



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 378
Thursday, November 28, 2024

Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 28, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

- (1005)
- [*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

While I am on my feet, I move:

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

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

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, we should have a recorded division.

The Speaker: Call in the members.

- (1045)

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

(Division No. 898)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Battiste
Bendayan
Bittle
Blaney
Boissonnault
Bradford
Cannings

Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Beech
Bibeau
Blair
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Carr

Casey
Chahal
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Coteau
Damoff
Davies
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Gaheer
Garrison
Gerretsen
Green
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Joly
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lapointe
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
Maloney
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McGuinty
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Morrice
Murray
Ng
O'Connell
O'Regan
Powlowski
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Sajjan
Samson

Chagger
Champagne
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Dance
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaine
Gazan
Gould
Guilbeault
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Jones
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McPherson
Mendicino
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
Oliphant
Petitpas Taylor
Qualtrough
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sahota
Saks
Sarai

Privilege

Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
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Sorbara
St-Onge
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Yip
Zarrillo

Schmale
Shields
Simard
Small
Steinley
Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's)
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Sinclair-Desgagné
Soroka
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Therrien
Tochor
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

NAYS

Members

Aboultarif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blanchet
Block
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Chabot
Champoux
Cooper
Dancho
DeBellefeuille
Doherty
Dreeshen
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferrerri
Gallant
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jivani
Khanna
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lawrence
Leslie
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
Maguire
Martel
Mazier
McLean
Michaud
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Patzner
Perkins
Poilievre
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Savard-Tremblay

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Carrie
Chambers
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
Desilets
Dowdall
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Fortin
Gaudreau
Genuis
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Kelly
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Larouche
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Majumdar
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Paul-Hus
Perron
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Rood
Sauvé
Scheer

PAIRED

Members

Duncan (Etobicoke North)

Plamondon — 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[English]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from November 27 consideration of the motion, of the amendment as amended and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I hear the member for Winnipeg North talking about the security clearance, which would imply that only one person should know the names. We as Conservatives believe that every Canadian should know the names, just as every Liberal should be entitled to speak out.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North sure is excited. He must not like what we have to say. Just last week, when the leader of His Majesty's loyal opposition left, we gave him rousing applause because he did a great job. The Prime Minister made a seal motion from his seat, as though implying we were all seals, although he talks about Conservatives being muzzled. Then we find out that the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek was told there would be consequences if he did not fall in line.

During question period yesterday, all we heard was why were those Conservatives being muzzled? We take pride in not being muzzled on this side of the House. We take pride in being able to ask questions.

The member for Winnipeg North asks just about every single question when there are people behind him who are more than capable of asking them. On this side of the House, we believe that people should be unmuzzled. We are free to speak in our caucus. We are free to speak our mind. This is not something the Liberals can claim.

The Liberals may say we are muzzled, yet that very day, the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek said he could not vote for and serve his constituents as he wished because the Prime Minister wanted to muzzle him. I believe the term used was shackles.

The Liberals do not like shackles. They hate mandatory minimums. They have allowed people to serve sentences of house arrest for violence, gun crimes like extortion with a firearm and drive-by shootings. People can serve those all now on house arrest because of the Liberal government. We know the Liberals do not like shackles, but the Liberal caucus is shackled in so many ways. There are encumbrances everywhere on the government benches. We cannot list how many encumbrances there are over there. Who gets to speak?

I spoke about the member for Winnipeg North, who has asked just about every single question in this debate. I think there have been maybe two people. There have probably been a thousand questions asked in this debate. For the Liberal side, I have seen that member ask probably 99% of them. The government has 158 MPs, yet only one member has asked most of the questions. It used to be two members. It used to be the member for Winnipeg North as well as the member for Kingston and the Islands. I guess the member for Kingston and the Islands has lost his mojo after that whole defamation thing. However, now the member for Winnipeg North is the only one being allowed to speak, yet we are the ones who are being muzzled? We cannot write this stuff. The Liberal caucus is just so muzzled.

I am looking over at the Liberals and there is so much despondency. We see them when they are in question period and have to give their rousing applause. We can see the thought bubble above their heads, “Please put me in cabinet.” That is what is going through their heads. Only a select few have asked questions.

Then we will go back to what we saw two weeks ago, which was the crossing of arms by the 24 who will remain nameless. However, they are absolutely united. They are absolutely muzzled while they are united. Why can they not tell us they are not united? Because they are muzzled. They are shackled. Finally, somebody like the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek gets to tell us about the shackles.

We are talking about a privileged debate being led by one person from the Liberals. We are talking about massive fraud and the Liberals, particularly the member Winnipeg North, love to tell us that the Conservatives did this or that. As I said yesterday, it is like the ghost of Stephen Harper is hiding under somebody's bed. They do not want to focus on the last nine years of complete and utter failure. The member keeps going on with his wink and nudge conspiracy theories as to what happened in the past with a security clearance. Never mind what happened with a reporter in the Kootenays. They will leave that one alone because they do not want to talk about that. I wonder if it would come up in a security clearance.

Privilege

• (1050)

In any event—

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Maybe it was a bad date, who knows.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, did you hear what the member for Winnipeg North just said, that maybe it was a bad date? I am not usually speechless, but I am now.

We can say these things in jest, but somebody said that they were groped by the Prime Minister and the member for Winnipeg North just said that “Maybe it was a bad date.”

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not mind the member quoting me, but I was referring to his leader, not the Prime Minister.

The Deputy Speaker: This falls into debate again. I want to caution members that when they accuse each other of doing things, it sometimes causes a little disorder in the House.

The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, there is a year in review, but let us do a little speech in review. I said something, called out the member for Winnipeg North for talking about his conspiracy theories of what was in the background and then asked why we were not talking about things in the background of the Prime Minister, like the reporter in the Kootenays. In response, the member for Winnipeg North said that maybe it was just a bad date. Then he stands and says that this is not what he meant. Canadians are not stupid, the Speaker is not stupid and I think the Liberals know, but there might be consequences if they speak out. In fact, the member should stand and apologize. I will stand here for five seconds and let him do that.

• (1055)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if that is the way the member interpreted it, and I believe he is being honest, then I would apologize, but that is not what I was referring to; I was referring to his leader.

Mr. Frank Caputo: I thank member for doing the right thing, Mr. Speaker. I am glad the Liberals are allowed to at least apologize when they do wrong, because we know they are not allowed to speak their mind.

Privilege

We have a \$400-million fraud. In question period, we see the Liberals hang their heads in shame when people say this, especially on the backbenches. The Prime Minister can show as much fight as he wants. He will do his thing, where he points at the ground and says that Liberals will not stand for that. Clearly, they do not stand for much when it comes to their MPs speaking out. We know now that Liberal MPs cannot disagree on things. Frankly, reasonable people can disagree on the GST holiday and the GST cheques. That is something on which reasonable people can disagree, and it is obvious that reasonable people can disagree on this, yet the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek disagrees and is told there will be consequences.

How many times have the Conservatives spoken up? On this side of the House, we are allowed to talk. This goes for the NDP and the Bloc as well. Every single one of their members is free to stand up and speak up. On this side of the House, we compete for who gets to ask questions. Often, two or three Conservatives will stand when it is time to ask questions. What do we see on that side of the House? We see the member for Winnipeg North consistently stand and ask questions when he has capable people behind him.

Just last week, I called him out. I told the member that there were three strong women behind him and asked why they did not get to ask a question for the government. Are they muzzled as well? Why is that? I remember when Candice Bergen was here as interim Conservative leader. She noted that there were four strong, capable women behind him and she asked the member for Winnipeg North why they did not get to ask a question. Perhaps it is because of the shackles. Perhaps it is because of the muzzling. This is after nine years of the government. It is so tired that it expects one person to carry all the baggage, all the weight and wink to all the conspiracy theorists.

As Conservatives, we will not stand for it. The Liberals should hand over the documents and release the names. Let us bring it home.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the unmuzzled member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, I would add. I would ask my hon. colleague if he is convinced that the entire Conservative caucus was willing to stiff Ukraine when the vote came up on the free trade agreement. Not once, not twice, but maybe three or four times they all voted against that. Even though I know the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman is a very strong supporter of Ukraine, he was bullied into voting against it.

Does the hon. member believe that everybody in the Conservative caucus voted against that based on their own feelings or based on the influence of their leader?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I do commend the member for staying off social media for a little while. I have not had as much fun with his social media posts of late.

I am happy to answer the question. The Conservatives are united, and we voted based on a carbon tax. If we want to get into Ukraine, where are the weapons that the member's leader promised? Where was that member, and all those members, when a turbine was sent back to Russia for repair, something that would have stymied the Russian economy? That member has no moral high ground on

Ukraine to talk about this. I will always stand in support of Ukraine, as will Conservatives, as will the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

● (1100)

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not that often that I would rise and thank the Prime Minister, but he came to my riding, to East Gwillimbury, with the member for Newmarket—Aurora. He could not even do an announcement in a Liberal riding. He had to set-up a mock grocery store above a grocery store because he could not do an announcement in the store. Every time he comes to my riding, I get so many lawn sign requests, and I thank him for that. I would love to have him back again, but I wonder if my colleague could comment on this tax trick for Canadians.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member is here and not in Lake Simcoe right now. I would be remiss if I did not ask him where his rural top-up is, because he is often saying this in the House.

On the tax trick, the Liberals like temporary relief; the Conservatives believe in permanent relief. That is why we will axe the tax. The Liberals want to take the GST off a small number of things for a small amount of time. As a Conservative government, we would take that Liberal-proposed 61¢-a-litre carbon tax off permanently.

Canadians have a choice. We can have a carbon tax election where they decide whether we take off the GST for a couple of months on a few things or whether we take off 61¢-a-litre permanently. That is the choice. The government should call a carbon tax election and let Canadians decide. In the meantime, the government should release the names.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, spoke in error in saying that to request all opposition party leaders fulfill their obligations in applying for top secret security clearance has the implication that only one person then knows what potential foreign influence has affected current sitting members of Parliament. As someone who has top secret security clearance, I remain baffled that the leader of the official opposition has declined to apply for such.

I ask my hon. colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo to reflect on what he said and correct the record of his own statements. Clearly, a federal party opposition leader having top secret security clearance does not mean that only one person knows the top secret information. I would also ask him to consider whether he really means that top secret information that is illegally shared under our federal legislation should be sent to all Canadians.

Privilege

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe I spoke in error. The point I was trying to make is that the government is implying that only one member of the Conservative Party should see the names and then should be muzzled. We, as Conservatives, will not be muzzled.

The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is talking about top secret information. That is how the information was derived. It is what we call evidence. We are not talking about that. We are saying that, if there are people in the House who have been compromised to such a degree that NSICOP has put it in a report and that our intelligence authorities have said that there are issues, then why is it that Canadians should be going to the ballot box without knowing whether the person's name they are putting an X beside may be compromised? That is a cloud over every single member of the House until those names are released.

With all due respect to my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands, I will not retract a thing; I stand by what I said. There should be more than one member of the Conservative Party getting those names because every single Canadian should have those names before the next election.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on the comment from my colleague from the Green Party. Even if the Leader of the official opposition did not want to get the names from the report, which very clearly talked about the fact that the Conservative Party leadership race was compromised, would he not want to get his security clearance anyway so that Canadians do not feel that he is hiding something from them? That is my point.

• (1105)

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, we believe in acting. We do not believe in being silenced. When we act, we will act decisively to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. That is something Conservatives are committed to doing. That is exactly how we will act. We will not be muzzled in doing those things. Unlike the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, we are entitled to speak out and to say these things. When we get information that is of interest to Canadians, we will speak out about it. The members of His Majesty's loyal opposition will not be silenced.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do agree with one thing the member opposite says: They do know how to act. They act constantly when they say those slogans and put them out there.

I would like to understand this: The member was talking about NSICOP, but I believe the motion being debated in the House is actually regarding the SDTC. I am wondering if the member opposite is confused. On the documents that the Conservatives are asking to be released, both the Auditor General and the RCMP have asked us not to release those, and the Speaker ruled that this should go to PROC to be discussed. I understand that the Conservative leader has said that he would use the notwithstanding clause in order to override Canadians' rights and freedoms. However, we are worried about Canadians' rights and freedoms, and we want to make sure we are doing this correctly.

Could the member opposite address why he feels that it is okay to override Canadians' rights and freedoms and to not be careful that we protect those essential rights?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, there is a lot to unpack. The member started with SDTC, the green slush fund, and then she went to overriding rights and freedoms, and whether the documents should go to PROC. Here it is: Crimes were committed, and \$400 million was potentially stolen from Canadian taxpayers. The member wants to talk about rights and freedoms. What about Canadians' rights and freedoms? What about the taxpayers' right to know what happened, through unredacted documents being tabled? Those documents should be tabled. It is the right of every Canadian to know.

What are the Liberals so afraid of that they will not table those documents unredacted?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the debate be now be adjourned.

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

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, Conservatives stand for democracy; therefore, I request a recorded vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1150)

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

(Division No. 899)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Ali
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Barron
Battiste	Beech
Bendayan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Cannings	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Chahal	Champagne
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Dance
Davies	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi

Privilege

El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith	Bérubé	Bezán
Fisher	Fonseca	Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Fortier	Fragiskatos	Block	Bragdon
Fraser	Freeland	Brassard	Brock
Fry	Gaheer	Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Gainey	Garrison	Caputo	Carrie
Gazan	Gerretsen	Chabot	Chambers
Gould	Green	Champoux	Chong
Guilbeault	Hajdu	Cooper	Dalton
Hanley	Hardie	Dancho	Davidson
Hepfner	Holland	DeBellefeuille	Deltell
Housefather	Hughes	Desbiens	Desilets
Hussen	Hutchings	Doherty	Dowdall
Iacono	Idlout	Dreesen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ien	Jaczek	Ellis	Epp
Johns	Joly	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Jones	Jowhari	Fast	Ferreri
Julian	Kayabaga	Fortin	Gallant
Kelloway	Khalid	Gaudreau	Généreux
Khera	Koutrakis	Genuis	Gill
Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Gladu	Godin
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Goodridge	Gourde
Lamoureux	Lapointe	Gray	Hallan
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Hoback	Jeneroux
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Jivani	Kelly
Lightbound	Long	Khanna	Kitchen
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Kmieć	Kram
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)	Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Kusie	Lake
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada	Lantsman	Larouche
Masse	Mathysen	Lawrence	Lehoux
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Lemire	Leslie
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty	Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Liepert	Lloyd
McLeod	McPherson	Lobb	Maguire
Mendès	Medicino	Majumdar	Martel
Miao	Miller	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Morrice	Morrissey	McLean	Melillo
Murray	Naqvi	Michaud	Moore
Ng	Noormohamed	Morantz	Morrison
O'Connell	Oliphant	Motz	Muys
O'Regan	Petitpas Taylor	Nater	Normandin
Powlowski	Qualtrough	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Robillard	Rodriguez	Pauzé	Perkins
Rogers	Romanado	Perron	Poilievre
Rota	Sahota	Rayes	Redekopp
Sajjan	Saks	Reid	Rempel Garner
Samson	Sarai	Richards	Roberts
Scarpaleggia	Serré	Rood	Ruff
Sgro	Shanahan	Sauvé	Savard-Tremblay
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Scheer	Schmale
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Singh	Seeback	Shields
Sorbara	Sousa	Shipley	Simard
St-Onge	Sudds	Sinclair-Desgagné	Small
Tassi	Taylor Roy	Soroka	Steinley
Thompson	Trudeau	Ste-Marie	Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's)
Turnbull	Valdez	Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake)	Strahl
Van Bynen	van Koeverden	Stubbs	Thériault
Vandal	Vandenbeld	Therrien	Thomas
Virani	Weiler	Tochor	Tolmie
Wilkinson	Yip	Trudel	Uppal
Zahid	Zarrillo	Van Popta	Vecchio
Zuberi— 179		Vidal	Vien
		Viersen	Vignola
		Villemure	Vis
		Vuong	Wagantall
		Warkentin	Waugh
		Webber	Williams
		Williamson	Zimmer— 150

NAYS

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Bergeron	Berthold

PAIRED

Members

Duncan (Etobicoke North)

Plamondon— 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

REQUEST FOR WITNESS TO ATTEND AT THE BAR OF THE HOUSE

The House resumed from November 27 consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: When we left the debate last time, the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil did get only a few words in, so we will accept a 20-minute speech now.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was the shortest speech in the history of the Westminster parliamentary system, I would argue, but we will have to do some research on that. I thank you for adding the extra second to allow me 20 minutes to speak about the important issue before us.

If someone were writing a Hollywood script, they could not write a better script than this. It has everything, and I am going to touch on that in a few minutes. It has intrigue, fraud, crime and a criminal investigation. All of it would make for a blockbuster Hollywood movie, yet here we are in the House of Commons playing this one out because of a minister who was using his position to further himself and his business with business partners who are suspect at best.

I would like to revisit how we got here. As you know, in your ruling on the question of privilege that was brought forward by the committee, you agreed that privilege had been breached. An appropriate motion was moved at that time, effectively calling Mr. Anderson, the former minister's business partner, to the bar to answer the questions that he refused to answer at committee.

In the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, I was obligated by the committee, as its chair, to present the report to Parliament. It had to do with the compliance of a minister with the Conflict of Interest Act. It was really, in essence, about failure to respond to an order of the committee.

Of course, through the SDTC scandal and the fact that Parliament has been seized with that privilege motion as well, we understand that the supremacy of Parliament is paramount. When we at committee, or members, ask for documents to be received, the expectation is that those documents will be received, because, again, the supremacy of Parliament is paramount. We have the right to compel documents when we feel that they are not being provided to us.

To revisit this, I will quote from a report I wrote to Parliament:

On Tuesday, May 7, 2024, the committee agreed, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), to undertake a study of the compliance of a minister with the Conflict of Interest Act. In the course of this study, on Thursday, June 6, 2024, the committee adopted the following motion:

“That, in light of media reports, [the minister]’s testimony at this committee, and the Ethics Commissioner’s confirmation that he is considering opening another investigation into [the minister]’s actions, the committee call on the following witnesses to appear before the committee and testify for one hour:

That includes Stephen Anderson, the character in question, and Kirsten Poon, who was a partner with Global Health Imports.

Privilege

The report continues:

And that the committee request that Stephen Anderson and [the minister] produce for the committee all of their phone records, text messages, iMessages, and all instant messages and call logs from all applications from September 8, 2022, within seven days of this motion being adopted.”

The date of September 8 is critical in the context of the information that the committee was seeking in relation to the minister's actions in conducting business that he was not allowed to conduct.

The report goes on to state, “Mr. Anderson mentioned that some of the information requested was personal in nature”, which is fair enough, and he “requested that this information be guaranteed to be kept confidential and that, in the absence of a guaranteed confidentiality, he would not submit some of the documents. In the end, he did not submit any documents”, despite the fact that, through an order, the committee had compelled him to do so.

It continues:

Pursuant to the same motion, the committee invited Stephen Anderson to appear before it. During his appearance on Wednesday, July 17, 2024, Stephen Anderson repeatedly said that the “Randy” referred to in many text messages was an autocorrect....

Somehow there was a mistake made, and on more than nine occasions by his count, the “Randy” in question in the text messages was, in fact, an autocorrect. There were also some suggestions that it could have been somebody named Randeep, but there were only three directors of the company, and two principals, Mr. Anderson and someone named Randy, so it is highly improbable that there was a Randeep involved.

• (1155)

However, “Mr. Anderson”, and this is important, “repeatedly refused to answer members asking for the name of the individual referred to in the text messages.” He said that he would consider providing that information on a confidential basis if the committee were to move in camera. Fortunately, despite the obstructionist efforts of the Liberal members of the committee, the committee, in its wisdom, decided not to go in camera, and it asked Mr. Anderson to provide the name referenced by “Randy”.

Further, the committee noted the Speaker's ruling that the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, 3rd edition, 2017, at pages 1078 to 1079, reads, “Witnesses must answer all questions which the committee puts to them”. It goes on, but I am not going to read it as it is in the manual, but the committee also noted that at page 1081, the following is noted in relation to a witness: “Refusal to answer questions or failure to reply truthfully may give rise to a charge of contempt of the House, whether the witness has been sworn in or not.” This is really the point we are at right now.

The report continues:

As a result, and in response to Mr. Anderson’s refusal to provide the name of the individual referred to during the meeting and other documentation requested, the committee adopted the following motion:

“That, the committee 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.”

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That is the report I am reading from. It goes on:

Mr. Anderson provided documentation to the committee; however, much of the information requested by the motion was not included. More specifically, the name of the individual he was referring to during his testimony was also not provided to the committee.

Pursuant to the Order adopted by the committee, the committee having not received the documents requested from the witness, and, most significantly, the name referenced during the committee meeting of Wednesday, July 17, 2024, continuing to be withheld, your committee [as I reported] feels it is their duty to place these matters before the House at this time so that the House may take such measures as it deems appropriate.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as you have indicated, the measures are to have Mr. Anderson, in a humiliating fashion, come before the bar of the House to answer the questions that were posed by the committee members. Once we dispose of the motion and vote on it, despite, as I said, many obstructionist attempts by Liberal members of the committee to not get to this point, we are at the point where Mr. Anderson will be called before the bar to provide answers to the questions that have been demanded of him, more specifically who the other Randy is. That is what we need to get to the bottom of.

As I said earlier, one could not write a Hollywood script better than this. It has it all, including the chance meeting of the former minister and Mr. Anderson on a flight coming out of Montreal, striking up a conversation about how it would be great if they got into business together. I bet that the former minister sure regrets that decision at this point, given the character he was aligning himself with.

The company was set up after the chance meeting, and the connections are critical because the former minister was not in government at the time. He had been so previously, and he had gained a tremendous number of connections within government that could elevate and escalate the business into dealings that it would not otherwise have had.

Certainly over the course of the last nine years, the extent of insiders, the connected cronies who have benefited as a result of their connections to the Liberal Party, is well documented. Not the least of the issues are the SDTC scandal and Frank Baylis. The list of the insiders connected to the Liberal Party who have benefited as a result of that connection is as long as the day.

● (1200)

There was an opportunity for pandemic profiteering. We had gone to the height of a pandemic, and procurement was being done all over the country to try to supply PPE, for example, with contracts that were being sole-sourced. The opportunity was there for pandemic profiteering, a perfect storyline for a Hollywood script.

There was fraud, which we have found out about since. Seven lawsuits have been filed against the former minister's company, of which he was a director, seven civil suits for fraud. He was not supplying material that had already been paid for. One of the last straws, but not the only last straw, was the sworn affidavit just filed a couple of weeks ago that names the former minister as the Randy in question in one of those civil lawsuits. That sworn affidavit is certainly an indictment on who was involved.

Then there was the famous fire at the company that still to this day remains unsolved. How was the warehouse set on fire that housed many of the products that GHI was storing?

There is a cocaine connection. One of the people involved with this company was found to be transporting cocaine on an airplane and shared a mailbox with the company. It is almost laughable.

Then there was the cover-up and the extent to which the cover-up went on. I mentioned this briefly in the information that I provided earlier. There were text messages that were not submitted after they were asked for. Those text messages are important because Mr. Anderson was directly communicating with the former minister while he was at a ministerial retreat in British Columbia. There was denial after denial on the part of the former minister and on the part of Mr. Anderson, yet it has been proven through the text messages that they were communicating while the former minister was sitting around the cabinet table. It is more intrigue, as if it were a Hollywood script.

I mentioned this earlier, but I think it is worth mentioning again. We saw many Liberal members trying to obstruct the committee's work by filibustering certain motions. The role of the ethics committee as an oversight committee is to get to the bottom of ethical breaches and violations, whether related to the code of conduct or the act itself, and the Liberals were obstructing that in every way. I finally had a sidebar conversation with the vice-chair, and I said to him that if he was willing to stake his political career and capital on defending that guy despite the amount of evidence that has been produced before us, with the text messages, the civil lawsuits and the sworn affidavit, it was not a hill that I would die on, quite frankly.

We have seen in recent news that he was let go, but, again, there is more intrigue. There is also the money, almost \$110 million in contracts, and the half-million-dollar fraud case going on for not supplying PPE to a company that had already forwarded the money.

Of course, we have heard about the indigenous connection too. The company claimed an indigenous connection in order to submit bids for indigenous procurement and contracts. The mighty OGGO has been dealing with that, as have other committees. The former minister embarrassingly had to step down, in large part as a result of the false claim of the indigenous connection.

I think the icing on the cake, and the last straw, was the police investigation. Given that the Edmonton police are now involved and engaged in a criminal investigation into this company, I think the Prime Minister had no other choice but to force the former minister's resignation and have him stand down as a result of all of those things.

It is a beautiful Hollywood script that would probably be a money-maker if it were to be produced. Of course, if we were to produce a movie like that, we would need a cast and an ensemble. Who would some of those cast members be?

• (1205)

Perhaps for Randy, we might look at Stanley Tucci or Jason Alexander from *Seinfeld*. I saw Stephen Anderson at committee, and I think he thought that he was auditioning for a reality TV show. Honestly, he lacked credibility, and the indifference he showed to our committee in requesting this information was quite something. Who would play him? Maybe it could be Brad Pitt or Charlie Sheen. Who would play the chair of the committee? Who would play me? Well, I think Mike Pence would be a good choice, but I am not sure that the former vice-president of the United States would go for that. I would settle for Tom Cruise, if that were the case.

For the Prime Minister, maybe Kevin from *The Office* would be a good choice. For the other ensemble members, Rosie O'Donnell would be there, along with Gérard Depardieu and my favourite actor, Denzel. Ryan Reynolds would be part of it, and we could get Cher in there, as well as Macaulay Culkin and Jude Law. I suggest that they would perhaps be good choices of actors for the member for St. Albert—Edmonton. Of course, Dog the Bounty Hunter would be himself because the committee has summoned both Mr. Anderson and the other one, Papineau, to the committee. We summoned them the other day, so we are hoping to see them. Maybe Dog the Bounty Hunter can find them because they are nowhere to be found on the radar.

Seriously, the minister has been forced to step down as a result of all of the things that I have listed, which would make this a perfect Hollywood script. He said he wants to clear his name, that he is going to take time to clear his name, and he has not. I have not seen him since. I suspect that he is probably out there. I would like to give the former minister an opportunity to clear his name.

Once this motion gets approved, Mr. Anderson will be appearing before the bar. The motion indicates how many members on each side would be able to ask Mr. Anderson questions. If the former minister, the member for Edmonton Centre, truly wants to clear his name, I cannot think of a better way to do that than in this place, facing his accuser. That would be a perfect opportunity. He should get out of the fetal position, lick his wounds, come in here and face his accuser. I want to give the member for Edmonton Centre that opportunity.

Therefore, I move:

That the amendment be amended, in subparagraph (f)(i), by adding the following: "followed by an additional 10 minutes which shall be allocated to the Member for Edmonton Centre,".

That would give him an opportunity to face his accuser in this place, at the bar, in an attempt to clear his name. That would make for an interesting ending to this movie.

• (1210)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The subamendment is in order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, staying with the theme of Hollywood productions, I am thinking of Homer Simpson and the leader of the Conservative Party. When I think of Homer Simpson, I think of the degree to which

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the leader of the Conservative Party continues to thumb his nose at getting a security clearance.

Every leader in the House of Commons has recognized that foreign interference is such a serious issue, yet the leader of the Conservative Party believes that he does not require it, even though there have been allegations that his own leadership was interfered with by foreign interference. Among other issues related to foreign interference, we still have the leader of the Conservative Party refusing to deal with the issue.

While the Conservatives are on the issue of character assassination, would the member reflect on the character of his own leader and indicate why he believes his leader does not have to get a security clearance?

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, in the vein of *The Simpsons*, I would like to thank Montgomery Burns for asking that question. I prefer the character of Homer Simpson to the Prime Minister any day, too, by the way.

We are talking about \$110 million in contracts. We are talking about seven civil suits that have been engaged against the former minister's company, a sworn affidavit in which he has been named by the person who is filing the lawsuit and a criminal investigation, which I touched upon in my speech. This is about having Mr. Anderson come to the bar and, once and for all, our finding out the truth, not just from Mr. Anderson but also from the former minister. We need to get to the bottom of this.

I know that the former minister has stepped down. I am giving him an opportunity, through the amendment, to face his accuser before the House. This is about the integrity of this place and the power of committees to compel witnesses.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to give a nod to my colleague. In his speech, he was comparing MPs to artists, but the examples that he gave were all American artists. If he wants, I can make him a list of francophone artists from Quebec of whom we can be very proud. Obviously, we could talk about Rémy Girard and Patrice Godin. I could name a lot of others like that.

I would invite him to take a look at the Union des artistes du Québec's website. That way, he can discover some Quebec artists and Quebec's wonderful artistic community.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I did mention Gérard Depardieu, but he is from France. I was born in Montreal. When I was young, I listened to René Simard and Céline Dion. I think that I am dating myself. I really liked Quebec music. I am very familiar with the song *Bye bye mon cowboy*.

I have a great deal of respect for Quebec. It is the province where I was born, and my parents were born there too. A family friend lives there. Every time I go back, I watch TV in French.

Privilege

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the speech that my colleague, the chair of the incredible ethics committee, just made because I think it touches on an incredibly important point in this whole saga. We have a culture of corruption that has been allowed to flourish within the Liberal Party, to the point that Canadian news coverage looks like a Netflix, binge-worthy, Hollywood-type drama.

I am wondering if my colleague from Ontario could share some of the ways the ethics committee has been working to ensure that some answers are found regarding the lack of ethics that we are seeing in the Liberal government.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I have had a front row seat, for the better part of two years, to all the things that have gone on. The SDTC scandal, for example, although it has touched many committees, started at the ethics committee. Generally, the ethics committee has been working well, and actually working better recently.

I cannot even say that the coalition agreement has been ripped up because it seems like it has been taped back together. I know the NDP member has shown some consistency in his actions over these two years in wanting to get to the bottom of things. Sometimes he has sided with the Liberal side.

What we have seen, more than anything else, is obstruction from the Liberal members of the committee. They have, on many occasions, filibustered when motions have been presented. The ethics committee is an oversight committee. We know that. It has a majority of opposition members on it for a reason. Like OGGO and public accounts, it is designed to hold the government to account. We have been seeing more of that lately. I am glad, and this is the reason we are at this point with Stephen Anderson. He has been called to the bar. It was not unanimous, but it was the will of the majority of the committee to report this to the Speaker, and the Speaker found that privilege had been breached with the lack of information that was provided to the committee.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think Canadians following along would rightly see that we have a Conservative Party and a Liberal Party blaming each other for being the most corrupt, which, of course, is not a very good thing for our democracy.

I wonder if the member would provide some insight on changes he would like to see within our legislative system that would make Canadians feel more confident that the next government, whether New Democrat, Liberal or Conservative, would have some guardrails on corruption. Canadians today are looking at a government under Stephen Harper that prorogued and was plagued by scandal, and now a government under the current Prime Minister that has also prorogued and been plagued by scandal.

What would those fundamental changes to our legislative system be, from his perspective?

• (1220)

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I would remind the member that the NDP, despite the fact that it is a fourth party, has never formed government and will likely never form government in this

country ever, has been involved in corruption issues in the past. It is quite rich for them to talk about that and to lob, as they do, from the corner over there—

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to ask the member to retract that. I do not think there is any way for him to have honestly said the NDP has caused any sort of corruption. As he mentioned, we have not formed government, so he—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member has made her point.

Is the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton rising on the same point of order?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, yes, on the same point of order. I would remind the member for Edmonton Strathcona of one Dave Stupich, the former finance minister of British Columbia and member of Parliament, who stole from charities to puddle it into—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): This is beginning to be debate, and I would like the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil to finish his answer.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I think the worst part of what the member for Edmonton Strathcona is talking about is that for the better part of two and a half years, the NDP has been supporting, through a coalition agreement, all of the scandals, corruption, expenses and everything, including the loss of civil liberties.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, if she does not like what I am saying, tell her to cite a standing order rule on this, because everything I am saying is correct.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, chapter 3 says that when a member repeatedly gives false information it can be ruled as unparliamentary.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I think that is a matter of debate and I am not prepared to judge because I have not been following the conversation.

The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, they can make those claims all they want. I will stand by everything I said. In 2022, the NDP signed a costly coalition agreement with the Liberals whereby they would support the government—

Mr. Ken Hardie: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, it is useful now and then for the Conservatives to be accurate. It was not a coalition. The member is misleading the House.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will proceed. I think the hon. member has given an answer.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the President of the Treasury Board.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I very much thank, as always, my entertaining colleague and the chairman of the ethics committee for his speech, although it really pains me deeply to be identified as obstructionist. I do not think I am obstructionist and I am sure the member would like to correct that on the record when he speaks.

I looked at the minutes of the July meeting where we reported Mr. Anderson to the House, and the vote was unanimous, but the hon. chairman said the vote was not unanimous. My feeling is it was a unanimous recommendation, because I do believe Mr. Anderson should appear before the House, so I wanted to correct that as well.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I believe what I was saying was with respect to going in camera. That was not unanimous and that is what I was referring to.

