in such awkward and hurtful situations.

Many people around the world seek to come to Canada and become Canadian citizens. In my opinion, Canada is the best country in the world, and it is clear that it is the top choice for newcomers to begin the next chapter of their lives. Canada is a country that is welcoming, diverse and inclusive. I think I can speak for all of us when I say that we are proud to be Canadians, whether we were born here and raised here or came to this country, like me, going through the process of making it our home.

Government Orders

In 2009, Canada's Citizenship Act was amended to resolve this issue and simplify the rules around citizenship. The 2009 amendments repealed the requirement to act in order to retain citizenship, but at the same time, the Harper Conservatives fundamentally changed citizenship by descent by introducing a harmful and unconstitutional first-generation limit. Individuals born outside of Canada in the second generation or a subsequent generation were no longer able to inherit citizenship and could only become Canadians through the naturalization process, which is by applying and coming to Canada, becoming a permanent resident and passing our citizenship test. It is deeply offensive to be asking someone who is rightfully Canadian to immigrate to their own country.

The 2009 changes also ensured that anyone who was born after the 1977 legislation but who had not yet turned 28 when these changes took place was allowed to maintain their status and remain Canadian. At the same time, in 2009 and then again in 2015, the government introduced amendments to the Citizenship Act to restore citizenship to groups of people who lost citizenship or who never became citizens in the first place because of rules in the first Canadian Citizenship Act of 1947, which we now recognize as outdated.

• (1645)

The vast majority of lost Canadians were remedied by legislative amendments in 2009 and 2015. Since 2009, nearly 20,000 individuals have come forward and been issued proof of Canadian citizenship related to these amendments to the Act. In December 2023, a court decision required that the Citizenship Act be revisited once more. The Ontario Superior Court of Justice determined that the Harper Conservatives' first-generation limit on citizenship by descent was unconstitutional on both equality and mobility rights.

It was clear during the study at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration on Bill S-245 that there is still a cohort of people remaining who refer to themselves as lost Canadians. These are people, of course, who were born outside Canada in the second or subsequent generations and who lost their citizenship before 2009 because of the now repealed rules that required them to take steps to retain their Canadian citizenship before their 28th birthday. This cohort of lost Canadians is limited to a group of people who were born outside Canada to a Canadian parent between February 1977 and April 1981, did not take steps to retain their citizenship before turning 28, and were the second or later generation born outside the country.

Since Bill S-245 went through a number of changes and improvements using feedback from experts and those affected, it made sense to incorporate some of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration's suggested changes into the new legislation. Today's legislation builds and improves on the work done in Bill S-245. It would restore and provide citizenship for groups impacted up to the date of the legislation coming into the force of law. It would also create new rules for citizenship by descent from the legislation's start date, ensuring a fair and inclusive Citizenship Act going forward.

This legislation offers the best solution for a welcoming and inclusive future. It would restore citizenship to those who might otherwise have lost it, and it would address the concerns from Parli-

ment and the Ontario Superior Court with the Harper Conservatives' exclusionary legislative amendments from 2009.

I hope we can all continue to work together to quickly pass the legislation and provide a better regime for future generations of Canadians.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask my colleague about the actual unconstitutionality of the bill. The bill came from a ruling of unconstitutionality from the Superior Court of Justice in Ontario, which is a lower court in Ontario. Six months ago, it did not advance to the Court of Appeal in Ontario.

Some judges may actually have some other, perhaps more experienced views on what is constitutional and what is unconstitutional that could come out before the bill lands on the floor of the House of Commons. Does the member think it is the government's job to take a lower court decision and bring it all the way to the House of Commons before it actually appeals that decision?

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Mr. Speaker, of course, the judgment of a court can be considered at any level. In this case, a solid, thorough decision made by the Ontario court was accepted and agreed to by the government. That gives reasonable grounds to proceed with what is really correcting an injustice that dates back to the previous Conservative government.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, which was quite clear. He did a good job explaining that the government wanted to correct an injustice by ensuring that people who have wrongly lost their citizenship could get it back.

During the debates, at least yesterday's debate, the official opposition pointed out that this bill could have negative effects, specifically that it could create a birth tourism of sorts.

I would like my colleague to comment on that.

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Mr. Speaker, yes, I heard the same speech. That is simply not true.

It is about helping those who lost their citizenship because of a decision made by the previous Conservative government. The bill simply seeks to correct an injustice that has been created. It does not open the door to other tourists. The government is really targeting certain people who have been forgotten and lost their citizenship because of that decision by the previous Conservative government.

Government Orders

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Yukon for his speech.

Obviously, the NDP agrees that this historic mistake needs to be corrected. In a democracy, there is nothing more precious than citizenship, which allows us to take part in the work of government. It is extremely serious that people could lose their citizenship because of a legislative error.

However, we are a bit concerned that, in the current wording of the bill, there is no implementation deadline for the act to come into force. I would like my colleague to reassure us that, once this bill is passed, it will come into force as quickly as possible.

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Mr. Speaker, I thank my NDP colleague for his comments. I agree with him, and I, too, hope that this legislation will come into force as soon as possible.

[*English*]

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on a question from my colleague from Calgary Centre to ask the member for Yukon. We know the legislation is unconstitutional and not in compliance with Canada's international obligations. Does the member think it is reasonable to expect the Canadian government to take a position where it could deny access to citizenship for at least another five years, hoping to get a different ruling, and spend perhaps millions of dollars in the process of doing that?

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the question.

I think it is really very precise in that, if we are to achieve correcting this injustice, then we can stand on firm ground to accept the Ontario court's decision and proceed accordingly.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Carbon Pricing; the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Public Services and Procurement; the hon. member for Calgary Centre, Finance.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to participate in the debate on Bill C-71, which would correct injustices and the institutional nature of the Citizenship Act. I am happy because, ironically, the Bloc Québécois set out to do just that in 2007 and worked incredibly hard on it. I am choosing my words carefully.

I would therefore like to acknowledge the work of the former member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges, Meili Faille, who took stock and made a list. I know her a bit, so I can imagine how she weighed and re-weighed every detail. She compiled an exhaustive list of problems relating to citizenship. I feel that she must have assessed the individual situation of every Canadian and every Quebecker. Under her leadership, the top experts across Canada worked on two studies, which many of us have quoted in the House. What makes this speech a bit special, if not fantastic, is that it is a privilege for me to talk about the work of Ms. Faille, given that she is now my assistant here in Parliament, and that of her friend Don Chapman, from

the Lost Canadians society. Right now, he is a lost Canadian who might be on the high seas or on another continent. I do not know where he is watching from, but I salute him.

I realize that this bill represents an important moment for the families caught up in this circus. It is high time that this citizenship bill made its way through the House. Citizenship is not a privilege; it is a fundamental right rooted in our collective identity.

In Quebec, this concept obviously has a particular resonance. Citizenship is also a reflection of our pride and our desire to build a fair, inclusive society that brings us together and reflects who we are. Obviously, I dream of Quebec citizenship. However, before that, there are steps to be taken. It is unfathomable to ignore the critical importance of this right to full participation in our society, regardless of political stripe.

There are different ways we can become citizens. Some of us were fortunate enough to be born in Canada. Others are newcomers who chose Canada, settled in our communities and obtained their citizenship. They are sometimes called naturalized citizens. There is also citizenship by descent. We are talking about people who were born outside the country to a parent who is a Canadian citizen.

Today, we must address a crucial aspect of the Citizenship Act that concerns the fairness and inclusiveness of the system. It is well established in Canada that, with very few exceptions, citizenship is automatically granted to anyone born on Canadian soil. However, there are significant challenges when it comes to citizenship by descent for those born outside Canada. These are challenges that we absolutely must resolve.

The Citizenship Act currently imposes a significant restriction. Citizenship by descent is limited to the first generation. In other words, children born abroad to Canadian citizens can only obtain Canadian citizenship if the parent was born in Canada or acquired Canadian citizenship by naturalization before their birth. This restriction excludes those who, due to personal or professional circumstances, have had children born abroad. These days, this is something that can happen to anyone. What's more, it also prevents Canadians born or naturalized in Canada from applying for citizenship for children adopted internationally. This creates inequality and frustration for many individuals who, despite their deep connection to Canada, find themselves unfairly deprived of the rights and privileges of citizenship.

Government Orders

Furthermore, the previous legislation, prior to the amendments made from 2009 to 2015, led to even more complex situations for some, including lost Canadians. These are individuals who lost their Canadian citizenship at the age of 28 if they were born abroad to Canadian parents during a specific period of time, between February 15, 1977, and April 16, 1981, before the law limited the transmission of citizenship to the first generation in 2009. Why keep it simple when it can be complicated?

• (1655)

The amendments proposed in Bill C-71 represent a significant step forward in resolving these long-standing injustices. They seek to expand opportunities to hand down citizenship rights beyond the first generation, which would enable Canadians who are born abroad to hand down their citizenship to their own children, even if those children are born outside Canada. These changes also address situations that were left unresolved by previous reforms and they provide a solution for Canadians who were unfairly deprived of their citizenship under the old legal framework.

By supporting these reforms, we are affirming that our commitment to a citizenship policy that reflects the principles of fairness and justice is essential and that we want to ensure that every citizen, regardless of their place of birth or place of residence, can have their rights fully recognized and protected. By making these changes, we are taking an important step toward fairer, more inclusive legislation that guarantees that our citizenship system is fair for everyone. Since the Citizenship Act was passed in 1977, we have seen that many Canadians, including many Quebecers, are being deprived of this essential right because of legal shortcomings. Not only does this situation create obstacles in their daily lives, but it also affects their dignity and sense of belonging.

In Quebec, we have always valued justice and equality. It is imperative for these values to be reflected in how we treat citizenship. The proposed changes have to go well beyond superficial adjustments. They have to ensure that this inalienable right is respected and protected for everyone, including those in Quebec who are fighting to have their status recognized.

Yesterday I was explaining to students from Noranda School in Rouyn-Noranda, who were here visiting Parliament Hill, why our work in committee is fundamental and just as important as our contributions to the debates here in the House. We have here a fine example of how much time it takes and how much work is required in committee. I commend the work of exceptional organizations and people like Don Chapman, who I was talking about earlier. These people work tirelessly for the cause of lost Canadians. I can attest to the contribution of the Chapman family, Brenda and Don, and all they have done for everyone who has asked them for help. I thank the Chapmans on their behalf. Many interventions have been made in committee.

I listened carefully to yesterday's debate on this bill. It is true that the Conservatives put members in a very delicate position in 2008. In response to the parliamentary work of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, they implemented the vast majority of the corrective actions recommended in the report entitled "Reclaiming Citizenship for Canadians: A Report on the Loss of Canadian Citizenship". While that legislation did fix some aspects, it al-

so contained a controversial provision that limited citizenship to the first generation only, excluding the second generation born abroad. This provision was an integral part of Bill C-37.

Those who followed the debates at the time will recall that the Harper government clearly stipulated that Bill C-37 would be repealed if it was not passed in its entirety. If that vote had not taken place, thousands of Second World War veterans, as well as tens of thousands of their wives and children, would have lost their rights in their own country. How appalling, considering the important contribution that veterans have made to the quality of life and freedom of people in this country.

A war bride who was 20 years old in 1946 would now be 98. Many of those veterans and their wives have passed away. If MPs back then had rejected the first-generation limit imposed by Bill C-37, those people would have died without citizenship, all because of the attitude of the Harper government at the time.

I have been closely following the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration's study on Bill S-245 and the enormous amount of work that has been done to try to fix the problematic situations. However, this bill does not actually include the changes that the lost Canadians wanted to see. It is also important to remember that, while all this was happening, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice in Toronto was hearing a case on the constitutionality of certain aspects of the Citizenship Act. The Liberal government waited until it received an ultimatum before taking action.

• (1700)

The bill responds to an Ontario Superior Court of Justice ruling which declared that the first generation limit on citizenship applicable to the children of Canadians born abroad is unconstitutional.

On December 19, 2023, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice struck down section 3(3)(a) of the Citizenship Act on the ground that it violated mobility rights under section 6(1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which states that "Every citizen of Canada has the right to enter, remain in and leave Canada", and section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, entitled "Equality rights", which states that every individual is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.

The Government of Canada chose not to appeal this decision and has finally acknowledged the inequity of this restriction. The government has until December 19, 2024, to pass Bill C-71. The Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of this bill because the Bloc Québécois believes that it rectifies historical injustices.

In his decision, the judge accepted the argument that women are particularly affected because the second-generation cut-off discriminates against them based on their sex, forcing women of child-bearing age to choose between travelling, studying or having a career abroad and returning to Canada in order to maintain their right to pass on citizenship to their children. There is something rather absurd about that. The Bloc Québécois supports any legislation that puts an end to discrimination against women.

Government Orders

As the Bloc Québécois critic for sport, I also want to commend Erin Brooks, a very talented surfer with roots in Quebec who grew up in Tofino, British Columbia. We heard from her at committee. Unfortunately, her dream of representing us in Paris at the 2024 Olympic Games did not come to pass. After spending more than three years in administrative limbo thanks to the Conservatives, she was unable to straighten out her citizenship issues in time to qualify. The Citizenship Act needs to be overhauled to end this kind of nonsense. We are proud of Erin and we wish her a successful career in sport representing us, Quebec and Canada.

Bill C-71 corrects the situation for the remaining categories of people who have been left out despite successive reforms to the Citizenship Act. It is imperative that we tackle the challenges and injustices in our citizenship legislation with determination and compassion. The amendments proposed in Bill C-71 provide a valuable opportunity to address persistent gaps and expand access to citizenship for everyone who is entitled to it.

By extending the opportunity to pass on citizenship beyond the first generation and by resolving the outstanding issues left unresolved by previous reforms, we are strengthening our commitment to fairness and inclusiveness. Every individual deserves to have their rights fully recognized, regardless of where they were born or where they live.

In supporting these reforms, we are not only advancing our legislative agenda, but also affirming our commitment to building a fairer citizenship system that respects the fundamental principles of equality. It is time to ensure that our citizenship policy truly reflects the values of justice and inclusiveness to which we aspire. Through these actions, we are demonstrating our commitment to a future where all citizens, regardless of their background, find their place and have their rights fully respected.

In closing, I want to highlight two things. It seems rather ironic to talk about Canadian citizenship and the laws of this Parliament. Back in 1995, I remember when Canada gave thousands of people the right to vote by granting citizenship to newcomers who did not have the background or family ties that come to mind when we think of the lost Canadians. I find it extremely offensive when political issues are used to promote or defend what people call “Canadian unity”. We saw a government illegally fast-track the citizenship process. Then there are the people who contributed and paid their taxes their entire lives who may not even have realized they never had citizenship and who were marginalized and denied certain rights.

• (1705)

Something is wrong there.

Take, for example, Roméo Dallaire, an outstanding citizen. He did not have Canadian citizenship when he did the work in Rwanda that made him so famous and that made us so proud of him and his integrity. These are very real situations that lost citizens encounter and that we must put an end to today in the interest of justice and fairness.

I have a little time left. I would like to use it to congratulate my friend, Louis-Philippe Sauvé, who was elected in the riding of LaSalle—Émard—Verdun. I met him about 15 or 20 years ago in

the youth wings of the Bloc Québécois and the Parti Québécois. He is a hard-working activist, and he has proven that over the past few weeks by earning the trust of the people of LaSalle—Émard—Verdun. I look forward to welcoming him to the Bloc Québécois benches.

• (1710)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives claim to defend freedom, but when they amended the Citizenship Act, they deprived many Canadians of their rights and their identity as Canadians.

I think that my colleague will agree with me that this is hardly surprising, coming from the Conservatives, and that Bill C-71 is a good way to correct such flaws, as he mentioned in his speech.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I think that partisanship will always have its place in debates on certain issues. However, on other issues, dignity must come first in the House. In that regard, the government is indeed going to support this motion. I invite members to show respect to these people who are in a delicate situation by fast-tracking this bill, which has an expiry date, I should point out, and respecting the court's ruling.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague. This historical error caused people to lose their citizenship, their rights and access to services. They became second-class citizens. Children became stateless and were stuck in limbo, although limbo apparently no longer exists because the church officially abolished it.

I would like to talk about the Conservatives' position. They talk about citizenship tourism and birth tourism. That makes me think of the years of darkness under the Stephen Harper government, when Jason Kenney eliminated health care for asylum seekers and refugees, claiming that these people were leaving their countries and their families to get health care here in Quebec and Canada. It seems like more of the same with the current batch of Conservatives.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, Richard Desjardins painted a picture that I always liked when he said that limbo must be somewhere in northern Ontario. In this instance, that is more or less the case for people who do not have their citizenship. In this context, it is definitely a matter of dignity. It is time to stop seeing problems where there are none. It is time to stop seeing conspiracy theories where there are none. It is time to show courage, dignity and respect toward those individuals.

Yes, the Bloc Québécois will support this bill. I thank the NDP and my Liberal colleagues for doing the same.

Government Orders

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment. I want to congratulate my colleague on his speech. I am a proud sovereignist and I am often asked whether my work in Ottawa is interesting. I say that it is, because when the Bloc Québécois takes a position, we do so as if we are defining the parameters of our future country.

We just heard an eloquent speech that set out the Bloc Québécois's position on citizenship. Anyone who claims that asserting the right to be recognized and respected for our differences is xenophobic or racist is mistaken. That speech was a concrete demonstration of how we in the Bloc Québécois would one day like to have Quebec citizenship, but in a country that is inclusive.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I sincerely thank my colleague from Montcalm.

The topic under discussion today is not a political issue. I especially want to make sure that the former member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges, Meilidreuil-Soulanges, Meili Failles, hears these words of gratitude. I am sure that she is listening to us with some emotion right now, because this battle has been a long one. It led her to forge great friendships, especially with Don Chapman and many others.

However, some issues are raising concerns. People have suffered because of this situation. With them in mind, the Bloc Québécois is supporting this bill to correct the situation. Sometimes, playing politics is okay, I do it, but other times, we have to put the greater good of people and citizenship first.

• (1715)

[*English*]

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so excited and happy to be back in the House of Commons to represent the good people of London West, and to also see my colleagues, who are energized and ready to serve Canadians.

I will be sharing my time with my amazing colleague, the member for Markham—Unionville.

[*Translation*]

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the second reading debate on Bill C-71, a bill that would amend the Citizenship Act to expand access to Canadian citizenship by affiliation beyond the first generation.

I also want to thank my colleagues in the House who spoke before me and advocated on behalf of lost Canadians because of the complexity and shortcomings of previous legislative changes to the Citizenship Act under the Harper government.

[*English*]

Bill C-71 proposes amendments to the Canadian Citizenship Act in response to issues raised in both Parliament and the courts. These changes would restore citizenship to the remaining lost Canadians, the individuals who either could not become citizens or who lost their citizenship due to outdated legislative provisions.

While previous amendments helped many, a small cohort of lost Canadians remain. The legislative amendments outlined in Bill C-71 would help lost Canadians and their descendants regain or ob-

tain citizenship. They also address the status of descendants impacted by the Harper Conservatives' first-generation limit. The revised law would establish clear guidelines for acquiring Canadian citizenship by descent.

Once this legislation is enacted, the harmful first-generation limit would no longer apply. It would allow Canadian citizens born abroad to pass their citizenship to their children, provided they can demonstrate a substantial connection to Canada. Canadian parents born outside the country would be able to transfer citizenship to their child if they have lived in Canada for more than three years before the child's birth. These changes would result in a more inclusive and fair Citizenship Act and would right the wrongs of the previous Conservative government.

Additionally, this new legislation would continue to reduce the differences between children born abroad and adopted by Canadians and those born abroad to Canadian parents. Any children adopted overseas by a Canadian parent before the law takes effect would be eligible for the current direct citizenship grant for adoptees, even if they were previously excluded by the first-generation limit. Once the new law is in place, the same criteria would apply to children adopted by Canadian citizens abroad. If the adoptive parent born outside of Canada can show a substantial connection to Canada, the adopted child would be eligible for citizenship as well.

Basically, we are saying that Bill C-71 would restore citizenship to those who have been wrongfully excluded and would establish consistent rules of citizenship by descent moving forward.

I would like to pause here to thank the many families who have worked alongside our committees and our staff, and the many people who have helped get us to this place where the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship has introduced this legislation.

Not only do Conservatives not want this bill to pass, they spent the whole afternoon yesterday filibustering and trying to move motions that would delay its passing and delay the many Canadians who have been harmed in the process from receiving justice. It is important to note that this legislation would not only fix the mess the Harper government created, but would also respond to the reckless government the current Leader of the Opposition was a member of.

Government Orders

In 2009, Harper and the Leader of the Opposition moved legislative amendments to the Citizenship Act to restrict citizenship by descent to the first generation born abroad. For many young Canadians who were perhaps too young to remember, the Leader of the Opposition was also part of the government that introduced Bill C-24. Not only did it seek to create second-class citizens, it also gave itself the power to revoke citizenship for dual citizens by targeting nearly one million Canadians. Therefore, it is not a surprise that Conservatives not only want to prevent Bill C-71, a bill that is in collaboration with all parties in the House to restore the Charter rights of Canadians, but also want to delay it even at committee.

Being a Canadian citizen is a privilege we should never take for granted. In fact, we should all advocate as strongly for our rights to citizenship as the lost Canadians have done for themselves. Canadian citizenship represents more than just a legal status. It embodies the ongoing commitment and responsibility.

● (1720)

What does it mean to be Canadian? There is no right answer to this question, and that is one of the great things about our country. Let us start with how our commitment defines us. One of those commitments is to understand ourselves and our history, as flawed as it is, and to work toward a better future for all. That is the oath that some of us took to become citizens, and that is the oath we should all continue to honour.

Our country has a rich and complicated history, dating from before the founding of Canada. The indigenous people who have lived on these lands since time immemorial have stewarded the country we all love and call Canada today. Since Confederation, many diverse people have chosen Canada as their new home. Apart from indigenous people, every Canadian's history begins with the story of a migrant.

[*Translation*]

Canada is known for its commitment to multiculturalism and inclusion. This commitment was made official in the 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism Act, which promotes the recognition and celebration of diversity.

Canada's approach to multiculturalism emphasizes the active integration and celebration of its citizens' diverse cultural identities. This approach creates a society in which people from different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds can retain their identity, take pride in their roots and feel a sense of belonging in our country. Canada's communities, from coast to coast to coast, are a living example of multiculturalism.

At the heart of Canadian identity lies our commitment to human rights. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens and residents, including freedom of expression, freedom of religion and freedom of peaceful assembly, as well as the rights to equality and non-discrimination.

Canada also demonstrates its commitment to human rights through its support for many international human rights initiatives. Over the years, Canada has defended the rights of women and marginalized groups, both nationally and internationally.

Our citizenship provides security, rights and opportunities. It helps people to feel more included in Canadian society and gives them the opportunity to participate in it. It offers many benefits that improve the lives of individuals and communities.

One of those advantages is the fundamental right to actively participate in the country's democratic process. This includes the right to vote in federal, provincial, territorial and municipal elections, which empowers citizens to have a direct impact on government policy. It is also important to note that only citizens can run for office, giving them the opportunity to represent their communities and contribute to the governance of Canada.

All Canadian citizens also enjoy all the legal protections and rights set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This ensures that their civil liberties and rights as individuals are protected at the highest level, in addition to providing a solid framework for justice and equality.

[*English*]

While we are on the subject of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, I would like to remind members that the leader of the official opposition has hinted that he would use the notwithstanding clause if given the opportunity. Canadians should take note of this and of what the Conservatives have done in the past, in particular, as I mentioned earlier, what they did in 2009.

Many Canadians who are around the same age as me maybe do not remember what happened, but in 2009, the Harper government took the right to interfere with Canadians' rights. They amended the Citizenship Act to limit citizenship by descent by introducing the first-generation limit. I would also like to remind the House that the Ontario Superior Court ruled that the first-generation limit imposed by the Harper government following legislative amendments in 2009 was unconstitutional in terms of both mobility rights and equality rights, and it is a clear example of how the Conservative Party continues to disenfranchise Canadians.

Don Chapman is one of those people who were affected by this generational limit. He has dedicated his time, advocated for Bill C-71 and worked through different committees to amend it and get to the place where we are today. I just want to give him a shout-out because I know how hard he worked, how many phone calls he had to make and how many of my colleagues he called over a long period of time.

● (1725)

Another important advantage of Canadian citizenship is access to the Canadian passport. This passport is recognized worldwide as one of the most valuable and offers visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to many countries.

Government Orders

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask a question about numbers, but I just want to preface by saying to the member that Bill C-37, when it was passed in 2009 and introduced the first-generation limit, was actually supported by all parties in the House twice, on February 8 and on February 15, with unanimous consent votes.

With respect to numbers, I looked at Statistics Canada, and in 2016, a study done by Bérard-Chagnon and Canon said there were four million Canadians living abroad, which was a 36% increase since 1990.

According to the study it was using for the United Nations, dating back to a 2017 study showing the progression, the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada found, in its estimate, that there could be as many as 2.7 million Canadians living abroad. An updated estimate in 2016 said there could be between three million and 5.6 million.

Regarding the last breakdown, I will put the question to the member. They did a breakdown, thanks to the United Nations, the World Bank and the OECD, and they found the following: 51% are citizens by descent; 33% are Canadians by birth; and 15% are naturalized Canadians, like I am.

I am going to put to the member the same question I put to the minister the other day. How many persons living abroad will therefore be eligible to apply to the department for a proof of citizenship document and thereafter a Canadian passport?

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from my colleague opposite, who also sits on the same committee as me and has had the opportunity to meet with the families and to hear from them. We have done this study. Maybe he should not have filibustered yesterday when we were trying to pass the motion on lost Canadians.

I mentioned earlier that there are still a small number of Canadians who are still left behind among the lost Canadians, who are waiting to get their citizenship approved, whether their parents gave birth outside of Canada or adopted their children. Some of these families were at our committee, so perhaps the member opposite should pay attention to some of the visitors we have to our committee when we are doing really important work for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I think that, like me, you noticed that the member for London West was going to talk about Don Chapman in her speech, but she did not have enough time to finish.

I am particularly interested in what she had to say about Mr. Chapman. I would like to give her a minute or two, at your discretion, so that we can hear her thoughts about him.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Madam Speaker, I deeply appreciate the opportunity that my Bloc Québécois colleague has given me to continue and to finish expressing my thoughts on this bill, which I consider very important for all Canadians everywhere in Canada.

Don Chapman is one of those Canadians who was adversely affected by what the Harper government did and what the Leader of the Opposition continues to support. Even now, during our commit-

tee meetings, when we try to advance the work, he keeps putting up roadblocks.

I am extremely grateful for the support of the Bloc Québécois, the Green Party and the NDP, who continue to support us so that we can serve Canadians. For the families we have met, the stories we have heard and the harms these families have suffered, it is our job as elected officials to fix the problem as soon as possible.

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is clear at this point that, among the Bloc, the Liberals, and the NDP, we have a lot in common with respect to seeing this important work go forward. Unfortunately, we are not seeing the same coming out of the Conservatives, and the member has spoken about this quite a bit.

We know that the Conservatives voted against provisions that would have rectified the unconstitutional second-generation cut-off amendments. The Conservatives filibustered the bill for 30 hours, which I believe the member also spoke about, at committee. They stalled third reading debate for the bill eight times. Instead of seeing the actions required for us to come together to help the exact people whom we are elected to represent, we are seeing the Conservatives playing with people's lives. Could the member please speak to that?

• (1730)

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Madam Speaker, my colleague on the other side said very well how terrible it has been. It has been really hard to do the work that Canadians sent us to do on our immigration committee, and sometimes it has been in the front of those families that have been harmed by those actions of the Conservatives. Watching them filibuster the work that we want to do has been very difficult.

I appreciate the support that we have received to move this forward. It is important for Canadians, and it is important that we do right by the people who have been wronged by the former Conservative government.

Mr. Paul Chiang (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the chamber today to give some more context for the proposed legislation to amend Canada's Citizenship Act.

I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are gathered today on the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin and Anishinabe people. I would also like to recognize that indigenous people have been here since time immemorial. The contributions they have made to our country in the past, present and future have been and will continue to be significant. It is our responsibility to continue to work towards reconciliation in coordination and collaboration with indigenous people each and every day.