I do want to say that the hon. member conducts himself with great honour and great integrity at the committee.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member did not need to mention a point of order. He had the floor.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

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

• (1305)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 900*)

YEAS

Members

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

Bendayan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Cannings	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Chahal	Champagne
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Dance
Davies	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gainey	Garrison
Gazan	Gerretsen
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	McPherson
Mendès	Mendicino
Miao	Miller
Morrice	Morrissey
Murray	Naqvi
Ng	Noormohamed
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rota	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Singh	Sousa
St-Onge	Sudds

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van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

Soroka
Ste-Marie
Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake)
Stubbs
Therrien
Tochor
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

Steinley
Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's)
Strahl
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Members

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Caputo
Chabot
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Lantsman
Lawrence
Lemire
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Majumdar
Mazier
McLean
Michaud
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Patzner
Pauzé
Perron
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Rood
Sauvé
Scheer
Seeback
Shipley
Sinclair-Desgagné

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
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Deltell
Desilets
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
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Gallant
Généreux
Gill
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Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kelly
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Larouche
Lehoux
Leslie
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
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Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Poilievre
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shields
Simard
Small

PAIRED

Members

Duncan (Etobicoke North)

Plamondon— 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 43—PROCEEDINGS ON
BILL C-78**

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in relation to the consideration of Government Business No. 43, I move:

That debate be not further adjourned.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places or use the “raise hand” function so that the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know many Canadians are asking themselves a question. The Liberals, supported by the NDP, are offering a small tax trick for a few Canadians, including on Christmas trees, but only if they are bought after December 14. If it is anything like in my household, the tree has already been set up for a few days.

The question is very simple: Why do the Liberals not reject the tax trick and instead vote to axe the carbon tax for all Canadians for good?

• (1310)

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always shocking to see how little the Conservatives have understood about climate change and how important it is to put a price on pollution. It is important now and it is important for our children and grandchildren.

What we are doing right now is recognizing that it is hard for families, seniors and Canadians in general. We have no control over the price of consumer goods, but we can eliminate the GST for a while to give Canadians a little break over the coming holiday season and the often challenging months that follow it.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, during the holiday season, we have the opportunity to give a bit of relief to Canadians if all of us of all political parties agree and vote for a tax cut of the GST on a number of products. I believe most Canadians would see that as a positive thing. I find it shocking that the Conservative Party, the leader of the Conservative Party, wants to vote against this motion and continue the filibuster as opposed to actually debating the issue of giving Canadians a tax break.

Could my colleague provide her thoughts on how important it is to give Canadians relief?

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, I think that my colleague is absolutely right. We have seen this for weeks now, for years in fact. When there is a measure to be put in place, something designed to help Canadians deal with difficult situations, the Conservatives are never there.

We know things are difficult right now. We know that families and individuals are squeezed during the holiday season. While we do not have control over prices, we do have control over taxes. We can choose to remove the GST and HST for two months to give Canadians a breather.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if a page could provide me with some tape so I can tape together the coalition agreement that was apparently ripped up by the leader of the NDP. What a shame and what a sham.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, maybe you could remind the hon. member that we are not allowed to use props. He should remember that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Members are not allowed to use props, as the hon. member well knows, and that includes slivers of paper.

The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I want to tape this back together, but I will do that later.

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What a shame and a sham. Instead of fixing the structural problems that exist in our economy, the government, through its NDP partner in this costly coalition, are throwing crumbs around.

The problem, as we have heard from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, is this is going to create challenges for businesses at their busiest time of the year. How can the Liberals justify this at this point when businesses and economists are panning this plan. The Liberals are not structurally fixing things, which they could do by eliminating the carbon tax and other tax measures. They are just providing crumbs right now. Worse yet, they are undermining democracy, undermining Parliament, with a spending measure that has very little scrutiny.

The government and its NDP partner are circling the bowl right now. They are desperate to find anything of relevance in their existence. They are going to fail, and then we will have a common-sense Conservative government that is going to do the things that need to be done to fix this country and return normalcy and decency to it.

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, I am stunned to hear my colleague's remarks. Seriously, how can he claim that we do not respect democracy when his party, the Conservatives, with the support of the other parties, I might add, have paralyzed Parliament for weeks? That is truly an insult to democracy. They are making a conscious effort to harm democracy and to flout our institutions.

We are introducing a great many foundational measures. Just think of all the measures we are putting in place right now for housing, including eliminating the GST on the construction of buildings containing four or more residential units. Just think of all the assistance we are giving to organizations that provide children with school meals, or all our initiatives under the green industrial strategy to encourage our businesses to invest in research and innovation. We are proposing lots of foundational measures to support our economy.

• (1315)

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, Canadians need a break right now. Giving them a break over the holidays is supportable, but the NDP, just a few weeks ago, proposed taking the GST off essentials permanently.

This is a small break for Canadians, and while NDP members want any break they can get, why not take the GST off essentials permanently?

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, I understand my colleague's question. It is indeed important and we are already offering a GST and HST holiday for the next two months, which is a particularly difficult time for Canadians.

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Finding the right balance among all these measures is important. Sometimes we need to support the most vulnerable among us, while at other times we need to help workers, or persons with disabilities, or senior citizens. We need to find the right balance.

We know that Canadians will be facing a difficult period, and we believe it is appropriate to eliminate the GST for two months on certain products we all use during the holidays.

[*English*]

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Madam Speaker, a fake Christmas gift is exactly what this GST holiday is. Christmas trees will be GST- and HST-free in Newfoundland and Labrador, but as for the decorations that go on them, hopefully people have some from last year because decorations will still have HST and GST in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Menorahs are not included, so is there some anti-Semitism going on? We know the government is anti-seniors and anti-disabled because those needy groups will not be allowed to receive the \$250 cheques that people making \$150,000 are going to receive. Also, the federal pension plan was just robbed of \$2 million, and where did that go? Was it to this fake Christmas gift?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, my colleague is really hard to follow. I am not sure if he wants us to give more or less. It is not clear. One thing is for sure, we are not fake. When we announce measures, they are real measures. Unlike the Conservatives, we do not have the nerve to say that the dental care program does not exist.

What planet do they live on that they do not see that there are already hundreds of thousands, even millions of Canadians who are benefiting from the dental care program?

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will ask the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier to leave the chamber if he wants to talk.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: I can assure members that when we announce a measure, we move forward and it is absolutely real. That is the case with the Canada disability benefit that is going to be very real in a few months.

[*English*]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, the CFIB was commented on by a Conservative colleague. The CFIB is calling on the Department of Finance to give affected small business owners a credit of a minimum of \$1,000 in their GST/HST accounts to cover the program's administrative and programming costs for the holiday season. Certainly, the NDP is in favour of that. Is the government willing to do that to ensure that this is not hurting those small business owners?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, Restaurants Canada also says that this measure will be beneficial. It will give businesses the benefit of being able to promote this tax holiday. I

was a business owner a while ago and I know what it is like to run a business. We know that when businesses see a benefit for their clients, it is a benefit for them too. Business owners have computer systems that are getting better all the time. I have confidence that they will be able to apply this tax holiday in the coming months.

● (1320)

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, because the NDP-Liberals are trying to fool Canadians with this tax trick, small business owners are forced to reprogram their point-of-sales machines and to find the time and money to pay for these changes. They are very much scrambling to do so. It is a shame that the minister did not care to think about the impact this change would have on the small business owners the government purports to help.

We all know an election is coming. Can we just stop with the desperation and call a carbon tax election now?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, once again, I think that SMEs and large companies across Canada are doing well. Companies are well equipped and the technology is there. Companies are perfectly capable of implementing this tax change. What is good for consumers is good for business owners, too. I am confident that it will be perfectly feasible and reasonable.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I notice that the opposition members are calling this a gimmick, a fraud and a trick. They cannot call it what it is, which is a tax cut. If the Conservatives called it a tax cut, they would have to vote for it because they have been asking for a tax cut. We are giving them this. The only gimmicky thing here is what the Conservatives have been doing for the last while in the House by blocking any progress.

In response to calling this a fraud, I would note that Restaurants Canada has said it is a big win for the restaurant industry: “[It] restores some much-needed hope to our industry and we are optimistic it will translate to increased spending at local restaurants across the country.”

Could the minister please comment on why the timing of this tax break is so important for restaurants?

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[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, the comment my colleague just quoted shows just how beneficial this measure will be for businesses. Businesses often see an increase in traffic in December, but January and February are tougher. By being able to offer a discount of between 5% and 13%, depending on the taxes levied in the various provinces, this will enable these businesses, particularly restaurants, to be more appealing to customers.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a simple question for the minister. Why is there a small GST break on Christmas trees, but not on menorahs?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, there is a whole list of products that are especially popular during the holiday season. These include children's clothing and gifts for children. The intention was to ensure that as many people as possible could benefit from this tax rebate.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister for a little bit of clarity. I have been speaking to business owners in Edmonton Strathcona. I just spoke to a restaurant owner this morning.

The minister has said, over and over again, that there are computers and that it is easy to do. This business owner was telling me that it will be very difficult for her to do that. The problem is that it is at a moment in time when business owners are already very busy, because the Christmas rush has already started for many of these businesses.

She would have liked to have seen this come sooner, that this would not have been so last minute. I am wondering if the minister could comment on the fact that it took weeks after the NDP had called for this action to be taken for the government to finally take the steps and that it has not provided the information that businesses need to be able to do the job, to be able to get through the holiday season, the very busiest season of the year for them.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, it is true that the run-up to the holidays is a very busy time for our businesses, restaurants and merchants.

I can assure the House that we are working with the entire Canada Revenue Agency team, naturally. Just today in fact a link appeared on the agency's website to learn all about this tax holiday, which will be in effect for the next two months, from December 14 to February 15. There is already a lot of information available on the agency's website.

Of course, we remain in contact with the various business associations so we can answer their questions as quickly as possible. We will be updating this web page so that it provides all the information our businesses need.

• (1325)

[*English*]

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am rising to ask a question on behalf of a business owner in my constituency who has three dollar stores. He has about 3,000

items per store that he will have to change. Given 30 seconds per item to go through, that is 90,000 seconds. That is 1,500 minutes. That is 25 hours. Between 9 p.m. that night and 9 a.m. the next morning, he has to pay somebody 25 hours, likely overtime, so we are going to call that \$30 an hour times 750 hours, which is \$1,500 per store because he has got to pay them to take the GST off and put the GST back on, times three stores, which is \$4,500.

What is the government going to do to put \$4,500 back into this business owner's pocket that he has to pay for its bad idea?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to learn that some of the employees working in these stores are earning \$30 an hour.

I think that our merchants will be able to make the necessary change, thanks to all the systems they have at their disposal. It is important to give our fellow citizens, our fellow Canadians, this tax holiday during the holiday period. Merchants know that what is good for consumers is good for them as well. It attracts traffic and is good for our businesses. That makes this a worthwhile investment.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have listened to this conversation a lot. Truly, it is a gimmick. When we are looking at this, we see money that will not be going out like they had promised. We are looking at people going to buy their Christmas gifts as of December 14. Ask any family member who is trying to get organized; that is already done. We know that the costs are being reduced for only two months and, as of February 15, it will not exist, so the impact on these businesses, long term, will also be difficult.

I want to go back to the businesses. Have they done a cost evaluation of how much it is going to cost small businesses with fewer than 10 employees? How much is it going to cost for this GST holiday?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, we are talking about a two-month GST tax holiday that will benefit all Canadians. It covers the goods we consume most during the holidays. It will carry over past the holidays, since the return from the holidays is always a difficult period as well. Our credit card balances are always a bit inflated by that point. The purpose of this measure, then, is to give Canadians time to catch their breath during a period where they want to make their loved ones happy, a period during which Canadian parents or grandparents are really feeling the squeeze.

This tax holiday is really meant to give Canadians a breather during this period.

S. O. 57

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, my NDP colleagues and I understand full well that people are struggling to make ends meet right now. Anything we can do to help them make ends meet and add a bit to their pockets is a positive thing.

Something that has come up over and over again today is the impact on businesses regarding the items being chosen to have the GST removed from, and I agree there are some problems with that. I wonder if the member could share why she and the Liberal Party did not follow through with what the NDP was asking for, which was to have the GST removed from all essentials permanently, including home heating, cellphones, Internet and groceries. None of these problems that are being expressed by the Conservatives right now would even be at issue if they had just followed through with removing GST from all essential products for Canadians. Why did the Liberals not do that?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, it is always difficult to strike a balance. Some want more, and others want less. However, I believe that this ad hoc measure at a critical time of the year will help us achieve the desired balance.

Earlier, my colleague said that officials from Restaurants Canada, which represents a large number of restaurants across the country, confirmed that it was good news and that they were prepared to adapt. What is good for consumers is good for business owners.

• (1330)

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, obviously, the NDP-Liberal coalition, which is alive and well, is keen to talk about its tax trickery, but we know it is not a tax cut because, of course, it is not permanent.

The other interesting thing is this. We know that two million Canadians are going to a food bank every month. We know that one in four parents are giving up meals to feed their children. We know there are cases of scurvy in this country. However, what is it that we will have the GST removed from? It is candies, confectioneries classed as candies or goods sold as candies, candy floss, chewing gum, chocolate, popcorn coated or treated with candy, chocolate, sugars or artificial sweeteners, chips, crisps, puffs, curls, sticks, popcorn, brittle pretzels, salted nuts, seeds, fruit bars, roll-ups or similar fruit-based snacks.

This is ridiculous. We have people starving in this country because of the bad policies of the NDP-Liberal government and it wants to give people chips and crisps. It is nonsense.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, there is nothing we can do to make the Conservatives want to support a measure that could help Canadians. Helping Canadians is against their religion. We saw that with the school food programs. They feel they can talk about food banks, but they do not support the programs we put in place.

These products that will not be taxed over a two-month period also include diapers, baby seats, and children's clothing and shoes. There are also prepared meals, which are still taxed at the grocery store. There is a wide range of products that are essential. We are talking about diapers, children's clothing and a host of other products that Canadians use, especially during the Holidays.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question about businesses. I wonder whether businesses were also consulted before this measure was adopted. It will be expensive for small businesses to change how they do things for two months. We are talking about businesses and people in our ridings and, at some point, some may decide to close their doors because they will not be able to manage. Consider Christmas markets, for example. These businesses will decide to shut down because it is not worth keeping them open for those two months.

What are we telling these businesses? In the end, we are telling them that it does not matter. Also, might this not cause a kind of inflation down the line? After all, we will have to make up for all that missing tax revenue at some point.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, that is the best overreaction I have heard all day. I am pleased to say that there are a lot of Christmas markets in the 35 municipalities I represent.

The tax holiday applies mainly to products for children, such as car seats, diapers, clothing and shoes. What we really want is to give Canadians some respite over the Holidays and during the weeks and months that follow. That is when they need a bit of a breather. There is a lot of pressure on parents and grandparents. They want to give gifts and take the kids out for a meal at a restaurant, for example. That is why we are trying to give Canadians a bit of a breather.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad to speak to this important motion. This tax break for Canadians during the holiday season through Christmas will make a world of a difference. I sympathize with the Conservatives, who are being shackled and told they cannot vote for this measure for their constituents. They should stand up and support their constituents. They should support this important tax measure, this important bill.

How will this measure positively affect the residents of Mississauga East—Cooksville?

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[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, I totally agree with my colleague. The aim of this measure is to help Canadians. We should not expect the Conservatives to support it. It is against everything they believe in. They are against anything we want to do to help Canadians, whether giving benefits to people with disabilities or funding school food programs. We cannot count on them.

Now we want to pause the GST and the HST in the provinces to help make the Holidays more affordable, to help people do a bit more for their children. That is what we want. We also want to give parents, workers and grandparents a break during the period following the Holidays.

● (1335)

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, what we have here is the Liberal Minister of National Revenue, the person responsible for collecting all of our taxes in Canada, defending the two-month tax trick of the Liberals that reduces taxes on Cheezies, chips and beer. However, for most of today, the minister has been bragging about the lower-cost restaurant meals this measure will allow people to get.

The Minister of National Revenue has access to all the tax data in Canada. How many of the two million people a month who line up at the food bank will benefit from lower-cost restaurant food?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, this tax holiday we want to give Canadians in the coming months applies to children's clothing, diapers, children's shoes and car seats, as well as books, games, puzzles, board games, prepared foods and take-home meals. All of that is in the spirit of our government.

Since we have been in power, we have sought to help the neediest people when they need it most. We did it with the Canada child benefit. Let us recall that, when the Conservatives were in power, everyone got the same cheque, regardless of household income or children's age. We changed things. Now money is distributed in inverse proportion to income. That allowed us to lift half a million children out of poverty.

What we want to do is to continue giving Canadians a bit of a breather during the Holiday period.

[*English*]

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are facing a very scary situation in Canada, with Canadians really struggling. As we know, one in five children is living in poverty, two million people are at food banks and homeless encampments are popping up all over our cities all over the country. What is really interesting about this measure is that it almost seems like the Liberals are finally admitting that Canadians are struggling after nine years of their governance. What makes it a trick is that they are selling it as some big, grandiose gesture to bring relief when really it is for relatively few items for only a few weeks.

How can they possibly justify expecting all this praise when all it amounts to is a few bread crumbs for Canadians? What they need is large-scale permanent tax breaks, like axing the carbon tax. That is

what Canadians need, not a few bread crumbs from the Liberal government for a few measly weeks.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, such disdain for Canadians is mind-boggling. It shows nothing but contempt.

Right now, it is about a two-month tax holiday. My colleague talked about breadcrumbs. What does she have to say about the dental care plan, which is helping people and especially seniors? What about the new disability benefit, the Canada child benefit, or our many investments in housing, for example?

We are there to help people and to help Canadians. The Conservatives, on the other hand, certainly can never be counted on. They will be there to make cuts, if by some misfortune they end up coming back.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the issue under debate at the moment concerns the closure motion, not the bill or the effort to reduce the GST.

I would like to ask a question of my friend, the minister. I am always against closure motions, but now that the House has been brought to a standstill for nearly two months, I am going to vote in favour of this motion. However, I would like the minister to tell us whether changes will be made in future bills to protect the very poor in this country.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Madam Speaker, yes, for now we are debating this tax break, but as we have shown over the past few years, our government is there to help the most vulnerable. We have proved it in a number of ways, with the Canada child benefit, the Canadian dental care plan, the school food program, and the list goes on.

● (1340)

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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

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Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, because this is such an important issue for democracy, Conservatives ask for a recorded vote.

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

• (1420)

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

(Division No. 901)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Ali
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Barron
Battiste	Beech
Bendayan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaney
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Dance	Davies
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gainey	Garrison
Gazan	Gerretsen
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauson
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen

May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Morrice
Murray
Ng
O'Connell
O'Regan
Powlowski
Robillard
Romanado
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara
St-Onge
Tassi
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi— 177

May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
Oliphant
Petipas Taylor
Qualtrough
Rogers
Rota
Sajjan
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Singh
Sousa
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Trudeau
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

NAYS

Members

Aboultatif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Bergeron	Berthold
Béribé	Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chabot
Chambers	Champoux
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeschen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Fortin	Gallant
Gaudreau	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Hoback	Jeneroux
Jivani	Kelly
Khanna	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	Larouche
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lemire	Leslie

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

[English]

PAKISTAN

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of concerned Pakistani-Canadian community members, including Dr. Babra Rana, Mr. Saif Pannu and Mr. Muhammad Akmal Gundhra, to address the alleged recent killings of unarmed protesters in Islamabad who were supporting Imran Khan.

A symbol of justice and democracy, Imran Khan inspires millions who are striving for transparent governance. Despite political persecution, his leadership has fuelled a movement for unity, accountability and electoral fairness. His supporters continue to advocate for human rights and democracy.

Canada must stand in solidarity with the people of Pakistan, who continue to stand up for their rights and freedoms. Ongoing human rights violations cannot be ignored. We must act now to demand justice and accountability, and to prevent the further loss of innocent lives.

* * *

● (1425)

BRUCE OAKE RECOVERY CENTRE

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the important work of the Bruce Oake Recovery Centre in my riding. The centre is a non-profit residential treatment facility located in Winnipeg, founded by Scott and Anne Oake. It provides addiction treatment and recovery services to individuals struggling with substance abuse disorders, and with a 57% success rate, the centre works.

I recently spoke with Shane Sturby-Highfield. Shane struggled with addiction since his youth, but thanks to the centre and to his own determination, he will be three years sober in December. He has his son back, and he has a good job working for Manitoba Hydro.

Success breeds success, so Scott Oake has now broken ground on a second centre in Winnipeg, the Anne Oake Recovery Centre, named for his late wife.

Treatment saves lives. Conservatives will not give up on those who are struggling with addictions. Common-sense Conservatives will stop taxpayer-funded drugs and will put that money into treatment and recovery to bring our loved ones home drug-free.

* * *

[Translation]

LEBANESE HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Lebanese Heritage Month, a time to honour Lebanese culture and its incredible contributions to Canada through its varied traditions, delicious food, remarkable economic contribution and so much more.

Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Maguire
Majumdar	Martel
Mazier	McCaughey (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Normandin
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perkins
Perron	Poilievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Sauvé	Savard-Tremblay
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shiplay	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's)
Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake)	Strahl
Stubbs	Thériault
Therrien	Thomas
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudel	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vignola
Villemure	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zimmer— 148

PAIRED

Members

Duncan (Etobicoke North) Plamondon— 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been discussions among the parties, and, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, the House do now proceed to Statements by Members followed by Oral Questions, and that the usual allotment of time be afforded for each rubric.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

Statements by Members

Lebanese Canadians began enriching our society over 140 years ago. It all started in Montreal. Canada is now home to over 200,000 Lebanese Canadians, including 8,000 in my riding of Vimy.

[*English*]

We remember the difficult circumstances and journeys of many Lebanese families who sought new beginnings in Canada, including the challenges of conflict in their homeland. Their courage, determination and success in Canada inspires us all, and we are grateful for them.

Together, let us honour this heritage and our Lebanese Canadian fellow citizens, but also let us all wish and pray that a permanent peace takes a firm hold in Lebanon.

* * *

[*Translation*]

LA RESSOURCE CONVENIENCE STORE

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the 50th anniversary of the convenience store La Ressource. Founded in 1974 by André Desroches, who also founded the Association des gens d'affaires de Boucherville, this family business has become a true institution in Boucherville.

La Ressource is much more than a simple corner store where people go to buy a quart of milk, a bag of chips or a case of beer. Over 25 years ago, in fact, these entrepreneurs were veritable pioneers when they made the switch to homegrown products from Quebec, in particular microbrewery beers. Entering the store is like entering Ali Baba's cave. There, patrons choose their beer the way they might sort through bottles at the SAQ. After some wise tips from their beerologist, they can chat with members of the family about the latest goings-on in the neighbourhood. Frédéric Desroches, part of the third generation at the helm of the family business, is every bit as involved and engaged in the community as his grandfather.

Congratulations to the family on their 50th anniversary, and long live La Ressource.

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[*English*]

CHARTER CITY TORONTO

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the most galling thing I have read in recent memory is a post by a Ford MPP celebrating tearing out bike lanes in my home city of Toronto by saying it will make roads safer for people on bikes. Where is the data?

Let us be clear. Bike lanes save lives. If someone has a problem with their design or location, they should take it to our mayor or to city councillors. That is why we elect them. It is time that we look at charter cities and look at how to better protect our cities from this kind of overreach.

I ran to make sure that our federal government was a strong partner to the city of Toronto, and we are. Strong partners do not roll over each other's toes.

The Ford decision is going to cost lives. It is going to cost taxpayers. It is going to take away an affordable way to get around our city, and it is going to add to traffic. How is that for a lump of coal for the holidays? Bah humbug.

Let us stand up for the city of Toronto. Let us stand up for charter cities.

* * *

• (1430)

ANTHONY “TONY” STURGEON

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am the proud nephew of Tony Sturgeon. Tony's recent passing brings a deep sadness to our family, along with major change. Tony leaves behind the love of his life, Aunt Christy, and daughters Mandy and Kyla. Our family will be forever grateful that Tony found someone as wonderful as Christy to share his life with.

Tony's love for Christy and his daughters was always evident in our family. He was deeply proud of both daughters and was always excited to spend time with his grandchildren. Toronto Maple Leafs fans are loyal for obvious reasons. We are all long-suffering, but few were as loyal as my Uncle Tony. We shared this passion, and it returned every fall, along with the common sorrow in the spring.

Tony leaves behind a great legacy of two beautiful daughters, their children and families, a lifetime of good humour and memories we will hold close forever. We will always miss Uncle Tony.

* * *

AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, more than 3,000 Canadians live with ALS. One is my constituent. Matthew Brown's courageous battle over the years has inspired me to do more. In fact, just a few days ago on Parliament Hill, we saw ALS Action Canada organize an effort that brought together Canadians living with ALS, their family members and their supporters.

In fact, those supporters include members of the NHL alumni, in support specifically of Mark Kirton. Mark Kirton is a former Toronto Maple Leafs player. He played for the Detroit Red Wings and the Vancouver Canucks. He had a very good NHL career, and he shared with us his efforts to create the ALS Super Fund. The effort, in less than one year, has generated more than \$1 million in support of awareness and research.

Efforts like that inspire us, across party lines in fact. As chair of the all-party ALS Caucus, I want to do more, and I know members in all parties feel that way. We will continue to advocate for people like Matthew, for people like Mark and for the 3,000 plus Canadians living with ALS. We are with our constituents and with Canadians.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

TAX RELIEF

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the holidays fast approaching, our government is taking decisive action so that Canadians can celebrate without worrying about the high costs associated with the holiday season. With the GST break, we are putting more money back into the pockets of Canadians. Starting on December 14, children's clothing, toys and diapers, along with prepared meals, restaurant meals and many other products, will be exempt from GST. This measure, which supports local businesses, will help the people of Alfred-Pellan and all Canadians to enjoy their celebrations at a lower cost.

Will the Leader of the Opposition get out of the way and allow his caucus members to put the needs of their communities ahead of his political ambitions by supporting this plan, which helps local businesses and families, or will he continue to silence them and block progress at every opportunity?

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, our once-safe towns and cities are now rife with crime and chaos thanks to the Liberal Prime Minister's radical catch-and-release bail policies that allow dangerous people, lawbreakers, to stay on our streets.

Our worsening public safety record has been made evident by a recent Fraser Institute study comparing our crime stats to those of the U.S.A. The numbers are in. Violent crime is up in Canada and is now exceeding the United States by 14%. There is also property crime, which is exceeding property crime in the U.S.A. by a shocking 27%. All of this is under the watch of the Prime Minister. It is nothing to be proud of.

We used to be proud of our public safety record. We used to think of it as one of our distinguishing features, something that was a source of national pride. That is no more. Canadians deserve to feel safe in their communities. It is time for a common-sense Conservative government that is going to focus on public safety and that is going to bring back safe streets.

* * *

● (1435)

ROBERT SMYTHE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to remember Robert Smythe, a true pillar of Centretown who passed away on November 15. For over 50 years, Robert dedicated his life to preserving the character and history of our community.

As the founding editor of the Centretown BUZZ, Robert captured the stories and struggles of our neighbourhood with passion and care. He shared downtown Ottawa's history and architecture in a way that brought it to life, championing the preservation of not just heritage buildings but also the modernist and brutalist structures that reflect our city's evolution.

He was a tireless advocate for affordable housing, a community builder and a passionate pedestrian who knew every corner of Centretown. His memory will forever echo through downtown's streets, its cherished buildings and people's stories that define our community.

May Robert rest in peace.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberals are not worth the cost. Taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up, time is up. Now they have broken Canada's immigration system.

The Conservatives have learned that there are over three million people in Canada who need to leave by December of next year, and the government does not have a plan. When we pressed the minister on this at committee, he simply shrugged his shoulders and said that he expected people to leave voluntarily. At the same time, he also expects asylum claimants to grow.

He is talking out of both sides of his mouth. The facts are that student demonstrators have said they will not leave voluntarily and asylum claims are growing. However, the NDP-Liberal government hopes this problem will just go away. Hope is not a management plan.

The truth is that the NDP-Liberals have no plan to ensure these three million temporary residents actually leave Canada. They do not have a way to know if they have left. They will not even prevent them from staying. They will not stop them from claiming asylum. They will not even control our borders.

Simply put, the NDP-Liberals broke our immigration system and do not know how to fix it. Where is the plan?

* * *

CARBON TAX

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, more and more Canadians are realizing the true role of the NDP leader and his entire caucus in keeping the Liberal government in power and shielding it from an election.

Even after President-elect Trump's unjustified threat of a 25% tariff on Canada's already fragile economy, the NDP-Liberal coalition continues to defend its harmful carbon tax, a tax that costs the average person in Manitoba \$693 and over \$900 in some other provinces.

Statements by Members

No matter what the NDP-Liberals say, the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer has made it clear that carbon tax makes most Canadians poorer. Unfortunately, the NDP leader does not care. Instead of voting with Conservatives to express non-confidence in the government and trigger an election, he is focused on securing his pension and is prepared to quadruple the carbon tax.

It is time to let Canadians choose a strong prime minister who will defend our economy. Let us fire the Prime Minister and call a carbon tax election.

* * *

[Translation]

AFFORDABILITY MEASURES

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government knows that, even though Canadians work hard, many of them are still struggling financially.

That is why we introduced the new working Canadians rebate last week. This tax-free \$500 payment will go directly to more than 18 million Canadians. If people worked in 2023 and earned up to \$150,000, this rebate is for them. This is meaningful support that Canadians who work hard every day can use to pay bills, buy groceries or save for the future.

In addition to our GST/HST holiday exemption for essential goods, such as groceries, diapers and children's clothing, our government is enabling Canadians to save a lot of money and get real relief at the cash register. I hope all members will work hard to get these important measures passed.

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[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Boyle Street, Bessell Centre, Tawaw Outreach Collective, 4B Harm Reduction, Water Warriors, Smile YEG, Bear Claw Beaver Hills House, Hope Mission and REACH Edmonton, these are the names of the frontline organizations in Edmonton helping our neighbours survive.

Houselessness is a crisis in Edmonton. Over the past few weeks, four people have already frozen to death. Things are so bad that last winter, over 100 people living on the streets lost a limb from frostbite. The majority of these people are indigenous.

These harrowing statistics put the work of Edmonton's local organizations into focus: compassionate and understanding care, supportive housing for those who need it most and wraparound services that go far beyond just putting a roof over people's heads. However, these organizations need help.

I urge the government to work with provincial and municipal partners to ensure that the people who support Edmonton's most vulnerable have the resources they need. Together, we can end poverty and houselessness.

• (1440)

[Translation]

CHANCELLOR PAULINE MAROIS

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Université du Québec à Montréal, or UQAM for short, has just scored a major coup by appointing Pauline Marois chancellor. This is another first for the woman who was elected Quebec's first female premier.

Throughout her impressive career serving Quebec, it was her role as education minister that Ms. Marois says she enjoyed the most, because that is where she was able to make the biggest difference. She made meaningful changes by creating, for example, a network of public early childhood centres. It was largely thanks to her efforts that Quebec women now enjoy one of the highest rates of female employment in the world.

At a time when UQAM is facing new challenges, including contributing to the revitalization of the Latin Quarter and planning to create a faculty of health sciences, the woman who describes education as “a pillar for any nation that wants to grow” is the right woman in the right place.

Well done, UQAM. Congratulations to Ms. Marois, and long live the chancellor.

* * *

[English]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of those Liberals, life has never been so unaffordable. Now, with Canadians struggling and his party languishing in the polls, the Prime Minister comes up with this two-month temporary tax trick. Even his own MPs are fed up.

The Liberal member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek called the plan “incomprehensible” and revealed he had been threatened with “consequences” for speaking out. He told the Toronto Star, “It says a lot about where our government is at right now and it says a lot about some of the shackles that have been put around MPs.” The Prime Minister silences anyone who dares to disagree.

Canadians deserve better than Liberal hypocrisy. It is a two-month tax trick today to distract from the Liberals' plan to quadruple the carbon tax. No wonder the Liberal MP for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek calls this plan incomprehensible.

Common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax for everyone, everywhere, for good.

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker,

Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens
Children's scarves and warm woolen mittens
Books and newspapers tied up with strings
These are a few of my favourite things.

Restaurant meals and crisp apple strudels
Snacks and candy and schnitzel with noodles
Toys and board games and the joy that they bring
These are a few of my favourite things.

These things will be exempted from GST, starting December 14. This tax break will give Canadians more money in their pockets during the holidays, a time when the costs go up for many families.

When the dog bites, when the CPC stings
I simply remember my favourite things will soon be exempted from the GST.

It is good news for Canadians. I encourage members opposite to vote in favour of this tax break and let Canadians have more of their hard-earned money.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is weak and has lost control of our borders. He is the one who opened Roxham Road and kept it open for a year after the Americans offered to close it. He is the one who invited at least 700 international students here, implicitly promising that they could stay here permanently, and now they have to leave the country. He is the one who lost 500,000 people.

What is his plan for restoring order at the border and stopping U.S. tariffs?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as our colleague is well aware, our relationship with the United States is our most important relationship of all in terms of security and the economy. We have been working very well together for years, for decades.

That is also what we have done over the past several years. My colleague knows full well that, just 18 months ago, we signed a new safe third country agreement that the United States has been very happy with ever since, and we are going to make sure our colleague is aware of that.

• (1445)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister likes to encroach on provincial jurisdictions, he has lost control of his own responsibilities. In fact, he is being irresponsible about the borders, which fall under the most important federal jurisdiction.

The premiers have now lost confidence in the Prime Minister. The Quebec premier is sending the provincial police to protect the border. The Alberta premier is doing the same. The Ontario premier said exactly the same thing.

How can anyone have confidence in this Prime Minister?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our colleague is talking about control, jurisdiction and confidence. I just answered his question a few moments ago.

One thing that is within his control is asking for his security clearance to protect himself from his own blatant incompetence. He is incapable of protecting himself and his own MPs. That creates a confidence issue. The confidence of Parliament and the confidence of Canadians depend on the ability of the Leader of the Opposition to control his agenda and get a security clearance.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the weak Prime Minister has lost control. He has lost control of immigration and he has lost control of our borders. Now we are facing massive threats to our economy.

Right now, there are as many as 500,000 people here illegally. There are 700,000 students who came here with the implicit promise they would be able to stay forever. Now they are being told they have to leave, with the temptation that they might head south for the much stronger economy than we have here, which would provoke a massive retaliatory tariff.