Government Orders

Being Canadian means taking steps to tackle inequality and injustice within our society. We do this not only through our words but, more importantly, through our actions. Bill C-71 proposes an amendment to the Citizenship Act in response to issues raised in both Parliament and the courts. These changes would restore citizenship to the remaining lost Canadians, individuals who either could not become citizens or who lost their citizenship due to outdated legislative provisions. While previous amendments helped many, a small cohort of lost Canadians remains.

The legislative amendments outlined in Bill C-71 would help lost Canadians and their descendants regain or obtain citizenship. They would also address the status of descendants impacted by the Harper Conservatives' first-generation limit. The revised law would establish clear guidelines for acquiring Canadian citizenship by descent. Once the legislation is enacted, the harmful first-generation limit would no longer apply, allowing Canadian citizens born abroad to pass their citizenship on to their children, provided they can demonstrate a substantial connection to Canada. A Canadian parent born outside the country would be able to transfer citizenship to the child if they have lived in Canada for a cumulative total of three years before the child's birth.

These changes would result in a more inclusive and fair Citizenship Act and would right the wrongs of the previous Conservative government.

Additionally, the new legislation would continue to reduce the differences between children born abroad and adopted by Canadians, and those born abroad to Canadian parents. Any child adopted overseas by a Canadian parent before the law takes effect would be eligible for the current direct citizenship grant for adoptees, even if they were previously excluded by the first-generation limit. Once the law is in place, the same criteria would apply to children adopted by Canadian citizens abroad. If the adoptive parent born outside Canada can show a substantial connection to Canada, the adopted child would be eligible for citizenship.

Bill C-71 would restore citizenship to those who have been wrongfully excluded and would establish consistent rules for citizenship by descent going forward. These updates build on the work done by the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration on Bill S-245, further refining the proposal and more comprehensively addressing the issues raised by the courts.

Canadian citizenship represents more than just a legal status; it embodies an ongoing commitment and responsibility. What does it mean to be Canadian? There is no one right answer to this question, and that is one of the great things about our country.

Let us start with how our commitments define us. One of those commitments is to understand ourselves and our history, flaws and all. Our country has a rich history, dating from before the founding of Canada to the indigenous people who have lived on these lands since time immemorial. Since Confederation, many diverse people have chosen Canada as their new home. With the exception of indigenous people, every Canadian's history begins with the story of a migrant. As Canadians, we have an ongoing commitment to reconciliation with indigenous people as we continue to strengthen our relationship with first nations, Inuit and Métis people across the country.

Another commitment we make as Canadians is to come together to build a stronger country for everyone. That is evident in many ways. Canadians spring into action to help those in need, and it is not limited to family, friends and neighbours.

• (1735)

We are there to help, whether that is through emergency response efforts to fight devastating wildfires or floods that threaten our community, keeping food banks well stocked or supporting local charities to help the most vulnerable among us. While these efforts may vary in scope and scale, the sentiment remains the same: We look out for each other when it matters. We know that our country's future prosperity hinges on that sense of goodwill and our continued collective efforts.

Canadians are also committed to inclusion. We choose to welcome diverse cultures, languages and beliefs, and that makes us unique. We value the experiences that have made our fellow Canadians who they are, just as we value the experiences others have. We respect the values of others as they respect ours.

We celebrate this choice. Take Citizenship Week, for example. Every year, across the country and around the world, Canadians use this fantastic opportunity to show pride in their diversity, cultures and achievements. Celebrating our differences helps us learn from one another and better understand the challenges and opportunities that arise in our communities. In turn, we identify new solutions to the problems we must overcome together. Though we are diverse, there are certain ties that bind us. In addition to helping others in times of need, Canadians also work to build opportunities for success and seek to share the benefits of that success with our communities.

How someone becomes a Canadian can vary greatly. As the minister said, it is important to recognize that. Regardless of how one becomes a citizen, we can all agree that we value each and every Canadian equally. Some of us are lucky enough to be born in Canada and are Canadians by birth. Others are newcomers who chose Canada, joined our communities and earned their citizenship. They are referred to as naturalized Canadians. Last, we have Canadian citizens by descent: individuals who are born outside our country to a Canadian parent, who proudly passes down their citizenship.

We hold and value each of these citizens as equal and as part of our diverse country. While we each define how we are Canadians in our own way, Parliament defines who becomes and how someone becomes a Canadian through the Citizenship Act. Our citizenship process and rules should be fair, equal and transparent.

Government Orders

However, it has recently become clear that the act must be amended to address the 2009 legislative amendments that excluded individuals due to the first-generation limit. The Ontario Superior Court has been clear: The Harper Conservatives' first-generation limit is unconstitutional, on both mobility and equality rights. Bill C-71 introduces inclusive changes that would address the challenges raised by the courts on citizenship by descent. This would apply particularly to those born overseas to Canadian parents.

Today we have a choice. We can commit to addressing past wrongs, take care of those among us who have faced injustice and inequality, be more inclusive and share the benefits we enjoy as citizens with others who deserve to call themselves Canadians too. As proud citizens of this country, we must uphold the commitments that define us as Canadians, whether we are citizens by birth, by choice or by descent.

Whether we are born in Canada or in another country, we are bound by our shared values, our mutual respect for our country and for each other and our enthusiasm to call ourselves Canadians. Canadian citizenship is a fundamental part of who we are. It unites us, opens up opportunities and challenges us to live up to our values: self-knowledge, service to others, democracy, equality and inclusion.

• (1740)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, the previous member who spoke, the member for London West, made a point, so I want to make a point to the parliamentary secretary. I want to just congratulate him on the multi-meeting filibuster he conducted on the draft report on Afghanistan. He was able to make it last from May well into September, and it ended only yesterday. He did quite the job on it. It is unusual to have a draft report debated in public. I invite members of the public to go watch that particular filibuster.

The member mentioned the court ruling, so I want to draw his attention to paragraph 265 of the judge's ruling. In it, she said that of the errors in processing in the sample size she looked at, 50% were the fault of the department. The department was unable to provide accurate information. In one case, the department sent the proof of citizenship document with the wrong date on it. In another case, it sent the wrong document. It had the wrong person's name, and it was not even the name of another family member.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, I hear the member for Waterloo heckling me, as she did yesterday.

I had asked the minister a question earlier in the debate, and I am going to ask the parliamentary secretary: How many persons who are abroad currently would be eligible for the provisions in Bill C-71?

Mr. Paul Chiang: Madam Speaker, I am glad to be here to speak to Bill C-71. We have worked on this issue at many meetings of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. I hope we can move the agenda forward and get the legislation passed so we can bring lost Canadians home.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for speaking to this very im-

portant issue and the real impacts on Canadians and those who are denied their citizenship as a result of the outdated rules that were put into place by the Harper government.

I have an interesting point. I was given a response by the leader of the Conservative Party to a family that was asking about his stance on this exact legislation. His response, which I find is interesting, was this: "Conservatives will help preserve what it means to be a citizen of this country and fundamentally what it means to be Canadian. Please be assured that they will continue to support and advocate for this legislation to reach its third reading in the House of Commons."

We know this is blatantly false. We know that the bill has been stalled, basically, eight times since last October by the Conservatives to prevent it from reaching third reading. Can the member please speak to why he believes the leader of the Conservative Party is misleading families that deserve to have their basic human rights met?

Mr. Paul Chiang: Madam Speaker, I am very happy to stand here to say that we, as the government, would love to work with the Bloc and the NDP to pass the legislation. I understand that the Conservatives are filibustering everything and trying to change everything around. I am very committed to getting Bill C-71 passed because it affects constituents in my riding. They are also lost Canadians, and they are waiting for the bill to pass so that we can make everyone a Canadian.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I remind the hon. member for Thornhill and the hon. member for Waterloo that someone was speaking and we should respect that right.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question about children born abroad and adopted, whose parent passed away, and who were denied citizenship.

Why do the Conservatives think that these children, who have already gone through the pain of losing a parent and being born into difficult conditions, should be excluded from the citizenship process?

• (1745)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Chiang: Madam Speaker, we as a government want to pass the proposed legislation so we can bring all Canadians here, all the lost Canadians, so we can make them Canadian citizens. I am so happy to work with the members from the Bloc and from the NDP, and we are hoping to make Bill C-71 legislation.

Government Orders

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today in the House, the day after by-elections in two provinces in Canada. There are some commonalities in these two outcomes. In both ridings, the Conservative vote went up by 50% from the last general election. In addition, as in the election in June, when a Conservative was elected in Toronto—St. Paul's, another safe Liberal riding turned out to be not so safe at the end of the day. Something has to happen for people to start listening to what Canadians are thinking. For those across the aisle who are still pretending there is not a problem, that Canadians do not see a problem in the way the country is being run, I ask them to start paying attention and change their direction.

Canadians see clearly how badly government is being run and how they are being marginalized and divided; they are demanding change as soon as possible. One indication of the pure government incompetence is the way the Liberals have managed immigration. One year ago, I was directed to serve on the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. It is not a strength I had before, but my office in Calgary Centre has an immigration caseload that is quite large.

Let me take a moment here to thank my staff in Calgary, Shaney Pap and Laura Wlodarczyk, because they do a fantastic job for Canadians, new Canadians, visitors and families that are navigating the maze of Canada's immigration process. It is a complex enough program, and it has been grossly mismanaged over the past four years.

How do we deal with a backlog of 2.6 million files? We should expedite 1.2 million files per year for two years in a system that previously managed about 320,000 files per year. They increased the workforce by 50%, from 9,200 employees in 2020 to 13,685 in 2023. It was a big increase in government, but corners were cut; we see the consequences of that with the recent arrests that are happening in Canada.

Why is the legislation before us? In December 2023, Ontario's Superior Court declared the first-generation cut-off rule in the Citizenship Act unconstitutional. That ruling was a damning indictment of the Liberal-run citizenship department. The court found a staggering 50% error rate in the processing of citizenship applications. This means that half of all applicants were mishandled, leading to abnormally long processing times and widespread malpractice. Such a high error rate is unacceptable and speaks volumes about incompetence and mismanagement in the current administration. That is the rationale for finding the previous law unconstitutional.

I might suggest that fixing the problem would make the whole issue less unconstitutional, but Bill C-71 proposes to grant citizenship to individuals born abroad with at least one Canadian parent having spent 1,095 days in Canada, the equivalent of three years. At the same time, it fails to require these days to be consecutive and lacks provisions for criminal record checks. This approach is deeply flawed and undermines the very essence of what it means to be a Canadian citizen.

Citizenship is not just a legal status. It is a commitment to our values, our laws and our way of life. By lowering the standards for obtaining citizenship, the NDP-Liberals are devaluing this precious

status and putting our national security at risk. The world looks at a Canadian passport as being a very important document.

I forgot to mention at the beginning of my speech that I am splitting my time with the member of Parliament for Thornhill.

Let us compare Canada's rules with rules around the world. The requirement is three years in Canada, according to the proposed bill, and five years in most other democracies. This would be five years of real connection, not just 1,095 days sporadically spread out over a quarter century of a person's life. Bill C-71 would remove the 2009 limit that only allows citizenship for the first generation born abroad.

● (1750)

Under the bill, children born abroad to a Canadian parent, even if the parent was also born abroad, can gain citizenship as long as the parent meets a weak substantial connection test. The parent only needs to show 1,095 cumulative days of physical presence in Canada at any point in their life. Since the days do not need to be consecutive, people from multiple generations living abroad, with limited and sporadic ties to Canada, can still claim citizenship for their children. This weakens the substantial connection requirement and risks creating a class of citizens with minimal ties to this country.

Moreover, the government has not provided any analysis of how many new Canadians will be created by Bill C-71. Despite the potential for tens of thousands of new applicants, especially with the removal of the first-generation limit, the Liberals have failed to disclose how many people will gain citizenship through the legislation. This lack of transparency, a common thread, is concerning and prevents us from fully understanding the impact of the proposed bill. Bill C-71 would add thousands of new applications to an already overburdened system.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is already struggling with delays and errors in processing citizenship applications. Adding a significant volume of new applications from abroad would overwhelm the department, exacerbating the existing backlogs. This would lead to an even longer processing time and further erode trust in our citizenship process. The bill does not require individuals granted citizenship to undergo criminal background checks. This poses a potential security risk and undermines Canada's standards of who can become a citizen. Ensuring that new citizens are of good character and pose no threat to our society is a common-sense measure that should not be overlooked.

Government Orders

We do support parts of the bill. While we have significant concerns, there are aspects that we support. Conservatives support the restoration of citizenship to individuals who lost it because of non-application or rejected applications under section 8 of the former Citizenship Act . This primarily includes people born between February 15, 1977, and April 16, 1981, who were affected by the old rule that required them to apply to retain their citizenship before turning 28 years old. This was part of the original content of Senator Yonah Martin's Senate public bill, Bill S-245, which aimed to address these issues more directly.

We also support the extension of equal treatment to adopted children born abroad. Under the proposed changes, adopted children would be treated the same as biological children of Canadian citizens for the purposes of passing on citizenship. This was supported by Conservative members during the Bill S-245 clause-by-clause committee review, and it is consistent with our party's long-standing position on equal treatment for adopted children.

Conservatives are committed to fixing the broken citizenship system that the Liberals have neglected. We will enforce a more robust substantial connection requirement, streamline processes and address backlogs to ensure timely handling of citizenship applications.

Our approach will restore integrity and trust in the system, ensuring that Canadian citizenship remains a privilege earned through genuine connection and commitment to our great nation. After nine years under the government, Canadians have endured enough chaos and incompetence. It is time for a change. Only common-sense Conservatives will put an end to the Prime Minister's reckless mismanagement and fix our broken immigration and citizenship process. We will restore integrity, trust and efficiency to it, ensuring that Canadian citizenship remains a privilege earned through genuine connection and commitment to this great nation.

• (1755)

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to say how happy I am to see my colleague come back; he sits on the immigration committee with me.

I find it really interesting that he is complaining about the Liberals taking too much time to fix something that the Conservatives broke.