What is the plan to reverse all the damage the Prime Minister has done?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, hundreds of thousands of people come to this country every year and then leave. They are called tourists. Hundreds of thousands of people come here as temporary residents and then they leave. Some become permanent residents. There is a plan to achieve that. They will migrate into permanent residency. However, not all can stay here and when they refuse to do so, they will be removed.

We cannot make this up. What the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, is doing, with the member for Edmonton Mill Woods, is going around to these people, pandering to them, promising them visas and promising not to deport them. That is highly irresponsible and incompetent.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member hallucinates almost as badly as his weak leader, who refuses to stand and answer for his own border failures.

Let us look at his record. He opened Roxham Road. He kept it open for a year longer than the Americans required. He put out a tweet saying, "Welcome to Canada", inviting people to come here illegally.

According to that minister's department, there are half a million people here illegally, all of whom could be tempted to go south of the border, provoking a massive retaliatory response.

Once again, what is the plan to fix what he broke?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will tweet out the video of him pandering to people, entertaining false hope, promising visas to everyone, promising they will not get deported. That is highly incompetent. Worse than that is that he is refusing to get his security clearance. That is irresponsible for any purported leader of our country or any responsible person in politics. He needs to grow a pair, get the briefing—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: There is a lot of flexibility that the Speaker gives, of course, in terms of the language that is used in here, but I think that might be on the border.

I am going to ask the hon. minister to withdraw the words.

• (1450)

Hon. Marc Miller: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the words. On a day like this, I would say that the Leader of the Opposition is all flannel and no axe.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, this shows the erratic, out-of-control government we have over there. The Prime Minister is hiding from questions. His minister is losing control of his words and his mind. The government is falling to pieces.

The Prime Minister has lost control of the border, lost control of immigration and lost control of our finances, and he has now lost control of his caucus, whose members are saying that they have been intimidated into voting in favour of his tiny tax trick. He has lost control, but he is holding on to power.

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the member is talking about. On this side of the House we can have conversations. We can have debates, and we do not get shut down from speaking like the members opposite.

Let us talk about today. We are moving forward with a GST cut for every single Canadian.

What have we heard from the Leader of the Opposition? He is opposed to tax cuts. He is all talk, no walk. He is not there for Canadians. On this side of the House, we are going to support Canadians and let our members have debates and conversations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has been asking the Liberals for weeks to increase resources at the border. For weeks, they have been telling us, in their typically condescending way, that they have a plan and that the Bloc Québécois is fearmongering.

However, in a dramatic turn of events, yesterday, the Prime Minister announced to his Quebec and provincial counterparts that the Liberals were going to do as the Bloc Québécois had been suggesting for weeks and increase resources at the border. They have just proved to everyone that, until last night, they had no plan and there were not enough resources at the border.

Why do the Liberals always have to wait until the last minute to take action?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our colleague is well aware that the relationship with the United States is the most important relationship that we have when it comes to economic and border security. That is why, for many decades now, we have been working actively and constructively with the Americans. That is what we have done in recent years, particularly with President-elect Trump's previous administration.

The Prime Minister had an excellent meeting yesterday with Canada's premiers, and we are going to continue to work together to deal with the issues raised during that conversation.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, better late than never. The Liberals have finally clued in to the fact that resources need to be increased at the border. However, they are still unable to tell us exactly when, how and by how much.

This is incredibly serious because, less than two months from now, Donald Trump is going to slap tariffs on the entire Canadian economy. The Liberals do not even have two months left to plug all the holes in the border, yet, until last night, they did not even know there was an issue.

Today, now that they have finally seen the light, can they explain their detailed plan?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know and we know that borders are important. It is in America's interest to protect them. It is in Canadians' interest to protect them. That is why we are working together on this issue.

I have had conversations with Premier Legault, and just this morning, I spoke with Minister Biron, Quebec's international relations minister. I have also had the opportunity to speak with several influential senators, both Republican and Democrat, who are all allies for ensuring that we can work together on protecting our two countries.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just as Mariah Carey awakens from her long slumber every November to sing the same Christmas song, so did the Liberals wake up last Thursday with the brilliant idea of doling out \$250 cheques. The NDP pointed out they were neglecting a bunch of people, like seniors, people with disabilities and people who were unable to work. In a panic, the Liberals delayed the measure.

It is all very well to punt the problem down the road, but the question remains: Will they fix their measure so it helps the people who actually need help?

• (1455)

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, today is a good day.

Oral Questions

With support from the NDP, we are going to vote in favour of a tax break for all Canadians, including seniors. We thank the NDP, because all we hear from the other side of the House is a party of Grinches who refuse to change and who do not want to vote for a tax break.

I thank the NDP, because it cares about Canadians as much as we do. We will continue to work with the NDP to make sure we support all Canadians across the country.

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they are not supporting all Canadians. The Liberals are letting Canadians down. Almost everyone is cutting back. Life is expensive, and that is especially true for students, seniors and people with disabilities. What is the Liberals' plan? It is to exclude them from the \$250 rebate.

Even the Liberals' own MPs think it is absurd, and the Conservatives want to give tax breaks to billionaires like Galen Weston, but will not give a tax break to everyday Canadians. When the Conservatives show us who they are, we should believe them.

Will the Liberals fix their botched rebate, yes or no?

[*Translation*]

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, I thank my colleague for the question. We were the first to introduce a disability benefit. My brother has a disability. Our government was the first government to bring in direct help for people with physical disabilities.

The \$250 cheque that we want to send out is a cheque that we want to send to workers. It is ironic to hear such a comment coming from a party that has been always said it stands up for workers. That being said, we estimate that more than one million working seniors will be eligible for this cheque. People with disabilities who are in the labour market will also be eligible for this cheque.

[*English*]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after the Prime Minister has doubled the cost of housing, added an inflationary carbon tax to everything Canadians buy and given us the highest levels of debt in the G7, his plan is a temporary, tiny, two-month tax trick. However, not even small businesses are fooled. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business says that only 4% of small businesses expect a sales boost because of the latest, last-ditch effort for the Prime Minister to save his own job.

If the Prime Minister is so sure about his plan, why does he not call a carbon tax election and let Canadians decide?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect, the member ought to look at what the Retail Council of Canada has said on the matter or at what Restaurants Canada has said on the matter as well. Small business owners in my community and across the country will benefit as a result of the tax cut. That is exactly what it is: a tax cut for workers and a tax cut for families.

What is also surprising—

An hon. member: Erin O'Toole says you're welcome.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, I just heard the name of Erin O'Toole. That is exactly right. He put the initiative on the table in the summer of 2021. We are supporting it now. Who else supported it? The Leader of the Opposition did. He reposted a tweet from Erin O'Toole at the time but does not want to support the initiative now.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not a tax cut; it is a distraction before a much bigger, permanent tax hike. Even the Prime Minister's own Liberal MPs are now opposing this. The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek says that he was threatened with “consequences” if he voted against it. Rather than threatening his own MPs, muzzling them like he has accused others of doing, we have a weakened Prime Minister, terrified of facing Canadians.

If the Prime Minister is so sure about his own leadership, if he is so sure about his own plan, why will he not allow his own MPs to have a free vote on this one today?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, workers who are going for groceries, who want to eat out and who want to buy gifts during Christmas are the people on our mind, as well as families who want to buy diapers or clothes for their kids, or the young family that is excited about a new child coming into the family. Car seats are expensive, and there is a tax savings on them too.

The Leader of the Opposition supported the initiative in 2021 but does not want to now because it is a Liberal initiative. Will the real Pierre Poilievre stand up in the House of Commons?

• (1500)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am sorry; I did not hear the hon. member, and I am going to say to members that if they were able to hold their voices unless recognized by the Speaker, it would be easier for the Speaker to hear.

The hon. member apparently mentioned the name of another hon. member. I will ask the hon. member to rise.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, it was an honest mistake. I withdraw it.

*Oral Questions***TAXATION**

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, turning temporary two-month tax tricks will not save the desperate Prime Minister. After doubling housing costs, doubling the national debt and doubling food bank usage, now he is blaming Canadians for not feeling the vibe of the pricey gimmick. Now he is even threatening his own Liberal MP from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for not supporting the vote-buying scheme.

Instead of threatening MPs to take cents off Skittles, call a carbon tax election now so common-sense Conservatives can axe the tax for good.

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the Leader of the Opposition knows a thing or two about threatening his own MPs, because if they do not speak in three-word slogans, we never hear from them again.

However, what I can say is that on this side of the House we are excited to deliver a tax cut for Canadians. For the mom who has to buy diapers, groceries and a car seat, this is meaningful.

Who it is not meaningful for is the Leader of the Opposition, because when it comes to supporting everyday Canadians, he would rather support himself than give them a break over the holidays. That is so disappointing, and Canadians across this country are disappointed in him.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only thing the Liberals are cutting is moms who have to cut down on the nutritious food they can give to their kids, and they are sending them into food bank lines. After the temporary tax trick is done, the Liberals are going to jack up the carbon tax on April 1, making everything more expensive, and anyone who does not believe in the Prime Minister's radical plan is threatened with consequences. The inflationary vote-buying scheme will add another \$6 billion to the Prime Minister's growing deficit.

Instead of taking chump change off chocolates, call a carbon tax election now so we can axe the tax for good.

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the GST that we are proposing to remove is going to be removed on essential items like groceries, children's clothing, diapers and car seats. I do not know whether the hon. colleague has children, but if he does, he would know just how expensive those items are for Canadians, and for Canadians who have to buy these essential items, the tax cut would make a difference.

I do not understand why Conservative members of Parliament do not get that, but I hope they change their mind and support the measure, because it is—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I will ask the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets to please not take the floor unless recognized by the Speaker.

The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis has the floor.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is desperate for a distraction. He is baiting voters with a GST holiday that will last a measly two months, but everyone sees through him. This morning, a constituent came to my riding office to criticize this out-of-touch Prime Minister for his tricks. Everyone is done with this worn-out government.

Does it know that everyone wants an election in order to elect the Conservatives, who will be able to bring hope back to Canadians?

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, once again, today is a good day. Canadians across the country, including Quebecers, are getting a tax holiday.

I do not understand why my colleague on the other side of the House does not want to support Canadians. The Conservatives' hidden agenda involves austerity and cutting programs such as housing construction. Today, it is very clear that they do not want to support Quebecers and give them a tax holiday during the toughest time of year.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we openly said that the Conservatives will axe the tax and take the GST off new homes, which will save buyers up to \$50,000 on the purchase of a new home and spur the construction of 30,000 new homes. This is a concrete idea to provide lasting solutions to the problems that this government created. Canadians are not stupid. They see what is going on. They will make this government pay the price when the time comes.

Do we want an election? Yes, we want one now.

• (1505)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, honestly, it is hard to accept the Conservative Party's question, because we have signed an agreement with la belle province, Quebec, to build more than 8,000 affordable housing units with a major investment of \$1.8 billion. This agreement is a success.

The Conservative Party's position is to scrap the agreement and scrap the program that supports the construction of affordable housing, which is unacceptable. The question is not acceptable and neither is the position.

SENIORS

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government introduced its GST holiday bill and set aside the \$250 cheques that it had promised to everyone except seniors and those who are struggling the most. It should take this opportunity to take a step back and seriously rethink its priorities. This government is prepared to spend \$6 billion to buy votes, but it refuses to improve the old age security pension for seniors 65 to 74, even though this would address the injustice they are suffering, not to mention cost half as much.

Will it give Bill C-319 a royal recommendation instead of trying to buy votes?

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, I am not trying to buy votes today. I am just trying to give Canadians and Quebecers a chance to buy essential items during the holidays. What I do not understand is why the Bloc Qu b cois does not want to support a measure that will directly help not only all Quebecers, but also seniors during this period.

Today, I received an email from a constituent that said: "The Bloc Qu b cois just lost my vote, because their blackmail is insulting".

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it has become standard practice for this government to ignore seniors. The government believes it has done enough for seniors, so it is hanging them out to dry. Some seniors will not even benefit from the GST holiday for Christmas, because all their income already goes towards their basic needs. The government can do something. If it can give \$250 to everyone just to show how generous it is, if it can spend \$6 billion to buy votes, then it can invest \$3 billion in old age security.

Instead of giving money to lots of people who do not need it, why not simply increase old age security?

Mr. St phane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, where was the Bloc Qu b cois when we increased the OAS for seniors aged 75 and over? The Bloc voted against it. Where was the Bloc Qu b cois when we brought in a 10% increase to the GIS, a benefit for the most vulnerable and needy seniors? Where was the Bloc Qu b cois when we voted in favour of the Canadian dental care plan? The Bloc voted against it.

The Bloc Qu b cois has consistently voted against seniors.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that says a lot about Liberal values. As they see it, giving money to a couple earning \$300,000 a year and giving nothing to seniors is fair and equitable.

The Liberals see the Conservatives scoring political points without having any sense of social justice or solidarity with people who are struggling, so they decided they would copy that strategy, since it seems to be paying off.

The government needs to get its values straight. On the one hand, we have a \$250 cheque that no party agrees with. On the other

Oral Questions

hand, we have Bill C-319 to increase the OAS, which all the parties agree with.

Why are the Liberals not making the right choice?

• (1510)

Mr. St phane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would invite the Bloc Qu b cois members to go see their constituents and look them in the eye. Every time they tell them that they support a pension increase for seniors between 65 and 74, they should have the guts to admit that they also voted against every measure proposed for Quebec seniors.

Bloc members did not want a GIS increase. They did not want a dental plan. They did not want anything for seniors. They cannot say one thing to one audience and something else to another.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, because the NDP-Liberals are trying to fool Canadians with a two-month tax trick, small businesses are being forced, and are scrambling, to reprogram their point-of-sale machines and to find the time and money to pay for these changes. It is a shame the Minister of Small Business knew and did not care that this tax trick would hurt the very businesses she purports to help.

We all know an election is coming. Can we simply stop with the desperation and call a carbon tax election today?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only things the member and his party can offer small businesses are slogans on repeat, cuts to programs that are essential and cuts.

Our tax break is not just good for small businesses; it is good for their customers. This tax break is not just helping families; it is also supporting the entire community in boosting the neighbourhood independent grocery stores, restaurants, retailers and small businesses that power our local economy. CRA has provided further guidance on this today, which will help support small businesses, and small businesses can call the CRA hotline to get further support.

*Oral Questions***INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 40% of Canada's economy is tied to our relationship in trade with the U.S., but after nine years, we have no softwood lumber deal. What has happened? Tariffs have doubled, and they are set to double again, if we have a first increase, and a second, if Trump gets his way, if we do not fix the border.

After nine years, we have lost 90,000 jobs in softwood lumber, 40,000 each in Ontario and Quebec alone. The last prime minister solved this in 79 days. It has been 3,311 days. Where is the plan for softwood lumber?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will always stand up for forestry workers and our lumber industry. We stood up for Canada when the U.S. imposed aluminum and steel tariffs on us. What did the Conservatives say? They urged us to back down and capitulate. When we renegotiated NAFTA back in 2018, we stood strong and protected Canada's economy while the Conservatives asked us to capitulate.

We have a proven track record when it comes to negotiating. We will continue to protect Canadian workers and Canadian industry.

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no team Canada when the plan is to pile on taxes, make energy and production more expensive, and sideline our Canadian industries on the global stage. What kind of team has no game plan after nine years, loses 90,000 softwood lumber jobs, gets kicked out of CUSMA negotiations and sits on the sidelines while Mexico overtakes Canada as the U.S.A.'s number one trading partner?

Here is a Canada first plan: axe the tax, scrap the cap on oil and gas production, and fix softwood lumber. Why does the Prime Minister not use that common-sense Canada first plan?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. is a very important partner to our economy and our relationships with the rest of the world. The member talks about trade. We had \$1.3 trillion of trade last year with the U.S., which is a record since we renegotiated NAFTA in 2018.

We will continue to be at the table with a team Canada approach as we continue to protect Canadian businesses and workers.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake to please not take the floor unless recognized by the Speaker.

The hon. member for Nunavut.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, three first nations children have died since January due to this government's non-compliance with Jordan's principle. The Liberals are actively fighting against the Human Rights Tribunal's orders and allowing first na-

tions children to die while in care. There are over 40,000 Jordan's principle requests in the backlog. Liberals are not even trying to fix this.

When will the Liberals stop fighting first nations children and uphold first nations' rights to care?

• (1515)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we care deeply about first nations children.

Jordan's principle ensures first nations children can access the care they need when they need it, regardless of where they live. Since 2016, Indigenous Services Canada has funded approximately 7.8 million products, services and supports for first nations children. The number of requests has grown exponentially over the years, and we are increasing funding so ISC can meet the demand.

All governments need to do their part to keep first nations children safe, healthy and supported.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here is the latest horrifying story involving the airlines' mistreatment of people with disabilities. Air Canada failed to secure a brain cancer patient in a wheelchair. She fell out and was left bleeding and bruised. We are talking about a failure to protect people's safety and dignity. We are talking about a failure to uphold their basic human rights and yet despite dozens of stories like these, people with disabilities have seen zero action from the government.

Either the Liberals do not think things in the air sector have gotten bad enough yet to act or they simply do not care. Which one is it?

Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government takes accessibility very seriously, ensuring all passengers are treated with dignity. In May, for example, we had a summit to listen to and learn from those who have accessibility issues. Of course, recommendations came out of those meetings to ensure we work with the airlines and, quite frankly, demand they address the issues as the member has brought forward.

TAXATION

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I continue to hear a lot of noise from members opposite about affordability but no real solutions. Last week, our government made an exciting announcement to support Canadians over this holiday season. Would the minister share—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Humber River—Black Creek can start from the top, please.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I continue to hear a lot of noise from members opposite about affordability but no real solutions. Last week, the government made an exciting announcement to support Canadians over this holiday season.

Would the minister share more details about our government's plan to put more money in the pockets of Canadians?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know Canadians need more support these days and that is why we introduced the Canada child benefit, lifting hundreds of thousands of Canadian children out of poverty. We cut child care costs by 50% to help families and we cut taxes for small business.

Now we are giving all Canadians a tax break. We are eliminating the GST on essential goods for two months to support Canadians through the holidays. This means groceries, children's clothes and more will be tax-free, so Canadians will have more money in their pockets.

Conservatives oppose this, just as they want to cut all kinds of supports for Canadians. While they play political games, we are working for Canadians.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, "Canada's 3M temporary migrants do not appear poised to leave 'voluntarily'" is the headline from a major Canadian newspaper. The immigration minister naively expects they will leave voluntarily. Migrant advocates admit they have no such plans. This sets the stage for mass overstays and more illegal border crossings into the United States. This strains our relations with the newly elected U.S. administration, now threatening a 25% tariff if we do not secure our border.

What is the Prime Minister's plan to enforce the laws and ensure that people who need to leave will do so?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite should get their facts straight. They float around numbers: three million, five million. They actually do not know what they are talking about in response to their own Order Paper question—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Marc Miller: Mr. Speaker, I hear them heckling me, but who they really should be heckling is the Leader of the Opposition, who is pandering to all these groups, promising visas to everyone

Oral Questions

and not to deport anyone. That is not responsible. He really needs to grow up if he is going to be responsible.

The Speaker: I am going to ask the hon. member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie to please not take the floor unless recognized by the Speaker.

The hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister had no answers at committee when I asked him the same questions. He does not know his numbers because he has no plan. It is really simple. The lack of a plan threatens the integrity of our immigration system. It wreaks significant diplomatic damage with this newly incoming U.S. administration.

Is the government deploying more police to the border? The Liberals do not know. Is the government deploying advanced technology and will the government use it for border surveillance? The Liberals do not know. Is the government going to use the CBSA with more resources and more agents on the border? The Liberals do not know. YouTube videos are not enough.

Will the Prime Minister present a Canada first plan that will make sure everybody who is required to leave will actually do so?

● (1520)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems the Conservatives are a little nervous about me responding, probably because I am going to point out the fact that they cut over 1,000 jobs from CBSA. They were warned that their cuts would lead to more guns, more human trafficking and more drugs at our border.

What did we do on this side of the House? We reversed those cuts. We invested in our police services. As a result, we have seen an increase of 600% in misrepresentation investigations and a 50% decrease in migrants entering the border from the south. That is because investments work.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, you can see how nervous I am.

After nine years of incompetent and ideology-driven decisions on immigration, the Prime Minister still has no plan to protect our borders or our jobs. Just two days before President-elect Trump threatened to impose tariffs, 16 people were arrested while trying to enter the United States from Quebec. Another 21,000 migrants have illegally crossed into the United States from Canada since the start of 2024.

Oral Questions

What is the Prime Minister's plan to put Canadians first, protect our borders, and protect our jobs?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no relationship in the world more important than the one between Canada and the United States. The reason we want to keep investing in this relationship is that we know Canadians want us to protect their interests. That is why the border is so important to us, and that is why border security is so important to us, as it is to the Americans.

In the past few days, I have been very involved. I have spoken with a number of my U.S. counterparts and U.S. senators. Naturally, we are going to have a very good plan, because it serves the interests of Canadians.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Chair, we are here because the Liberals have caused chaos and disorder in our immigration system and at the border. Nine years later, it is clear that the Prime Minister is much too weak to deal with Donald Trump.

Let me remind the House that in 2016, the Prime Minister flung Canada's doors wide open to the entire world. After promising the Canadian dream to all these people, he is now saying that three million of them will have to go home by the end of the year. How is he going to make sure that none of them go sneak into the United States? He has no plan to protect our border. When will he call an election so that Canadians can elect a strong leader who will put Canada first?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know very well that we need to protect the border. That is why we signed a safe third country agreement with the Biden administration. That is why we will, of course, come to an understanding with the incoming U.S. administration. It is in Canadians' best interest. I might also point out that our government is the one that has experience dealing with the Trump administration.

Instead of playing politics on the backs of Canadians, we need to work together. Together, we will be able to turn this situation to our advantage.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the GST Christmas holiday is a \$1.6-billion gift to people who do not need it. It is a reward for spending money. It will not make much of a difference to low-income seniors, minimum-wage workers or families that receive Christmas hampers, but it will certainly benefit people who have reservations at fancy restaurants or who buy their New Year's Eve champagne by the case.

How can the Liberals and the NDP subsidize rich people's spending while leaving those who have to tighten their belts at Christmas to fend for themselves?

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, I represent a riding in which, by the end of the month, people often have to buy their food at Dollarama. By downplaying the impact that the

measure we introduced today will have on Canadians' and Québeckers' wallets, some members are showing that they do not understand what people are going through, especially vulnerable people. We want to give them a break. This is a break, a tax holiday, that will help them have enjoy the holiday season more.

I do not understand how the Bloc Québécois can vote against this measure.

● (1525)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is not a good example since food is not taxed.

The GST holiday also burdens our small businesses. It is nothing for Walmart, Best Buy and so on to pay to adapt their systems to remove the GST. Our small businesses do not have the means to lose thousands of dollars adapting their systems or dealing with the logistical nightmare of figuring out which product is still taxable or not.

Some are warning us that it is more affordable to close for two months. Our small businesses should not have to pay the price when the Liberals and the NDP want to buy votes.

Will they at least compensate small businesses?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this tax holiday is not just good for Canadians, but it will also give a boost to small businesses.

Restaurants Canada described this measure as a great victory for the restaurant industry and predicts that this tax relief would increase sales by 5%, which would give restaurants an extra \$1 million in revenues. This tax holiday will allow more people to patronize small businesses, which will generate more revenues and improve their bottom line.

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[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a new study from the Fraser Institute shows that violent crime and property crime rates in Canada are exceeding those in the United States. In 2014, before the Prime Minister took office, crime rates were at their lowest. Now, violent crime is up 43.8%, which is 14% higher than in the United States. Similarly, our property crime rates are 27.5% higher than in the United States.

When will the Prime Minister admit that he should abandon his failed, soft-on-crime policies?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while Conservatives use skewed data to talk down Canada, Liberals are investing in the brave police who do this hard work every single day. As a result of those investments, we are seeing massive success in our police services.

For example, on October 31, the RCMP announced its largest, most sophisticated drug seizure of over 95 million doses of lethal meth and fentanyl. That is what investments do, while Conservatives talk down Canada.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that answer would suggest that the statistics are all in our heads. However, the data clearly reveals that Canada has become a much more dangerous place under the Prime Minister. Since 2015, violent crime is up 50% and gun crime is up 116%. Since that has happened, we have seen no urgency from the Prime Minister.

Where is there urgency? When will the Prime Minister admit that his dangerous, soft-on-crime policies have made Canada unsafe and that Canadians are now paying the price?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is safe to say we do not want to know what is in the member's head. On this side of the House, we are investing in the RCMP. We work with police right across the country. As a result, we are seeing some of the largest drug and gun seizures in this country's history.

Conservatives talk a big game, but they cut the RCMP's guns and gangs program. They cut resources at CBSA and our borders. What did that do? That brought drugs and guns into our country, and Conservatives made those cuts.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's violent crime rate is 14% higher than that of the United States. Again this week, the media reported that a woman was kidnapped, beaten and strangled in Val-d'Or, in Abitibi. This government has abandoned victims with the full support of the Bloc Québécois, which voted in favour of Bill C-5, a bill that allows violent criminals to serve their sentence while they sit at home watching Netflix.

The Liberals and the Bloc would rather support criminals than victims.

When will an election be called?

● (1530)

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about investments.

On this side of the House, we have made investments to protect Canadians, including Quebecers. We have invested in border services. We have invested in scanners to monitor our borders, particularly at the port of Montreal. Here are the results. Auto theft is down 41% in Quebec. We have taken action to fight crime and protect Canadians.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government believes that working Canadians need meaningful support to help them manage the rising cost of living. Last week, we announced the new working Canadians rebate,

which will provide direct, tax-free assistance to millions of Canadians.

Can the minister explain how this rebate will make a real difference in workers' lives?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. Today is a very good day for Canadians, as we are announcing a tax holiday on food, restaurant meals and children's clothing to help families and workers.

It is quite something to hear that the leader of the Conservative Party is forcing his members to vote against this measure, when just two years ago, he himself supported it. It is the height of hypocrisy. Do members know what we say about someone like that back home in La Tuque? We say they are all talk and no action.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at committee, the environment minister recklessly promised to quadruple the carbon tax, despite American tariffs that would cripple our economy. He gleefully stated that, of course, they are going to continue with the carbon tax. With 40% of our economy dependent upon trade with the United States, he should have just said that he is going to kill our economy. He has done it before, and he will do it again.

Why is the minister so hell-bent on vandalizing Canada's economy?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, carbon pricing in Canada is generating 25 billion dollars' worth of investment every year in our economy. It is putting more money in the pockets of eight out of 10 Canadians and helping us reduce our emissions for the first time in our history.

If it were up to the members of the Conservative Party of Canada, they would let the planet burn. They would bring the economy down. They would let Canadians down.

We do not do that on this side of the House. We are there for Canadians. We will fight climate change. We will support the economy. We will create good jobs for Canadians.

Oral Questions

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's radical environment minister is willing to drive Canada's economy into the ground with no remorse. The carbon tax will cost the Canadian economy \$25 billion by 2030. In the face of 25% tariffs, the minister can do something. He can cancel his planned quadrupling of the carbon tax. If he is unwilling to protect our economy, will the Prime Minister at least allow Canadians to protect our economy and call a carbon tax election?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party of Canada, when it comes to many things, including climate change, is extremely reckless. This is the party that has let the people of Jasper down. For four consecutive years, it invested nothing to protect Jasper from forest fires. From 2011 to 2015, there were zero hectares of fire removal and zero hectares of mechanical removals to prevent forest fires. The Conservative Party let Jasper down. Now it wants to let Canadians down in the face of climate change, but we will not do that on this side of the House.

• (1535)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nine years of economic vandalism proves that the NDP-Liberals are not worth the cost. The radical environment minister's own department now admits the carbon tax will cut \$25 billion from Canada's economy in the next six years, but he does not care. He said that the Liberals will quadruple it anyway.

Canadians already cannot afford to eat, heat, house or drive themselves, so with the threat of a 25% crushing tariff on Canadian goods, will the Liberals finally put Canada first and axe the tax for all goods so Canadians can actually afford to live?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honestly not sure how Canadians can give any credence to anything the member and those folks over there say. The member on the other side of the House ran on a platform that included putting a price on pollution. It is the height of hypocrisy. At the same time, she and her colleagues are denying the science of climate change and condemning our children to a terrible future. From an economic perspective, they have no plan to build an economy that would create good jobs for our kids and our grandkids. It is absolutely shameful the positions that they take.

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HOUSING

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year, we announced a \$471-million federal investment in Toronto through the housing accelerator fund to unlock nearly 12,000 new homes over the next three years and over 53,000 over the next decade. A few weeks ago, the Conservative leader announced his plan to shut down homebuilding by making dangerous cuts to federal housing investments.

People in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt cannot afford these kinds of Conservative housing cuts. Can the Minister of Housing update the House on how he is solving the housing crisis?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her advocacy on behalf of the community she represents.

We are putting billions of dollars on the table to help cities cut red tape, change their zoning practices—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to ask the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo to please not participate if he is not recognized by the Chair.

I am going to ask the hon. minister to start from the top.

Hon. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, we know that it takes investments to solve the housing crisis. We put billions of dollars on the table to help communities cut red tape, change their zoning practices and speed up permitting so they can build more homes faster. The Conservative response to this program, which is helping construction go up and rents come down, is to advocate for cuts to communities, including cuts in communities represented by 68 Conservative members of Parliament.

We are going to put money on the table to help cities build homes more quickly. It is a shame that Conservative members of Parliament will not even stand up for the communities they represent to get their fair share of this important funding.

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PENSIONS

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's massive public sector pension plan surplus is so large that by law it has to be drawn on. This surplus was created by contributions from both employers and workers, yet the Liberals continue to leave workers out and follow the former Conservative two-tier pension plan, which forces 100,000 public service employees to work for five years longer than their colleagues.

When will the Liberals reverse this regressive plan and treat all workers fairly?

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we obviously recognize the very important work done by the federal public service. We want to make sure that we look into this matter very carefully. As to where this money will go, it will go into the general accounts for the moment.

We will be discussing this with different parts of the government, including the unions, and we will come to the right decision.

JUSTICE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to raise with the Minister of Justice Bill C-63. We finally see some movement. It has gone from prestudy to committee. Legal groups that have looked at it and the many people who have reached me say that this four-part bill would help protect children from sexual predation online. Parts 1 and 4 have large degrees of consensus; parts 2 and 3 remain problematic.

Can the minister tell us what he will do to improve and expedite passage of this bill to protect our children and other vulnerable people from online sexual predators?

• (1540)

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, who often acts as the conscience of this chamber.

I would simply appeal to all parliamentarians: The issue of protecting kids from child sex predators should not be a partisan issue. Getting this bill into committee is of paramount importance for all of us who want to combat online sex predation by people who take vulnerable children and spread revenge porn about them. If we all simply listen to Amanda Todd's mother and Rehtaeh Parsons's mother, we can get behind this bill, get it to committee, get it off to the Senate and protect children. That is what Bill C-63 is about. I hope everyone in this chamber can support it.

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[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the first time in nine weeks, the government House leader has taken control of the House agenda, and it has only cost taxpayers \$2 billion, or \$1 billion a day. I want to congratulate the leader.

Can she tell the House if she has any more deals with costly gimmicks up her sleeve for the rest of this week or next? If so, what will the House be debating? Perhaps the leader actually intends to do the right and inexpensive thing, which is to table the Liberal green fund scandal documents in the House?

After all, even Richard Nixon eventually tabled the incriminating tapes.

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not going to thank my hon. colleague for his question because it was not exactly complimentary, but I am going to answer it anyway.

I am pleased to announce that later today, we will dispose of Bill C-78, a very important government initiative that will provide Canadians with substantial savings through GST/HST relief across the country. Canadians will be able to buy necessities like groceries, snacks and children's clothing tax free.

[English]

Even if my hon. colleague does not understand or appreciate how important this is for everyday Canadians, I can assure him that

Government Orders

we do as a government. We are listening to Canadians, responding to their needs and helping them get through a tough economic time by providing a tax break as we move into the holidays, even if the Conservatives do not want that support to go to Canadians.

Furthermore, I would like to inform all hon. colleagues in the House that Monday, Tuesday and Thursday of next week shall be opposition days. Earlier this week, I shared a unanimous consent proposal with the opposition parties that would pause the privilege debate so the Conservatives and the NDP could have their opposition days next week. I hope we can find agreement on this motion so that the House can debate and vote on the billions of dollars needed to fund the programs and services that Canadians rely on, depend on and expect us, all parliamentarians, to deliver for them into the future.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 43—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-78

The House resumed from November 27 consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

It was an interesting question period today, to say the very least. As we understand, the Conservative caucus, led by its mighty leader, has done yet another flip-flop, one of great consequence, I would suggest. I want to take the opportunity to explain why we are here and why I say we have seen a flip-flop.

The reason there is a need for this motion is that the Conservatives have determined they want to enter an area that I would suggest is borderline contempt of Parliament, ultimately preventing the government from dealing with a wide spectrum of issues that would have a positive impact on Canadians. That is a direct result of their multi-million dollar game for the personal benefit of the leader of the Conservative Party.

Government Orders

The motion that we are debating is necessary for supporting Canadians. The recent announcement made by the Prime Minister deals in part with the issue of affordability, recognizing, with the holiday season approaching, that the appropriate action to take is to support Canadians with a GST tax holiday on numerous products. Ultimately, every member of the House should vote in favour of that. It would be a very powerful, collective message that every member could take to their constituents. I believe it is a wonderful idea. In fact, I have had the opportunity to express my thoughts on this issue for the last number of days.

An interesting fact came up today, and it is important to note it for people following the debate. Especially through social media, the leader of the Conservative Party has downplayed the tax break's significance and is very critical of what we are doing by providing it. The leader of the Conservative Party has made up his mind, and that is a powerful thing for the Conservative caucus, because as members will recall, what made national news last week was the manner in which he has absolute and total control over Conservative members of Parliament.

We can read what members of Parliament and Conservatives are saying about their leader. Let me recite a few of the statements. One is from a headline, which starts off by saying, “[the leader of the Conservative Party]’s office maintains tight control over what Conservative MPs say and do”. I will quote from the article, and keep in mind that these are Conservative MPs who are saying this—

● (1545)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, do we have quorum?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will check if we have quorum.

And the count having been taken:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have quorum.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, my feelings are not hurt, because I realize that this particular member likes to call quorum when I am speaking. I do not think he likes hearing the truth. He needs to understand that members of the Conservative caucus are out there speaking. They are talking about a leader that goes around Canada saying that he is going to make Canada a free place, but that does not apply to the Conservative caucus.

Here is the story. Here is what Conservative members are saying: “After two years of Pierre Poilievre as their leader, many Conservative MPs say they are much less free now than they were before his arrival.” The man who—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I apologize. The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, no apologies to the parliamentary secretary are necessary. I think you will find, if you review his comments, that the member is intentionally and inappropriately

using the proper names of elected members of the House, which, as you know, is a violation of the Standing Orders.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I said “leader”.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, while he interrupts me, I will note that he repeated his name more than one time. He needs to withdraw it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that, as all members know, they are not to address members by their first or last name, only by their title or riding.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

● (1550)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I apologize.

The story says, “After two years of [the leader of the Conservative Party] as their leader, many Conservative MPs say they are much less free now than they were before his arrival.” It goes on, “The man who promised during his leadership run to make Canada ‘the freest country in the world’ maintains tight control over the actions of his caucus members.” It goes on extensively. One of my favourite quotes from a Conservative MP shows what Conservatives are saying about their leader: “He’s the one who decides everything. His main adviser is himself”. It goes on: “The people around him are only there to realize the leader’s vision.” That is the leader of the Conservative—

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, you know as well as anybody that we often talk about different things when we are supposed to be focused on the particular topic at hand in this place, and you give us certain latitude. The member who is speaking goes on many rants, but he is far off topic. I am not sure what he is referencing that is on the table today.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on this point of order, I have listened to over 200 Conservative members stand up on a filibuster. I have seen the latitude that is provided. The number of cheap shots and character assassinations from the Conservative caucus directed toward the Liberal benches is truly record setting. I think the member needs to sit down, be calm—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, the hon. parliamentary secretary’s point of order is actually a point of debate.

The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies knows full well that there is some latitude. I hear it on both sides, it is not one or the other, where some of what is said is not quite related, but they eventually bring it back to the motion or bill before the House. I am sure the hon. member will mention the bill on a number of occasions while he is referencing his documents.

The hon. parliamentary secretary should make it relevant, but as I said, there is some latitude. He should please make sure to reference how it affects the legislation before the House.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I absolutely will. If members would just be a bit patient, what I am talking about is the character of the leader of the Conservative Party. He has made a decision in regard to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap is rising on a point of order. This is becoming a regular thing. I ask the hon. member to quote the standing order he wants to raise.

The hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order because the member is talking about the character of members of the House. We know that is not appropriate language. He started out by speaking about misleading the House and stating that the Conservative Party was doing that. I want to point out that where we have been in the House for the past number of weeks is because the Liberal Party has misled Canadians—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have not heard the standing order yet; from what I hear, this is a point of debate. Again, I would hope that members will allow the hon. parliamentary secretary to finish, then he will take questions and comments. The hon. members will be able to elaborate on their thoughts at that point.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, let us follow the line here. The leader of the Conservative Party has dictated to his caucus that they have to say whatever he says. By the way, according to Conservative MPs, they are being watched; if they do not say the right thing, they are in trouble. If they say the right things and they repeat the slogans, they get the gold stars. I am not saying that; Conservative MPs are.

When we talk about the GST, the decision has been made. This gets to the flip-flop. We now have the leader of the Conservative Party telling Conservative members of Parliament that the law is they have to say no to their constituents about giving them a holiday on GST products. I find that shameful. At the end of the day, every Conservative is going to stand up and vote no to giving that GST break on numerous commodities to their constituents.

They will come up with all sorts of lame excuses as to why they say no. However, before they think about those lame excuses, I will remind them of what Erin O'Toole, the former leader of the Conservative Party, said. He said, "We will remove GST for the month of December on purchases from retail stores to provide immediate relief for cost of living." This is what the then leader of the Conservative Party said. Interestingly, the current leader of the Conservative Party not only liked the idea but also retweeted Erin O'Toole's tweet. For Conservatives who say they are not on social media, I trust they read their election platform book. If we look on page 51, it talks about a "GST holiday".

On the one hand, the Conservatives are saying it is a bad idea today. On the other, not that long ago, they were telling Canadians that this is what they would do if they were in government. I want members to tell me something: How do we define hypocrisy? One only needs to take a look at this policy or the policy on the price of

pollution. The price of pollution was also made reference to earlier today; we had 300-plus Conservative candidates going around to Canadians, just as they did on the GST break. They said that, in December, they were going to give Canadians a GST tax break; by the way, they also supported a price on pollution, which is a carbon tax. The Conservatives supported it.

The election came, and we got the Conservatives doing a couple of somersaults or flip-flops on the ideas. Now, all of them say no to the GST break we are trying to provide, which they supported in the last election platform, with their former leader tweeting on the issue. We see that every day. They are going to say no to that; at the same time, they no longer support what they told Canadians in regard to the price on pollution.

To add insult to injury, instead of giving that tax break to constituents, they are also going to be cutting the carbon rebates, taking more money out of the pockets of Canadians. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has made it very clear that 80% of Canadians have a net gain when it comes to the carbon rebate versus the carbon tax. However, the leader of the Conservative Party has dictated to his minions that they have to say what he is saying; if they do not, they are in trouble.

We can ask the member for Abbotsford what happened to him when he went offside after the leader of the Conservative Party said he was going to fire the Governor of the Bank of Canada. Where is he nowadays? What role did he play prior to that statement? Conservatives know that if they are not in step with the leader of the Conservative Party, they do not have a place within that Conservative caucus. At the very least, they will be sitting way in the back. There are examples of that.

• (1555)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a serious question about the bill, and I hope to get a serious answer.

Just today, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business released a statement after surveying their members. They said that a majority of small firms oppose the GST holiday that the member's government is proposing. Only 4% of small businesses believe it will improve sales; furthermore, "75% say it will be costly and complicated to implement the holiday [and] 65% say there is not enough time to implement the change". The bill is putting pressure on small businesses to comply with onerous, back of the napkin changes when they should be concentrating on making a living.

Why will the government not stand with small business?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I explained in my comments how Conservatives are going to come up with excuses. Where was that concern when Erin O'Toole said that he would do it for one month? We are doing it for two months. Where was that concern then?

Maybe I should ask for leave of the House to table what Erin O'Toole tweeted and the leader of the Conservative Party retweeted, showing that not only did he—

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• (1600)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to table the document?

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the member across the way was asked a very clear question. The only answer he seems to have is a diatribe about the Conservative Party. I wish he would just simply—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is debate and not a point of order.

I would ask members, when they rise on points of order, that they quote the standing order they are rising on.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Fleetwood—Port Kells.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives ran on putting a price on pollution, but they forgot about that. They then ran on an idea of cutting the GST for Christmas, but they forgot about that too.

It really concerns me when the Leader of the Opposition says he will not allow any attack on a woman's right to choose. What are the chances Conservatives forget about that when they get the chance?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I truly believe that the more Canadians get to know who the leader of the Conservative Party is, the more they will leave the Conservative Party in a very real and tangible way. Canadians know that, on the one hand, Conservatives say one thing; on the other hand, they will flip-flop with no qualms at all. This is a very good example.

All I wanted to do is table a one-page document—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have mentioned on a couple of occasions this week that the hon. member is not to point to a document. He can quote from it, but he cannot say he is quoting from it. I would again ask him not to do that.

I would also ask members who want to participate to please wait until the appropriate time. For those heckling, I will not recognize them for questions and comments if they continue.

The hon. member can wrap up; there are other individuals interested in asking questions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am here advocating for my constituents, who see a great benefit of having a GST tax break on numerous products during the holiday season. I would like to think that every member, no matter what political party they are from, would recognize the value of giving their constituents a break and, therefore, vote in favour of the legislation. That is the responsible thing to do. The Conservatives—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments, the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business is calling on the Department of Finance to give affected small businesses a minimum credit of \$1,000 in their GST/HST accounts to offset the administrative and programming costs because of the impact

this short-term GST cut will have on them. New Democrats are in favour of that and think that making this GST cut permanent is the way to go.

In light of that, is the government willing to move forward with that \$1,000 credit for the losses businesses may have?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, virtually from day one the government has been supportive of our small businesses, going through the pandemic to today. I would encourage members to look at their communities, the restaurants and many other companies that would have a direct economic benefit by this policy. Most important, our constituents, the people who we represent, would be given a bit of a break by our providing this GST break on numerous products at a time like December, because it is the holiday season and purchasing takes place, and January, which is a very difficult time of the year for many people. This is a wonderful thing to do. All of us should be voting unanimously for this legislation.

It is disappointing that the Conservatives have abandoned their support of this policy, because they did support it at one time. It was a good idea then, and it is a good idea today.

• (1605)

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today, as always, I am pleased to rise to speak on behalf of the constituents of Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, especially since I am speaking on the positive measures that our government is implementing to support small businesses and restaurants, including the proposed removal of the taxes, GST and HST in some provinces, from groceries and other holiday items.

I would just note that many provinces, such as Ontario, and Newfoundland and Labrador, have already agreed that they will be removing their provincial part of the HST. They see the benefit of this through their leadership, even though the Leader of the Opposition cannot see the benefit.

Now, I understand the holiday period is one of the most critical times for small businesses. They are making a significant proportion of their annual sales, helping them to achieve their annual goals. We had small businesses, and I know that the holiday season made a huge difference. Consumer spending and encouraging people to come out and buy things is very important to these small businesses.

Thanks to our government's efforts, I am glad to report that Canadians from across the country will receive a tax break from December 14 to February 15, helping both consumers and businesses. This will make a meaningful difference for Canadians by making all food, as well as other holiday provisions and children's clothing and toys tax-free, providing real relief at the cash register. Importantly, it will also contribute to improved sales and greater revenues for businesses and restaurants from mid-December through to mid-February, as I have said.

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Many small business stakeholder groups have expressed appreciation and support for this. For example, Restaurants Canada has said, “This is a big win for the restaurant industry...restores some much-needed hope to our industry and we are optimistic it will translate to increased spending at local restaurants across the country.” Ultimately, this could mean a boost of up to 5% or close to \$1 billion in additional revenue. That is significant.

The Retail Council of Canada also welcomed the sales tax relief announced from the government, stating, “The removal of GST and HST on a sizable list of goods will create major tax savings for Canadians, along with economic stimulus for our industry.” Notably, they also reported that this stimulus will support businesses both through the holiday season and in the first six weeks of the new year, which is typically the slowest period of the year for retail and restaurants.

We expect the tax break will help restaurants and other small businesses across the country. I am glad that we can offer this support through the holiday season. I encourage Canadians to take advantage of the opportunity for savings and to shop local as they purchase gifts for friends and loved ones, and to patronize local restaurants if they are planning a holiday outing.

I also want to speak to many other initiatives our government is delivering to support small businesses. We will always support hard-working entrepreneurs who contribute significantly to their communities, support good jobs and enable economic growth. Our small and medium-sized businesses are the bedrock of our communities, and it is essential they thrive.

From digital transformation to greening our economy while creating well-paying jobs, our government has an economic plan that will ensure businesses across the country continue to grow and thrive. That is why we are delivering \$2.5 billion to close to 600,000 small and medium-sized enterprises by the end of the year through the Canada carbon rebate. In fact, the rebate checks have gone out earlier than anticipated and started to be sent out this past week.

Reports say that 60% of small businesses are directly impacted by climate change. From floods and droughts to closures and employee absences caused by extreme weather events and illnesses, small businesses are feeling the impact of climate change. We are going to continue fighting it while putting money back into the pockets of Canadians and small businesses.

I am also pleased to report that we have negotiated agreements with both Visa and Mastercard to reduce their interchange fees by up to 27% or \$1 billion over five years. This means that small businesses, like the businesses in my riding, will be able to keep more of their revenue and be able to invest in their operations, creating jobs and strengthening our overall economy. This will make a meaningful impact for these businesses, improving their bottom line. These are in addition to and build on our government's work to alleviate the global economic pressures that businesses have been facing, pressures such as inflation, interest rates hikes and worker shortages.

Then, to help Canadian businesses thrive even more, we have invested in them through the Canada summer jobs program, which

we are doing again this year, and, in fact, that has just opened. There is also the My Main Street program. One of the first things that this government did to support small businesses was to lower the small business tax rate from 11% to 9%. We cut taxes. This was done in recognition of the vital role small businesses play in our economy and our communities.

● (1610)

In 2024, estimates are that small and medium-sized enterprises will save \$6.2 billion because of this decrease made to the preferred small business tax rate bias. To encourage Canadian innovators to turn their ideas into businesses, we announced the creation of the Canadian entrepreneurs' incentive that would reduce the inclusion rate on capital gains to one-third on a lifetime maximum of \$2 million in eligible capital gains. Combined with the increased \$1.25-million lifetime capital gains exemption, the entrepreneurs' incentive would make eligible business owners better off when selling business shares worth up to \$6.25 million.

The government's 2024 budget devoted \$200 million to renewing the venture capital catalyst initiative, or VCCI, with a goal of supporting venture capital for entrepreneurs who are part of equity-deserving groups and investing in underserved communities as well as in entrepreneurs who live outside key metropolitan areas. This investment builds on the previous \$821 million the government has already invested in VCCI, as well as the multiples of that amount that came in through private capital attracted by these investments and supportive of innovative Canadian businesses.

Study after study show us that increasing diversity in business ownership responds to market needs, strengthens economic resilience and boosts the bottom line. We also know it is the best way to support economic growth, so we have created a suite of initiatives to ensure that all business owners have access to the capital they need to start or grow their businesses. We have given young people the option to choose entrepreneurship as a viable career path. That is why we invested \$60 million in Futurpreneur Canada to help the organization increase its capacity to support young Canadian entrepreneurs. These investments will support shared prosperity long into the future. We are boosting government procurement in small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as supporting indigenous enterprises. We understand that the best products and ideas often originate here in Canada and we want to ensure entrepreneurs are equipped with the tools they need to bring their ideas to fruition.

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I am confident that these combined measures will continue to make a real, tangible difference for all businesses from coast to coast. In summary, this government has made unprecedented investments to support Canada's small business community, from important tax relief to a range of incentives to support business owners and entrepreneurs, to the extensive COVID support measures through the pandemic period. No other government has done so much for small businesses.

In closing, I urge all members of Parliament to vote for the legislation before them, quickly and unanimously, to ensure business owners and consumers can receive the benefits of these tax breaks and have more money and less stress during the holiday season. I ask members to not be a Grinch, even if their leader is. I ask them to think of all the Whos in Whoville or perhaps all the constituents in their own riding and give them a well-deserved break this holiday season.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a troubling comment. The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek was stating quite publicly that he is not going to support this. He was threatened with unspecified consequences, threatened with punishment, because he did not want to support this. He even said caucus was not even consulted. This is highly unusual.

Was the member consulted before the government brought this piece of legislation in, and which businesses in her community did she consult with? The business owners in my community are extremely worried about it, especially about the cost of reprogramming their computers and the costs that are going to be laid down on them. Could the member just let the House know if she was consulted, and then which business owners she consulted?

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Madam Speaker, in our caucus, we have been talking weekly about the affordability issues that Canadians are facing. We discuss this constantly. In fact, last week, we had a very robust discussion about such measures as these. We are constantly talking about it and I have been talking to business owners and consumers in my riding on a regular basis. Every time I am home, I go out door knocking, I go to events and I make sure that I check in with them. I know that they want some relief. I know that they are looking for these kinds of breaks this holiday season and I am so glad that our government has taken action to decide to do this. I just wish the Conservatives would get on board and help support their constituents too.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, people have indeed been asking for lower consumption taxes for quite some time, but they were referring to a permanent, or at least long-term, suspension, not the two months we are getting.

As everyone knows, my family was disadvantaged for many years. For families like mine, buying new toys is often impossible. They buy toys at the thrift store. I had a \$100 budget for my four kids. On that amount, a cut of 5%, which is what the federal tax is in Quebec, comes down to a savings of \$5. That would not have been enough for me to even buy better food. I was not buying chips, beer or alcohol. There is no tax on groceries.

How exactly does removing GTS actually help the least fortunate?

I do not understand how that works.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Madam Speaker, Canadians buy a range of things. Every family is different, and we certainly want to help every family. We cannot look at just one purchase; we have to look at the basket of purchases, and certainly the tax break is going to help Canadians. We are trying to make sure our constituents have some relief, and this is a great way to do it.

We have chosen a number of different items that families generally buy over the holiday season, as different families buy different things. Tax relief on things like children's clothing, diapers, food and other holiday items will make a difference, I know, for my constituents.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, New Democrats hold the belief that we need to ensure that the taxes people are paying are truly fair. The rich in this country, the super-rich mega-billionaires, pay almost next to nothing because the government continues to keep the immense tax breaks brought in by Harper. We need tax fairness. The measure is, of course, a temporary one. New Democrats believe that the GST should be removed permanently from all essential goods. Would the member comment on whether she believes the same?

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Madam Speaker, we do need to look at our tax system overall. This particular measure, though, is not a tax overhaul, as the member knows. It is a specific program being put in place to provide relief for Canadians over the holiday season.

We understand that Canadians are struggling right now. Our economy is getting better and we have seen many signs of improvements, but it is still a time where people need help. We are putting in a temporary measure to help them for now, perhaps with a rebate cheque in the spring, and then we hope to see a better economic situation for all Canadians.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today. I will be sharing my time with my great colleague from Kelowna—Lake Country.

The Liberals are so desperate, so worried about getting wiped off the electoral map, that they actually think they can buy Canadians' votes for \$250, using Canadians' own money. It is all borrowed, too. Liberals have already spent all the tax dollars they have collected; therefore they are actually borrowing money from the banks to give cheques to Canadians, so Canadians will be stuck with the bill.

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This reminded me of someone's taking their credit card to the bank machine, taking out \$250 and thinking they are actually ahead by \$250. That is exactly what the government is doing, all for the crass purpose of trying to buy Canadians' votes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is a point of order by the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill. Maybe she could tell me which standing order she is—

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Madam Speaker, I cannot. I am sorry, but it is the one that has to do with relevance to the topic, because we are debating a bill about an HST break and not a bill about rebate cheques.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member is only one minute and four seconds into his speech. There is some latitude, as members know, as there just was with the hon. parliamentary secretary.

However, I do want to ask members to please be relevant to the legislation that is before the House. I am sure the hon. member will include the relevance in his speech.

The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley has the floor.

• (1620)

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, as I said, it is all borrowed. It is like someone putting \$250 on their credit card and then thinking they are ahead. That is what the government intends to do.

Canadians are not going to fall for it this time. They are just smarter than that, and after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, everything is broken. They have doubled housing costs, doubled the debt, doubled food bank use and doubled gun crime. Food prices have risen 36% faster in Canada than in the U.S., a gap that opened up after the Prime Minister put a carbon tax on farmers and on the truckers who bring us food.

Two million people are lined up at food banks, and our GDP per capita is actually lower now, after the government's having doubled the national debt to over \$1.2 trillion. Our GDP is actually lower per capita than it was in 2015. Now Donald Trump is imposing crippling 25% tariffs on Canadian goods, yet the weak Prime Minister plans to quadruple the carbon tax to 61¢ a litre.

Can members hear the sound? It is the sound of the mass exodus of Canadian jobs fleeing to south of the border. Donald Trump loves our carbon tax. He loves that the Prime Minister recklessly jacked up the capital gains tax too. People are popping the champagne at Trump Tower as we speak, celebrating the economic vandalism of the Prime Minister, who seems hell-bent on exporting good Canadian jobs to the United States.

I know that Donald Trump wants to put America first, and he should. What Canadians do not like and really do not understand is why the Prime Minister wants to put Canada second. We need a Canada first plan for our economy and our security.

The NDP leader made a grand announcement during the Elmwood—Transcona by-election. He was terrified that the New Democrats were going to lose, so he panicked and called a press conference, proudly announcing that he was tearing up the agreement and that he could not support the Liberals anymore. What

happened? I recall that even yesterday he made a statement that he was not going to support the bill, and now he has made a statement this morning that he is supporting it. He just does not know what he is doing, and now he has taped the agreement back together, desperately hanging on until February 25, 2025, the day his pension kicks in.

The NDP leader has sold out Canadians yet again to the reckless Liberal tax trick that would push Canada even deeper into debt. The two-month temporary tax trick would be more than offset by the quadrupling of the carbon tax on heat, housing, food and fuel planned for next spring, so here is the trick, the scam: In just a few months, the Liberals will actually raise taxes on all the same things they are claiming that they are giving Canadians a tax break on.

Instead of trying to trick Canadians, our leader, the member for Carleton, is offering a common-sense solution. Conservatives would axe the carbon tax permanently on everything for everyone for good and take the GST off new homes to save people up to \$50,000 on a new home purchase and stimulate the building of 30,000 extra homes every single year. Only common-sense Conservatives will bring home powerful paycheques and lower home prices so people can afford food and a home in a safe neighbourhood.

I want to talk about how we got to this point. Members can imagine, if they will, a prime minister's actually saying that the budget will balance itself, saying that they do not think about monetary policy or saying to let the bankers worry about the economy. It seems unimaginable that a prime minister, responsible for the economy of this country, would say such things. However, it is not unimaginable; our Prime Minister actually said these things. It is no wonder we are in so much trouble, but it gets even worse.

Just this week, the Minister of Finance, in her weak defence of our economy, said that she could not understand why Canadians were complaining about the great job she thinks she is doing. Her explanation was that Canadians are in a “vibecession”. Yes, for those watching, the Minister of Finance thinks they just do not get the vibe, and that they should feel great when they lose their job and when they cannot afford groceries in the grocery store, and that they should feel great about not being able to heat their home, gas up their car or pay their rent or their mortgage.

• (1625)

That is what the minister thinks. She thinks people just do not get the vibe. She does not get it. The truth is that Canadians are suffering and the Prime Minister does not believe it or understand it. He is weak. He is out of touch. His own Liberal members want him to resign, and it is time for him to go.

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The quadrupling of the carbon tax to 61¢ a litre will stop our trucks from delivering parts to factories, clothing to stores and food to grocery shelves. Just last spring, the Prime Minister actually admitted he does know at least one thing about monetary policy. I will give him that. He acknowledged, when sending out billions of dollars in cheques, that “as soon as you do that, inflation goes up by exactly that amount.” According to his own words, with the planned \$4.6 billion spend for \$250 cheques, he is committing economic malpractice. It will cause inflation. It will force the Bank of Canada to keep interest rates higher for longer.

The Liberals like to say that most Canadian families get back more than they pay in the carbon tax. They completely ignore the findings of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who has said many things that when we take into account the economic knock-on effects of the carbon tax, 100% of middle-class Canadians pay more than they receive in the rebates.

On top of this, the inflationary effects of the tax mean that families will have to spend \$700 more on food this year than they did in 2023. Since 2015, when the Prime Minister came to power, by the way, the price of food has increased by 35%. The price of gas is up nearly 50%. Rents are up 33% and mortgage interest is up 73%.

Canadians deserved tax relief before Donald Trump made his “I love tariffs” comment. He was elected three weeks ago, and the Prime Minister did nothing at all to head off the tariff. The killer tariff will devastate our economy when we have a weak Prime Minister who is panicking because he does not know what to do about it.

However, there is a leader who can stand up to Donald Trump and put Canadians first. The member for Carleton cannot become the prime minister soon enough.

Let us talk about small businesses. I mentioned this earlier in my question to the member for Winnipeg North. The CFIB released a statement just today, saying that a majority of small businesses in this country oppose the policy. Only 4% of small businesses believe their sales will improve; 75% say it will be costly and complicated to implement the holiday, and 65% of businesses say there is not enough time to implement the change. This comes from a group that represents small businesses in Canada.

The Liberals have also jacked up the capital gains tax. Economists like Jack Mintz say this will hurt way more people than just the 0.13% of tax filers who are directly affected, and will blow a \$90-billion hole in our GDP, costing 400,000 jobs.

Of course, there is the so-called luxury tax. The head of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada was at the finance committee a couple of weeks ago. He said that it has cost \$1.8 billion in sales to the aircraft industry and \$90 million in GST revenue. The government has collected only \$15 million in luxury tax, while it cost it \$19 million to administer the tax. Leave it to the Liberals to create a tax and lose money doing it.

The bottom line is that this country needs a prime minister who understands economic issues. Enough is enough. It is time for a prime minister who, as Wilfrid Laurier said, will put “Canada first, Canada last, and Canada always”.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the hon. member from Winnipeg. Today there was great news for the Canadian economy, because StatsCan provided information on our foreign direct investment flows. With that, Canada had \$23 billion of foreign direct investment in and \$9 billion out, which is \$16 billion. It is the second consecutive quarter where the Canadian economy has seen foreign direct investment coming into our country. That means that companies and entities around the world are investing in Canada.

On top of that, we are meeting Canadians where they are at, and Restaurants Canada and the Retail Council of Canada are applauding our move. I would say to the member from the city of Winnipeg that there are over 5,000 employees in my riding who work in the restaurant industry and who would benefit from the increased hours and increased sales for restaurants. This is a great thing. Ontario has joined it.

Would you not agree with all the great data that has come out for the Canadian economy and our hard-working workers who work in restaurants?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge knows that he is not to address questions and comments directly to the member. It has to be through the Chair.

The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley has the floor.

• (1630)

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, that is what we get from the Liberals. They know this policy is a flop. They are just trying to put lipstick on a pig. That is the reality. This policy is a flop. Canadians know it is a flop. They cannot be bought with their own money.

As well, small businesses hate it. Hundreds of thousands of businesses responded to the CFIB survey. Only 4% of those businesses like the tax. I think that would answer that member's question.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague. What would be the Conservative Party's plan to address the cost of living, which mainly affects families?

[English]

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, the member's question was about the Conservatives' plan to help families. Maybe the hon. member has missed this talking point in the House.

I know we have not been saying it very often. I will repeat it for her, so she has the information first-hand from me: We are going to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

Government Orders

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague and I come from the same city. I represent a riding with children experiencing some of the highest rates of poverty in the country. They should not be paying the bill for the billionaires and the big corporations. This is an opportunity for us to give some relief to Winnipeggers, and what are the Conservatives doing? They are voting against families. They are voting against single moms. They are voting against kids.

I share that because, when the Conservative leader was in government, the member voted for a \$60-billion tax break for big corporations, yet the Conservatives will not even vote in favour of a two-month holiday on taxes for people who really need a hand-up during an affordability crisis. I thought the Conservative Party was the party that hated taxes.

I would like to ask why the Conservatives are fighting so hard to keep this tax if their party hates taxes so much.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, I think the member might not have read the entire bill. This tax break benefits billionaires the most. They are the ones who spend more than anyone else. This is not a progressive move by her party. She is not going to be voting for a progressive tax change. She is going to be voting for a tax that benefits millionaires and billionaires. If she is concerned about that, I would suggest that she vote against this bill.

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.

I rise today to discuss the Liberal government's two-month temporary tax trick, which looks like it was written on the back of a napkin as a knee-jerk reaction to seeing some new poll. Canadians are smarter than that. Residents in my community, and all Canadians, expect better policies to make basic necessities, such as food, fuel and housing, more affordable and to address the causes of cost increases. The measures the Liberals have proposed would not address the causes of affordability or bring sustainable cost reductions. Many people and businesses are struggling after nine years of the costly Prime Minister and his partners in the NDP.

We have to wonder how the Liberals came up with this out-of-the-blue policy, which would be implemented literally just before Christmas, on the evening of Friday the 13th, no less. The Liberals do not have a one-for-one rule like that the Conservatives have proposed. The one-for-one rule is when, for every dollar spent, we need to find a dollar of savings, or for every dollar less in revenue, such as this Liberal measure, we need to find a dollar of savings. This is how households and small businesses operate. This is the principle used for the Conservative commitment to remove the GST on new home sales under \$1 million to bring savings to home builders and families. Conservatives were transparent in how this reduction in federal revenue would be offset.

The Liberal government does not operate or create policies like this. The measure we are debating today is not a tax cut and would only be inflationary, but the Liberals do not want to talk about that. Conservatives have real tax cut plans that would lower costs and spark production.

It is also unbelievable how much Canada will be spending on servicing our debt. Our children and grandchildren will be paying for it. It is clear that the Prime Minister has a spending problem. He also has no clue about fiscal responsibility. He stated that budgets would balance themselves and that he does not think about monetary policy. His latest statement is that bankers will look after the economy.

On addressing the rampant unaffordability we are seeing across the country, the measures we are debating today would not be a permanent solution. We know how bad things have gotten for Canadians after nine years of the Liberals being propped up by their NDP partners. The Liberals do not think Canadian families are struggling. They think that this is just in their heads and they are having a bad vibe. Statistics Canada figures show that food prices have increased by 35% since 2015. Grocery prices have jumped by 20% over the past three years alone. Food prices have risen 36% faster in Canada than they have in the United States.

This gap can be said to have started when the Liberals introduced a carbon tax. This has increased costs throughout the agriculture and agri-food supply chain. These rising costs, which have not increased this dramatically since the 1980s, will see families having to spend \$700 more on food this year than they did in 2023. The price of gasoline has also soared. Housing unaffordability has also risen to levels not seen before, with housing, rent and mortgage costs all doubling since 2015. This is real. This is not just in Canadians' heads and it is not just a bad vibe, as the Liberals believe.

One thing with this temporary tax trick is that it picks winners and losers, this product over that product, rather than lowering the cost of everything. This Liberal measure does not acknowledge everyone's place in life or that their priorities are different. Another problem with this temporary tax trick is exactly that: It is temporary. It will not help address the causes of affordability over a longer time frame, and it is not addressing costs of basic necessities such as nutritious food, fuel or housing.

This measure will also not help hedge against the impending almost 19% carbon tax increase that will hike the costs of food, fuel and housing. That is right. On April 1, the Liberal government, supported by the NDP, will increase the carbon tax again. Over the next few years, it will increase to a whopping 61¢ per litre.

• (1635)

Even worse, to add insult to injury, the excise tax is also set to automatically increase on April 1, and this is on liquor. Again, the Liberals are giving a slight, temporary tax reprieve so Canadians forget that they will be increasing those taxes in just a few months. These April Fool's Day tax increases are not a joke. They are real.

Government Orders

Another thing the Liberals want to divert Canadians' attention away from is how the Canadian dollar continues to drop. It is now hovering around 70¢ compared to the U.S. dollar. The Canadian dollar is the lowest it has been in five years. This will make buying everything from the U.S. more expensive, whether it be a new refrigerator or food sold in Canadian grocers that came from the U.S. That is a lot of products, including everything from fruits and vegetables to cereal, which households, restaurants, senior homes, care centres, hospitals, day cares and everywhere else all buy. However, the Liberals and the NDP do not want us talking about that.

They also do not want us talking about the fact that there is GST on the carbon tax, a tax on a tax, which is so wrong. Last winter I had many residents send me screenshots of their home heating bills, asking why GST was charged on the carbon tax. I just responded to another constituent asking about this the other day. On the measure we are debating today, one resident wrote to me saying, "We don't want the added burden of debt. We want real change."

I also have a message from a local business retailer in my community. I need to paraphrase what he said because I cannot use that type of language here in the House of Commons. He is a merchant, and he said that the Liberals have "no clue" how much of a huge administrative and costly effort these temporary tax changes on select items is going to be. His staff and customers are already confused.

Businesses and organizations from across the country have also offered critiques of these Liberal measures. The director of the Huron Chamber of Commerce stated the government has "downloaded the administrative cost of this tax cut onto small business owners - and it's going to cost hundreds, if not thousands of dollars". The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce CEO stated that these measures will be "very onerous for small businesses". The Canadian Federation of Independent Business stated that these measures "may add confusion and complexity for general retailers with both taxable and new exempt items." They went on to state, "Canadians need permanent, not temporary tax relief."

Ian Tostenson, the president of the B.C. Restaurant and Food Services Association, said that the tax relief will likely have little effect in stimulating the restaurant economy. He said, "If you look at a restaurant bill of say \$100, you're talking here about saving \$5. I don't think that people are going to rev up their cars and head out for that, I really don't". He continued, "I think it's a misguided policy". As described in an article, rather than a limited GST reprieve, "he'd like to see governments do more to increase consumers' disposable income, so dining out is back on the table."

It has been reported that a "co-owner of Orca Dynamics, which provides point-of-sale products and services to businesses on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, said it's a 'hellscape' out there for retailers who will have to deal with a tax change on top of their regular work." He said, "It's going to cost a merchant a lot of labour hours to go through all these products to exempt the GST for just a few months of transactions.... The maintenance side of this is a nightmare, a living nightmare."

In closing, I want to describe what bringing home the promise of Canada would look like. It would mean lowering the cost of heat, housing and gas. It would mean lowering the cost of food so Cana-

dians can afford groceries. It would mean having a long-term impact on the ability of Canadians to afford what they need.

Let us axe the carbon tax on everything for everyone, forever. Let us axe the tax and bring home affordability for all Canadians. I have no confidence in the government. Let us call an election now so Canadians can decide.