This is something that his Harper government, the same government that the current Leader of the Opposition sat in, did to leave Canadians behind and to create second-class citizens. Can the member opposite talk about that and why he thinks it is a Liberal problem when it is a problem that they created themselves?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, nine years would be a long time for a problem to exist, but somebody should have fixed something in nine years if that problem actually occurred nine years ago. If it was created nine years ago, I would ask this of my colleague on that side: Why did her party support the party that brought it to the House and voted, every one of them, for the same motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, obviously this is not about creating revolving

doors in this context, but about righting historic wrongs. I would like to know what my colleague from Calgary Centre would say to Canadian women who married a non-Canadian before 1947, who are nearly 100 years old now and who, because of the Conservatives' filibustering, may never see their most basic rights upheld before they die.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, that is something I am not too familiar with, but does the member have an example we could discuss? I am on board with discussing this with him. Maybe there are many examples of situations to draw from. We could look at a certain situation, but here we are developing a policy for all immigrants in Canada. I would be happy to look at this with my friend.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, it has been clear since day one, since June 2023, that the Conservatives do not want to rectify the unconstitutional second-generation cut-off rule for lost Canadians and their families. They voted against provisions that would have rectified the unconstitutional amendments. They filibustered the bill for 30 hours at committee, and they stalled reading debate for the bill eight times. One thing that I know is that actions speak louder than words, and their actions have been really clear.

Why are the Conservatives misleading family members with their fake commitments?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague that actions speak louder than words, so let us talk about actions here. Let us talk about how we are actually dealing with Canadians. Let us talk about the substantive test that made this ruling unconstitutional. That was the action of the Liberal government, which has been unable to deliver any efficiency in getting people through the immigration process.

A 50% failure rate because of mistakes is what makes this unconstitutional. That should be fixed forthwith. That would address the ruling of unconstitutionality that came with this.

Mr. Branden Leslie: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned the difference in the tests of someone's connection to Canada. Could he offer a few comments on the value of citizenship—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I apologize. The hon. member is not sitting in his seat.

The hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, sometimes it is hard to notice. Standing Order 16 was a great standing order when it was suspended temporarily, so we could sit at any place and actually speak. That way, we could represent our constituents from anywhere in here. I think benches were a great solution.

Government Orders

The member for Calgary Centre heard, as I did during the debate on a previous private member's bill that dealt with the same question, when I was asked the following many times: How many Canadians would be affected by this? How many persons who are outside the country would be affected by it?

We, on the Conservative side, obviously agree with the adoption provisions. We want adopted children to be treated exactly the same way as Canadians born or naturalized in Canada. Could the member tell me if he knows how many Canadians would be affected by it? The minister could not answer the question.

• (1800)

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, that is exactly one of the concerns we have. How many people are we dealing with this actual opening up of the immigration system in Canada? We have asked the question of the minister. We have asked the question of the department. Nobody knows. So there is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Thornhill.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, “broken, broken, broken” has been the refrain this summer, a summer that showed Canadians once again that the Prime Minister and the Liberal government are just not worth the cost. I suspect that was the refrain the Liberals felt last night after a brutal loss in a safe riding in Montreal, where Canadians sent the Prime Minister yet another message to say that his plan is not working. Nowhere is that truer than in our immigration system and citizenship system.

Let us go back to 2015, the last time the Conservative government was in charge. We had a consensus in this country, and it was a multi-generational consensus that existed long before 2015. It was a system that worked for our economy, with inflation low and home prices half of what they are today, and a system that kept our nation safe from terrorist attacks and multinational criminals. It was a system that was truly the envy of the world, through which a person could come to this country, welcomed with open arms, in an effort to build a life better than the one they left behind.

However, in just nine short years, none of that is true today. Housing prices keep going up, reaching record highs in cities small and large everywhere. International students are living seven, 10 or 15 to a basement, or even resorting to homeless shelters and food banks. Opportunity keeps slipping away in the face of higher taxes, more expensive groceries and, yes, more and more people in the way. People who came here after being promised a new beginning are instead finding that their hard work does not pay off, and shockingly, they do not want to stay. In fact, they want to leave. It is all made worse by a government that cannot seem to exhibit a single ounce of competence and organization in immigration. That is why the consensus is broken.

The Liberals lost a million people and still cannot tell Canadians where they are. The Minister of Public Safety, just a couple of weeks ago, insisted that the system is working when a terrorist was given citizenship. The member for Kingston and the Islands, who I missed very much over the summer, claims that the Liberals are delivering results for Canadians. However, Canadians keep sending them the same message that this is simply not the case, because nobody with an ounce of common sense can step back and say that

things in Canada are working as they should right now. If this is what the Liberals consider delivering results, then I would hate to see what not delivering results looks like. Even when they do not know where people are, the system still does not work and incompetence still reigns supreme.

The government gave citizenship to a terrorist who appeared in an ISIS snuff video and who somehow passed six security checks while plotting an attack in the country's biggest city. It gave a student visa to a guy planning a massacre of Jews on the anniversary of October 7, all while being exposed for not even checking his criminal record, the record check we do for any temporary resident. This was just in the past month. With each successive blow, the confidence among Canadians and our peers abroad in the integrity of our immigration system, in who we grant citizenship to and in the basic ability of government to get anything done is certainly in question.

No one of us should relish the fact that the Canadian immigration system seems to be falling apart right in front of us. I am a child of immigrants. There are many children of immigrants. There are many immigrants among us, many of our colleagues and constituents. We can testify to the power of a necessary immigration system, but a system that lacks integrity just does not work, and Canadians will not trust it. If not for immigration, my family would have never been able to experience the freedom of opportunity that this country gave us. If not for immigration, our communities would never benefit from the skills and expertise of countless doctors, nurses, engineers, tradespeople and the many people who built this country. If not for immigration, our country would never be strengthened by the values and pluralism of our newcomers, who are rooted in their culture, and what that provides for us.

What happened in less than a decade is nothing less than a tragedy, which is why it is even more disappointing to see the Liberal government plowing head-first into more misguided policies like this one rather than taking the time to fix what is wrong, further extending the reach of Canadian citizenship in the same ham-fisted and incompetent way that we have come to expect. The Liberals cannot even tell us how many people will be eligible under this piece of legislation. Surely, they can come up with a model.

Government Orders

• (1805)

The government cannot possibly believe it still has the confidence of anyone in this country when it simply says, “Trust us. We got this.” This bill threatens the integrity and security of the citizenship system. In December 2023, as we have said here in the House, the Ontario Superior Court declared that the first-generation cut-off rule for the Canadian Citizenship Act was unconstitutional. The Ontario Superior Court itself found a 50% error rate in the Liberal-run citizenship department, with abnormally long processing times and malpractice.

The NDP-Liberals took six months to respond to Bill C-71, showing a blatant lack of urgency, which they claim to have found today. This bill proposes to grant citizenship to individuals born abroad to at least one Canadian parent who has spent 1,095 days in Canada. We know that. This is without requiring that these days are consecutive and without provisions for checks in the Criminal Code. We know that other countries require more time and certainly more consecutive time. I do not think it is out of line to ask for a security check given what we have seen in just the last month in this country, with a public safety minister who says that the system is working as it should.

We see in this debate that the Liberal Party voted in favour of Bill C-37. That is the bill that was here prior to this one, which the Liberals seem to have conveniently forgotten about entirely today and certainly have forgotten that they supported not once, but twice. It was passed at first reading and second reading and there was unanimous consent to pass it. The Liberals voted in favour of the very ideas they are attacking in this bill today. This further erodes the lack of consensus I spoke about that exists in our system.

The Liberals are doubling down on citizenship by Zoom and pushing forward with the present path, even as evidence shows that we are not building enough homes, that we are not credentialing those who should be able to work here in their professions and that we are not doing our due diligence. That is clear. That is a message they should have heard over the summer and is a message they probably heard at the doors in Montreal last night.

Perhaps most egregious is giving people who created this mess even more responsibility in running the government. The guy who used to be the immigration minister, the guy responsible for losing those million people, is now being promoted to the guy who is supposed to build houses in this country. This is a guy who ignored advice from his own ministry and instead chose to pursue a blind political agenda. What happened? He was given a promotion. It is the guy under whose nose blossomed a corrupt and phony international student program alongside a foreign worker program called a “breeding ground” for modern-day slavery. This is the guy who is in large part responsible for the debate we are having today, as the Ontario Superior Court cited bureaucratic incompetence at the IR-CC as a major reason for its decision. Spoiler alert, that minister could not run the system, and he cannot build homes either. That should not surprise anyone.

We need to fix this broken system. We need to fix it for those who want to come here and create a better life, for the promise of Canada, for the promise that if they come here and work hard, they can buy a home in a safe neighbourhood. They should be able to

work in their profession to the scope of its practice and to the scope of their education, and they should know that when they come here.

What we have right now is a broken consensus in the public because the system does not work. That is because people who come here cannot achieve the dream that we have promised and cannot achieve the dream that so many of us and our constituents have benefited from. That is a shame.

• (1810)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals seem to be implying that there is a rush to get this legislation passed. The ruling by the judge was at the end of December, and the government took until May 23 to table the bill. There were 19 sitting days before the June break and this bill never came up. In fact, we are only on the second day of debate.

I would like to hear from the member why there is a sudden need to rush this and why there is a sudden interest in it. It is as if because the government has suffered election loss after election loss, it is embarrassed by its own record.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I suspect there is a little of that. I suspect there is a bit of chaos on the other side after losing two stronghold seats. The Liberals' record is being repudiated not only on immigration but on housing and everything else. They have probably heard about it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, there is some unease in the House about the court's ruling. That is because the current Citizenship Act is unconstitutional. I would therefore like to ask my colleague the following question.

How do the Conservatives intend to reform the act if they keep opposing it and dragging out the proceedings? Why not go ahead and pass the amendments instead?

We can all agree that this does not exactly affect hundreds of millions of people, but rather a handful of people whose rights have been violated over the years. These are historic mistakes that can be corrected.

Government Orders

[English]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, we have no idea how many people this would affect, and that is the question we still have. Is it 1,000? Is it 10,000? Is it 100,000? Surely the government, which still has not been able to answer this very basic question about how many people we are talking about, can come up with a model based on how many people it knows are outside of the country and how many kids it thinks they have. How many people would be affected by this? That is the question. Security checks are certainly a question too, and there, the government does not have two legs to stand on right now.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I found that the question from my Bloc Québécois colleague made a lot of sense, unlike the Conservatives' comments. However, I would like to ask my colleague the following question.

If the Citizenship Act is unconstitutional, if the act allows people to lose their citizenship by accident or administrative error, if children are born stateless, why do the Conservatives want to drag their feet and not ensure that this problem is resolved quickly?

[English]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, we tried to make very reasonable amendments at committee, even supporting the reasonable amendments from the Liberals, but at every turn, those proposals were voted down. At every single turn, the government has failed to answer questions about how many people this bill would affect and whether there would be security clearance. There is a provision the minister has in the law right now to make exceptions and grant citizenship in some cases, as he sees fit, and until those questions can be answered, the minister can use that provision rather than bring this bill to the House of Commons without answers.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I find it fascinating that this is only the second day the bill has been debated. It was introduced just before Parliament rose for the summer. As my colleague mentioned, it was in response to a court decision a number of months prior to that.

The Liberals talk about not wanting a debate on this issue and accuse Conservatives of delaying it. What are her thoughts on that, when they have shown that they truly did not prioritize this in their overall legislative agenda?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I cannot answer questions on behalf of their legislative agenda, because I have failed to understand it from the very beginning. The questions that we have asked, though, are real questions that would lead us to making better decisions about laws in this country.

As a baseline, I think Canadians at home watching this right now would want to know exactly how many people this bill would affect. The Liberals do not have a good record on our immigration system. They do not have a good record on security checks, certainly not with what has been found out in the last couple of weeks. I think Canadians ought to know those answers before they blindly support legislation.

• (1815)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to start this short speech by taking a look at some important events that took place yesterday and by congratulating my new colleague, Leila Dance, who won in Winnipeg and held on to a seat for the NDP. She showed that we are capable of beating the Conservatives. I would congratulate Mr. Sauvé as well, who won in LaSalle-Émard-Verdun. I would also like to talk about another Mr. Sauvé, Craig Sauvé, who was the NDP candidate. Unfortunately, he came in third in an extremely close race. I still want to congratulate him on his campaign and to congratulate the whole team of volunteers and activists who worked so hard on the ground.

That being said, today we are debating a very important subject, a bill that seeks to right a wrong. I apologize for the expression, but there are people who are falling through the cracks. This has very serious consequences because it means that they can lose their citizenship. Some may even lose their citizenship without even realizing it. This has a whole range of repercussions, including impacts on their ability to work, to get public services, to enrol their children in school, and so on.

I admit, I was surprised that it is possible to lose citizenship. Then there is the whole issue of being able to pass on citizenship to second-generation children born abroad to parents who are Canadian citizens. I think it is a very serious problem if our laws allow children to come into the world stateless. Let me remind the House that even the United Nations, in 2007, identified Canada as one of the countries that was refusing to take steps to avoid making people stateless. According to Refugee Listed Canada, we were operating slightly outside the law.

I think that this bill makes some important corrections. Loss of citizenship has major repercussions on people who work abroad and have to travel, as well as on their children. If we can all steer clear of petty politics, finger pointing and scare tactics, we could solve a problem affecting hundreds of people and avoid problems that throw the lives of many of the people we represent into turmoil.

I encourage everyone to make an effort so that we can pass this bill quickly and solve a problem that should have been fixed a long time ago, a problem created by the Conservatives when they were in power.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[English]***NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR A SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-322, An Act to develop a national framework to establish a school food program, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question of the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I ask that it be carried on division.

(Motion agreed to)

- (1820)

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Madam Speaker, I would like to welcome all of my colleagues back to the House. I also want to thank my constituents in the riding of Acadie—Bathurst for their support over the past few years. I also want to acknowledge my parents, my family, my friends and my staff. I hope that Parliament's work will go well and that we will have good debates in the House.

Today, I am pleased to resume debate, if I can put it that way, on my bill. My bill proposes a national framework to establish a school food program.

A lot has happened since we last debated this bill in the House. In the last budget, the government invested \$1 billion over the next five years to develop a school food program. In May, I had the pleasure and good fortune to welcome the Prime Minister, the Minister of Families and Children, the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Veterans Affairs and my colleague from Madawaska—Restigouche to my riding for a great announcement at my daughters' school, École Marguerite-Bourgeoys in Caraquet. That day, the Prime Minister announced the first phase of the school food program.