• (1640)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I do know that Canadians are struggling with grocery prices. We are all experiencing it. I also know the part of the world the member is from, and I know that the scourge of the climate crisis has impacted her community. Vineyards that were once successful cannot grow grapes anymore because they have had such unpredictable freezing of grapes on the vine, as well as fires and floods. I know most people do not regard wine as a staple in the grocery stores, but climate change has also wiped out grain crops. It has had impacts all around the world, which have driven up the prices of things, such as vanilla for ice cream because there were storms that wiped out vanilla in Madagascar.

Could the member give us a sense of the connection she sees between the devastation in her own community and higher prices?

• (1645)

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, we have not heard anyone mention how high the carbon tax has to be in order to stop incidents like the member just described. This is why we are proposing to axe the carbon tax for everyone, forever, everywhere, because it is obviously not working. All it is doing is making Canadians poorer. We believe in focusing on technology, not taxes, because the Liberals and all of their partners have a tax plan, not an environmental plan.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really appreciated my colleague's speech. I do enjoy working with my colleague on the HUMA committee.

Our Liberal government delivered a battery plant for Windsor. There are 2,000 construction workers building the plant, and 2,500 local workers will be building batteries for generations to come. Conservatives voted against it.

We delivered a dental care plan that provided smiles for 15,000 residents in Windsor—Essex to date. Conservatives voted against it.

Government Orders

We are now providing a tax holiday. I spoke to a young family who said that this was going to help them purchase a car seat for their child. It is going to help them purchase clothing and other supplies for their child. However, the Conservatives are going to vote against that too.

The Conservatives are voting against jobs for communities like ours. They voted against smiles for seniors in communities like ours. Now they are voting against giving families the financial breathing space they so deserve.

Could the hon. colleague please address why the Conservatives are against those three things?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, it is really interesting that the Liberals never want to step back and actually look at why things are so bad or why there are two million people going to food banks in one month. They do not know why there are record numbers of homeless encampments across the country or why there are record numbers of mental illness, addiction and crime. People cannot even afford basic necessities. Seniors have to go back to work because they cannot afford basic necessities or afford their own medicines. The Liberals do not want to step back and actually look at the causes.

Their policies and legislation have actually led to those causes, but they want to step up and say that they are there to help. A constituent of mine said it really well one time. It is like somebody trips us when we are walking, and then they put their hand out and offer to help us up. However, as we lie there looking at them, we know that we would not be lying on the ground if they had not tripped us in the first place.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I noticed yesterday when I looked at the bill that the tax was removed from games, but not video games. Later on, I saw that video game media, meaning cartridges, were tax-exempt. However, the game itself and the cartridge are not taxed separately because they are sold together. Is that not further proof of the government's lack of organization, planning, foresight and consistency?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, I thank the opposition member for her question.

[*English*]

This is exactly what I was saying. It is like the Liberals put it together on a napkin in one night. They are picking winners and losers, and there are some random things that they have chosen. This is not solid policy they have come up with. This is not solid legislation. It is something they just came up with and threw at the wall. It really was not well thought out at all.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always great to rise in the House and discuss important matters. Today, we are discussing making life more affordable for Canadians, Canadian families and hard-working Canadians, and continuing to grow the economy.

I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, whom I have known for many years, and I know he presents his view in a very eloquent manner every time the hon. member rises to speak.

I would quickly like to note that today is a good day for the Canadian economy. It is a really good indication of where we are. Foreign direct investment flows are something that, as an economist, I very much like. We are at \$23 billion in Q3. Foreign outflows are at \$9 billion. This is one of the largest-ever recorded foreign direct inflows into our economy. These are not securities. These are actually investment transactions by companies. This is confidence about where we are going as a country and where we are going as an economy.

This is really important to note because it is something I believe in, whether it is the \$10-billion Dow project or the \$2-billion Linde project in Alberta, whether it is the Stellantis plant in Windsor, near my hon. colleague down the aisle, or whether it is the Volkswagen investment, which is literally transforming southwestern Ontario, in the St. Thomas area. It is just incredible to see those types of numbers presented. Again, there is confidence in Canadian workers and confidence in our country.

We are here to discuss giving Canadians some help and meeting them where they are. When I was growing up, we had this saying within the family that every little bit helps. Every little bit helps a family that is working hard, saving for their kids and for their futures, and looking forward to celebrating the Christmas holidays. I know that in my riding, a lot of families will be getting together, of course, just like they will all across this country. A lot of them will buy prepared meals.

In the city of Vaughan, there are a lot of entities that have these prepared meals, and they are going to be saving, literally, hundreds of dollars sometimes, when it is a large family, on a prepared meal. Those are real savings for families. In my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, there are 368 food service establishments employing over 5,000 hard-working Canadians, and they are going to get a boost, from December 15 to the day after Valentine's Day, especially during January. It is the slowest period of the year for many businesses, including restaurants. They are going to get a boost.

I can name a few: Romano's, Castello, Via Mercanti, Giro d'Italia, Funghetto Trattoria, Desserts Plus, That's Italian. Zafferano and pizza restaurants are near my office. There are so many wonderful restaurants.

In all of these restaurants, we are going to see groups of people before the Christmas holidays, during the Christmas holidays, having lunch. The Province of Ontario has signed on. That is for Ontarians, for the residents of Ontario. That is about \$1.6 billion to \$1.7 billion in tax savings from December 14 to February 15. These are real savings.

I am so proud. The day we made the announcement, Restaurants Canada was there to say that was great work. Its hard-working members need a break. Restaurants have faced higher costs from higher minimum wage, higher insurance costs and higher input costs. Of course, we are going to help them, and that is what it is about.

Government Orders

I have a three-year-old, and most of the time, to be honest, my wife takes care of her because I am here in Ottawa. She goes out to buy diapers, and they are not cheap. We do not control the price of diapers. However, for parents with kids at home, we made raising a child more affordable, much like we did with the national early learning and day care plan. We reduced fees by 52%, again, working with the Province of Ontario. We will see further relief in January, down to, I think, 60%. Then in September, it will be down to \$10 a day on average.

We are going to give Canadians a break. We are going to help them out because every little bit helps. These are real savings for hard-working families across the country.

If the Conservatives wish to vote against it, that is their prerogative. We all make our own decisions. That is fine. With the Canada child benefit, for example, in my city, 49,400 children and their families receive the Canada child benefit, and \$192 million flows to the residents of the city of Vaughan, to those collecting the Canada child benefit, and the Conservatives voted no.

Let us be frank. With the Canada workers benefit, there are 19,000 people in the city of Vaughan who get the Canada workers benefit. There has been over \$21 million delivered.

• (1650)

Making life more affordable and growing our economy is what we are about on this side of the aisle, and we will continue to do that. Even in uncertain times, we will deliver for Canadians.

Regarding the Canadian dental care plan, when I first assumed office in 2015, I heard from seniors everywhere. The only place for a senior facing emergency dental work to go was York Region. There was no plan. However, over 21,000 seniors in the city of Vaughan, including nearly 12,000 in my riding, are on the Canadian dental care plan today. These are real savings. Canadians are saving, on average, \$710. I have had seniors come to my office who, after nine or 10 years, have gone to a dentist. It was unfortunate to hear that one person had eight cavities, when I spoke to the dentist afterwards. That is real, tangible progress for Canadians.

We talk about our economy. In the city of Vaughan, we had a South Korean firm invest and create 300 jobs. It was a \$100-million investment about a month ago. We had a food products company invest another \$100 million. Every week I attend a new business opening, whether it is in Vaughan Mills or whether it is in my riding. I have probably attended 10 or 12 new business openings in the last two months.

Canadians have been through a lot. We know it. There was a global pandemic, and there was global inflation, which impacted everyone and elevated prices. However, we have had the backs of Canadians, and that is what being in government is about.

We are now debating a bill to give Canadians some tax relief. I am all for tax relief. They better believe it. I know those hard-working restaurant workers are going to get more hours out of this. Those owners are going to get more profits. They also received the small business carbon rebate, tax-free, which is being delivered today.

I know that Josie and Patricia at Il Castello, and Francesco at Via Mercanti are going to get their tax-free small business carbon rebates back. They are going to get tax-free money, and they will actually receive a tax deduction up front. They are getting a double benefit, and that is very important.

I will talk about the Canada workers benefit because it is not in this bill, but we look forward to it in the future. It will help hard-working Canadians, who work hard every day and who do the right things. They save, invest, create jobs, pay taxes and do the right things for their services.

I look at the other items, some essentials, and I go back to prepared foods. At Brettone Catering in my riding, Romano's, Aidas and all those bakeries, their customers are going to go in at Christmastime, *Natale*, Noel, and are going to get a tax break. It is great news. Again, regarding the 13% HST in the province of Ontario, the province has joined us in delivering savings for its residents. That is something I am so proud of.

This is about making life more affordable, laying the foundations on social programs that strengthen our social fabric while growing our economy. I think of the Canada child benefit again. It is tax-free, monthly. Almost \$200 million flows to the families in the city of Vaughan. There is the Canada workers benefit, the Canada child benefit, as I mentioned, and the national early learning and day care plan.

We also eliminated interest on student loans and on apprenticeship loans for students in university. We raised the amount they can get before they start to repay those loans to get them back in and get them working.

Canada is a work in progress, but we are the ninth-largest economy in the world. We have a AAA credit rating. Our debt-to-GDP is the lowest in the G7. Our deficit-to-GDP is around 1%, versus that of the United States at 7% or 7.5%, versus our European friends at between 3% and 5%. Ours is the lowest. That is being fiscally responsible, and it is something we need to celebrate. These are good foundations to continue to grow and to invest in our economy.

There is uncertainty in the world. We know that, and we will continue to deal with it. That is what strong leadership is about.

I always look forward to getting up and debating in the House about the issues of the day, with my three daughters at home and with the family watching. It is always an honour to rise. I look forward to questions and comments from my most hon. colleagues. I wish everyone a wonderful afternoon.

Government Orders

• (1655)

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, recently, I had the pleasure and the honour of canvassing in the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge's riding with Michael Guglielmin and the member for Lakeland, Alberta. When we were knocking at the doors, that is not what we heard. The member's constituents do not trust him. He continues to say that he wants to cross the floor. Well, believe it or not, Conservatives do not want him.

Why is he continuing to bribe taxpayers with their own money? The owners of the restaurants he has mentioned, which I frequent, are fed up with the current Liberal government. They want a carbon tax election. I will tell members that Michael Guglielmin will be the next MP for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

• (1700)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I always say, "In life, it does not cost anything to be kind to someone." The other expression I like to say is, "God is good all the time. All the time, God is good."

I will say to the hon. member, the candidate who is running, and I encourage all candidates to run, had a pivotal role in my campaign in 2015 to beat the minister at the time, Julian Fantino. That is something Conservatives need to think about, and so forth.

I look at what I have delivered for the city of Vaughan: \$59 million through the housing accelerator fund; the Jane Street investments; the brand new park in Thornhill; the investments in all the community centres across the city of Vaughan; and the FedDev investments in Northern Transformer. There are more coming and more to be announced in the coming weeks. The investments that grow our economy create the jobs of the future. All the auto parts suppliers in our riding depend on the electrical vehicle transition. They are transitioning and creating jobs.

That is the record I have delivered for my community, and I cannot wait. When I knock on doors, I know what the residents will say, including all the seniors who have the Canada dental care plan and that the opposition—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. I have been trying to give the hon. member a signal to end.

I want to remind members, when they have an opportunity to ask questions, if they have other questions, they should wait until the appropriate time.

[*Translation*]

Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, before asking my question, I would like to remind my Liberal colleague that he is right to be angry, but he should perhaps refrain from banging on the desk. That can be dangerous for the interpreters, for their ears, as a working condition. We do not bang on the desks.

In the Conservatives' 2021 campaign, they said they wanted to pause the GST during the holiday season. They promised voters

that. Today they are voting against the measure, as if it is the worst thing in the world. I have a very practical question. The NDP pushed for this GST holiday on essentials, such as groceries and children's clothing. The Liberals are proposing half-measures and, worse, they are temporary, for only two months.

What does my colleague have to say to the small retailers and small and medium-size businesses in his riding that will have to undertake a long and expensive process to change their entire tax procedure for two months only to do it all again eight weeks later?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, which is very important to us.

[*English*]

To give the hon. member an example, prepared foods are a very big item. I know my wife and all mothers and fathers in the evenings sometimes do not have enough time to cook for their kids. They will go to a supermarket to buy prepared foods. Right now, on those prepared foods, Canadians have to pay the HST in Ontario. I would like to see that revisited.

This is a temporary two-month tax break. Every little bit helps, as I say. These are issues we need to talk about, how we can continue to help hard-working Canadian families, which we have done through so many measures and which we will continue to do because we always have the backs of Canadians.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I cannot blame the Conservatives for having a little amnesia about the GST cut they proposed in 2021, because it was on everything, so somebody who treated themselves to a \$25,000 watch would have saved about \$1,250. That is a little different from the tax cut being proposed here, and I am wondering if the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge can pinpoint what the big difference is in what we are proposing.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I wish to say that the focus of our government is helping hard-working Canadians and hard-working Canadian families. This is exactly what we are doing in terms of those who love to dine out and go to restaurants all over the GTA, from Vaughan to Toronto, Burlington, Oakville and Scarborough, in all those great restaurants that exist. People are going to have time to spend with their families. They are going to go out over the holidays in Ontario.

It is a full removal of the HST. This would be \$1.6 billion in savings. This would be providing relief to Canadians, meeting them where they are and helping them, because every little bit helps. We know that and we understand it. It is too bad the opposition members, who ran on a similar idea and voted for this a couple years ago, are now saying, "No, we do not like lower taxes." We like—

• (1705)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. I have been trying to give the hon. member a signal again.

Government Orders

The hon. deputy House leader has the floor.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would ask for a couple of brief moments to report on some breaking news that came out of the public safety committee moments ago. Patrick Brown, the mayor of Brampton and former leadership contestant for the Conservative Party, has been summoned to the committee to talk about foreign interference and what he witnessed during the Conservative leadership convention. I think all members will be equally interested in hearing what—

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I question what this has to do with the ongoing debate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are a lot of members who start their speech with something else. I have seen it over and over again from both sides. It has not even been one minute since the member started his speech, so I want to allow the hon. member to continue. I am sure he will bring some relevance to it. He does need to make sure his speech is related to the bill.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am not one bit surprised Conservatives are not happy to hear that. We should hear some earth-shattering testimony from the mayor of Brampton in relation to foreign interference during that leadership contest.

I will bring this to the issue we are talking about right now. We are talking about removing the GST on some essential items during a time when Canadians experience, and will be experiencing, a stretch in their wallet from paying for things over the holidays.

I heard from a Conservative member, maybe 20 or 30 minutes ago, who said the only people who will benefit from this are billionaires. I am sorry, do billionaires buy car seats in the dozens? Am I missing something? Do billionaires buy diapers at Costco in bulk? What am I missing here? Only a Conservative would get up and say an initiative like this would only benefit billionaires. It is absolutely ludicrous.

What I find most troubling, and it has been highlighted several times today, is another flip-flop by the Conservatives. All we ever hear from them is “axe the tax”. They will not even axe the tax. Literally, we have a tax here that we are ready to axe, and the member for St. Albert—Edmonton does not even want to axe it. This is the hypocrisy. Not only is it hypocritical in the sense that Conservatives are always running around talking about axing the tax, but this is a tax they proposed axing in the last election, literally. Now the member from St. Albert-Edmonton and the member for Carleton, the current leader of the Conservative Party, do not want to axe it.

Let us go back to 2021 for a second because it is really important to put this into context. Erin O’Toole was the leader, and I am sure we all remember what happened. His finance critic was the member for Carleton. The member for Carleton, now the Leader of the Opposition, had made a statement about the governor of the Bank of Canada. What did Erin O’Toole do at the time? He said to the Leader of the Opposition, “You’re out, and I’m putting the member for Abbotsford in your position.”

This is important context and I will get to it in a second, but I think it is safe to say there was no love lost between those two.

They did not get along. Even during the 2021 election, we could almost feel the animosity between the member for Carleton and Erin O’Toole. Notwithstanding that, when Erin O’Toole made his platform announcement about getting rid of the GST for one month in December, do members know who celebrated it, reposted it, talked about it and made it an issue?

An hon. member: Do not say Pierre Poilievre.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I would not say his name because I am not allowed to do that, but it was the Leader of the Opposition who did that. Just to put it into context, they were not exactly friends; I would argue that they did not get along. Yet the member for Carleton, the current Leader of the Opposition, liked that so much that he was willing to put aside his differences with Erin O’Toole to celebrate the fact they had brought that along.

Flash forward to now: Suddenly Conservatives do not want to axe the tax anymore. That is where we are. The Leader of the Opposition is saying this is a phony scam that will result in nothing and this is just a trick. He should talk to some of the businesses and restaurants in downtown Kingston about whether or not it will be beneficial to remove the GST from takeout and from eating in restaurants in January.

When I was younger, in my 20s, I worked in the hospitality industry in Kingston. The slowest month of the year is January, and February would probably be the next slowest. This is the time when we can genuinely impact those businesses. We are very proud of the number of restaurants we have in downtown Kingston. I am not sure if it is because we are heavily populated by all the Queen’s students, but we like to think we have the most independent restaurants per capita in the country.

● (1710)

This will directly benefit them. This is not just about giving a break, although millions of people will benefit and will rejoice in it, not just the billionaires, as Conservatives would say. This is about helping our economy keep moving and helping those small businesses that would typically have a slower time.

I also hear Conservatives saying it is really difficult for small business owners to change the sales tax on their system for two months. Back in the 1990s, when I was doing it, we used to change it on a nightly basis based on drink prices changing every night. It is very simple to go in there and change what is currently marked at 5% to 0%. They can even do it now from a smart phone for all of the restaurants they might have throughout the country. They do not even need to physically be at the terminal to do it anymore. I am sure not everybody is using that technology, but the red herring the Conservatives are throwing around here, that it is just going to be a massive, complex thing for a restaurant or a small business to change the tax percentage from 5% to 0%, is nothing more than that: just a red herring.

It apparently was not going to be a problem when it was only going to happen for one month in December 2021, when Erin O'Toole proposed it and the member for Carleton, the leader of the opposition, celebrated it. It would have been simple to do in 2021, but I guess in 2024, the technology has reverted back to the 1950s or 1960s and it will be next to impossible to do.

Of course, I am dripping with sarcasm here because I cannot stand to listen to the hypocrisy over and over from Conservatives on this. They actively want to see something fail rather than try to support Canadians. They have a choice when we get to voting on this whether or not they want to give this tax holiday. By the way, we are not even the ones who most recently used the term “tax holiday”; it was literally in their platform in the last election.

Every Conservative sitting here agreed when they ran that for December 2021 that it was a great idea to give a tax holiday to consumers. Suddenly in 2024, it is the worst thing we could have ever thought up. It is literally the exact same program. This is just typical. It happens over and over. Conservatives continually do this. Every Conservative sitting here also ran on a platform of pricing pollution. What did they do there? They just completely flipped on that. They suddenly said because they are not doing it, it is a horrible idea. That is not their job in here. Their job in here is to hold the government accountable, not make it their mission to see that absolutely everything fails to the detriment of Canadians. That is what they are doing.

Whether it is filibustering, or whether it is voting against measures for Canadians they dreamed up in the last election, they are always doing it. They just hate the idea. It is more important to them to see political failure on this side of the House rather than seeing Canadians get ahead. They are more interested in political failure and seeing the government fail than they are in helping Canadians.

I would encourage all members, including those who have been silenced by the leader of the opposition, to vote in favour of this later today. It is good legislation and it is legislation we know they like too.

• (1715)

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member has suggested that this is going to help small business. He said he has talked to businesses and that it will genuinely impact small business. This irresponsible inflationary tax trick will not help small business. In fact, today, there was a message from a local business, and I neighbour this gentleman's riding, from Justin Martin from McCormick's Country Store in Camden East, He is extraordinarily upset by the negative impact this is going to have on his small business.

The member gets up here and talks about how this is going to help small businesses so much, but the government has completely lost control of spending, and the Prime Minister has lost control and is trying to cling to power. How can this member of Parliament suggest he is helping small business when we get comments like this from local small businesses?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, what I said is that when I was in my twenties, I worked in the hospitality sector in Kingston, and I am fully aware of the fact that January is the slowest month.

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When someone is in the restaurant or bar business, they look for every opportunity to increase business in that month. That is just a fact. What people are looking for are ways to generate more business, and that is what this would produce.

The member says it is irresponsible policy. Suddenly it is irresponsible policy in November 2024, but when she ran on it in September 2021, it was revolutionary and amazing and it should be put in the Conservatives' platform. Just for the record, the member is calling a policy she ran on irresponsible.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, I heard some surprising things in our colleague's speech, but I admit that I am getting used to hearing surprising things in the House. However, I would like him to explain his thoughts on two things a bit better.

First, he said that this bill has to do with essential goods and then listed a few. I saw that the goods covered under the bill include alcoholic drinks and video game consoles. I would like my colleague to explain to me how these things are essential to young families who are struggling to make ends meet. I am intrigued.

Then our colleague told us that billionaires do not buy diapers for babies. Just out of curiosity, I would like to know what they use. I am interested, because we might be able to save some money.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I want the member to go back and review Hansard, review everything I said, and if he can find where I said this is only about essential goods, I will buy him a GST-free beer in December. He will not find it, because I never said that. What I said is that this would cover a whole host of goods.

As it related to diapers, I was not saying that billionaires do not buy diapers. What I was saying is that the Conservatives said this only benefits billionaires, and I was just asking if billionaires buy diapers in mass bulk and in a way that the rest of society does not. I would assume billionaires buy diapers the same way I would buy them or the member from Winnipeg would buy them. If they do not and the member knows something I do not, then I would encourage him to tell me.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, the last time the Conservatives were in power, they gave a \$60-billion tax break to billionaires. Worse yet, they then hired them to go on their staff, their lobbyists for Loblaws. Today, they are here trying to stop a lot of Canadians from getting a break. Would the member speak to how hypocritical it is that Conservatives speak every single day in this place about axing the tax and now today, when the time has come that we are going to see some tax relief, they are saying no.

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• (1720)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, he is absolutely right. Conservatives always talk about axing the tax, but in reality, the only thing they want to axe are people's rebates. The only thing they want to axe are the rebates people get through the Canada carbon incentive. Everything else, they are fully prepared to keep in place, including the GST that they ran on axing when they ran on it back in 2021.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am sharing my time with the member for Simcoe North and look forward to his remarks.

What we are debating is the outcome of a desperate gimmick announced by the government a few days ago, for which, somewhere on the back of a cocktail napkin, it cobbled together some kind of desperate ploy to buy Canadians' votes. The plan originally had more components than what is going to be voted on tonight. We are down to only voting on the GST elimination for two months because the Liberals blew it with the rest of the plan they tried to hatch.

They also have a promise that is still hanging out there to give cheques to working Canadians who earn up to a net income of \$150,000. This part of this half-baked scheme fell so flat that not only do Conservatives oppose that plan but the Bloc and the NDP have both publicly opposed it, arguing that it does not go to enough people, and Liberal backbenchers are unhappy, too. As the government tried to spray money as far and wide as possible, it was not far enough for the backbench.

I do not know how, but the Liberals quickly whittled their bill down to that which they thought they could get passed tonight. Based on the comments from the NDP, it sounds possible that this bill will get passed later this evening, but I will vote against it because I have no confidence in the government's agenda whatsoever, or what even passes for an agenda these days. We see a desperate government desperately clinging to power with the NDP carrying it along as it limps through the final months of its mandate. We are dealing with an entirely unserious government that is not committed to real reform that would enhance the productivity of this country and deliver the powerful paycheques that people need to afford food, housing, transportation and, indeed, a few extra luxuries or a few Christmas presents for their families this year.

When the finance minister made the announcement earlier this week, which included not just the two-month GST holiday but the other parts that the Liberals cannot even get their own backbench behind, she talked about a vibe session. What is this? It is like she is saying that all the people lined up at food banks because they cannot afford food are really giving off bad vibes and if the government could take the GST off a certain laundry list of items, then maybe it could improve the vibe of the millions of Canadians who are struggling to afford the basic necessities of life, which, by the way, are groceries and residential rents. These are GST-exempt already, so the argument has been made that people with more disposable income disproportionately benefit from this particular tax removal, and I think that is correct. That is demonstrably factual.

Canadians are struggling and will take whatever they can get in terms of making life more affordable, but what they really need is a

serious government that is prepared to tackle the very serious problems that this country faces. We are not going to get there by trying to shake off the bad vibes that have come about from a government that has presided over the doubling of the cost of residential rents and the more than doubling of an average mortgage payment in Canada.

• (1725)

People are struggling with day-to-day life and affording the basics. It is almost like the finance minister is blaming people for their bad vibes as they are struggling with what this country has become under nine years of the Liberal government's rule.

Taking the GST off a specified list of things through this bill is not going to increase productivity. It is not going to stem the flow of investment that is leaving this country and taking thousands of jobs with it. Despite the comments from the previous speaker, it will create a burden on retailers, which may carry hundreds or thousands of items that would be affected. It may be easy for a restaurant to just take 5% off everything, but what if we go to a dollar store proprietor with a handful of employees? Do we tell them they need to re-mark some but not all of the things in their store for two months and then do it again two months from now?

I spoke to a colleague who has a proprietor of dollar stores in his riding, and he knows what this is going to cost him. It is a true burden, and it is disproportionately felt by smaller retailers. Their systems cover less than those of a large chain, which might have hundreds of stores. That is just a minor digression about how this half-baked plan the Liberals came up with earlier in the week is not a solution for the affordability crisis and productivity crisis in this country.

Canadians need much bolder steps than that. They need a government that is going to axe the tax and fix the budget. We are going to axe the carbon tax when we form government. We will create far more affordability opportunities for Canadians by eliminating the carbon tax, which affects groceries, home heating, fuel, just about anything. These are necessities. We are going to axe that tax permanently for all Canadians.

We will also have to deal with the budget. The government's deficit is a moving target that can never be predicted. We can go through each budget and each fall economic statement since the Liberals came into power and see that they have disregarded or blown through every fiscal anchor, guardrail or whatever they want to call it in the moment, including the current one. As recently as this spring, the Liberals projected a \$40-billion deficit. The Parliamentary Budget Officer already had it up to \$46 billion before the current announcement. The current announcement is going to take it over \$50 billion. If the Liberals get through the \$250 payment they want to give to Canadians this spring, for which they will need to gain the support of all parties, including their own backbench, they are going to be way over that amount with no plan whatsoever to rein it in.

We need to get Canadians back to receiving the services they need from the government. It needs to get serious about national defence and about public safety. These things will require enormous investment from the government, but we have only seen the bloat of bureaucracy without an improvement to service. We see chaos in department after department, such as Immigration, Service Canada and the Canada Revenue Agency.

With that, I will yield the floor.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1730)

[English]

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1999

The House resumed from April 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-380, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (plastic manufactured items), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, here we are again with private members' hour, which there are very few of nowadays because of what is taking place. I will get to that, but I want to emphasize that this particular private member's bill takes a step backward when it comes to the environment.

All political parties, with the exception of the Conservative Party, recognize that our environment matters. Canadians are concerned about our environment, contrary to what the Conservatives might believe. However, interestingly, this is not the first time we have a private member's bill that would not do very much for the environment.

When we look at the Conservative Party's approach to the environment, the highlight, as the member opposite just made reference to, is, as he said, to axe the tax. However, the theme behind axing the tax is to attack the price on pollution, and it is a common thing the Conservatives say inside the chamber. There is a reason they do that. Members may recall that, last week, it made national news that Conservative MPs were complaining and providing comment in regard to their "freedom leader no more", as we found out that the leader of the Conservative Party not only watches very closely what

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his MPs are saying and doing, but also rewards good behaviour and punishes bad behaviour.

I say that because the member opposite just spoke about axing the tax, which is one of their slogans. What do the Conservatives have to say about slogans? I will quote directly from a news article that made headlines yesterday. Here is what Conservative MPs had to say: "If the leader invents a new slogan, 'we know we'll have to use it'". Reading further down in the story, it says, again coming from Conservatives, "'If you repeat the slogans, you get rewarded,' said a Conservative source. 'You are celebrated in front of the entire caucus for being a good cheerleader.'"

If one is in the Conservative caucus, one gets celebrated for repeating the leader of the Conservative Party's slogans. That is why we often hear them saying "axe the tax" and the other slogans, the bumper stickers.

An hon. member: It's embarrassing.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is embarrassing; my colleague is right.

Now we have this private member's bill. Anyone who follows Parliament would understand that we do not get to debate private members' bills that often. That is because the leader of the Conservative Party is in essence holding the House of Commons hostage. It is unfortunate, even though I do not think that this particular private member's bill is that great. I believe the member might be trying to get a gold star from his leader, because what he is hoping for is that we allow and encourage plastic use in Canada.

I remember the days when I was a member of the Manitoba legislature. The thought at the time was that we encourage people to use fewer plastic bags. We tried to amplify that by talking about how long it takes a plastic bag to disintegrate. Members would be amazed by how long it takes. We are talking many years. The thought was that we should bring in private member's legislation to deal with it, to ban the use of plastic bags, as there are alternatives. I believe I even had support from some Progressive Conservatives.

● (1735)

There is a huge difference there: Members should not be confused by the current Conservative Reform Party we see opposite. There are Progressive Conservatives in the Conservative caucus today, just not very many of them. It is the progressive-minded ones who are designated to go to the back or leave caucus. However, there are still ideas there that are tangible and will make a difference.

We could google plastic bags and the nuisance and damage they cause to the environment. One of the pictures that come to mind right away is plastic bags in trees that stay there endlessly. When the wind picks up, they get carried into the trees and stay there for a long time. These are the types of things that I believe a vast majority of Canadians are very much sympathetic to. What can we do as a population to improve our economy and our environment?

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When we watch some of the nature shows, especially anything dealing with water, we see how plastics are harming our environment in many different ways. I made reference to plastic bags in trees. Do members remember the old plastic rings that would hold a case of pop together? We see fish that have been strangled by this plastic item. If we look at storms that come in from the coast, especially in some countries, we see literally hundreds of yards of plastic being washed ashore. If we look at the type of plastic we see when the water recedes, it is a very serious issue, as is the amount of plastic waste we see when we drive out to rural communities.

We see different levels of government as well as citizens trying to contribute to cleaning it all up through recycling programs. There are initiatives we can all take, including looking at ways we can ban certain single-use plastics. There is so much potential in what we can introduce, and I suspect a vast majority of Canadians would support it. However, I do not know to what degree we would get wide support for legislation that takes away from the value of protecting our environment from plastics. It seems to me that this is what this legislation is advocating for, which is consistent with what we see from the Conservative Party, as I said when I started to talk about the price on pollution.

There was a time when individuals like Erin O'Toole and other Progressive Conservatives saw the value in things like a price on pollution and looking at ways to deal with single-use plastics. That is no more under this particular Conservative Reform Party leader. Instead, we see the far right taking control of the leader of the Conservative Party's office, at a substantial cost to good public policy.

We have seen examples of that even today as we talk about the Liberals and the New Democrats wanting to give a GST tax holiday to Canadians on many products. We have the New Democrats and the Liberals saying yes to it, but the Conservatives, who said yes during the last election, are saying no today. It is because of the far-right attitude within the Conservative Party. It is more concerned with Conservative self-interest than about—

• (1740)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member is short on time.

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly: I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, December 4, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I request unanimous consent to provide my speech on the bill.

Some hon. members: No.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, I also rise on a point of order. I request unanimous consent from the House to let me do my speech. I just had a bit of a trip in the hallway, and I was late coming in by a matter of seconds.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, my understanding is that we will give unanimous consent for both members to speak.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, the NDP has a long history of fighting against pollution and climate change. The NDP has been calling for plastic regulations and a ban on single-use plastic for years. We continue to lead the way when it comes to addressing plastic pollution. For example, my colleague has put forward a motion. Is it Campbell River?

An hon. member: North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Yes, Madam Speaker, my colleague from North Island—Powell River has put forward motion M-80, calling on the government to ban styrofoam in aquatic infrastructure. It was the MP from—

An hon. member: Courtenay—Alberni.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, in 2018, it was my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni who proposed a national strategy against plastic pollution.

I want to thank my colleagues for helping me out on this today. I just had a little trip in the hallway, and it has me a bit flustered.

My colleague proposed a national strategy against plastic pollution that was agreed to by all parties but has yet to be implemented by the Liberal government. Thanks to a motion by former MP Megan Leslie, in 2015, plastic microbeads are now banned in consumer products. In addition, Canada has made legally binding international commitments to reducing plastic pollution and to being plastic-free by 2030. This can only be done by advancing policies on plastic, not by tearing them down, which this bill does, but this is the culture of the regressive Conservatives.

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Canada has a responsibility as a rich and developed country to reduce our waste and to be a climate leader on the international stage. We cannot let the regressive Conservatives, kowtowing to the petrochemical industry, set the tone for our international commitments to people. An NDP government would end all public financing and subsidies of petrochemical companies, meaning big oil and gas, that profit from producing more plastics. Corporations that are fuelling the climate crisis and our pollution problem should not be getting rich off their pollution, and they should definitely not be getting government handouts to help them do it.

Ending government handouts to fossil fuel companies is something the residents of Port Moody—Coquitlam want. They want their government to take real steps toward putting an end to pollution. They are also concerned about the proliferation of plastics in their lives and in the ocean.

The last NDP MP for my riding of Port Moody—Coquitlam was Fin Donnelly. He stood in the House over six years ago to share that it was Canadians who first proposed World Ocean Day at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. However, over 30 years later, the issues are more overwhelming than ever before. Climate change, plastic pollution, open-net salmon farming, illegal fishing and habitat destruction all need immediate attention. This cannot continue, and that is why New Democrats are moving forward to end plastic pollution. We are not going backwards as the Conservatives continue to do.

Canadians want their governments to take action, and they are also taking action by organizing beach cleanups, banning plastic bags and saying no to more plastic. It is time the Conservatives also get a climate plan and address this pressing issue, although solutions to pollution and climate change require a belief in science, which the Conservatives do not know much about.

It was the Harper government that attacked science and scientists. An investigation by the Information Commissioner of Canada showed that the Harper government muzzled scientists. The investigation came about after a complaint by the University of Victoria's Environmental Law Centre clinic and the advocacy group Democracy Watch. The group submitted a report detailing a series of examples of Harper government officials blocking media access to scientists. In one case, the government scientist was ordered to get permission from the minister of natural resources before he could talk to reporters about a flood that happened 13,000 years ago, even though this research had been published in the journal *Nature*. Another example is that it took 11 government employees and 50 emails to decide how to answer a reporter's request to interview a Canadian government scientist who was part of a NASA team studying regional snowfall patterns.

● (1745)

It was shown that most of the muzzling involved scientists researching climate change. We cannot go back to the Conservative era. We know Conservatives do not have a climate plan; they do not believe in reducing fossil fuel emissions to slow down catastrophic climate change. In fact, the Conservatives are trying to reduce the very important climate change discussions down to a dislike of paper straws and coffee cup lids. They are deeply unserious, and they are not up to the challenges of the 21st century. In fact, if they

could get their way, they would roll us all back to the years of bench seats in cars with no seat belts and no concerns for the emissions they produce.

That is not the only thing they would roll back. They would roll back women's rights, the pension eligibility age for seniors, climate protection policies, affordable child care, dental care, pharmacare and indigenous sovereignty. We just need to look at what the B.C. Conservatives have already said: Provincially, they would undo commitments to UNDRIP. These are the realities that Canadians would experience with a regressive Conservative government.

I want to go back to the oceans. Oceana published a report in 2020 called "Drowning in Plastic". It shares that Canada introduces millions of tonnes of plastic, and 87% of it ends up in landfills or in the environment. Much of the plastic we discard ends up in the ocean, threatening whales, birds, turtles and all marine life. Canada has a national and global responsibility to stop the damage and do more, not less, to stop this pollution.

Unfortunately, doing less is what the Conservatives always do. In the three years the current Parliament has been sitting, they have done nothing for Canadians; the NDP continues to bring about wins for Canadians, such as in housing, child care, anti-scab legislation, dental care and pharmacare.

With that, in closing, I ask for unanimous consent to table, in both official languages, the report I quoted earlier: "Drowning in Plastic" from Oceana Canada, dated September 2020.

● (1750)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to table the report?

Some hon. members: No.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):
Madam Speaker, the famous movie *The Graduate* had the well-meaning father-in-law whisper to the young Ben, played by Dustin Hoffman, one word: "plastics". He said, "There's a great future in plastics." In fact his advice was on the mark. The 20th century was dominated by plastics, which are light, versatile, inexpensive and inert. There was not a single country on earth that did not use plastics. There was not a human endeavour that did not benefit from this miracle material.

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We have reached the point where we carry plastics with us daily. Think how many credit cards we have in our wallet. How about bank notes? How about our phones, our computers, or even our eyeglasses? If someone has had bypass surgery lately, what were the stents made out of? How did we get here? We got here in a car made with a massive amount of plastic. By using plastics in that car, we save more energy and create less pollution than it took to make the plastic in the car in the first place.

Without a doubt, plastics are the miracle material of the 20th century. Will they continue to be the miracle of the 21st century? They will not if the hysterical and ill-informed climate radicals sitting on the NDP and Liberal benches have their way. Their war against plastics is to our detriment. It makes Canada less efficient and less competitive, and as the federal court ruled, banning plastics as toxic was unconstitutional. This is why I am so grateful for the chance today to speak in support of my colleague's initiative.

Bill C-380 would be an excellent first step in defending a substance with many applications, one that makes modern life possible. Have members ever wondered why we do not find plastic banknotes littering the streets? What insight does that provide into human behaviour? The absence of plastic banknotes littering the streets is indicative of human behaviour and the intrinsic value assigned to certain forms of plastic. When plastic is perceived as valuable, individuals are more likely to dispose of it responsibly, contributing to reduced littering.

If we assign a value to plastic instead of viewing it as toxic, the waste problem becomes solvable by market forces. Scrap metal is not a problem, because it has value. People make a part-time job of picking apart appliances at the curbside and make extra money by selling the metal to salvage yards that recycle it. Therefore if there were a market value for old plastics, likely the same would occur with them.

Canada has the best engineers in the world, and the ones I have spoken to are working on and excited for recycling solutions. Recycling means plastics can be used over and over again without creating more waste, while protecting the health of our people and the safety of our environment. That is a common-sense solution. By establishing a market value for plastics, we incentivize recycling and responsible waste management practices, ultimately mitigating a waste problem.

Plastics related to food are not just the straws, the forks and the coffee cup lids the NDP-Liberals demonize. Plastics also play a crucial role in food production and preservation. Plastics like films are essential for extending the shelf life of perishable foods, reducing food waste and ensuring food safety during transportation and storage. They enable us to distribute fresh produce globally, maintaining quality and accessibility for consumers.

Canada imports over 80% of its fruits and vegetables. The distances travelled to transport this food are enormous. Plastics are indispensable in the agricultural sector, facilitating the transportation and preservation of fresh produce over long distances. Without plastics, we would see significant increases in food prices due to decreased shelf life and increased food waste. Additionally, compromised food safety could pose health risks to consumers.

Unfortunately, positive narratives about plastic recycling often go unnoticed amid sensationalized stories about plastic pollution. It is essential to amplify success stories and recognize the progress made in sustainable plastic management to inspire further action and innovation. For example, there is a small family-owned company in Woodbridge that I toured, Petro Plastics.

The company's stewardship initiatives help lead repurposing of plastic film and plastics, recycling roughly 100,000 pounds per month. It works with plastic recyclers in Ontario, and the recycled material is now being used in construction projects like building homes, something else the NDP-Liberal government is failing Canadians on.

• (1755)

There is still work to do in increasing opportunities to recycle. Recycling plastics in specialized sectors like health care presents unique challenges due to stringent safety and regulatory requirements. However, innovative initiatives like the PVC 123 program demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of responsible plastic recycling, contributing to both environmental and economical sustainability.

Plastics are ubiquitous in hospitals. In fact they seem essential for health and safety. Plastic PPE is life-saving. Eliminating or restricting plastic in the health care space would come at a devastating cost.

We should focus on optimizing plastic use, implementing recycling programs, and exploring sustainable alternatives where feasible. We know that plastics have become deeply embedded in our daily lives for food packaging and medical equipment, but banning plastics would undoubtedly have far-reaching implications, both economically and socially.

In Canada, food waste is already a \$49.6-billion concern and growing, 60% of which is thought to be avoidable. Considering plastics as toxic and attempting to ban them would add an additional 50% in waste, further exacerbating the problem and driving up costs. The number rises to 150% once we consider the entire supply chain. This is without even going into the 44.2 million in GHG emissions related to food waste, to which banning plastics would add another 22.1 million in GHG emissions. For perspective, this exceeds 8% of total national GHG emissions.

Private Members' Business

Environmentalists' targeting plastics leads to regressive outcomes. It shows that they care only about sensationalism and not about substance. Instead of solving problems, they are becoming part of the problem. Chris DeArmitt wrote a fantastic book that sums up the issue perfectly. It is called *The Plastics Paradox*. Let me cite it:

...we need to recognize that...damage happens because plastic and other articles are in places where they should not be. There would be no problem at all if people were not intentionally dumping plastic and other waste.... The problem is clearly not with plastic itself, but with the unconscionable behaviour of some humans who [litter]....

Banning plastics would not solve the problem; it would create more problems.

In the same Deloitte study that I mentioned earlier, it is estimated that the government's P2 plastics ban would create a \$1-billion annual revenue loss for the plastics industry, a 60% increase to packaging costs and up to a 55% increase to operational costs should the agrifood sector lose access to plastic packaging. Fresh produce costs would increase up to 34%, and availability of fresh produce could be cut in half. This would be devastating to every Canadian who buys food, which is every single one of us. It also would mean roughly a \$5.6-billion detriment to the Canadian produce industry.

Waste concerns are generated from the prediction that bulk packaging would be required to mitigate cost increases to farmers, who are price-takers, leading consumers to dispose of excess goods. Additionally, value-added products like pre-made salads or cut fruit, even fruit and vegetable platters, would no longer be viable without plastic storage, as there are no comparable alternatives readily available. Fresh produce represents less than 3% of the total plastic usage in Canada, and the NDP-Liberals' continued assault against plastics through bans would have a negligible impact on recycling.

Once again, let us take the information into consideration as we look to understand why the Federal Court overturned the single-use plastics ban, calling it "unreasonable and unconstitutional". We should also note that it is saying that there is "no reasonable apprehension that all listed Plastic Manufactured Items (PMIs) are harmful".

While the NDP-Liberals commit to an appeal, Canada's \$35-billion plastics industry is not safe. I encourage sharing perspectives on the multi-faceted issue, considering both the challenges and the opportunities that a plastics ban might present. It is evident that while plastic pollution presents a pressing challenge, our focus should be on practical, actionable solutions rather than on radical bans not based in evidence.

We should seek predictability and manageable regulations that foster innovation and incentivize responsible behaviour. By fostering a culture of responsible consumption and waste management supported by clear and consistent regulations, we can make meaningful progress toward a more sustainable future.

A vote for Bill C-380 is a vote for common sense, and my message to Canadians is clear: Only Conservatives are working to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget, stop the crime and can the ban.

• (1800)

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I ask for unanimous consent to give my right of reply.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is incredibly dangerous to be right when one's government is so wrong. The NDP-Liberal government is wrong, and it is ignoring Canadians. It is ignoring the science, common sense, the cost of living crisis it created and the courts, when it tries to ban plastics. The NDP-Liberal government hates the facts on plastics. If Canadians are suffering now with skyrocketing bills, wait until the full ban of plastics is in effect.

Plastics make modern life affordable, reliable, practical and enjoyable. There are no Canadians left who can say the same about the Liberals. Wet, limp and utterly useless are paper straws, which Canadians are forced to use. They suck. Paper straws have a higher carbon footprint than plastic ones, making them worse for the environment. All the environmentally conscious people on the other side of the aisle, and we are conscious of the environment on this side, should remember that emissions are higher with a paper straw, and paper straws are worse for people.

Square this one for me: Canadians are suffering with the high cost of heating right now, which was driven up on purpose by the carbon tax to lower emissions. Although it is not working, that is the Liberals' intent. The same government is banning common consumer goods that have lower emissions than their replacements. The government is driving up emissions.

Someone please make sense of this. Grandma is turning down the heat this winter to lower emissions so the radical left can force Canadians to increase emissions in other parts of their lives. Does this make sense?

It is not just for the environment that paper straws suck; they are worse for our health. The science shows that the chemicals that coat paper products, making them somewhat waterproof, also unfortunately leach chemicals into our food and drink and then ultimately into our body. This is what the NDP-Liberals are forcing Canadians to use instead of plastic straws: an inferior product that is worse for their health. Is that not wacko? What they are doing is completely wacko.

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Even as the science shows that the policy would hurt the environment and Canadians' health, it is also bad for Canadians' pocket-book during a cost of living crisis. Paper products cost more money than plastic ones. The ban would also make food more expensive because plastic extends the shelf life of food. That is why plastic-wrapped cucumbers last over two weeks longer.

Banning plastics would only drive up food costs, sending even more Canadians to the food bank. We know that over two million Canadians have to rely on a food bank because of the situation they find themselves in with the policies from the Liberal-NDP government. Conservatives will stop this soon. Do we want to make things cheaper for Canadians? We need to stop banning more affordable products. What Canadians really want is a ban on banning things, and the courts agree.

For the millions of Canadians who are thirsty for a common-sense change, dawn is breaking. There is a failing regime that is desperate to attract the most radical environmentalists to its cause. It has gone too far. Common-sense Canadians will soon punish the Liberal government, during a carbon tax election, for ignoring the science, ignoring the facts, ignoring the common sense, ignoring the provinces, ignoring the Constitution and ignoring its citizens. I believe that is why most Canadians are ignoring the Prime Minister.

In the end, it is not really about straws that suck or do not suck, or about flat wooden spoons, weird forks or even plastic itself. It is about power and control and about an out-of-control Liberal government that does not want to find practical solutions to problems but wants to virtue-signal for its shallow political interests; that is all the government is about right now. It is using the heavy hand of government to get its way.

We need a new government that is about practical solutions and not about feelings and virtue signals. Does the government even care about the garbage in our environment? This is the most infuriating thing for me: There is an issue here, and the government is addressing it with a ban that obviously has had zero effect on our climate and our environment.

Between 88% and 99% of the garbage in our oceans comes from 10 rivers in the developing world. Instead of the millions of dollars that we have wasted on the ban, what if we took a bit of that money and tried to introduce a waste disposal system in the developing world, which has the 10 rivers that are causing the majority of the problem? That is a common-sense approach: not to ban waste but to manage it, reuse it and ultimately recycle it.

I have a couple of common-sense—

• (1805)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are out of time.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, I believe I have one minute left. When I asked for unanimous consent, the clock continued to tick. I believe there is an error that caused me not to have the full five minutes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will verify that.

I have confirmed that the member had the full five minutes. That is the clock we guide ourselves by.

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock as 6:30 p.m. so we can get back to Government Orders.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 43—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-78

The House resumed consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, what we have before us tonight, as I mentioned before, is part of a broader, desperate gimmick that the Liberals cobbled together on a napkin somewhere with the hope that the NDP, the Bloc and their backbench would sustain the government a little longer. They cannot, so we are down to this GST bill. I will vote against it. I oppose the government's agenda.

We need a serious government that will tackle serious problems in a meaningful and comprehensive way. We have a national security crisis, a public safety crisis and an out-of-control budget crisis. We need to axe the carbon tax that makes life more expensive for all Canadians and fix the budget.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member said he is going to be voting against a tax break, the GST holiday. I will quote from the Conservative election platform from when he knocked on doors. Under the heading "GST Holiday" it says, "To help families and help our hard-hit retail stores recover, Canada's Conservatives will implement a month-long GST holiday". Ours is two months. The leader at the time, Erin O'Toole, tweeted that it was going to be in December, a GST holiday tax break. The current leader of the Conservative Party retweeted that tweet.

I am wondering why the Conservatives have had this road to Damascus turnaround, a huge flip-flop. It was a good idea when the Conservatives made it a part of their election platform, but it is a bad idea now because they do not want to help Canadians.

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• (1810)

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, it was a heck of a lot easier to administer an across-the-board cut on all products for one month than this bizarre, cobbled-together laundry list the Liberals have created, but that is beside the point.

The point is that I have no confidence in the government. I will not vote in favour of a budgetary tax measure, a money bill. I am not going to vote for it and I am proud to oppose the government.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I asked the government members some questions earlier, but I did not really get any answers, so here is my question.

Does my hon. colleague think that the most vulnerable people, such as single mothers, low-income seniors and low-income families, are the people covered by this bill and those who can afford to spend money on catering and champagne?

I would also like my colleague to explain how he would define clothing for 14-year-olds. When my son was 14, he wore size 14 shoes and was over six feet tall. Would his clothes qualify? He was certainly the right age.

Perhaps my colleague could provide some details that the government could not.

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely right. It was an excellent but leading question. She suggested that this whole system is arbitrary and strange and will benefit wealthier Canadians. People who perhaps buy large quantities of things in January, such as a year's supply of beer or wine, and warehouse it, can do so, but these are the better capitalized Canadians who have more money, not the people who need it the most. The member is absolutely right about that.

I have no confidence in the government and I am not going to vote for its bill.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a question related to my hon. colleague's response to the last member on what is fair for Canadians.

I do not think it was necessarily fair for Canadians when Stephen Harper, the last Conservative prime minister, gave billionaires \$60 billion in tax breaks. The Liberals continued that, unfortunately. The tradition in Canada seems to be that when one of the major parties does a great deal for billionaires, the next party that comes in keeps it and it goes back and forth like that. Liberals and Conservatives are always going to bat for billionaires.

Would the member comment directly on the fact that the Conservatives gave billionaires \$60 billion? Will he actually address that question? Will he have the courage to address why Conservatives did that?

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, the previous government did no such thing. I reject the premise of the member's question.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I can see the member opposite is uncomfortable answering a reality and a truth, which is

that when Conservatives are in power, they are always giving their rich friends a bunch of money, taxpayer dollars. Why?

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, I answered his question. It contains a ridiculous premise that I reject, and so there is no answer for that question. It is a non-question.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is really wonderful to see you again. I thought the last time I would see you before the holidays was my last speech a couple of days ago, but it is a delight to see you in the chair again this evening.

It is a pleasure to rise on behalf of the constituents and residents of Simcoe North to talk about a very important issue. We are talking about tax relief for Canadians. If government members wanted to provide relief to Canadians, they would have done it in an easy way. They would have taken the GST off of everything. They would have made it administratively simple.

The Liberals want to talk about how in the previous election campaign, the Conservative leader at the time and the Conservative Party campaigned on a cut. They are trying to say this is the exact same cut the Conservatives ran on in the 2021 campaign. That is false. The Conservatives ran on a one-month GST holiday on everything: on fuel, on food, on every single item GST is charged on. That is not the same plan the government is proposing here today.

We should also talk about control. This is yet another example of the Prime Minister wanting to control our lives. He wants to give us a tax break, but only on the things he agrees we should get that tax break on. Let us go through the list. If I want to buy a hard copy of the Toronto Star, that counts for the tax break, but if I want to buy the renowned magazine The Walrus, I still have to pay GST. Christmas trees are on the list, thank God, but not decorations. I cannot buy that star to put on the top of the tree to get that tax break. I cannot buy that wreath to hang on the door to get that tax break.

Jigsaw puzzles are on the list. I can spend three weeks hiding out, putting that 1,000-piece puzzle together, but if I want to build something in my garage and use a jigsaw, I do not get the tax break on that. If I want to put my feet up and have a Coors Light, it is under 7% so there is no GST, but if I want to have a Boneshaker, at 7.1%, from Amsterdam Brewery, it is not going to be on the list. Maybe someone wants to go and talk to the Kingston brewery that makes Oats & Cream IPA, which has over 7% alcohol. It is not on the list.

Let us talk about some other things: candy and snacks. Why on earth would a government specifically single out sugar for a tax break, when many stakeholders, like Diabetes Canada, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, and the Canadian Cancer Society, have been promoting a special sugar tax? I do not think they are too happy with this tax break. Also, the Canadian Cancer Society came out publicly and said the government should not be taking tax off of alcohol.

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Why are the Liberals picking and choosing these special things we might put in our grocery carts? Some are in and some are out. It is absurd. It is a list that only pointy heads in some government agency or department could put together.

I was at a local restaurant last night, a wonderfully run restaurant, and the proprietor said, “I do not even know how these rules are supposed to work. I called the GST line at CRA, and they did not even know how they are supposed to work. What if I am selling tickets to a party that has food and beverages, but some of the spirits do not have the the tax break and some do, and I am selling food, and I am selling those tickets today for a party that happens on New Year's? Do I charge the HST on those tickets today?” It is unclear. It is completely absurd.

The government should have either taken the tax off of everything or left it on everything. That is not to mention that we are in a deficit position. If the government had said it was going to spend \$2 billion on this, and this is where it found the savings to pay for it, maybe that would have been a different conversation.

● (1815)

Let us talk about the NDP. A previous principled NDP stood in this place and decried, absolutely criticized, reducing the GST. Why is that? NDP members criticized reducing the GST because, as I will quote from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which the NDP likes to quote very often in the House, imagine a tax cut that you only get when you buy stuff. In relation to GST cuts in a previous government, it said that this was a tax cut that disproportionately favoured high-income families. For every dollar of this tax cut received by low-income families, \$3 went to families who were not low income.

What could the government have done? The government could have just doubled the GST credit, which, by the way, had the support of all major parties in the House just two years ago. Every party in the House agreed to increase the GST rebate cheque that goes to low-income households. Eleven million people would have doubled up on the payment that they got.

We believe that we should help the lowest-income people possible, but this is not a measure targeted to low-income people. This measure goes to every single Canadian, whether they need it or not. It is costly to administer and it is also costly to the treasury. The government is already in a deficit position. It could have come up with a dollar-for-dollar rule, to say that this is how it is going to pay for it.

Let us also remember, just two weeks ago, that the Governor of the Bank of Canada said, “The fight against inflation is not over”. When a government runs deficits, that is fiscal stimulus. The Governor of the Bank of Canada also said, almost two years ago, that if you want to help people with the effects of inflation, or those that have a problem with affordability, those measures should be very targeted.

It would have been very targeted to give an additional doubling of the GST/HST credit that low-income individuals have. It would have only gone to 11 million people. It would have reduced the overall cost. It would have been administratively very easy to deliver. We would have just doubled the payment.

By the way, when we talk about the cheques that will be going out, guess what? The people in this chamber get the cheques. Why on earth would they design a program to give cheques to members of Parliament when there are low-income people who do not work, like seniors who do not work or people with disabilities who do not work, who get nothing?

It makes absolutely no sense. Not only that, economists said, just two weeks ago, before this announcement, that the Bank of Canada was on track to reduce the interest rates by 50 basis points. Those same economists now say that the Bank of Canada cannot reduce as much. It might only reduce by 25 basis points or hold interest rates steady.

That means that when politicians spend, Canadians pay more for their mortgages. Conservatives are for permanent tax reductions, shrinking the size of the deficit and making sure that Canadians have more money in their pockets long term.

● (1820)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, wow, that is unbelievable. I have been sitting here, for 10 minutes, listening to a Conservative member talk about taking care of the most vulnerable people in our community like he somehow cares. Are we kidding? He is trying to lecture us on giving supports for the most vulnerable in our communities. He has voted against every single measure. His former government, the Conservative government of Stephen Harper, told seniors that they had to work two more years before they could retire. On every measure we brought along, lowering the tax on the middle class, increasing OAS, increasing GIS, he voted against and his party voted against.

Is he now going to stand up in here and lecture us on taking care of the most vulnerable in our community?

● (1825)

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, this is the member whose party created two tiers of seniors in this country, those who are below 75 and those who are above 75.

For the record, maybe that member needs to get some facts straight. Conservatives on this side of the House decided to vote in favour of doubling the GST credit that went to the poorest households in this country. I have no idea what that member has been thinking about or who he is talking to or where he is getting his facts, but he should double-check them before he stands up in this House.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to my Conservative colleague's speech, and there is something I do not understand. The Conservative Party tells us that we need to reduce taxes and, for once, the Liberals are doing just that. They have taken up the NDP's proposal to help people out with basics and essentials like groceries, food, children's clothing and diapers. The Conservative Party keeps repeating the slogan about needing to destroy taxes, lower people's taxes and ease financial pressure. This time, the Conservatives are singing a different tune with a monumental reversal that contradicts their 2021 promise by refusing to give a break to people who need one.

How does the member explain this change of position by the Conservatives?

[English]

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, why do they not just take the GST off everything and reduce government expenditures to pay for it? There is a problem. We do not have enough money. I have been around this town for three years, and I still cannot find the money tree that these parties think exists in this town. Why do they think we have to keep spending with deficits?

Not only that, the NDP asked for taxes off heating bills and cell-phone bills. The government is not even doing that. By the way, as we talk about staples, what about fuel? Why not take the GST off fuel? Maybe that would have been a little more palatable for people as they travel over the Christmas holidays, the winter holidays or whatever religious holidays they observe.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know the member for Simcoe North speaks a lot with the constituents in his riding. I want him to comment on whether his constituents agree that our tax system is far too complicated, and whether it might be smarter to have a simpler, fairer, lower tax system for Canadians.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, what an excellent question and astute observation from my friend from Perth—Wellington. He absolutely nailed it.

People are going to spend so much time trying to figure out what is in and what is out, and retooling their machines, when the government could have easily just said that for the whole month or the whole two months, it is going to take the GST off everything. It would have been far simpler for people to manage. There is no question about it.

That is why after the next election, there will be a special tax task force to bring production home, to simplify the tax code and to grow our economy.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a little time for him. The member just admitted something.

The Conservative plan back in 2021 would have taken the tax off everything. I would appreciate the member's reaction to this scenario. Somebody goes out and they buy a present for their little one for \$25, and taking the tax off saves them \$1.25. Somebody goes

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out and treats themselves to a \$25,000 watch, and they are saving \$1,250.

It seems that once again the Conservatives are tilting the playing field toward those who can spend the most. Can he comment on that?

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, it is an interesting question, but if the member just swapped what he was talking about for food, the exact same thing applies to what the government is doing.

If someone was to take their friends out for a nice dinner and spends \$10,000 on food, which a number of well-meaning people might actually be deciding to do after this, they would get a huge tax break. However, as I said before, if people want to buy decorations for their Christmas tree, they are not on the list. It actually does not make any sense, and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are way over time.

Resuming debate, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for London North Centre.

I am thankful for the opportunity today to debate Bill C-78.

The past few years have been challenging. It feels like the price of everything has gone up, thanks to global inflation and the need for central banks all over the world to raise interest rates in response to the after-effects of a once-in-a-generation global pandemic. While inflation has cooled and interest rates are dropping, we know that Canadians are not feeling that in their household budgets quite yet. Our government obviously cannot set prices at the checkout, but we can leave Canadians with more money in their pocket to help them afford the things they need and save for the things they want, which is where the measures in Bill C-78 come into effect.

Starting December 14, we are proposing to give a tax break to all Canadians. With a GST/HST exemption across the country, Canadians would be able to buy things like prepared foods, snacks, kids' clothing, Christmas trees, books, puzzles and other children's toys, all tax-free. Lasting until February 15, 2025, this tax break would essentially make all food GST/HST-free and would deliver meaningful savings for Canadians with real relief at the cash register. This relief is about saying to Canadians: "Yes, things have been hard, but they are going to get better."

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Inflation was at 2% in October, which means that inflation has been within the Bank of Canada's target range all year long. The bank has cut interest rates four times now this year. Our economy looks like it is having a soft landing from a COVID recession. We are providing this new support for Canadians who have really gotten our country through a tough time. We are counting on powering a very strong recovery at the end of this year and the beginning of next year.

This new support is about making life a little bit easier at this time of year when costs are highest, because we have the space now to do it. With good economic news, and I just mentioned inflation cooling and interest rates dropping, we are able to do so in a way that is not going to stimulate inflation, but rather is going to help make ends meet and continue our economic growth.

Canada has one of the strongest balance sheets in the world, and the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. We have a strong fiscal position, and we are putting it to work to support Canadians with our temporary GST/HST relief. This can also help sustain the pace of our economic recovery. For example, consumer spending per capita has remained somewhat subdued, reflecting a lowering of household purchasing power due to higher inflation, elevated shelter costs and the impact of high interest rates over the past two years. Thankfully, inflation has cooled, interest rates are coming down and our government is delivering a plan to make housing more affordable. However, with some heightened global economic uncertainty, we have witnessed consumers and businesses adopting a more cautious approach when it comes to spending. We all know that the effects of lower interest rates can take time to be felt throughout the economy and make their way to impacting the pocketbooks of everyday Canadians.

Really, the Canadian economy has been operating below its potential capacity for over a year. This has largely been by design, as excess supply has put downward pressure on inflation, and as the monetary policy decisions from the Bank of Canada and other central banks around the world have done their job to stabilize inflation. Rather than reignite inflation, this time the GST relief would simply help Canadians to bridge that gap. It would build on actions that are already saving families and individuals thousands of dollars a year, like the Canada-wide \$10-a-day child care system, which has already cut fees for regulated child care to an average of \$10 a day or less in over half of all provinces and territories and by 50% or more in all the others. The Canadian dental care plan and the national school food program are saving Canadians hundreds of dollars a year, especially for those Canadians who are least able to carry the costs associated with those expenses. The Canada child benefit continues to lift children out of poverty, and then the Canada workers benefit provides a meaningful boost to our lowest-paid and often most essential workers. These are just a few of the ways that our government is already supporting Canadians, making everyday items cost less and putting more money back into middle-class pockets.

• (1830)

With Bill C-78, we want to deliver new tax relief on groceries and seasonal expenses. This is about helping Canadians celebrate with family and friends and starting 2025 with a little extra money

in their pockets. With Bill C-78, we can make life a bit easier, so Canadians have more money for the things they want.

Please join me in calling for all parties to quickly and unanimously pass this legislation.

• (1835)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, how is it that the member sees this as putting more money in people's pockets, or, to be more accurate, more of their own money back in their pockets, when the funds to help them out will come in April when the government is raising the carbon tax, quadrupling it, and totally nullifying anything that they would be doing with those funds?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, I think my hon. colleague has not read the bill. The bill is just about a GST tax relief, which would happen from December 14 to February 15. It would immediately give from 5% to 12% relief, depending on the province. That is, consumers will pay less when they go to the till, so the relief would be immediate. It will carry forward into the new year, but there is nothing about the new year itself.

I think the misrepresentations about the carbon rebate have been misleading. The last time the House heard about carbon, gas prices went down. I think they went down to historical lows. Freaking people out about a carbon rebate increase that is going to happen in April is not the way to scare them away from the benefits of this GST relief.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, for the past while, I have been listening to members boast about lifting the GST for a couple of months so that people can get a better deal on groceries.

However, here is what groceries look like for people living on a budget: milk, not taxed; eggs, not taxed; vegetables, not taxed; fruit, not taxed; pasta, not taxed; and meat, not taxed when it is on sale. Items that are usually taxed include chips, candy, beer, diapers, personal care products and household products, although the last two are not on the list of products that will be exempted. That is what I was looking at two minutes ago.

In the end, is it right to say that the government, by making this argument, is mistaking people for imbeciles?

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[English]

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, I think the member uses very crass language in calling those people, who take their families out for dinner at Christmas, imbeciles. I think that is a very inappropriate word for parents who buy their children books. I think that is a very inappropriate word to call those parents who buy their kids puzzles or children's toys, or who might have a beer or two, or a glass of wine, during the holidays.

I think that is a very derogatory word to call those parents and those folks, who are just trying to enjoy the holidays, give a little cheer to their families and save a few bucks while they are doing it.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that Liberals always do half measures. A few weeks ago, we New Democrats tabled a demand to see GST relief across all essentials, including home heating. It is something we tabled last year, but two major parties voted against it. We are finally seeing the Liberals move on something like taking the GST off of essentials and other items. This is a strong way forward to hopefully begin the discussion on making it a permanent relief for Canadians right across the country.

Will the member join New Democrats in calling for the government to see GST removed off of all essentials?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, I think the Liberal government has always had a two-pronged approach to grow the economy and increase the pie. If we grow the economy and increase our GDP growth, then of course we want to give relief to the tax base as much as possible and wherever it is possible. That is why we have targeted relief when it comes to pharmacare, dental care and child care.

We will continue to work to make sure that Canadians get more money in their pockets and get bigger paycheques going forward.

• (1840)

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, as members know, Greens will be supporting this measure because it does offer some short-term affordability relief. It is not ideal. It is far too broad-based. It includes video game consoles, such as a PS5, which I think we can all agree are not an essential. The measure does not get to the root causes of corporate profiteering. It is far too complicated for small businesses.

It also does not have any new revenue attached to it. Why would the government not have ensured there was new revenue attached, for example through a windfall profits tax on the excess profits of the oil and gas industry?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, we are giving tax relief to those who need it the most: Canadian workers, Canadian families and Canadian seniors. We will continue to do that.

With respect to more economic growth, I think sales will go up. People will be able to spend a bit more, and we will probably see the government coffers having a little more revenue at the end of the day as well.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise and speak to the matters of

the day and the issues as they impact Canadians, specifically as they impact my constituents back home in London. Global inflation is, by definition, a world phenomenon that has impacted the middle class and lower-income populations in particular, and we see that effect in Canada, too. The past few years have been very difficult for Canadians. They have counted on a federal government that has been there, that has seen them through the most difficult years of the pandemic and that has put in place landmark policy, ground-breaking policy, that is intended and is having the effect of helping make everyday costs more affordable.

I think of, for example, the dental care program. The Canada dental care program now has over a million people who have registered for it. Earlier today, the Leader of the Opposition said it does not exist. It certainly exists. We can ask the seniors in my riding back home in London. My seatmate here is from Winnipeg. We can ask his constituents. We can ask my other seatmate from Brampton. They fought for it. Every single member of Parliament on this side, and I will say in the NDP as well, as it was behind the idea, recognized the importance of a dental care program, particularly in the context of inflation.

We also see a federal government that has moved ahead with child care, recognizing the importance \$10-a-day child care has for young families. In fact, the vision for that did exist at one time from the Conservatives back in 1987. The only difference is that Brian Mulroney and his government were an example of a Progressive Conservative government. They tried to put in place a national child care program at that time, but because of political reasons, it did not work out. Certainly, former prime minister Martin and people like Ken Dryden attempted as well. Also for political reasons, that did not work out.

This government was able to get it done. We see that in excess of 110,000 women have been able to re-enter the workforce now because of a child care program that is affordable. In fact, the economist Jim Stanford says that over the next 10 years, he expects 1 million women to be able to re-enter the workforce because child care is now going to be so affordable in this country. It turns out that social policy is good economic policy. This is something Conservatives have never, unfortunately, understood.

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There is the school food program to make sure kids are able to go to school and have some food in their bellies, that they have what they need to succeed as children. We are ensuring we have that fundamental basis of dignity to make sure kids in this country have what they need to succeed. That is not asking for too much. In fact, Canada is one of the advanced democracies that has come to this late, unfortunately. It was the government, working with other interested parties in the House of Commons, making sure we were standing by our constituents the whole way. That is now moving forward to ensure elementary schools and high schools will have the opportunity to offer hot meals to kids, whether it is breakfast programs, lunch programs or whatever the case might be.