It was a wonderful day, with a lot of dignitaries and groups that have been involved for many years in preparing breakfasts, lunches and snacks for schools in my region. I would especially like to acknowledge the Fondation des petits déjeuners de la Péninsule acadienne, which provides services to many schools in my riding. Its

members go into schools to provide healthy breakfasts for students. I would also like to acknowledge Alexis Légère, a young vegetable farmer who grows food at Marguerite-Bourgeoys school. A few years ago, the school gave him a parcel of land. His vegetables are used to prepare meals in collaboration with students at the school. I will talk more about that a little later.

Why is this bill important? We have talked about this many times already, but here are some examples. We know that there are a lot of children who go to school on an empty stomach. I do not think that, in 2024, it is acceptable for our children to go to school on an empty stomach. We have to do something about this situation. This is not new. In the 1980s, I was in grade 1. That was many years ago. I remember that some of my friends had nothing to eat in their lunch boxes. We have to address this problem. We have to help families and especially children by setting up a program like this so that they have healthy food in their lunch box every day.

To continue in the same vein, nearly one in five children say that they go to school or to bed hungry. Those are not good numbers. We need to improve those statistics. That is why a school food program will be very beneficial for these children.

We know that proper nutrition during childhood is very important for maintaining health and well-being and for achieving socioeconomic success. If we want to give our children every opportunity to succeed at school, it starts with a healthy diet, with basic nutrition. If we do this, we will see that, in the years to come, the young people who have benefited from these programs will be successful on the job market. They will likely do better than many other young people who did not have access to such a program.

Many studies have shown that school programs act as social equalizers. We know that, today, discrimination and bullying are unfortunately part of our society. Often, we hear about kids at school who make fun of other kids who have nothing in their lunch box. Putting an end to this bullying or stigmatization will go a long way in helping our children to cope with these situations.

One final point is that Canada is one of the only member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development that does not have a school food program in place. A big, beautiful country like Canada cannot go without such a program any longer.

- (1825)

Once again, I want to acknowledge the efforts of our government, which provided the funds needed to launch a program of this kind in partnership with the provinces and territories. I hope that the provinces and territories will sign these bilateral agreements as soon as possible. A program like this has many benefits. I listed some of them earlier. These benefits are not limited to children. The program is good for families, for the parents of these children.

Private Members' Business

Let me talk about some of the benefits for children. A program like this is sure to significantly improve nutrition. As we know, school meals ensure that children receive at least one balanced meal a day. This could be breakfast, lunch or a snack, and it can go a long way toward offsetting the nutritional deficit that some children experience at home for various reasons.

Other benefits include better concentration at school. A child who is properly fed, whose needs are met and who shows up for school with a full belly has a much easier time getting through the day. Everyone here knows what long days are like. Even as adults, when we do not have time to eat properly, our concentration suffers. Imagine how hard it must be for a child in grade 1, 2, 4 or 5 who did not get anything to eat before school in the morning, or even during the day. How hard must it be for them to concentrate, to follow the teacher's instructions or even to keep up with their friends in the schoolyard at recess? A program like this one offers a lot of benefits.

Promoting healthy eating habits is another benefit. School food programs teach children the importance of good nutrition. I said earlier that I would talk a bit more about why I decided to make this announcement at my daughters' and stepson's school, Marguerite-Bourgeoys school in Caraque. A few years ago, a young vegetable farmer decided to approach the school and ask if they could provide him with a small parcel of land where he could grow vegetables. It was not necessarily to supply the school cafeteria, but rather to show students the importance of farming, how to grow one's own vegetables and fruits, and how to eat well. One thing led to another, and this program has grown so much that the partnership between the farmer, the school and the students now provides almost 80% of all the fruit and vegetables for the meals served at the school.

This is being done with the students' participation. Every day, students take classes with the farmer. They grow tomatoes, cucumbers, blueberries and so on. They also help prepare the meals. What a wonderful idea to have a program like that in the school. Imagine how having an initiative like this in every school in Canada would help educate children about the benefits of good nutrition. At the same time, it would benefit local farmers. As we know, local produce is increasingly valued, especially in rural areas like mine. It would help a lot of local producers to be able to supply our schools by growing their fruit and vegetables as part of a program like this.

Reduced absenteeism is another benefit, and this has been proven. Countless studies show it. This greatly reduces the absentee rate among students. If they are not lucky enough to have a meal at home, students will go to school knowing that they will have a snack to help them get through their day. Many studies show that this is highly beneficial.

It is also about equality of opportunity. We know that all children, regardless of their parents' income or their family's income, should have the same chances. I think that in our society, the stigmatization of certain groups of people has to be eliminated, and we need to create equal chances for everyone. We need to have these types of programs.

- (1830)

Sometimes families may have a good income, but when both parents work, there may not necessarily be time in the morning to

prepare lunches, snacks and so on. Having access to snacks or breakfast at school will be a big help to families and students.

For parents, too, this can have major benefits, such as reducing their financial burden. Free or subsidized meals can have a significant impact on family finances. We know that the cost of living is high right now and that some families are struggling. Having a little bit of help and not having to worry about providing meals or snacks for children will be extremely helpful for these families. As I said, it will save time for parents who sometimes do not have time to prepare meals. It will provide peace of mind too, as these examples show. It will encourage education when parents see their children doing well at school. Children get better marks at school. That goes a long way toward making children feel good about themselves, and it also helps parents when they see that they no longer have to worry about this burden or about struggling to feed their children.

These programs not only have a positive impact on children's health and development, they improve family dynamics and society as a whole. Many studies have shown that programs like this can be extremely beneficial. They boost nutrition and academic performance and have an impact on the local economy and agriculture.

They can also come with their share of challenges. For schools, obtaining healthy food can be a costly venture. We know that food costs have gone up. That is why the government presented a plan to provide \$1 billion over the next five years. This assistance will help schools and various groups buy healthy food so they can provide students with meals. The quality of the meals is also important.

The fact that so many schools in Canada are located in remote or rural areas also presents a logistical challenge. That is why agreements will be signed with Canada's provinces and territories to move forward and provide them with additional funding to help them develop programs. I am very pleased that the first province has already signed a bilateral agreement with our government, and that is the province of Newfoundland. We hope that other provinces will follow suit, like my home province of New Brunswick. I hope that we will have serious discussions about the benefits of having a program like this in our schools.

Private Members' Business

This bill is close to my heart. It is important to me because I have in some way experienced some of these situations and challenges. I do not come from a wealthy family. We were lucky because we always had good meals. My parents always made meals and healthy eating a priority. However, over the course of my life, I have had friends who were not so lucky. Giving every child in Canada the opportunity to have access to a program like this, to not go to school hungry and to not have to worry that their parents or families lack the means to feed them properly is a good thing. I think this will do a world of good for all those people.

Once again, Canada is one of the only countries that does not have a program like this. It is time to set one up. The government has made a great deal of effort so far and has put a lot of money on the table to develop the program, but we need a framework so we can do this properly and follow the steps and look at things that are not working and things that will work a bit better. I am sure we will be able to make a lot of progress.

I am calling on my colleagues to please support my bill that will benefit every child in Canada.

• (1835)

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for introducing this bill, which we debated at the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. It is now before the House.

My colleague spoke about the benefits of healthy school food. There is no doubt about this anymore; the studies prove it. It is so true that Quebec has a school food program. My colleague acknowledged in committee that education and school programs fall under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces, but despite that, he also acknowledged that not enough was being done in his province.

It seems that the federal government is deliberately interfering in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces to make up for the fact that some provinces have decided not to invest in these programs. Is that true?

Mr. Serge Cormier: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question and for the helpful comments she made about the bill in committee. I have been clear. I do not necessarily always agree with the Bloc Québécois's positions, but I can say that I have always been impressed by the number of programs implemented by the Quebec government over the years. I am thinking in particular of its child care program or even its school food program, which has been developed so well. It is a good example to follow.

As indicated in my bill, negotiations will take place with the provinces and territories. We are aware that the Quebec government wants to sit down at the table to discuss how these agreements will be developed. Our goal is to work with all the provinces and territories, including Quebec, to see how we can design an excellent program, a great school food program for all the provinces of Canada.

We recognize that Quebec already has a program like this, but we will continue to work with the province to see if the program can be improved in any way.

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the member can speak to this. During his entire speech, he did not reference any of the causes of food prices going up. For example, there is the inflationary deficit spending that caused inflation to increase for food in double digits. There are the tax increases caused when we tax the farmer who grows the food, those who transport the food, those who warehouse the food and those who retail the food; we actually tax the end user of the food. I am wondering if the Liberal member can speak to the actual causes behind why food prices have gone up so much.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Madam Speaker, I would prefer not to get into a political debate when we are discussing a bill that will help so many children and families. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have repeated one thing over and over during the debates on my bill and even in committee. They keep saying that if there were no carbon tax, we would not need a program like this.

They say that if we got rid of the carbon tax, we would not need a school food program. To me, that is not serious. We know that the cost of living is bit higher right now for families across Canada. The government has done everything in its power to help these families. We will continue to do that. I think it is deplorable that the Conservative Party voted against the bill. It even voted against the amount of \$1 billion that we proposed for a school food program to help—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

[English]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am incredibly appreciative to be here for this particular debate.

As we all know, we are the only G7 country that does not have a national school food program. Now, I never like to make this about me, but I have to share.

I was one of those parents who could not afford to keep healthy, nutritious food on the table for my children, and I would have loved to have given them healthier options when sending them to school, but I just could not afford it. I became an EA in the school district and worked directly in the schools, and I realized I was not alone. Too many children were showing up to school who were unable to learn effectively. They were having a hard time with relationships. The impacts were just tremendous on children of not having access to the food that they so desperately needed.

I then went on to work as a community school coordinator. I applied for programming and funding to get kids the essential programs and food that they needed and saw the difference in the kids when they had a healthy breakfast in the morning and when they had access to a lunch. I went on to become a school board trustee to fight for these school food programs across Canada. Now I am here.

I say this because I do not understand why it has taken us so long to get where we are now when children are hungry, and they are even worse off now today than they were before—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. member a few seconds to answer.

The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question, and I appreciate her friendship on the various committees that we serve on together.

As I said earlier, we have known for years that many students are going to school hungry. We need to do something about that. I completely agree with my colleague that we need to implement a program like this one as quickly as possible.

As the government announced in its last budget, \$1 billion over the next five years will go a long way—

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

The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

[*English*]

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise on behalf of the residents of Kelowna—Lake Country.

As this is my first opportunity to rise in the House since the summer, I would like to take a brief moment before starting my speech today to recognize the small businesses, in particular the farmers in my community and region, who work hard seven days a week, toiling the soil and pruning the orchards to feed our residents and beyond. They have had a particularly hard last few years due to many factors, and I want to recognize them and encourage everyone to support our farmers and small businesses and to buy local.

This legislation before us is a Liberal private member's bill, Bill C-322. I serve as the vice-chair of the committee that studied this legislation, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Our committee had many witnesses appear with respect to Bill C-322 who are directly involved with providing food to people. During our questioning, Conservatives pointed out that Food Banks Canada came out with a report where it had seen a 50% increase in food bank usage since 2021. Witnesses who manage food programs that support families in need also told us that they had seen similar increases.

Mr. Carl Nabein, the president and founder of Kids Against Hunger Canada, stated, "There's enough food to feed everybody,

Private Members' Business

but our limitation is the funding or the donations that we need to get the food to where it's needed."

With respect to a question on the price of food, he stated:

Yes, dramatically.... It's a bit of a double whammy. Our food prices have gone up. They've pretty much doubled over the last six or seven years. The cost of transportation.... [and] transportation companies were providing us with the shipping of the food at no cost, which they can no longer afford...due to the increase in the price of fuel. Even the cost of our materials has gone up.

Mr. Nabein is right. In Canada, we are blessed with an enormous amount of agricultural capacity to feed Canadians. The problem this bill seeks to address stems from Canada's ongoing cost-of-living crisis. Farming, transportation and fuel costs on farms, whether to grow or process food, are all increasing, which ultimately increases the cost of food. Bill C-322 does nothing for any of these causes.

Mr. Nabein stated that he has seen the cost of food double over the last six or seven years, and we have seen the federal carbon tax increase, which makes the costs of growing or producing food in Canada increase. During his appearance on C-322, when Mr. Nabein was asked whether getting rid of the carbon tax would help Kids Against Hunger Canada, he stated, "It definitely would help."

Conservatives at the human resources committee sought to amend the legislation to speak to this proposed solution and help Canadians.

To improve food security and reduce costs, I moved the following amendment to Bill C-322, clause 3, adding, after line 15 on page 3, the following: "examine the applicability of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act to food and the transportation of food sourced under the school food program and, where applicable, examine ways to exempt them from the application of that Act."

In addition, I moved an amendment in clause 4 of this legislation, replacing line 18 on page 3, so that the proposed national framework in this Liberal private member's bill "includes a projection of transportation and production costs that would be incurred by the school food program under the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act".

Private Members' Business

These amendments would have given the legislation real teeth toward reducing the cost of food being provided to families while exposing the real costs the carbon taxes are having on feeding children. Without these amendments, there is very little in this legislation except creating reports in government departments. Reports, reviews and more photo ops do nothing to help hungry Canadian families because none of these things can feed them. Still the Liberals, with the support of the supposed opposition parties of the NDP and the Bloc, voted against these amendments. This bill now contains no mechanisms for actually tracking costs or reducing the cost of food.

When this legislation was first debated here in the House last November, I noted many frightening food security statistics that proved how many Canadians are driven to food banks because of the NDP-Liberal government's inflationary policies. Almost a year later, things have only gotten worse under the NDP-Liberal government.

● (1845)

According to Statistics Canada, nearly a quarter of all Canadians will use a food bank just this fall. In the report, it says that “findings from the current analysis show that certain groups are experiencing greater financial strain due to rising prices, including those with lower incomes, younger adults, households with children, and persons with a disability.”

In a survey of families with young children, the very group this legislation is meant to help, Statistics Canada found that “over half (55%) of households with children reported that rising prices were greatly affecting their ability to meet day-to-day expenses”.

Throughout this summer, I heard from many Canadians in my community of Kelowna—Lake Country and across British Columbia who told me how the rising costs of groceries have put a strain on them and their families. Just recently, Food Banks BC reported that for the first time ever, it had served 100,000 food bank users in a single month. It warned that the high cost of living and rising prices of groceries are creating a “perfect storm” for record food bank usage.