We do have examples of that in Canada, but it is a patchwork quilt. It has been volunteer organizations that have offered it in the main. Here, we have a federal government that is going to fund that work. This is tremendously important for our future as well. We have put in place these measures, but we still see challenges. While inflation has come back to normal levels because of the financial stewardship of the government, we have to make sure that we continue to be there for Canadians who are faced with a difficult time when it comes to the cost of living.

I hear it from my constituents. We all do. When they go to the grocery store, it is difficult. When they go to purchase clothes for their kids, it can be difficult. When they want to go eat out, whether it is just as an individual or as a family, it can be difficult. If we go out to an average family restaurant, as a family of four, that bill is going to be a high one.

The federal government has recognized that people are going through these challenges, so it has put forward a tax break, a tax cut. This is something Conservatives talk about a lot. However, today we saw the Leader of the Opposition announcing, in a declarative tone, which he seemed to be very proud of, that they are not going to support this measure of lifting GST/HST for the period starting on December 14 and continuing past Valentine's Day, ending on February 15.

• (1845)

The Conservatives are in a party that says it is for the everyday person, apparently. It is a party that says, only apparently, that it stands for tax cutting. No, it does not. In fact, we should not be too surprised at all, because when this government moved ahead not once but twice to cut taxes for the middle class, who stood against it? The Conservatives did. When this government moved ahead and cut taxes for small businesses, who stood in the way? The Conservatives did. However, we were still able to get those measures through. When we were able to, in the pandemic years, stand by small businesses to make sure they had the emergency supports they needed, who stood in the way there too? The Conservatives did.

They do it every single time. They present this mirage, a kind of fiction, that they are there for the everyday person, whether it is the worker, the family or the small business owner, but they do not believe in those things, as it turns out. What we have in the House of Commons that really shows what we are all about is our vote. The vote does the talking every single time, and the Conservatives'

votes are where the proof in the pudding is. There is not much proof there; there really is not.

We have a measure that would go a long way for everyday people, for people in the middle class and for people working hard to join the middle class. In question period today, I talked about a young family, and I am a relatively new father myself. Child seats are expensive things, running into hundreds of dollars. We are going to lift the tax on them. I think of what that would mean for the young couple getting ready to start a family. It is expensive. They have to worry about all of the essentials and pay tax on top of that, but we would lift the tax on, for example, child seats, diapers and children's clothing.

Those are just examples that pertain to a young family. What about a family that wants to spend more time together, maybe take a bit of a load off, go out and enjoy a restaurant? The tax would be lifted there too. Who benefits? It is not just that family but entrepreneurs, who continue to be the backbone of this country's economy. That is something this government recognizes and something that parties in the House that will support this measure recognize.

I just heard my colleague from the Green Party say that he is on-side with this. That is a very good thing. I know that NDP members have said they are on-side with this, but I wonder where the Conservatives are on this, the so-called party of entrepreneurship and free enterprise. I want the Conservatives to go back and look at what Restaurants Canada has said. It said in a very clear statement that not supporting a measure like this would be irresponsible, because a measure like this would not just be good for families, as I said, for individuals and for businesses, but would also act as an economic stimulus during challenging times.

We have weathered the storm quite well. We still see historically low, at least relatively, unemployment rates in this country, just in excess of 6%, but that has come down significantly in the past few years. We see a AAA credit rating. We see the lowest debt and deficit in the entire G7, and Canada, according to the International Monetary Fund, is poised to lead economic growth in the coming years in the G7. I know my Conservative friends are not in the habit of quoting what they call "elite organizations", but I think the views of the IMF should be taken seriously.

The economic fundamentals are quite strong. That puts those in the middle class and those with a lower income on a good footing for a good future, but they need this support right now in the immediate. That is why the government is seized with this kind of vision.

We are going to continue to be there for Canadians every step of the way, for my constituents in London and for constituents across the country. The Conservatives still have some time. I just hope they reverse their decision on this and stand up for a responsible vision. This policy is responsible. They should stand up for the idea that they have to be on the side of the people and have their backs during tough times. That is exactly what we are going to continue to do.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, does my colleague really believe that a family that cannot afford a \$100 meal will be able to afford a \$95 meal thanks to the GST cut?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Speaker, yes, I think it is a very responsible policy.

This policy offers something for the middle class during very difficult times. My colleague has talked a lot about the middle class in the House, but the Bloc Québécois is not here for the middle class.

[*English*]

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are hearing the Liberal member wax eloquently about how compassionate the Liberals are toward the people of Canada. However, I would like to compare that to what the Conservatives are offering: the permanent elimination of the carbon tax, which makes everything more expensive, and cutting the GST for new home purchases, which will add 30,000 jobs and make life much less expensive for people entering the market.

This plan is two months long and comes right before the government raises the taxes on many other things, including the carbon tax. Does the member want to compare his plan with our plan?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Speaker, does the member think I would not know about his voting record, not just in the House of Commons but during his time as a member of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia? He supported pricing carbon at that time. He was in the government of Gordon Campbell. He stood in that legislature and championed the idea of carbon pricing, and here tonight he offers a different perspective. Now I see he is smiling. He knows he has been caught.

On top of that, he talks about the Conservatives' big, bold idea to cut the GST from the purchase price of homes. How would they pay for that? By getting rid of the housing accelerator fund, which is responsible for building homes across the country, including in 68 Conservative-held constituencies. They would cancel that program to the detriment of this country and their constituents. They are not serious.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the NDP asked for the GST to be removed from home heating. I wonder if the member can explain to the House why the Liberals did not listen to us and make sure this tax relief could be extended to people who have to pay a higher cost for home heating.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Speaker, first of all, every time the member engages in debate, she offers a perspective that is important.

If we look at the list of items that would be eligible for the GST/HST cut, we see a very long list that would benefit Canadians across the country. We are talking about everyday essentials. I would be very happy to speak with the member more on that particular idea.

I think we have something here. It is a two-month holiday, essentially, which will go a long way toward help constituents not only

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in my riding back home in London, but in her constituency as well, particularly the low-income Canadians she has always championed in the House of Commons.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member is a very erudite colleague and I turn to him for answers.

Members on the other side are saying that this policy is inflationary, yet in 2008, the Harper government reduced the GST by 1% on everything, in other words, everything in the basket of goods used to calculate the CPI. We are just taking the GST off a very narrowly focused basket of goods for a temporary period of time, which is a slow point in the retail cycle.

How is it that the other reduction of the GST was not inflationary, but this one is? In both cases, there were government deficits.

• (1855)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Speaker, the member has been a mentor to many of us on the Liberal side and was the caucus chair when I was first elected. He is very kind to offer those comments.

What I will say to him is that I cannot possibly explain Conservative contradictions. I can do many things, but I cannot do that. However, Doug Ford champions this policy. It is not inflationary at all.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hard-working, common-sense Conservative member for Fundy Royal.

It is always an honour to rise to address the House, but unfortunately I do so this evening without optimism and without enthusiasm. Instead, I am forced to rise with disappointment and frustration given the state of the House of Commons.

In the past 24 hours, we have seen the tired, weak and desperate Liberals use closure and programming motions to avoid accountability for their scandals and to attempt to distract Canadians with their temporary, two-month tax trick. What is interesting about Motion No. 43 is that it is a guillotine motion that has itself been guillotined by a guillotine motion. This is a motion that would introduce closure on a motion that is about closure and stopping debate.

Here we are this evening debating Motion No. 43. I want to say that Bill C-78 was written on the back of a cocktail napkin, but it seems more appropriately to say the bill was written on an Etch A Sketch. The Liberals have taken it, shaken it and changed it a few times to try to get the NDP on board, and no one knows exactly what the next shake will do.

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The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has shut down debate on not one but two matters of privilege today so that the Liberals can force through their temporary, short-sighted tax trick legislation. The problem is that the Liberals are afraid of the Canadian people. They know that their parliamentary calendar is slipping away and that the days they have left to bring legislation before the House of Commons are limited. They know that a strong, common-sense Conservative government is on the horizon. When our common-sense Conservative Party takes power after a carbon tax election, we will be able to deliver for the hard-working Canadians we have the honour of representing.

We know the Liberal government has allowed its entire legislative agenda to be paralyzed. Why is the House paralyzed from considering all other pieces of legislation? It is because the Liberals violated an order of the House of Commons from June 10 wherein they were required to table documents with the clerk so they could be turned over to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. This begs the question: What is so damning in those documents that the Liberals would shut down Parliament for two months to prevent the Mounties from getting them?

What does this programming motion today actually do? It shuts down debate on Bill C-78. In the House, there are 338 seats, yet all but five of the hon. members who sit in those seats will be prevented from debating this piece of legislation. Billions of dollars of spending will not be debated in the House because of this programming motion.

Even more egregious is that the Liberal programming motion means the temporary tax trick bill would skip the committee process altogether. This means it would not go to the finance committee so we could hear from experts. It would not go to the finance committee so we could hear from the Canadians who will be affected by the bill. It would not go to the finance committee so we could hear from the small businesses and small business workers who would be affected. There would not be an opportunity to make amendments to this piece of legislation.

No sensible legislative body ought to agree to this process outside of an emergency situation. Let us be clear: Plummeting Liberal poll numbers may seem like an emergency to the Liberal government, but it is not an emergency for the Canadian people, who we have the great honour of representing.

If we read this programming motion, this guillotine motion, it has the wording “deemed requested”, “deemed referred”, “deemed considered”, “deemed reported”, “deemed concurred in” and “deemed read a third time and passed”. It is as lazy as it is reckless. This programming motion is not democratic. In fact, it is an affront to transparency and Canadian democracy.

● (1900)

Why is the Liberal government doing this? Why would the Liberals bring forward this temporary tax trick at this time? It is because it is a distraction from the other scandals that they are involved in. There is the ArriveCAN scandal, in which two guys in a basement were paid millions of dollars for no actual IT work. There is the \$400-million Liberal green slush fund, which is currently under consideration in the House as a matter of privilege. There is the ever-evolving scandal around the disgraced former minister of em-

ployment, the member for Edmonton Centre, who falsely claimed indigenous status in order to gain contracts from the Liberal government; this has also led to its own question of privilege. The misconduct and ethical lapses of the Liberal government are outright disgraceful. Finally, last week, after weeks of opposition members' demanding action, the member for Edmonton Centre stepped down from the Liberal cabinet. However, I can assure members that the good people of Edmonton Centre are watching. I know that, after the next election, they will remove him as the member of Parliament for that riding so that a common-sense Conservative member can represent those fine people.

What happened right after the member quit being in cabinet? The Prime Minister and the finance minister obviously took to Google and typed in “ways to distract Canadians”. They came up with this new temporary tax trick. The Prime Minister may have been googling it at the Taylor Swift concert as he kept changing different ways of doing that. However, Canadians do not just see this as bad vibes, as might be noted, but as a real challenge for going forward and for their livelihoods.

As I know many colleagues on this side of the House do, I talk regularly with local constituents and local small business owners. These small business owners may have one, two, three or four employees. They put in long hours, late into the night, and they are up early in the morning before the sun rises in order to build a business for themselves, for their families and for their communities. While I have been speaking with local businesses over the last few days, they have told me of their real concerns about the impact this temporary tax trick will have on their businesses, on their point of sale and their computer systems. They will have to shoulder the costs of updating those systems for December 14 and then again on February 15, which is Flag Day in Canada, and they are going to have to bear those costs. They are also concerned about the potential for audits down the way for incorrectly applying these new rules, albeit through no fault of their own. What is more, because this falls over the new year, it is two fiscal years for most businesses, and so they would have the double challenge of being audited twice for the challenges of this program.

I have received a number of emails, and I will read one from a small business owner, who wrote that the “Federal government DOES NOTHING but expects us to eat the cost of trying to Make the Federal government look good” and “we then must do more work to turn all of this off in February”. He concluded, “[S]orry if I'm not very supportive of this very badly thought-out policy.” That is from a small business owner who is expressing the concerns that so many of us have heard about how this program was brought about.

Let us talk again about the temporary nature of this program. It goes until February 15. What happens about six weeks after that? First, the escalator tax on wine, beer and spirits goes up automatically. Even worse, on the Liberals' way to quadrupling the carbon tax on April 1, we will once again see the carbon tax rise on the way to costing 61¢ per litre. This is simply unacceptable.

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This policy is poorly thought out. We should not have been at this point in Parliament, with the Liberals so desperate to implement a temporary tax trick to try to distract Canadians from their poor record as a government. The Liberals have made the House unworkable. This is not the policy that we should be going forward with. We should be having a carbon tax election so that Canadians can make the decision that they want to see a strong, common-sense Conservative government after the next election.

● (1905)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, really and truly, Conservatives do not have any shame. We can think about what they actually say they are collectively voting against. They said they believe in a GST holiday. They literally campaigned on that. Not only did their former leader tweet it, but their current leader retweeted it. It was a wonderful, beautiful idea when they campaigned on it, and they made a promise to do what we are actually doing. We are fulfilling one of the commitments they made a couple of years ago.

It does not make sense. They are now voting against it. I do not know how members of the Conservative Party can justify breaking a promise that they made to Canadians and that we are actually putting into place, let alone the fact that they are telling their constituents that, sorry, they have to listen to their leader because their leader has told them they have to vote against it. That is the real reason.

Does the hon. member really believe that Erin O'Toole and his campaign platform were absolutely worthless? Is that what we can anticipate at the next election?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I am very proud to stand up on behalf of the people I serve, the great people of Perth—Wellington. What the people of Perth—Wellington and what people across the country are demanding is a carbon tax election. They want the ability to have a say on where the carbon tax goes. On this side, we will oppose the carbon tax. That is the comparison. On the Liberal side, they are offering a temporary, two-month tax trick on certain items. On this side, we are offering the permanent cancellation of the carbon tax for all Canadians across the board.

We are also saying that we should take the GST off new home construction under \$1 million so that we can see the spurring of up to 30,000 new homes being built each and every year. The people I talk to who are having trouble and challenges finding a place to live that is in their price range will benefit from that, and it will spur growth in our communities, be helpful for the economy and ensure that the cost of living goes down for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, a family of four that can afford to spend \$100 on a restaurant meal in Quebec ends up paying \$115. The GST is 5%, and the QST is about 10%. Then there is the \$15 tip. If the government removes the GST on restaurant meals, this family will save \$5. Will that really make a difference? Will that really make it possible for an average family with financial difficulties to go to a restaurant, or is the government just blowing smoke?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou for her question. Much like in the ridings of many of my colleagues, people and families in my riding are turning to food banks. These folks are not going out to restaurants. They cannot afford it. This bill is not going to help families using food banks or those who cannot afford to spend any money on their families. This Prime Minister and this Liberal government have created an economy where everything is more expensive for Canadians. This bill will not help most Canadians.

[*English*]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, during the last Harper government, which was a majority government, of course, Stephen Harper time allocated over 100 government bills. Considering that, I would imagine that it is hard for Canadians to believe that the current Conservative Party is so upset about the fact that there is a time allocation here.

Considering that record, would the member agree that time allocation on over 100 bills is deeply undemocratic?

● (1910)

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, what is deeply undemocratic is a Liberal government that campaigned on not using it and then hypocritically uses it so often, allowing only hours of debate. In this case, we were allowed to debate for an hour and 15 minutes on a major tax policy measure; it will have almost no debate in the House, no debate in committee and no room for amendments.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to join in this debate tonight. A desperate government makes a transparent attempt to distract Canadians, Canadians who have been suffering. I listen to constituents in my riding of Fundy Royal, where individuals and families are struggling to make ends meet. They are struggling to put food on the table, to pay their mortgages and to pay their heating bills. Why is that? It has something to do with a government that has doubled the cost of a mortgage, doubled the cost of rent and increased the cost of groceries. Every April 1, by increasing the carbon tax, the government is also piling on new costs for people to drive their kids to a hockey game or to get themselves to work.

The government offers up what amounts to a tax trick after piling all these costs on Canadians, after making it so difficult for hard-working Canadians. I include small businesses in this, which I am going to speak about shortly. If it was not so serious, if people were not hurting so much, it would be laughable.

Who would think of an idea to lift the GST off a Christmas tree but only if someone buys the Christmas tree December 15. If they buy it before then, they do not get the break. This is just a small example of the kind of complication this is going to add and the misery this is going to pile on small businesses at what is sometimes their most challenging time of year.

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Today I had the opportunity to speak to an individual at a small business in my riding of Fundy Royal. It is in a small community. Small businesses in my riding are the backbone of our community. They give back so much. They are the ones coaching and providing support to charities in the region. They are the ones helping out those who need a hand and providing employment in small communities. This individual, with desperation in her voice, was telling me that, after everything they had gone through with the pandemic, after barely hanging on, she cannot implement this change the government has brought in. At her busiest time of year, she does not have the resources to change all her systems over to accommodate what the government has just dumped in her lap.

Any one of us would struggle to decipher what the government is doing. The CRA, which is ever so helpful, has come out with some guidelines, and we need to take a look at them. Exempt now for two months from the GST are toys that “[i]mitate another item, whether real or imaginary” or “[i]nvolve building, creating or assembling structures, objects or models by using pieces, parts, materials or modelling compound”. Okay, that makes some sense.

However, not exempt are “[t]oys and model sets that are marketed for adults (for example, adult Lego or train sets)”. How is the small business owner in my riding supposed to decipher those things? The CRA directive on what qualifies as a toy includes this: “Card games, including playing cards and Pokémon cards”. A Pokémon card is eligible for this two-month reprieve. However, if someone buys their kids hockey cards, that is not eligible for the exemption.

Physical video games will be tax-free. When I was growing up, we finally got the opportunity to get an Atari because someone else had bought a Nintendo. It played physical games. When someone else got a Super Nintendo and I got a Nintendo, again, this played physical games. However, young people are now downloading video games. They are not buying physical games. According to the CRA, thanks to what the government has done, physical video games qualify, but online-only and downloadable video games are not included. I can assure everyone that the people on that side of the House, the Liberal government members, do not understand the confusion they have just wrought; Canadians are certainly not going to understand it. The person who will be responsible for all this will be the small business owner.

• (1915)

The individual I spoke to today told me how horrified she is that, in trying to interpret this mess, she will be on the hook and that CRA and the government will be coming after her if she gets it wrong and charges GST where she was not supposed to or exempts it when she was not supposed to.

Let us talk about children's clothing and footwear. “Sports clothing, dancewear, such as jerseys, ski jackets, leotards and dual-purpose swimwear that can reasonably be worn outside of sports or dance activities” are exempt. However, “Specialized clothing and footwear designed exclusively for sports or [those same] recreational activities” are not exempt. “Adult clothing and footwear...if it's purchased for a child”, so if someone buys clothing for a child, but it happens to be adult size, again, are not exempt.

It goes on when we are talking about physical books. They say on the other side that physical books are tax-free. Okay, that is simple enough to me, but now look at how the CRA helpfully explains that. “Guidebooks and atlases that do not mostly contain street or road maps” are exempt so if they do contain mostly street or road maps, they are not exempt. “Magazines and periodicals (that have no more than 5% of their printed space devoted to advertising)” are exempt, so for the entrepreneur in my riding who owns her business, who has to do all the accounting, if she sells a magazine that has 6% advertising, then it is not exempt, but if it is 5% advertising it is exempt. How is she, at the busiest time of year, supposed to decipher this mess?

The Liberals tell us that books are tax-free; however, “Colouring books, scrapbooks, sticker books, sketchbooks”; “Books designed primarily for writing on, such as address books, diaries, journals, and notebooks”; “Certain directories and collections of street or road maps”; e-books and audio books are not GST-free.

That is just a short example that just scratches the surface. I guarantee no one in here understands what I just said, and the individuals in my riding who are trying to run a small business should not be expected to have to deal with this.

At a time when people are suffering, on this side of the House we are offering actual help; we are offering to axe the carbon tax that has increased the cost of everything for my constituents who are seniors, have young families, are entrepreneurs or are farmers. The carbon tax has increased the cost of heating their home, driving to work and taking their kids to hockey. The government has increased the cost of food because it is taxing farmers, truckers and everyone along the supply chain who puts food on a family's table. In Canada, our food cost increase has outpaced the U.S. by 36%. What is the difference between us and the U.S. right now? We have a carbon tax and they do not. Canadian families suffer from the misguided policies of the government.

According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, “Only 4% of small business owners believe they will have stronger sales as a result” of these temporary measures. However, they go on to say that “small firms”, perhaps like the constituent I was talking to today, will face approximately “\$1,000 in additional costs to re-program their point-of-sale system to remove and then reinstate” applicable taxes. I think in some cases that \$1,000 may be underestimated.

A constituent of mine, who is a business owner, wrote to me today, “The GST holiday is crazy. To take the GST off takeout, restaurant, alcohol and, considering the fresh, healthy groceries don’t have the tax...is only taking taxes off less healthy junk food options.”

My constituents get it, small business gets it and we on this side of the House get it. We are going to provide real tax relief for Canadians by axing the tax and we are going to stand up against the Liberal government’s gimmicks.

• (1920)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Erin O’Toole got it, so did the 337 other Conservative candidates who ran in the last federal election, including that member. Their election platform said they would do the same thing. Their former leader tweeted that he was going to provide this GST break for the holiday season. The leader of the Conservative Party retweeted the idea.

Now, the members seem to express concerns about or give excuses for how they have managed to get themselves into that pretzel twist and turn and flip-flop to justify their vote. The bottom line is they say they want to give a tax break to Canadians, and when it comes right down to a vote, they do the same thing they did when it came to giving a break and cutting the taxes for the middle class: they vote against it.

Does the member not see the hypocrisy there?

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, this is the House of Commons. As members of Parliament, we represent our constituents, so I am going to allow one of my constituents to answer that question. They wrote, “Ridiculous. No break on groceries, fuels or utilities. I was just reading the PM’s plan to take a tax break, and I am not impressed. First off, we all know the government will want to recover this lost revenue later, and that will hit our wallets again. The GST holiday is crazy.”

I could not agree more. My constituents understand, as I just illustrated, that this is a trick that is incredibly complex for our small businesses. We have been talking about this for a long time. Only Conservatives are committed to real tax relief for hard-working Canadian families.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I saw that my colleague had the bill in front of him and was reading out the various products covered by the bill. The government keeps saying that these are essential products, truly essential. They keep repeating the word “essential”. I would like to hear my colleague’s thoughts on the list he read.

When champagne is included in the list of tax-free products, are we really talking about essential needs?

[English]

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, that is what is so perplexing about this. The essentials Canadians are really struggling to pay for right now, based on what I hear from my constituents, are fuel for their vehicle to get themselves to work and get their kids to school,

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food to put on their table, heating their home and paying their mortgage or rent. Canadians are suffering as they try to pay for these essentials. Those are the exact expenses we on this side of the House are addressing with our commitment to axe the carbon tax that has increased the cost of all those things.

What I listed off, from what this government is doing, is a confusing list where they purport to cut maybe the cost of a leotard, but then not the cost of skates or ski boots. They purport to cut the cost of a magazine, but only if it has less than 5% advertising. They have created a monster. They know it. It was rushed out, and Canadians deserve so much better.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned in his speech that it would be fantastic if we had no GST on utilities. Well, he had the chance. The member and every Conservative had the chance to remove GST from all home heating. New Democrats fought for that in the last term. The two major parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, joined up and voted against GST removal from utilities. How disingenuous that the member says now, “What if we had an opportunity to get GST off home heating?” Shame on him that he would vote against that measure and then come to this place and try to say the opposite.

Does he have anything to say to explain why he voted against it?

• (1925)

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, where do I begin? This is a government that has increased the cost on Canadians exceptionally, beyond anything we have ever seen before, doubling the cost of a mortgage, doubling the cost of rent and increasing the cost of home heat. It is all due to its carbon tax, its inflationary measures. How is it possible the Liberal government has been able to do that? It is with the support of that member and the NDP when they voted 24 times to increase the carbon tax. We will take no lessons on supporting Canadians from that bunch.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is nice to be here late into the evening talking about an important measure to support affordability for Canadians.

Before I start, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Beauport—Limouilou.

I would like to just say that I think this is a good measure to support affordability at the right time. Measures like this are all about timing, and if we go back a couple of years, just three years in fact, to when Erin O’Toole was the prime minister, he suggested that we do a GST holiday back in 2021. That was at a time when our inflation was over 4%, and it was going up.

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Indeed, over the course of the ensuing months, it went up to 8%, so that idea probably would have had a negative impact on rising inflation rates at the time—

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. I am wondering if the member can correct the record, because he just referred to somebody as the prime minister who had not been prime minister.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the member. It has been a long day in the House of Commons. Yes, I know Erin O'Toole was never the prime minister, but he was the leader of the Conservative Party. When Erin O'Toole was the leader of the Conservative Party back in the fall of 2021, when inflation was over 4%, he recommended a GST holiday in Canada to provide some tax relief to Canadians. That was bad timing. It was terrible timing, in fact, because inflation was going like this. It was 4.1% in the summer of 2022 and it went up to 8%. When inflation is on the rise, it is not a good time to do these types of measures. However, right now, inflation is on its way down.

This is good news for Canadians. We need to find ways to stimulate our economy and provide relief and affordability measures. That is why, over the last couple of years, through our economic measures and the hard work of Canadians, our policies have all reversed and reduced inflation in Canada faster than other countries have achieved that.

I had a meeting recently with somebody from Australia, and they were talking about how they have not seen an interest rate cut, and inflation is still quite high. Inflation is persistent in some places around the world, but our economy is recovering from the COVID economic downturn here in Canada. I want to credit Canadians with that. I want to acknowledge that a lot of our economic policies have created the terrain for that change, but this is really good. The inflation situation has abated a bit and that means it is a good time for this. This is a timely measure, supporting our economic recovery with a responsible affordability measure for everyone.

Our economy is actually recovering better than anticipated. Canada is in really good shape economically and fiscally. The Conservatives want to suggest everything is broken in Canada, but I will not tolerate that. Canada is the best country in the world to live in. It is a great country. We are strong. We are economically durable through these challenges. We endured the economic downturn of 2009 quite effectively, and we did this one too, and that is because of the hard work of Canadians, because we have a good regulated banking system and because we are used to challenges in Canada. When the snow falls, we get outside with our shovels and we shovel our neighbours' driveways. We do not sit around and complain and say everything is broken, because it is not.

All that work, the perseverance of Canadians, has paid off and we can afford nice things. We can afford to do nice things for Canadians right now because of the expediency with which our economic recovery has taken place. We have been through a lot over the last couple of years. I know the Conservatives want to heckle me and they want to suggest Canada is not in great shape, but I will not tolerate that. Canada is the best country in the world and Canada is in great shape because of the hard work of Canadians, not because of complainers, not because of people sitting in the back rows complaining, providing no solutions to anybody's problems but just

barking, yelling and screaming about how everything is broken, because it is not. Canada is not broken. As well, we have the solutions.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, that member should get on the list to speak tonight. He has probably already done three speeches about the previous thing on the agenda. If he wants to speak, he can ask me a question. I hope he would learn to wait for his time. If he wants to speak, he has to get a tie. He is going to sit in the back row and complain.

There are things we can do to help Canadians. The Conservatives have been talking about lowering taxes since the member for Carleton has been the leader. He has said it every single day. We have introduced a measure to lower taxes for Canadians and they are all going to vote against it. The irony and the hypocrisy are not lost on me, but it is also ironic that the Conservatives like to consider themselves the economic stewards, the stewards of the economic purse. That is absolute horse crap. It is not true. That is clear because at a time when inflation was going up, they wanted to do a GST cut, and now that inflation has abated and is on its way down, they do not. That is just basic Economics 101.

The Conservatives have demonstrated time and time again that they do not know how to manage an economy. It was clear when Harper was the prime minister. It was clear when the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle was their failed leader. They always put forward economic policies that will not help Canadians, but this will. A two-month break on GST and HST between the Christmas holidays and Valentine's Day is going to help Canadians. We are going to give them a little bit of a break because they deserve it, because they have worked really hard.

A lot of Canadians right now do not feel like their hard work is paying off. It is a really challenging thing to go into work every day, similar to going to the gym, and not see that work paying off. We want to see the hard work that Canadians are putting forward pay off. We want to make sure they have a great holiday. If that means they want to go out to dinner with their family and their friends, 13% off of that bill is going to help. Restaurants Canada has come out and said this is great and we will see more people in restaurants. They are going to see a bit of a bump. That is something our economy could use right now.

As the holiday season approaches, a time when people spend a little more on quality time, with some time off from school or work, whether they are sharing meals with loved ones, buying gifts for the kids or just ordering some takeout and chilling out, they deserve a break and our government is there for them.

• (1930)

[Translation]

Canadians deserve this quality time, after the tough years they have been through. Our goal with this bill is to ensure that as many people as possible can benefit from it. As the holiday season draws near, people need a helping hand. We want to give them that help. In fact, we are giving them two helping hands.

First, there is the tax holiday for all Canadians. In concrete terms, what we are proposing is a nationwide exemption from the GST and HST on certain products. It would start on December 14 and last two months. That would mean not paying tax on the purchase of clothing, shoes, children's toys, diapers, prepared foods and snacks. There would also be no tax on restaurant meals, beer, wine and Christmas trees.

The purpose of this tax break is to make the holiday season more affordable, especially for families who find this time of year difficult because of the extra expenses that come with it. The GST and HST holiday will make the holiday season more enjoyable for these families. That is the first helping hand, which is included in this bill.

The second helping hand we are proposing is a \$250 rebate for millions of Canadians. We will have time to debate that rebate in due course. The tax holiday is what is more pressing right now.

We know that the holiday season is the most expensive time of year for Canadians and that the new year does not always get off to a good start once people have paid off all the holiday spending.

[English]

I would also like to point out that we, as a country, can afford to offer this help to Canadians. Canada's net debt-to-GDP ratio is well below that of our G7 peers. The Conservatives suggest Canada has a balance sheet they would like to change. We all want to make sure that we are paying down our debt, that our debt-to-GDP ratio is going down and that our deficit is reduced, but the Conservatives did not do that when they were in power. Mr. Harper saw inflationary deficits and added to our debt without experiencing a global pandemic.

Liberals are good stewards of the Canadian economy, and our recovery is evidence of that. We are one of only two G7 nations with a AAA rating by at least two of the three major global credit rating agencies. That is good news for Canadians. This has been achieved through a responsible economic plan that has put Canada in a really strong fiscal position.

It is also time to put that to work for Canadians. Removing the GST from these qualifying goods for two months will provide an estimated \$1.6 billion in federal tax relief. That means \$1.6 billion is going to stay in the pockets of the people who earned that money, Canadians, hard-working Canadian families. When they earn that money, it is their money. They will not be spending that money on taxes on goods, and we should debate in the House whether these are things that should ever be taxed, like prepared food in grocery stores or diapers, whether for babies or for adults. That is a debatable topic. We should talk about whether or not those are essential

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items and perhaps this bill will provide us the opportunity to talk about some of those things.

Budget 2024 removed the GST on psychotherapy and mental health counselling. That was a good move. We should have done that, and we did it. It is a breath of fresh air to talk about a bill like this in the House of Commons. It is a good opportunity to discuss those and more issues.

• (1935)

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member who just spoke is definitely feeling the Liberal vibe. He is drinking the Liberal Kool-Aid. He talked about how great things are.

I would ask the member, what about the over two million people a month who are going to a food bank? What about the record number of people who are living in homeless encampments? What about the record increases in chronic homelessness across the country? What about the seniors who have to go back to work because they cannot afford food and medicine? What about acknowledging all of the people who are facing a real, serious challenge in paying for even basic necessities in Canada? Why does the member not acknowledge them?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Mr. Speaker, we are acknowledging that, not by using them as props, and standing in front of people who are facing challenges in Canada and suggesting some group of people is not doing anything, but by actually doing something.

The Conservatives cannot claim to have helped Canadians once in the last nine years. Other parties have put forward private members' bills, ideas, amendments and changes to various pieces of legislation. Other parties have done that work. Even small ones, like the Green Party, have managed to help Canadians. The Conservatives have literally done nothing to help Canadians at all. Unfortunately, that is a stain on their record, because all of us have an opportunity and an obligation to help Canadians.

I do not use people who are struggling, whether through homelessness, addiction or the affordability challenges, as a prop. I show up at events, like yesterday when Food Banks Canada came to the House of Commons. I met with them and we discussed affordability challenges. We discussed solutions, not slogans.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether my colleague has heard about the survey by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business that was released early this afternoon. It says that most Canadian businesses do not support the GST holiday and that only 4% of them believe that it will increase their sales.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. Restaurants Canada supports this measure. In my opinion, and according to Restaurants Canada, this measure encourages people to go out to eat and gives Canadians an opportunity to spend their hard-earned money.

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I would say that measures like this will help every single Canadian. That is why it is unique. It is an opportunity for us all to get behind something for the holidays before we go on break, a measure that is going to support every single Canadian who is going to spend a little money this holiday season.

- (1940)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we know, the NDP had called for the GST to be removed from all essential and basic goods. The Liberals came up with a list that may at times seem far-fetched or over-the-top. What we are seeing, however, is that the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives are joining forces to keep the GST on in-store prepared foods like sandwiches or roast chicken, as well as on diapers, child car seats, and children's clothing and footwear.

Why do the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives want to keep the GST on these products?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for his great question. It is an important question because, as I said earlier, it allows us to examine which products should or should not be taxed.

[English]

It is a good opportunity to discuss some of the items out there in the market that have tax on them. They are not the same across jurisdictions. We have all been looking into this recently and we are all surprised to note that some provinces tax certain products differently, but we could harmonize that. We could look into which essential items are taxed so that, over the coming months and year, we look at which items we could provide permanent tax relief on. It is a good question.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, as the parliamentary secretary, I believe, knows, Greens are intending to support this measure. However, we do have some concerns, one of them being that it is not focused only on essentials. It is a pretty broad-based measure that includes video game consoles, for example, like a PS5.