The Greater Vancouver Food Bank reports a 30% increase in clients and a 24% increase in families since last year. The Central Okanagan Food Bank has seen similar numbers. Because of the increase in demand, food banks in Surrey are having to reduce the amount of food they give per person. Another report, by Feed Ontario, revealed that over a million Ontarians used a food bank this year, an increase of 25% from last year and a record-breaking number.

Feed Ontario said in a news release, “This represents a continued trend in the rise of food bank visits,” marking an eight-year all-time high. That is the same period the Liberals have been in office. These are the effects of the government's inflationary and high-tax policies.

It is no different from the announcement that carbon tax Mark Carney was appointed to do the work of a finance minister. He has been asked to create a report advising the government on the economy. I should mention that no member of Parliament will be able to question carbon tax Mark Carney on this forthcoming report, be-

cause he will be writing economic policy for Canadians from the boardroom of the Liberal Party of Canada instead of from a government office and will avoid federal ethics rules that would require him to disclose conflicts of interest or investments.

The Liberals continue increasing carbon taxes, making Canadians poorer, and they have missed emissions reductions targets while the Prime Minister's transport emitted 92,000 air kilometres' worth of carbon emissions in just the last three months. The Prime Minister, carbon tax Mark Carney and Bill C-322 are full of empty promises. Liberal ideology is their priority, rather than looking at the effects of their ideology, their policies and their legislation, including tax increases.

The government taxes the farmer who grows the food, taxes the trucker who transports the food and then taxes the stores that sell the food. Ultimately, the person who buys the food pays for it.

Under the failed policies of the Liberal government, Canadians are hurting from coast to coast to coast, and the shelves of food banks and many family homes are running out of food. There are more government frameworks and reports of reports, like Bill C-322 seeks to do. This can only be done through bringing down food costs by addressing the causes.

Hard-working Canadians want to feed their families. They want powerful paycheques to buy groceries, but the government and its high taxes impose more misery and suffering on them. Conservatives will axe the tax, stop tax increases and stop wasteful inflationary spending to bring down costs for Canadians.

● (1850)

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by saying that the Bloc Québécois is opposed to Bill C-322.

The principle of the bill before us is to establish a national school food program, so it clearly infringes on Quebec's jurisdictions. We cannot support a bill that attacks Quebec's jurisdictions like this.

As I said earlier during my question to the member who introduced the bill, a school food program is definitely important. It is so important that Quebec has had one for a long time now. My colleague, the member for Repentigny, and I both worked as union activists in the education sector. I led a major union that is mainly active in the education sector. If there is one thing we know about academic success, it is that school meals play a big role. We are all for supporting school-based organizations like the Club des petits déjeuners and other Quebec organizations in creating a school food program. I am saying all this so that no one can claim, as I heard in committee, that the Bloc Québécois is opposed to a national school food program, the way we have been told in the House for the past two days that the Bloc voted against the dental care program for seniors.

I do not think people understand the distinction we are making. In this case, we are opposing Bill C-322. It is not because of the principle of a school food program, but on the basis that section 93 of the Constitution of Canada—it bothers me to have to argue this—clearly states that “in and for each Province the Legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to Education”. It could not be clearer. Programs that encroach on Quebec's areas of jurisdiction are nothing new. Whenever the government introduces national programs or strategies and does not specify in the relevant bill that this must be done exclusively with respect for Quebec's areas of jurisdiction, it is an intrusion that takes money from Quebecers to fund programs in other provinces. It is ridiculous. I was listening to my colleague's speech. If New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island or Manitoba do not have such a program or if the programs are not sufficient, that does not give know-it-all Ottawa the right to tell each province and Quebec how to govern their affairs.

The Liberals keep telling us that they admire Quebec's programs, that Quebec is doing well with its school food program, that Quebec is a leader in universal child care. I could go on. We are also a leader when it comes to the parental insurance plan and a leader when it comes to employment equity and pay equity. Creating trailblazing social programs is in our DNA. We do not need overlapping federal programs that will only hinder our independence and the advancement of our social programs. With all due respect, I would say that each province is entitled to make its own societal choices in the areas that concern them.

• (1855)

The government is going overboard with federalism to make itself look good. While it is doing that, it is not taking care of its own jurisdictions. It is not improving old age security or employment insurance. Those things are the federal government's responsibility. Maybe the government thinks that it will look better if it can say that it brought in a universal child care program, a dental care program and a national school food program. It makes no sense.

A program for healthy food in schools is very important and we could go further, but I just want the federal government to mind its own business. That is federalism. We are part of a federation and the provinces have their own jurisdictions. In education and schools, the federal government has absolutely no jurisdiction at all and no expertise, yet the federal government wants to tell our schools that they have to bring in such and such a program, choose

Private Members' Business

this apple from that grower and so on. As I describe it, it should become clear that this makes no sense.

I think that I have clearly explained why overlapping programs create more bureaucracy. They do not solve anything because the federal government does not have any expertise in education or how things are done in this field. We know that the federal government is constantly intruding in Quebec's exclusive jurisdictions. We know that it has no qualms about that.

The Prime Minister's thoughts on this are clear. He does not care about jurisdictions, which means he does not care about the Constitution of the country whose government he leads. By way of evidence, the Prime Minister of Canada recently said the following, and I quote: “People do not care which level of government is responsible for what”. That is not true. According to a Leger poll that came out on April 19, 82% of respondents in Quebec believe that governments should respect each other's jurisdictions, while 74% of them believe that Ottawa should get the provinces' approval to intervene in their jurisdictions.

The government is saying that this changes nothing for ordinary people, but the government is wrong. In fact, Quebecers reminded the government of that of this yesterday when they elected a Bloc Québécois MP in the riding of LaSalle—Émard—Verdun. That new MP will soon be joining us to defend Quebec, its jurisdictions and its independence.

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, before I begin to discuss the important topic of making sure that kids do not go to school hungry in Canada, I would like to acknowledge that today Korean families across Canada are celebrating Chuseok. This is a time of year when Korean communities all over the world come together to celebrate and share a meal together. Today, as these families come together to watch the moon, share gifts and enjoy spending time with their loved ones, I would like to wish everyone celebrating this day with their families *Chuseok jal bonaeseyo*.

Celebrating and sharing food are fundamental parts of the well-being of any society.

The bill addresses the issue of the deficit among children in this country in terms of having a daily meal at school. Food insecurity among children is rising, and it affects today's generation of kids. Those same kids will also be affected in the future; a lack of food does not allow kids to get the best start possible.

As we navigate the challenges of rising food prices and increasing time and financial pressures on families, kids deserve protection. It is more important than ever to address the reality that no child in Canada should have to spend the day at school with an empty stomach.

Private Members' Business

Shamefully, Canada ranks 37th out of 41 of the wealthiest countries in the world for providing schoolchildren with nutritious food. What that means is that, of all 41 wealthy countries, Canada is number 37. The government is actually doing a bad job of making sure kids have food at school. This is because the government does not do it with purpose.

Although Canada is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, Conservatives and Liberals are incapable of making sure that our children are well fed and able to learn at school with a full tummy. That needs to change.

In committee, we heard how the bill would provide a necessary framework for the government to work in co-operation with the provinces, territories and indigenous governments to ensure that kids are fed at school and that no one spends the day in need of a meal.

I want to take a moment to give a shout-out to School District No. 43 in Coquitlam, which is already providing healthy and nutritious food for its students with a daily lunch delivery program. I thank all the administrators, parents and volunteers who make this happen.

I also want to recognize food programs run through School District No. 43 in Coquitlam by Share Family & Community Services, Access Youth and the Rotary Club, with their after-school backpack program.

I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge the Coquitlam Firefighters' nutritional snack food program, a fully inclusive program that provides thousands of meals per year to children experiencing or at risk of food insecurity. There is also the City of Port Moody, which led the coordinating of a food security round table in my riding and has given to the BC Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food. I thank all of them.

It is obvious there is great work happening on the ground in schools and communities across this country, just as there is in Port Moody—Coquitlam. However, a more stable framework is needed to ensure that no child is left behind.

I want to take a moment here to thank my colleague from Winnipeg Centre, who is here today, on the important work they did in committee to make sure that this framework was fully inclusive and that it pushed through for the government. We know the government was not interested in feeding kids. It has been slow on its budget delivery of feeding kids in the school program. I just want to raise my hands to the member.

The NDP has always known that a national school food program is needed. That is why we used our power in this Parliament to force the Liberal government to take the steps needed to get a formal school food program into law. It has been budgeted, and it needs to roll out to Canadians immediately.

Conservatives will take away school food programs. They voted against a national school food program in the budget while they literally enjoyed their free lunch. They receive a free lunch right here in the House of Commons every single day. After eating their taxpayer-paid meal, they came in here and voted against feeding kids at school.

• (1900)

To the Liberals I say hurry up. The inaction we have seen from the current government is deeply disappointing. Since 2019, the Liberal government has made a promise to establish a national school food program. However, more than four years have passed and this promise remains unfulfilled for the majority of kids at school.

There are kids in our community today who were promised school food programs when they were in middle school, but they are now graduating with no program in place. The delay in implementing a national school food program is more than a policy lapse. It is a moral failure to act on a commitment to improve the lives of children and prepare them as best we can for their future.

This is a program supported by advocates across the country. They have long called for the development of a national school meal program. Organizations such as Food Banks Canada, the Breakfast Club of Canada, the Canadian Teachers' Federation and numerous local community groups have highlighted the urgent need for such a program. They agree that a national approach is necessary to address the systemic issues of food insecurity and ensure that all children can benefit from a consistent and reliable source of nutritious food when at school.

My NDP colleagues and I have been clear that any national school food program must be universal to avoid the stigmatization of children. Means testing cannot be part of any school food program. The program must focus on promoting healthy eating habits and supporting kids. It should also be culturally appropriate.

I recently had the opportunity to be invited to share some time with a school meal program led by Karen Butler Curtis from Port Coquitlam, an educator and food security expert. While I was there, I asked the children what was important to them with regard to a national school food program. They talked about the food they eat at home and the need for culturally appropriate foods for them. I promised them that I would raise this in the House of Commons, so today, from the kids at Queensborough Middle School, I will say that any national program must be culturally inclusive and must include principles of indigenous food sovereignty.

The NDP is fully committed to making the national school food program a reality. We will support this bill, as we supported the initiative the NDP pushed with the government, and we will hold the Liberal government accountable for fulfilling its promise to have a national school food program for kids. Our commitment goes beyond mere advocacy. We are dedicated to ensuring that the program is well designed, inclusive and effectively implemented. This means ensuring the government is collaborating with communities, health professionals, families, indigenous leaders and kids to create a program that meets the diverse needs of every Canadian child at school.

● (1905)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a real honour to rise today to speak to such an important piece of legislation, Bill C-322.

Canada has led the world in many regards, and in particular, most recently, I think of the way we have been leading in terms of developing new technology for adopting clean energy, the green revolution, and everything we have done to support that.

One of the things Canada has not, unfortunately, led the world in, or at least within our G7 counterparts, is a national school food program. A national school food program has already been adopted by the other six countries in the G7. Canada remains the only country in the G7 that has not yet adopted such a program. I want to congratulate my colleague for bringing forward such an important initiative.

I heard comments from Conservatives moments ago that this was just about reporting and putting together data, and that there was really no substance to it. I am sure that is what they will use as their justification for voting against it. However, in reality what it would do is set up a framework for a national school food program and the manner in which the data would be collected and reported back to the House.

Of course, Conservatives, who are keeping their eyes on forming government, would never want to see that kind of data put before them, because it would be a constant reminder of something that they are just philosophically against. This issue is a perfect example of the philosophical divide between Conservatives and Liberals. Let us be honest: Conservatives do not believe there is a role for government to play when it comes to supporting communities. They believe in an “every person for themselves” approach; the strongest will survive, and that is it.

However, that is not how we look at this. Liberals look at our responsibility to ensure that children have the best possible start, because if we do that, we give them the opportunity to be successful and to be contributors back to an economy to the fullest of their potential, and to our society.

When I heard the NDP colleague before me speak, I heard her talk about the importance of the program's being universal, and I would completely agree with her on that. Having a universal school food program gives the ability for the stereotypes to be eliminated. I will give a perfect example of this. I have mentioned this in the House before, but it is important for me, so I will mention it again. In Kingston there is a food sharing project. It is basically a group

Private Members' Business

that was started a number of decades ago through various means of accessing food, bringing food together, putting it into different baskets or boxes and delivering food to schools, where children can take some of the food at their own discretion.

The food sharing project led by Andy Mills in Kingston relies on a lot of volunteers to help to make it work, because there really is not a stable source of funding. I have had the opportunity to volunteer, and I have taken my family with me when I have done this on a couple of occasions. I was really surprised the first time that we did this. My eight-year-old, who was five or six at the time, came. While we were packaging the food, he looked at me and he said, “Oh, so this is where all that food comes from that I see in school.” I found that remarkable because what it said to me is that Frankie, my now eight-year-old, did not realize where the food came from or what the purpose of it was. All he knew was that in his school there was food that every child had the ability to get if they were hungry—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I cannot believe Conservatives would heckle me on this. I am telling an impassioned story about my eight-year-old and a lesson that he learned, and the member from Peterborough feels that this is an appropriate time to heckle.

Nonetheless, the point is that my eight-year-old learned an incredible lesson about the stereotypes, not needing to rely on them or to stigmatize people, and that this was genuinely about an opportunity for kids, in particular those who need it, to access food without having a stereotype attached to them.

● (1910)

That is what this is really about. I do not want my eight-year-old and six-year-old to be in a classroom with kids who are picked on because they have to go to a special basket to get food. That is why I completely agree with my NDP colleagues that this absolutely must be universal. It is the only way it can work, and it will certainly break down stereotypes.

The Conservatives are against this. They want no part of it. The Conservatives voted against it when it came before the House previously, and when it was in committee, they started to put forward motions that had to do with the carbon tax. They could not even set aside their differences on an issue as simple and easy to justify as putting food in the stomachs of children and, in particular, getting it to the kids who really need it. I find it really discouraging that we continually see the Conservative Party of Canada take this approach.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Conservatives will be the first to talk about food bank usage, as their one speaker so far has done today, but they have absolutely nothing to offer when it comes to solutions, other than saying that if we get rid of a tax, all of a sudden, poof, poverty is going to be eliminated. That is what the Conservatives would like to sell to the Canadian people: If we just get rid of this tax, nobody will ever need to utilize any kind of social resources to access food ever again because everything will just suddenly and magically be better for everyone. That is not reality. Food banks have been around for decades. I remember volunteering at the food bank in Kingston when I was in high school. That was a long time ago. That was 30 years ago. The reality is that food banks have become a stable source for taking care of people, in particular those in need.

What Bill C-322 would do is establish a national framework for a school food program. It mandates the Minister of Employment and Social Development, in consultation with the Minister of Health, provincial governments, indigenous governing bodies and other relevant stakeholders, to develop a framework to establish a national school food program. The bill requires the government to develop, post online and report on a national framework that would broadly set out the contents of a school food program. It says the minister must, within one year of the act coming into force, prepare a report setting out the national framework and table the report before each House of Parliament on any of the first 15 days on which the House is sitting after the report is completed.

The bill also states that within five years of tabling the report:

the Minister must undertake a review of the effectiveness of the national framework and prepare a report setting out his or her conclusions and recommendations regarding the national framework

The bill, of course, does not impose any conditions on provinces or territories because we understand and respect the need to work with the provinces and territories.

Coming toward the conclusion of my speech, I will reflect on some of the comments that I heard from my NDP colleague moments ago when she spoke. She challenged the Liberals to ensure that this program is seen through. She challenged the Liberals to make sure that the government does it. I would remind the NDP and her that we had a supply and confidence agreement that had another year left in it.

The NDP is now in a very similar situation with the national school food program that it was in in 2006 with a national housing program aimed at working with provinces. All of the right components were in place and a motion was set out to deliver a housing plan throughout the country. What did the NDP then do? We have a lot of respect for Jack Layton around here, and he did a lot of great things, but he also triggered an election.

• (1915)

Stephen Harper got elected and a number of things were affected by that, such as Kyoto, and as a result, the NDP did not end up getting the housing plan that it had been a part of putting together in 2006. I say to my NDP colleagues to be very careful. They have the power here to see this national school food program come to fruition. They have the power because it is all in their hands to make sure that we have the ability to deliver on this. It is one thing to call on us to do this. It is another thing to accept the fact that they

have the responsibility to Canadians to ensure that it is seen through to the end.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):

Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in this place on behalf of the great people of southwest Saskatchewan.

As I begin my intervention here tonight, harvest is happening in Saskatchewan. We are not quite three-quarters of the way done in the province. There is a lot higher percentage done in southwest Saskatchewan. In fact, I was riding on a combine just last week with a farmer and we were literally on the last field that they were going to be harvesting for that particular year. There are many who are already completely done and have moved on. I want us to give a big thanks to them for growing the food that feeds the world and feeds our country, and doing so in the most sustainable way in the world.

When I got up previously, I was talking about food bank usage and how the carbon tax was affecting and impacting that. There was a report from the Canadian Trucking Alliance indicating that, this year alone, the trucking industry is going to pay \$2 billion in carbon taxes. In 2030, it is going to be paying \$4 billion in carbon taxes per year on an ongoing basis. That is a 15% increase in being able to operate a truck.

When we think about the cumulative impact that 15% has, it is going to be passed from the trucking company onto the people who are buying the goods. That may be the stores, or a farmer getting fertilizer shipped to his farm or getting seed delivered, things like that. Everybody is going to be paying 15% more. Who else is going to be paying 15% more? If we build that out a bit further, it will be a higher number. It will be the consumer when they go to buy food.

When we are talking about food bank usage, the ability for food banks to buy food, or people who are buying food to donate to food banks, they are going to be paying an exponentially higher amount simply because of the carbon tax. That is on top of the impact the carbon tax has had already.

Adjournment Proceedings

There is another contributing factor in regard to the carbon tax. We all know about the first carbon tax. The Liberals want to increase that, and it is going to cost about \$25 billion per year to the Canadian economy in 2030 when it is fully implemented, but that is not good enough for the Liberals. They are trying to appease carbon tax Carney.

One carbon tax is not good enough, so they are going to impose a second carbon tax. That carbon tax, through the fuel regulations to be imposed on Canadians, is going to drive another \$9-billion wedge into the Canadian economy. It is going to cost well over \$30 billion a year in 2030 in carbon tax to the Canadian economy. What is that going to do to food prices in this country? What is that going to do to food production in this country?

We know a bit from the Canadian Trucking Alliance about what it is going to mean for it, and it has some pretty strong words about the carbon tax and what the impacts of it will be. It said it is trying to do its bit, but the government has not provided any alternative for it to be able to do something else. It is completely crushing the industry, and there is only one place that it can pass that buck onto, and that is onto the consumer.

I wonder what the government has to say about that.

• (1920)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. However, the announcement indicated that the question would be about ways to help families. I will therefore focus on the topic that was announced.

[*English*]

Supporting families and improving their quality of life is one of the government's key priorities. We have made significant investments to make life more affordable, because we believe every Canadian deserves a real and fair chance to succeed.

The Canada child benefit helps low- and middle-income families with the cost of raising their children. This benefit, which is indexed to inflation, supports over 3.5 million families and over six million children, putting close to \$25 billion tax-free in the hands of families each year.

[*Translation*]

In 2021, the Government of Canada made a transformative investment to create a Canada-wide early learning and child care system, because we knew it would give children the best start in life. Tens of thousands of families are already benefiting from reduced fees. This allows mothers to re-enter the workforce, which in turn increases family incomes.

From 2022 until June 30, 2024, families with children under the age of 12 were eligible for the Canada dental benefit. With the new Canadian dental care plan, the Government of Canada continues to help families access the dental care that parents and children need and deserve.

• (1925)

[*English*]

There is no question that food insecurity affects many Canadians. No child should go to school on an empty stomach, but the rising price of groceries makes it difficult for many families to afford nutritious food. That is why, as part of budget 2024, we announced a \$1-billion investment over five years to create the national school food program. This program will increase access to school meals for up to an additional 400,000 schoolchildren a year and help more Canadian children get a better start each day. It will ensure they can focus on learning, not on being hungry, and it will take some of the pressure off family budgets, helping to make life more affordable.

We are also helping to deliver relief at the grocery checkout counter in three ways: first, amending the Competition Act to enhance competition in the grocery sector, to help bring down costs and ensure that Canadians have more choice in where they buy groceries; second, securing commitments from Canada's five largest grocery chains to help stabilize prices; and third, establishing a grocery task force to supervise the big grocers' work and investigate unacceptable grocery sector practices such as shrinkflation. These are great examples of government working for Canadians.

Since 2015, we have also enhanced the Canada workers benefit, increased the old age security pension and improved the guaranteed income supplement. Also, the new Canada disability benefit will help working-age Canadians with disabilities. We have made this significant investment because we are committed to investing in people, and our efforts are working. There are close to 1.3 million fewer people in poverty, including approximately 380,000 fewer children, compared to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, I will quickly read a quote from the Canadian Trucking Alliance:

Due to razor thin margins in the trucking industry, these added costs cannot be absorbed and must be passed on to customers. As virtually every good purchased by Canadian families and businesses involves truck transportation, this means those families and businesses are paying increasingly higher prices for those goods to pay for this ineffective tax.

The member is from Quebec, and we hear from the Bloc as well as from some Liberal MPs that Quebeckers are immune to the carbon tax. Well, this statement would suggest otherwise. When a trucking company hauls goods into Quebec, it is going to pass on the cost of the carbon tax to the constituents in the member's riding. I am wondering what they would say about the fact they are going to have to pay the carbon tax that the government is forcing on them anyway.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to hear my colleague say that the carbon tax does not apply in Quebec. Quebec has its own system.

Adjournment Proceedings

I think that we can help families with programs like the ones I listed, while fighting climate change and protecting the environment. It is the eleventh hour, and I think that, with a Liberal government in Canada, we are much better equipped to give Canadians the best of both worlds by helping them deal with the challenges that we are currently facing while protecting the environment.

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals have had many chances to do the right thing for Canadians: remove corruption from their spending. It is shocking that they actually put it in their budgets, and we have called on them to cut the corruption and save Canadians some money.

One in four Canadians is going to be using a food bank this fall. That is a heartbreaking number for me to hear, knowing that in my communities, like Brockville, Gananoque, Prescott and South Grenville, food bank use has doubled. While there are still many generous people in the community who are giving food and funds, it is also just not going as far as it used to. Even the food banks are struggling with life after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government.

We heard from the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands today, who talked about the devastating effects of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister's carbon tax. The Canadian Trucking Alliance in the last week spoke out about the costs that they are incurring, the billions in increased costs for them that will have to be passed on to consumers because if we tax the farmer who grows the food and the trucker who ships the food, it is of course a tax on the person who sells it, and the person who buys it is paying that tax.

Canadians are having a hard time getting by, and we do not think it will get any better with Mark “carbon tax” Carney now advising the Prime Minister, knowing his affinity for making others pay. He follows a different set of rules, jet-setting around just like the high-carbon hypocrite at 24 Sussex, the Prime Minister.

Canadians are struggling, and we hear often the Liberals' caution about Conservative cuts. Conservatives are going to cut the corruption. We are going to cut the scandals and we are going to cut the waste.

Just look at the billion-dollar green slush fund. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were misappropriated that we knew about just when we started out, and now the chair of the fund has been found to have been in a conflict of interest. Another government-appointed board member as well is being investigated.

The \$60-million arrive scam, two guys in a basement, is how we found out that there is grift, a 30% markup on everything the government outsources. It is spending more than \$21 billion in a year outsourcing, and we find out that oftentimes 30% of that is just going to Liberal insiders who line their pockets.

Common-sense Conservatives have made a commitment to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime, and Canadians deserve that. They deserve a carbon tax election, and we are ready to put that motion before the House at the first available

opportunity. In the meantime, the Liberals need to do one thing: The parliamentary secretary can stand and say that they will cut the corruption from their budgets and stop the madness.

Canadians deserve better.

● (1930)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Special Advisor for Water, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me start by saying that the government shares the member's concerns and his desire to hold those responsible to account. This is an issue that the government is not taking lightly.

The members of this House and all Canadians are justifiably concerned by what they have been hearing in the media and at committee. We are using many tools and following many avenues of inquiry to understand what went wrong in the case of ArriveCAN. These avenues include the rare and extraordinary measure of a public rebuke in the House, for which the government did vote in favour. This speaks to how seriously we take this issue. It is why we voted for Mr. Firth to present himself here in the House and why we will continue to support the various investigations and inquiries into this matter.

While we await the responses that Canadians need and deserve, I can tell everyone about the swift and decisive actions this government is taking to strengthen and protect the integrity of government procurement so that something like this can never ever happen again. When something goes awry, the government takes decisive action to restore trust in the system. That is exactly what our government is doing.

Budget 2024 clearly outlines the actions we are taking to enforce and uphold the highest standards of procurement to ensure sound stewardship of public funds. They include new steps to strengthen the government's procurement and conflict of interest regimes and updated procurement guidance for managers to reinforce the prudent use of public funds. This means examining human resources and staffing strategies before procuring professional services, strict evaluation criteria when a supplier is selected, clear due diligence protocols to ensure no conflict of interest and ensuring all contractual obligations are upheld by third party vendors. It also includes government-wide audits to ensure governance, decision-making and controls associated with professional service contracts uphold the highest ethical standards.

Adjournment Proceedings

The results of these audits are expected by the end of this year. Changes are also under way to modernize the new master-level user agreements for a professional services supply arrangement to improve transparency regarding costing and subcontractors. We will launch a new risk and compliance process to ensure government-wide trends, risks and departmental performance meet the highest standards and take corrective actions whenever necessary as soon as possible. We are also bringing forward stronger accountability guidelines for managers when procuring professional services, which include robust validation that a potential contractor is the best fit for the requirements.

In closing, our government is committed to ensuring that Canadian tax dollars are used wisely and responsibly. We recognize the seriousness of the ArriveCAN issue, and I want to assure Canadians that we will be acting swiftly and decisively to ensure that it cannot happen again.

• (1935)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary claims that the Liberals are good stewards who ensure the responsible and wise use of tax dollars. He talked about taking this seriously and wanting to get to the bottom of it.

My question is very simple. In this \$60-million arrive scam scandal that lies at the feet of the Liberal Prime Minister, himself twice found guilty of breaking ethics laws, the member, the cabinet, the Prime Minister and all members over there voted against having the Auditor General investigate. If they wanted to get to the bottom of it, were not trying to protect their friends and Liberal insiders and wanted to do the right thing for Canadians, even if it made them look bad, why would they not allow Canada's Auditor General to investigate?

The motion passed in the House without the Liberals' and the member's support. Why did the parliamentary secretary and his government vote against the Auditor General investigation?

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, perhaps the hon. member did not hear me. Just to repeat what I said, the Government of Canada is committed to ensuring that Canadian tax dollars are used wisely and responsibly. The issues that have emerged around the procurement of professional IT services and the management of the ArriveCAN application are indeed deeply troubling. We know from the reports of various investigations into the matter that Canada's procurement system can be strengthened and improved, and that is exactly what we are doing. Budget 2024 outlines the important steps we are taking to enforce and uphold the highest standards of procurement to ensure sound stewardship of public funds.

We will continue to actively explore all possible ways to further bolster our processes. We are working relentlessly to make sure that what happened in the case of ArriveCAN does not happen again.

FINANCE

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank you very much for allowing me to speak here tonight. I appreciate my colleagues who are here.

Let me address this escalating problem we have with government debt in Canada.

I asked a question a long time ago in which I really tried to nail down the government on its debt-to-GDP ratio calculation, which is a fabrication. Canadians understand what debt costs them and the mounting cost of debt that has been happening across the economy. They are particularly looking at their own accounts, but they are also looking at the government accounts. The projected amount the government is going to have to spend servicing the debt this year is \$47 billion. Within four years, that is going to grow by about 50%, to over \$67 billion, because of the mounting and escalating debt the government is adding on to the backs of Canadians at the federal government level alone.

There is one thing I want to make sure people are clear about here. There is more than one debt in Canada. There is more than one government debt. There is \$1.4 trillion of federal government debt outstanding. We add in an extra \$700 billion of provincial government debt, and that is about \$2.1 trillion of debt held by governments across Canada, for a country whose GDP is about \$2.25 trillion.

Those numbers are not updated. When we look at the IMF, it states that our debt-to-GDP ratio in Canada is north of 100%; its number is 107%. However, the government, in its pretense, said that it is 40%. How does it arrive at 40% at the federal government level alone? What it does is it takes the money that is in the Canada and Quebec pension plans and it says that is an asset of the Government of Canada. That is the money it takes off people's paycheques that goes into a separately managed account for the retirement of Canadians; the government uses that as collateral to jump into, to piggyback off and to make sure it does not have to pay the debt that is due in the future. This is a problem.

I am going to talk, first of all, about the IMF. I know my colleague across the way tried to say that Canada has the best debt-to-GDP ratio in the group of seven countries. That is completely false. He needs to look at the chart, and I can point him to the website if he would like. There is an additional problem here, of course, because debt is not just government debt in Canada but also personal debt and corporate debt. We call it nonfinancial debt. The personal debt alone in Canada is about \$3 trillion, on top of the government debt, which is \$2.1 trillion. If we add the private debt on top of that, which is about another \$3.75 trillion, we have a massively debt-financed economy here in Canada. The amount of interest spent by Canadians is exorbitant, and it is going to continue to rise because of the government's profligate spending.

Adjournment Proceedings

We have to get this under control. The problem with debt is that, once it is a problem, it is an escalating problem. There is a reason the International Monetary Fund was going to interfere in Canada's public budget processes back in the 1990s. The Chrétien government, at that point in time, had to intervene and cut the actual amount it spent on health care by half and put it on the backs of the provinces. This was because the country was loaded up on debt, and it had to be dealt with very quickly. The way it dealt with that was by loading it on to the backs of the provinces. We are going to see the same thing again because the government is going to face a problem in the very near future. Will it please address this debt-to-GDP ratio, which we have to get under control?

● (1940)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite is a graduate of the Ivey Business School. He knows numbers very well. Clearly, he is a fan of numbers, and I am too, so I will follow along his line of argument around the number 40, a debt-to-GDP ratio at 40%.

As a woman in her forties, I feel like I know this number well. The member opposite mentioned 40% debt-to-GDP ratio, and I understand why most people feel like that is a large number. After all, 40% is close to half. Forty per cent is usually enough to be elected in a riding in Canada, so 40% can seem impressive to my Conservative colleagues.

However, when it comes to government debt, it is a different story. The last time the U.S. had a debt-to-GDP ratio of 40% was in the early 1980s, before Ronald Reagan blew a hole in the American financial system with his irresponsible tax cuts for the very wealthy. What is the U.S. debt-to-GDP ratio today? In the U.S., it is around 120%. Yes, members heard that right. It is actually over 100%. Is the U.S. an isolated case? I do not think so. Let us look at our G7 peers. In France, it is over 90%. In the U.K., it is over 100%. Italy is at over 140%. In Japan, it is over 200%.

What do these numbers tell us? First, Canada has the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7, and our comparative advantage is growing. Why does that matter? It is because when comparative advantage grows, that is when foreign investment flows into the country. That is what creates more jobs, more good-paying jobs.

Second, Conservatives are desperate to gaslight Canadians and scare folks with scary-sounding numbers without context.

Third, Conservatives argue that we should not make the tax system fairer, that we should not help Canadians feel like the playing field is actually level.

My time is short, so I would like to touch on another 40 that my colleague raised in a previous conversation in this House, which is

a \$40-billion deficit. That also sounds like a big number, but I like another even bigger number, which is \$2.2 trillion. That is our gross domestic product in Canada, the size of the entire great, amazing and beautiful Canadian economy. That is \$2,200 billion. That is what the deficit is measured against, and that means our deficit is actually below 2% of GDP. That is to be compared with about 6% in the United States and about 5% in France. Yes, numbers do matter. Context matters.

● (1945)

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the numbers, but the numbers have to be correct at the end of the day. I was hoping she would listen to my speech, because the 40% she is stating is actually a fabrication. She is using Canadians' assets as collateral, which proposes also to go into their private pension plans in order to get the balance she is looking for here, the 40%.

On the numbers she states, as far as where the U.S. and France are, the comparable number for Canada is 107%. I challenge her to look at that very website she took those numbers from for the other countries. The number 40% is a fabrication. It raids the piggy bank of the pension funds of Canadians, and that is not the federal government's money. We have talked about that several times in the House. She is also not counting the provincial debts, which are also on top of it and are included in the other numbers of the countries she has referenced along the way. Her numbers need to be more forthcoming. She needs to be more forthcoming with Canadians.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: No, Madam Speaker, I do not include provincial debt in the federal debt. Since I only have one minute and my colleague raises several points, I thought I would take the opportunity, given the news of today, to remind Canadians that inflation has fallen from its high, at over 8%, to just 2% in Canada. That is a reduction of over three-quarters, beating all forecasts, and is now perfectly in line with our target rate set by the Bank of Canada.

Canada was actually the first among all of our peers to cut interest rates, and then cut them again and then cut them again, bringing relief to homeowners today and tomorrow. That will help not only homeowners right now in our country but prospective homeowners.

I have many more numbers on my sheet, but I see that my time is coming to a close. I would be happy to respond to additional finance questions from my Conservative colleague in the future.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:48 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Tuesday, September 17, 2024

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Foreign Affairs		Mr. Longfield.....	25454
Mr. Turnbull.....	25437	Mr. Savard-Tremblay.....	25455
Committees of the House		Mr. Kurek.....	25455
Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics		Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands).....	25456
Mr. Brassard.....	25437	Mr. Cannings.....	25456
Transport, Infrastructure and Communities		Mr. Kurek.....	25456
Mr. Schiefke.....	25437	Points of Order	
Mr. Muys.....	25437	Alleged Unparliamentary Language	
Public Accounts		Mr. Masse.....	25456
Mr. Williamson.....	25437	Committees of the House	
Privilege		Government Operations and Estimates	
Alleged Failure of Government to Produce Documents		Motion for concurrence.....	25457
Mr. Masse.....	25438	Mr. Kurek.....	25457
Committees of the House		Mr. Gerretsen.....	25457
Government Operations and Estimates		Mr. Perron.....	25458
Motion for concurrence.....	25438	Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands).....	25458
Mr. Barrett.....	25438	Points of Order	
Mr. Gerretsen.....	25439	Alleged Unparliamentary Language—Speaker's Ruling	
Mr. Villemure.....	25440	The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes).....	25458
Ms. Dancho.....	25440	Mr. Kurek.....	25458
Mr. Berthold.....	25440	Committees of the House	
Mr. Lamoureux.....	25441	Government Operations and Estimates	
Mr. Perron.....	25441	Motion for concurrence.....	25458
Mr. Masse.....	25442	Mr. Brock.....	25458
Mr. Lamoureux.....	25442	Mr. Lamoureux.....	25460
Mr. Kurek.....	25444	Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné.....	25460
Mrs. Vignola.....	25445	Mr. McLean.....	25460
Mr. Cannings.....	25445	Mr. Lamoureux.....	25461
Ms. Taylor Roy.....	25445	Mr. Lemire.....	25461
Mr. Bragdon.....	25445	Division on motion deferred.....	25462
Privilege		Petitions	
Alleged Failure of Witness to Respond to Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics		Medical Assistance in Dying	
Mr. Barrett.....	25446	Mr. Kmiec.....	25462
Committees of the House		Democratic Institutions	
Government Operations and Estimates		Mr. Kmiec.....	25462
Motion for concurrence.....	25448	Health Care	
Mrs. Vignola.....	25448	Mr. Lamoureux.....	25462
Mr. Savard-Tremblay.....	25449	Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. Lamoureux.....	25449	Mr. Lamoureux.....	25462
Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné.....	25449		
Mr. Lamoureux.....	25451	GOVERNMENT ORDERS	
Mr. Masse.....	25451	Citizenship Act	
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands).....	25452	Bill C-71. Second reading.....	25462
Mr. Masse.....	25452	Ms. Chagger.....	25462
		Ms. Gladu.....	25463

Mr. Lemire.....	25463
Ms. Kwan.....	25464
Mr. Lamoureux.....	25464
Mr. Kmiec.....	25464
Mr. Majumdar.....	25465
Ms. Chagger.....	25466
Ms. Kwan.....	25467
Mr. Lamoureux.....	25467
Mr. Jivani.....	25467
Mr. Lamoureux.....	25468
Ms. Kwan.....	25468

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Fall Fair Season in Kitchener—Conestoga	
Mr. Louis.....	25469
Golf Club Fundraiser	
Mr. Généreux.....	25469
44th Annual Terry Fox Run	
Ms. Damoff.....	25469
Michel Dompierre	
Mr. Blanchette-Joncas.....	25470
Châteauguay—Lacolle	
Mrs. Shanahan.....	25470
Conservative Party of Canada	
Mrs. Kramp-Neuman.....	25470
Allan Andrews	
Mr. MacDonald.....	25470
Mahsa Amini	
Mr. Ehsassi.....	25471
Toronto—St. Paul's	
Mr. Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's).....	25471
Mid-Autumn Festival	
Ms. Yip.....	25471
Bloc Québécois	
Mr. Godin.....	25471
Liberal Party of Canada	
Mrs. Stubbs.....	25471
Mathieu Miljours	
Mr. Schiefke.....	25472
Elmwood—Transcona	
Mr. Green.....	25472
Marilyn Castonguay	
Mrs. Desbiens.....	25472
Liberal Party of Canada	
Mr. Hallan.....	25472
Donald Marshall Jr.	
Mr. Battiste.....	25473

ORAL QUESTIONS

Finance	
Mr. Poilievre.....	25473
Ms. Freeland.....	25473
Mr. Poilievre.....	25473
Ms. Freeland.....	25473
Mr. Poilievre.....	25473
Ms. Freeland.....	25473
Mr. Poilievre.....	25473
Ms. Freeland.....	25474
Carbon Pricing	
Mr. Poilievre.....	25474
Ms. Freeland.....	25474
Seniors	
Mr. Blanchet.....	25474
Ms. Freeland.....	25474
Mr. Blanchet.....	25474
Ms. Freeland.....	25474
Grocery Industry	
Mr. Singh.....	25474
Ms. Freeland.....	25474
Housing	
Mr. Singh.....	25475
Ms. Freeland.....	25475
Women and Gender Equality	
Ms. Lantsman.....	25475
Ms. Freeland.....	25475
Ms. Lantsman.....	25475
Ms. Freeland.....	25475
Ms. Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk).....	25475
Ms. Khera.....	25475
Finance	
Ms. Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk).....	25475
Ms. Gould.....	25476
Mr. Barrett.....	25476
Ms. Freeland.....	25476
Mr. Barrett.....	25476
Ms. Gould.....	25476
Seniors	
Mr. Blanchet.....	25476
Mr. MacKinnon.....	25476
Mr. Blanchet.....	25476
Mr. MacKinnon.....	25476
Mr. Blanchet.....	25476
Mr. MacKinnon.....	25477
Finance	
Mr. Berthold.....	25477
Ms. Martinez Ferrada.....	25477
Mr. Berthold.....	25477
Mrs. Lebouthillier.....	25477
Mr. Gourde.....	25477
Mrs. St-Onge.....	25477
Mr. Gourde.....	25477

Mr. Champagne	25478
Indigenous Affairs	
Mr. Desjarlais	25478
Mr. Battiste	25478
Ms. Idlout	25478
Ms. O'Connell	25478
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Ms. Kayabaga	25478
Mr. Miller	25478
Finance	
Mrs. Vien	25478
Ms. Anand	25478
Mrs. Vien	25479
Mr. MacKinnon	25479
Carbon Pricing	
Mr. Barlow	25479
Ms. Suds	25479
Mr. Barlow	25479
Ms. Suds	25479
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	25479
Mr. Miller	25479
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	25479
Mr. Miller	25480
Carbon Pricing	
Mr. Kurek	25480
Mr. Wilkinson	25480
Mr. Kurek	25480
Mr. Wilkinson	25480
Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	25480
Ms. Suds	25480
Public Safety	
Ms. Lambropoulos	25480
Mr. Virani	25480
Ms. Dancho	25481
Mr. Virani	25481
Fisheries and Oceans	
Mr. Williamson	25481
Mrs. Lebouthillier	25481
Mr. Ellis	25481
Mrs. Lebouthillier	25481
Sport	
Mr. Blois	25481
Ms. Qualtrough	25481
Persons with Disabilities	
Ms. Zarrillo	25482
Ms. Khera	25482
Mr. Masse	25482
Mr. Champagne	25482
Hon. Chuck Strahl	
The Speaker	25482
Mr. Scheer	25483

Mr. MacAulay	25484
Mr. Bergeron	25484
Mr. Masse	25485
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	25485
Mr. Strahl	25486

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Committees of the House

Government Operations and Estimates

Motion for concurrence	25487
Motion agreed to	25488

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Citizenship Act

Bill C-71. Second reading	25488
Mr. Weiler	25488
Mr. Kmiec	25490
Mr. Lemire	25490
Ms. Chagger	25491
Mr. Hanley	25491
Mr. McLean	25492
Mr. Thériault	25492
Mr. Boulerice	25493
Mr. Weiler	25493
Mr. Lemire	25493
Mrs. Brière	25495
Mr. Boulerice	25495
Mr. Thériault	25496
Ms. Kayabaga	25496
Mr. Kmiec	25498
Mr. Lemire	25498
Ms. Barron	25498
Mr. Chiang	25498
Mr. Kmiec	25500
Ms. Barron	25500
Mr. Lemire	25500
Mr. McLean	25501
Ms. Kayabaga	25502
Mr. Lemire	25502
Ms. Gazan	25502
Mr. Kmiec	25502
Ms. Lantsman	25503
Mr. Kmiec	25504
Mr. Lemire	25504
Mr. Boulerice	25505
Mr. Kurek	25505
Mr. Boulerice	25505

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

National Framework for a School Food Program Act

Bill C-322. Report stage	25506
Mr. Cormier	25506

Motion for concurrence.....	25506
(Motion agreed to).....	25506
Third reading.....	25506
Ms. Chabot.....	25508
Mrs. Gray.....	25508
Ms. Barron.....	25508
Mrs. Gray.....	25509
Ms. Chabot.....	25510
Ms. Zarrillo.....	25511
Mr. Gerretsen.....	25513

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Carbon Pricing

Mr. Patzer.....	25514
Mrs. Brière.....	25515

Public Services and Procurement

Mr. Barrett.....	25516
Mr. Duguid.....	25516

Finance

Mr. McLean.....	25517
Ms. Bendayan.....	25518

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>