The hon. member mentioned food banks specifically. He knows food banks have been calling for the government to fix the Canada disability benefit. A far more targeted measure would be one that is focused on those living disproportionately in poverty, like folks with disabilities. Can he speak to what would be needed after tonight to continue to advocate for folks with disabilities to be lifted out of poverty?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, I agree that this is a broad spectrum. It is meant to help Canadians buy presents. I remember, when I was a kid, there was a Nintendo under the tree one year. It really surprised my brother and me because we came from a modest household. If this will help bring joy to young kids, then I support it.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Milton for sharing his time with me.

Quebeckers and Canadians have been asking for tax relief for many years, and we recognize that. However, people want permanent relief, not this temporary relief for just two months. If it is not permanent, it should at least be long-term. This measure offers only a two-month break.

The measure proposed by the government and supported by the NDP does not meet public expectations in many respects. To illustrate that, I want to go over the bill briefly, even though all my colleagues have already done so and pointed out certain inconsistencies. I will explain why this measure is aimed at the wrong people. This measure will also be very costly for business owners. In the end, it may be much less beneficial than some people think, not only for the poor, but also for the economy.

The bill provides for a GST exemption or holiday. In Quebec, by the way, the GST amounts to 5%. In other words, there would be a \$5 discount on every \$100 in taxable purchases. At the grocery store, clients who limit their purchases to staples like bread, milk, eggs, vegetables, fruit, flour, sugar and meat would not have picked up any taxable items. That means they would have saved no money on any of their purchases. As the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie pointed out earlier, when someone buys ready-made sandwiches or roast chicken instead of preparing their food at home, they will save a few pennies, because these items are taxable. However, unless they buy \$200 worth of roast chicken or \$200 worth of sandwiches, they will save only pennies. Since people rarely buy \$200 worth of sandwiches, this person will save just a few cents on their groceries.

The bill includes alcohol, candy and video game cartridges. Physical video games are included, but, I assume, not video games bought online. We have to read between the lines. There is no mention of sports equipment, aside from balls. Books are covered, which is good. However, there are a number of restrictions when it comes to books. There cannot be too many maps or too much advertising. There cannot be this or that. It will be a nightmare for retailers. Parents will find it hard to know which books they can buy without paying the GST.

Then there is the list of toys. In fact, it is more like a description of eligible toys. It is like the government asked all of its employees to go to a department store that sells toys and describe each and every one of them without actually naming them. Those are the descriptions. Retailers and parents will probably be wondering whether a toy is taxed or not. They will wonder if they will save \$1 on a \$50 toy. Actually, let me recalculate: They will save \$2.50 on a \$50 toy.

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We are also talking about clothing for children under the age of 14. That is something that I mentioned in one of my questions. I am five foot four, which is fairly normal. My husband is five foot nine, even though he claims to be five foot ten. That is fairly normal too. We are very normal, or so we hope. However, our youngest son is 14 years old and wears a size 9 shoe. He wears pants with a 32-inch waist and 32-inch inseam, so he does not fit into the category of children under 14, according to the definition. I will not even talk about the oldest of my three sons. When he was 14, he was nearly six feet tall and wore a size 14 shoe. For him, it is very clear. If he were 14 right now, he would definitely not meet that definition. There may be a bit of an issue with the definitions.

● (1945)

As I was saying earlier, we need to think about the fact that we are talking about essential products. During the holiday season, I can understand wanting to buy a bag of chips, especially since they are often two for \$9.50. I would not buy them a few years ago because they were too expensive. A few years ago, I would not buy them because they were too expensive, at two for \$5. Now they are two for \$9.50. It is nice to be able to afford a little treat when you cannot usually afford it. It is nice when a bag of chips or a bag of candy, whatever it is, becomes the treat of the month. That is great. However, 5% off \$9.50 is about 25¢ off the big treat of the month.

Furthermore, when people are struggling financially, they do not think about dining out. As I explained earlier, instead of spending \$100 at a restaurant, plus \$5 GST, plus \$10 Quebec sales tax, plus \$15 tip, which is a minimum, a family of four in financial difficulty will go to the grocery store with that \$130. They will not go to a restaurant. As long as they only get \$5 off \$130, they will head to the grocery store and have a nice meal.

I invite folks to look at their grocery receipt to see how much tax they pay. If they have bought household goods and, yes, diapers, it will be a few dollars. Actually, I do not understand why diapers and feminine hygiene products are taxed. Those things should never be taxed. In Quebec, total sales tax is 15%. Divide that by three to see what the GST savings will be. It is not very much. People will save a few cents on groceries a week.

Getting back to the bill, it would allow people to save the GST on catering. To be honest, ordinary people do not hire caterers, especially not if they are struggling financially. For the most part, this measure will help people with money. It will help people who already have money save even more money. They will save \$50 in GST on a \$1,000 catering bill. That means someone who can afford something that costs \$1,000 will be able to save much more than someone who saves 25¢ on their grocery bill or a bag of candy, yet the person saving 25¢ is the one who needs it most. This measure is not targeting the right people.

There has been a lot of talk about business owners. Earlier, there was one member who mocked people, saying that 30 years ago, prices used to change every week. Yes, prices used to change every week 30 years ago because all we had to do was turn the dial on a little machine and re-label the products. Then computers came along, but they were often the 1980-88 models with the spinach-green screens. That was not the same level of programming at all. I used to work at grocery stores back then. I know how much time it

could take. Then there are the extra costs. There is the cost of the time it will take to check the inventory, to determine what is taxable and what is not. Reprogramming will also cost thousands of dollars. In Quebec, there is the cost of administering the collection of the GST. This is going to be complicated, and there is nothing in the bill to support Quebec and the provinces, which will have to deal with the chaos that will be unleashed for two months.

To close, when I look at this, I see some things that are good, like books and diapers. I agree, but it should target the people in greatest need, the poorest, and this bill does not do that. It really seems like a purely vote-seeking strategy thought out by people who tried to predict who is going to vote. Will it be those with the most money or those with less? Will it be people who live day-by-day, or those who can see beyond the end of their noses?

● (1950)

I cannot vote for this bill because it does not target the right people, not to mention that it is only effective for two months. If this measure were permanent, then maybe, but that is not the case. People are not stupid. They will catch on.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the concern I have is that, as we enter the holiday season, the constituents of members of all political parties in the House are concerned about affordability. I truly believe that by passing this legislation, we are sending a positive message to the constituents we all represent during the holiday season. I do not see, even given the concerns the member has raised, why we would not, at the very least, support our constituents in this way. I personally think it is a very strong, powerful, positive message. It shows that we all care, that we can sympathize and that we want to give our constituents that little extra.

Why would the member not support that idea in principle?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, I just spent the last 10 minutes giving a rather exhaustive list of reasons why I could not support this bill. There is, for example, the fact that the measure is not permanent or even long term, at the very least. Another reason is that it will enable the least fortunate to save roughly 25¢ to 50¢ per week, while the wealthy, who can afford to pay for catered meals, will be able to save \$50. Let us look at children's clothing. Things are simple enough for parents who have a young child, but if they have a teenager or someone under the age of 14 who does not fit into children's clothes, that slips through the cracks.

This bill ends up being too discriminatory and is not targeting the right people. That is why I will be voting against it. That is why I am getting dozens of emails from my constituents telling me that they are not stupid and that saving 10¢ or 25¢ is not going to make them vote Liberal.

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• (1955)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague gave a nuanced, thoughtful speech that raised some good points.

We in the NDP said that we wanted a permanent tax break on essential items, including heating and cellphone packages. Naturally, the Liberals presented a temporary half measure accompanied by a very haphazard list.

However, I have to disagree with my colleague when she says that this will help the rich more than the poor. I think that is a fundamental error, because the GST is a regressive tax, meaning that the proportional impact hurts the middle class and the poor more than the rich. When someone earns \$200,000, a 5% tax on consumer products does not really affect them. If they earn \$20,000, a 5% tax represents a considerable proportion of their available income.

Therefore, the measure helps the poor more than the rich because the GST is a regressive tax.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, I agree in principle with what my colleague just said. I know that a 5% tax does not make as much difference to people making \$200,000 than to those making \$20,000. That is what I made for years, so I understand perfectly well. However, saving \$1 per week over two months amounts to \$8. That buys four extra litres of milk for two months. It is not enough.

I agree with my colleague. If they are going to do this, it should be on very targeted products and on a permanent basis. This, however, is a sop that, in the end, will not help those who really need it.

There are questions about removing the 5% for two months. Will that also be deducted from the GST rebate at the end of the year?

The government will definitely want to get its money back.

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I read the bill, there is a whole host of problems, some of which have been articulated this evening. However, specifically, it treats different regions of the country, different provinces, very unfairly. I would suggest, it is in violation of the agreements that the federal government has signed with provinces in regard to HST and other shared taxation.

I am wondering if my colleague from the Bloc could expand on that.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague. That does not happen very often, but on this I agree. Once again, it shows the government's lack of planning, lack of vision and lack of consistency.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know that the vote coming up on the legislation is of significance to all members. As we are using the hybrid system, I would like to get some clarity from you with regard to the voting.

For example, if individuals are appearing virtually, are they in fact obligated to have their jacket and tie on if they are male? I think it would be valuable to know.

The Deputy Speaker: As always, we will allow members to vote even if they do not have their tie on. We just want a quick yay or nay, and that is it.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by addressing some of the people in my riding.

I want to acknowledge the people who are still fighting for employment insurance reform, because they are already in the spring gap. They will not make it to Christmas. Never mind Christmas trees and all that; they will not even be able to put food on the table, not until April. They know all about vulnerability. Earlier, members were talking about sloppy, temporary half measures and so on, but these people have been waiting for more than 20 years, probably since the Axworthy reform, for a way to make it to the end of the year. That is why I want to acknowledge them and thank them for keeping up the fight, because this is another battle the entire Bloc Québécois is fighting.

I also want to acknowledge the people in my riding who live in remote communities. The government is talking about a 5% tax holiday for two months. However, there are people in my northern riding who live in isolated areas where there are no roads. There are sometimes boats and planes in the winter. Otherwise, people have to use snowmobiles to get around. These people are already struggling to afford groceries and the cost of living. They do not just need a 5% tax break so that they can buy a lavish amount of food or a case of champagne. I want to recognize the Canada Post employees who are on strike, but also the residents of the Lower North Shore, who are having a hard time right now because Canada Post is the only carrier in their area and one of the things it delivers is food.

That said, these are really tough times for everyone. It is not necessary to broaden our perspective to know that this bill is a bad piece of legislation. My colleague from Beauport—Limoilou explained that earlier, perhaps more calmly than I am now. I know she is very passionate and outspoken. She said that the bill is very flawed and that we cannot afford to support it.

First of all, people are going on and on about the idea of essentials. I have been hearing about all kinds of lists throughout the day. For example, a puzzle and a pair of dice are now essentials. This bill seeks to remove the 5% tax on dice, which will apparently bring great relief to part of the population for two months.

I know that is a ridiculous example. Not everyone is in a position to read bills, but I am, and I really have to wonder why the list contains toys and other items that will save people maybe a few pennies off the purchase price.

Of course, members have talked about food. My colleague talked a lot about that. This measure will not really help anyone. It will cover candy, catering services, alcohol, prepared foods, which are more expensive because they are prepared, and restaurant meals. I heard the party opposite say over and over again that, now, people will be able to go out to restaurants. For a family, dinner at a restaurant costs \$100, \$150 or sometimes even \$200. For a family of four, five or six, going to a restaurant does not just cost \$20. I have a family of six, and it is a lot more expensive than that. This measure does not cut it. This is not the kind of help that people need.

People here in Ottawa are living in a bubble. Perhaps the government should get out into the real world sometimes, rather than hastily cobbling a bill together without really thinking about how that bill will actually affect people. Then it might understand that this bill is not a real solution for ordinary folks.

My colleague opposite talked about heating, and I agree with him. Perhaps heating is an essential when compared to some of the items listed in the bill.

The Bloc Québécois has a problem with a second aspect of the bill. We tried as hard as we could to find a way to improve it, but we cannot amend the bill. We are in the House and things are moving very quickly. I saw it. Members were practically trying to keep me from speaking by saying that there was not really time for one last speech. Meanwhile, we had time for quite a few bells today. That is exactly why we need to take the time.

- (2000)

It is a technical issue. We are here as legislators to reflect and propose new ideas. We are not here simply to oppose in a foolish and stubborn way, but to oppose in order to improve things. Even if we are not voting in favour of the bill, the government still needs to listen the legislators. The Bloc Québécois proposed an amendment. I know that there are other parties that agree with this amendment proposed by my colleague from Shefford, who is calling for the bill to be studied in committee and for the Minister of Finance to come testify.

Legislation cannot simply be introduced like that. All of this was clearly improvised. Earlier, one of my colleagues from the Conservative Party said that December 14 was too late to buy a Christmas tree, even if it will supposedly be cheaper then. When a measure arrives this late, it is obvious that it was thrown together quickly in the hope that it will not be so bad and no one will notice the glaring flaws. That is truly what is happening. The Bloc Québécois would have liked to simply discuss it, but that is not going to happen. I can say that I had a taste of that medicine earlier.

I would also like to talk about other aspects, like business owners, for instance. This subject has come up a number of times, here and there. It is true that, as a society, Quebecers are strong supporters of small businesses. My constituents on the north shore are no exception, and I cannot help but think about these businesses.

The government is proposing a measure, but it is not thinking about how things work in the real world. In a bar, it is not that easy to know what percentage of alcohol is going into a cocktail. Will it be exempt from the GST or not? Should bartenders start measuring everything proportionally to make sure they are really following the

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rules? Again, it may sound far-fetched and absurd, but we need to think of every possibility when drafting bills in order to see where the blind spots are.

It sounds like a great idea. Then again, I do not know if alcohol counts as an essential, although I do want to encourage our business owners. I thought of a joke there, but I am not going to share it. I was going to say that maybe alcohol is an essential for those who have to think about this bill. There, I said it. Still, we have to think about the blind spots and try to identify what is not working in the bills to help businesses. Walmart and Costco are not the only ones that will be selling discounted products. Sometimes I get the impression that the government is only thinking about them.

Where I live, we have a Walmart, but no Costco. We have some very small businesses too. These small businesses are going to have to change their programming, and that does not happen with a snap of the fingers. Changing programming takes technicians. Where are people supposed to find technicians when there is already a shortage of technicians? On top of that, this all needs to be done right across the country. That requires technicians, and they do not work for free. Then they have to come back again mid-February to do exactly the same thing. Small businesses have fewer staff and will be forced to take on an extra burden at their busiest time of the year. People may be getting a 5% tax break to go to a restaurant, which amounts to a \$5 discount, but businesses are having to spend \$3,000 out of pocket to implement this measure.

I would like to remind the government that businesses are owned by people. These are people who put their heart and soul into their business all the time, who work seven days a week, who are trying to improve their companies, who also have to hire people and who also have families. They are also going to be affected.

In light of all that, I am wondering whether this is really going to be worth it. The government has not considered all these consequences. They did not think it all through, so they assumed it would be easy. My colleague gave a detailed list of all the difficulties that businesses could face. They will have to identify which products are be tax-free. It could be tough.

- (2005)

I heard a government member say earlier that adult diapers would be exempt from the GST. I would have liked to ask him about that again. I checked the bill. I could not find it in there. I do not know where he saw that.

If it is hard for a government member to keep straight the contents of the bill he is defending, and if the government does not want us to study it in committee because it wants to move really quickly, why should we pass something like that? The member does not even know what is in his own bill. I do not have the bill in front of me. Let us say I have it here.

Government Orders

How are the businesses back home going to sort this out? How are the parents or the people buying the products going to sort this out? Are they going to walk around with a copy of the bill in their hands and look at the shelves and ponder whether the item is truly a soft toy with accessories? That is how it is worded in the bill. Are they going to check whether an item matches what is written in the bill? Is a parent really going to do that? In the bill, books are GST-exempt, but cut-out books are not. The parent will have to check the books to see if there are any cut-outs or stickers.

It will get complicated. I think it is too daunting. Consumers might not want to bother doing all that for the sake of 30¢. Maybe people will decide to take the item anyway because it is what they want, so who cares if it is not GST-exempt. I do not know if this measure is going to be as effective as the government thinks.

Members have been talking a lot about families. That makes sense. As my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou said, it is the holiday season. Of course, not everyone celebrates Christmas, but it is the holiday season. Yes, there will be celebrations and family gatherings, so we want to help people. At the same time, the date is arbitrary. The list of goods that will be exempt from the GST and the timing are both very arbitrary.

I am the mother of three children, two of whom are over the age of 14. Parents are well aware that there are certain times of year that are more difficult, and I want to stress the word “times”. Ideally, there should be a GST exemption on children's clothing year-round. That is a huge burden on families. Let us not forget that, every year, in August and September, we hear about how expensive back-to-school time is. Lunch boxes, school bags, school supplies, clothing: all of those things are expensive. Then, of course, parents have to pay to register their children in this or that activity. In short, yes, back to school is a very expensive time of year, and Christmas is too, so we need to ask ourselves another question. Is this measure needed only at Christmastime?

I saw costumes included on the list of products in the bill. Maybe people need costumes. In any case, there is a big difference between costumes and clothing. What do people really need? What is the government really trying to give people?

Once again, it all boils down to the same thing. I apologize for repeating myself, but there is no thinking behind this. I have not talked about it yet, and I myself do not understand why. It is probably because the idea behind the bill was not properly thought out.

It was not about making a perfect bill. The goal was probably just to grab some media attention by telling people that the government was going to hand out a goody, a big treat. People were led to believe that it was a treat. Anyone with any sense at all quickly realized that this makes no sense. It is really just electioneering, but they are trying to pass it off as a treat. I almost said they are giving people a trick instead of a treat. It is too easy to make puns with this bill.

I am about to wrap up. Maybe we need to think about other things. This measure tells people to spend money on things that are not necessarily useful. I am not saying people do not want to go to a buffet every now and then for a festive occasion, or that they do not feel like cooking some nights because they are exhausted.

Sometimes I pick up a rotisserie chicken at the grocery store, and that is on the list of GST-exempt products. It happens to us, too.

That said, is spending really saving? They say they want to help people. Are people really saving when they are spending money or when the government is trying to make them spend more? As I said before, these are not essential things. The Liberal-NDP government is so proud of itself, but this is not actually saving.

Besides saving money, the other thing we are interested in this evening is not the GST part, it is the part that has been set aside for the time being, the \$250 cheque. I hope we can get back to that, because I have just as much or more to say about it. It is a measure that excludes people. The GST measure excludes things that people might appreciate having a discount on. It excludes some products that could really help people. The \$250 cheque excludes some people outright.

- (2010)

It excludes people who do not have a lot of money, like seniors and students. Students may decide not to work during the year so that they can focus on their studies. It also excludes people with disabilities. It excludes people and actually penalizes them, if members can believe it, for not currently being in the labour market.

When people need housing, when they need food, when they need clothing—we cannot forget Maslow's advice to always go back to basics—a bill like this one, or a one-time cheque for \$250 that goes to a select number of people, is not what they need.

I would like to talk about the amount. The Bloc Québécois introduced a bill for seniors, Bill C-319, presented by my colleague from Shefford. It seeks to end discrimination. I just talked about discrimination when I spoke about the people who may be excluded from receiving the \$250 cheque, but the same holds for seniors. We want to restore fairness and fix the situation, but the government refuses.

It says this would make the measure way too expensive. However, between the \$250 cheques and the \$1.7 billion, at a minimum, for the GST break, that is already double what the Bloc Québécois was asking for. This may be a clue that what the government is really trying to do with its tax break and its \$250 cheque—which should of course be coming soon, although we might not get it until April—is simply buy votes.

As I read the bill, something occurred to me. It is important to have a sense of humour. People are going through a tough time. Our constituents are struggling. When a bill like this comes along and we get the impression that what will be exempt from GST is what people might need to celebrate Christmas and New Year's Day, or perhaps even the Epiphany, since the measures will be in effect until February, it occurred to me that it is a good thing this was not introduced at Easter.

Imagine if the bill had been introduced at Easter. What goodies would they have given out? We would have had tax-free chocolate eggs, little pet bunnies and maybe yellow, purple and pink clothing. I am being sarcastic, but when a bill like this comes along, it is not hard to believe that this was the degree of thought that went into it. It is all about buying votes.

• (2015)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 8:18 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of Motion No. 43 under Government Business, which is now before the House.

The question is on the amendment.

[*English*]

May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to House*]

• (2020)

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I would like to request a recorded division.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (2105)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 902*)

YEAS

Members

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

Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Findlay	Fortin
Gallant	Gaudreau
Généreux	Genius
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Hoback
Jeneroux	Jivani
Jones	Kelly
Khanna	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	Larouche
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lemire	Leslie
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Maguire
Majumdar	Martel
May (Saamich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
Melillo	Michaud
Moore	Morantz
Morrice	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Normandin
Patzner	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perkins
Perron	Poilievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Sauvé	Savard-Tremblay
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shiple	Simard
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's)	Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake)
Strahl	Stubbs
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Tochor
Tolmie	Trudel
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Williams	Williamson
Zimmer — 153	

Government Orders

NAYS

Members

Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Beech
Bibeau
Blair
Blois
Boulerice
Brière

Government Orders

Cannings
Casey
Chahal
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Coteau
Damoff
Davies
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Fry
Gainey
Gazan
Gould
Guilbeault
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lapointe
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
Oliphant
Petipas Taylor
Qualtrough
Rogers
Rota
Sajjan
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Singh
Sousa
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Trudeau
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Weiler

Carr
Chagger
Champagne
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Dance
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaheer
Garrison
Gerretsen
Green
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Joly
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Miller
Murray
Ng
O'Connell
O'Regan
Powlowski
Robillard
Romanado
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara
St-Onge
Tassi
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Virani
Wilkinson

Yip
Zarrillo

Zahid
Zuberi— 176

PAIRED

Members

Duncan (Etobicoke North)

Plamondon— 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.*[English]*

The next question is on the main motion.

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

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, we would request a recorded division.

● (2115)

[Translation]

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

*(Division No. 903)***YEAS**

Members

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Battiste
Bendayan
Bittle
Blaney
Boissonnault
Bradford
Cannings
Casey
Chahal
Chatel
Chiang
Cormier
Dabrusin
Dance
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaheer
Garrison
Gerretsen
Green
Hajdu
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien

Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Beech
Bibeau
Blair
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Carr
Chagger
Champagne
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Coteau
Damoff
Davies
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Fry
Gainey
Gazan
Gould
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek

Government Orders

Johns	Joly	Fortin	Gallant
Jones	Jowhari	Gaudreau	Généreux
Julian	Kayabaga	Genuis	Gill
Kelloway	Khalid	Gladu	Godin
Khera	Koutrakis	Goodridge	Gourde
Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Gray	Hallan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Hoback	Jeneroux
Lamoureux	Lapointe	Jivani	Kelly
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Khanna	Kitchen
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Kmiec	Kram
Lightbound	Long	Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Kusie	Lake
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)	Lantsman	Larouche
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Lawrence	Lehoux
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada	Lemire	Leslie
Masse	Mathysen	Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Liepert	Lloyd
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty	Lobb	Maguire
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Majumdar	Martel
McLeod	McPherson	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Mendès	Mendicino	McLean	Melillo
Miao	Miller	Michaud	Moore
Morrice	Morrissey	Morantz	Morrison
Murray	Naqvi	Motz	Muys
Ng	Noormohamed	Nater	Normandin
O'Connell	Oliphant	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski	Pauzé	Perkins
Qualtrough	Robillard	Perron	Poilievre
Rogers	Romanado	Rayes	Redekopp
Rota	Sahota	Reid	Rempel Garner
Sajjan	Saks	Richards	Roberts
Samson	Sarai	Rood	Ruff
Scarpaleggia	Serré	Sauvé	Savard-Tremblay
Sgro	Shanahan	Scheer	Schmale
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Seebach	Shields
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Singh	Shiple	Simard
Sorbara	Sousa	Small	Soroka
St-Onge	Sudds	Steinley	Ste-Marie
Tassi	Taylor Roy	Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's)	Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake)
Thompson	Trudeau	Strahl	Stubbs
Valdez	Van Bynen	Thériault	Therrien
van Koeverden	Vandal	Tochor	Tolmie
Vandenbeld	Virani	Trudel	Uppal
Weiler	Wilkinson	Van Popta	Vecchio
Yip	Zahid	Vidal	Vien
Zarrillo	Zuberi — 174	Viersen	Vignola
		Villemure	Vis
		Vuong	Wagantall
		Warkentin	Waugh
		Webber	Williams
		Williamson	Zimmer — 148

NAYS

Members

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

PAIRED

Members

Duncan (Etobicoke North) Plamondon — 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[*English*]

TAX BREAK FOR ALL CANADIANS ACT

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-78, An Act respecting temporary cost of living relief (affordability), be read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

Government Orders

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleagues on all sides of the House, and it is great to be here this evening to make life more affordable for Canadians while we continue to grow the economy. It is great to stand up when we are going through legislation that is going to provide tax relief during the Christmas season and into Valentine's Day for the benefit of all Canadians.

As the father of a three-year-old, like many parents, when I go to the Walmart, Costco or any store to buy diapers, children's diapers will be HST-free in Ontario. As an individual who grew up in a very humble household, every dollar counts, every little bit helps and I am so proud of that.

Also, as an economist and someone who had the chance to work on Wall Street and Bay Street for a number of years, it is great to see what a number of my former colleagues and people I have known for many years are commenting on exactly what Bill C-78 is. It is wonderful to see some of the remarks. I will just read one or two and then I will get into some other comments.

Benjamin Reitzes from BMO Economics said, "We're assuming a good chunk of the stimulus cheques will be saved, but the GST/HST rebate will drive additional spending. BMO Economics is boosting Q1 GDP growth from 1.7% to 2.5%, with 2024Q4 and 2025Q2" being even bigger and having a larger impact.

Derek Holt at Scotiabank said, "That, in turn, would lift GDP growth by about two percentage points above our baseline forecast."

The Retail Council of Canada came out with some comments about its members and what they see: "Retail Council of Canada (RCC) welcomes today's sales tax relief announcement from the federal government. The removal of GST and HST on a sizeable list of goods will create major tax savings for Canadians, along with economic stimulus for our industry". Both—

• (2120)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. There are some people talking above the hon. member. I also notice a number of people behind the curtains, speaking as well. They are just curtains, and we can actually hear through the curtains.

I would ask everybody to keep the volume down a bit so the hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge can get his speech done.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I know that was not done intentionally by the hon. members.

Going back to my conversations about restaurants and the restaurant industry, the city of Vaughan is home to literally over 1,000 restaurants and food establishment services. As an individual of Canadian and Italian heritage, I am very proud of our cuisine, like all individuals in Canada, of whichever heritage we may be.

I know all the restaurants in Vaughan, especially in the January period when it is slower, are going to be benefiting from this. I think about Ciao Ragazzi, Tubbies, Perla, Osteria Gente, Via Mercanti, Giro D'Italia, Spizzico, Zafferano and all the wonderful restaurants. Their customers are not only going to benefit from the GST removal, a tax cut on the GST; they are also going to benefit on the equivalent side and get the full HST removed.

That, like I said earlier this evening, is a billion dollars just from the province side and another \$600 million or \$700 million, a \$1.7-billion tax cut for the residents of the province of Ontario. I like tax cuts. I like reducing taxes for hard-working Canadians. I really encourage this.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I am always respectful when I am speaking. I will let the others chirp over there.

This is about making life more affordable for Canadians, which we are doing.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, we heard this speech two hours ago and I think I questioned the member across the way—

The Deputy Speaker: That is debate, but it gives me the opportunity to say to keep the volume down so the member can finish.

The hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, making life more affordable for all Canadians and putting out social programs is what our government has been about. It is the Christmas season, so *buon Natale*, *Feliz Navidad* and merry Christmas. It is a beautiful time of year, and Canadians are going to have more money in their pockets. That is what this government is about.

We brought in a middle-income tax cut; the Conservatives voted against it. We brought in the Canada child benefit; the Conservatives voted against it. We brought in the Canada workers benefit; the Conservatives voted against it. We brought in a national early learning and day care program; the Conservatives voted against it.

We brought in a Canadian dental care plan, and over 21,000 individuals in my riding are already benefiting from it. We have not even offered it yet to 18- to 65-year-old Canadians, which will happen in 2025. Almost three million Canadians from coast to coast to coast are using this program, and over a million Canadians who have visited an oral health care provider have been provided \$710 on average. There are seniors in my riding, across the city of Vaughan, who have not gone to the dentist in over 10 years because they could not afford it and now they are going. That is progress.

Government Orders

Let us be straight. Every Canadian needs to know that the party opposite will cut those programs. Every senior needs to know that the Conservatives will attempt to cut those programs. The Conservatives have indicated it. This is not a personal comment; this is a policy comment. The Liberals reduced income taxes for some, and we raised them for the wealthiest in this country. The Conservatives voted against that.

We must continue to help Canadians. Christmastime is coming, and in a few weeks, Canadians will gather with their families and their loved ones. They will go to church, like me, and do other things. Our Jewish community will celebrate Hanukkah. They are all going to be talking about how our government is saving them money.

The Liberals also want to introduce the working Canadians rebate for hard-working Canadians, and we will do it in the coming months. It is tax-free help because we know Canadians have been through a lot: the global pandemic, global inflation, a war in Ukraine, the events in the Middle East and a changing of administrations south of the border. There is a lot of uncertainty.

The one certainty Canadians can count on is a government that always has their backs, every day and every hour, and, with no pun intended, a government they can trust and have faith in and that keeps its word in what it will do and implement. For our hard-working seniors, that means a 10% increase in old age security for almost four million seniors. The retirement age was raised in Davos, Switzerland, when it was announced many years ago by a former Conservative government, from 65 to 67—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (2125)

The Deputy Speaker: I know we have been here for a long time today and I know we have a lot of craziness going on tonight. Let us just bring debate on the bill back to the issue at hand.

The hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I was saying that the former leader of the opposite party, who was in Switzerland, raised the retirement age from 65 to 67. There are bricklayers, electricians and labourers who work a very long time. Those extra two years of work are laborious. That is not fair to them. That is not fair to Canadians. It was not fair.

When we got elected, we promised we would return it, and we did. That is approximately \$17,000 more in the pockets of retirees today than there was nine years ago. The opposition party, which was in government at the time, raised the retirement age without consultation, without doing it in this country, while it was overseas, just like that. We returned it. That is leadership.

On the middle-class income tax cut, literally billions of dollars will be returning to Canadians because we cut that middle tax bracket from 22% to about 20.5% in year one. We did that. On the Canada child care plan, \$10-a-day day care is saving parents in my riding, including myself, and I am blessed, over \$10,000 of after-tax income. We can do the math of what that means for before-tax income. We have continued to invest, and we will continue to invest.

There was a chart out the other day showing that rental construction in this country is booming right now. It is outpacing population growth because of the policies we have implemented. Going into Christmastime, in a few weeks, when we all get to spend time in our communities with our residents and our families, we should go to our local restaurants.

There are over 5,000 hard-working Canadians in Vaughan—Woodbridge right now who work for restaurants. They and their employers are going to see an uptick in business. Restaurants Canada has applauded this. It was there the day of the announcement because it is a great thing to do, and it is going to carry them over into January, which is a tough period for many businesses because of their seasonality. That is great news.

The Province of Ontario has signed with us for the national school food program, much like it did for the early learning and national day care plan. Again, they have joined us to provide tax relief to the residents of Ontario and to the wonderful citizens I am blessed to represent in the riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge. This is something we should applaud. This is progress we should applaud. Hard-working Canadians go to work every day, and they deserve a break.

We need to meet Canadians where they are today. As a son of very humble immigrants who came to this country and worked very hard at a pulp mill and a fish plant, I can say that every little bit helps. Every little bit helps all the time, and that is where we are at. The residents in my riding can put their trust in me. They have, and they will because we keep our word.

There is an old hockey adage from a few years ago where Patrick Roy was getting murmured out by another hockey player, and Patrick Roy said he puts his two rings in his ears, so he does not listen to the noise. I will not listen to the noise.

● (2130)

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was taking some notes while the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge was speaking, and I find it quite ironic because we hear the same crap. Can I use that word?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. We hear the same lies over and over—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Mr. Speaker, oh, my goodness, I cannot say that word either.

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The member is gaslighting all his constituents with everything he is saying there. I have proof. The member for Lakeland was with me this weekend. We went to those restaurants. We went to those neighbours. They said they want the Liberals out. They want the Conservatives to get in to fix everything they have broken.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, at this moment in time, in the city of Vaughan, 50,000 children benefit from the Canada child benefit, to the tune of \$200 million. There are 22,000 seniors now on the Canada dental care plan. We will continue the progress for the Canadians who voted us in and believed in us.

I do not believe in slogans. I do not believe in any of that stuff. I believe in good, solid policy that moves us forward. We will continue to do that, and we will continue to always have the backs of our businesses and our hard-working labour union members. We will always have the backs of everyone, all our residents. Canadians will know who to place their trust in several months from now. The arrogance is showing on the other side, and it is disgusting.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member talk about supporting communities. The NDP proposed giving a tax break permanently on essential items.

Why did the Liberals not choose to give a permanent tax break to communities that are desperate for help, and why did they leave out home heating?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I would like to answer these questions from the hon. member for Vancouver East because I was born and raised in British Columbia. At the time, the member of Parliament who represented me, who is no longer with us in this world, was Jim Fulton and I had a great degree of respect for him.

If any party has an idea at any time to reduce the burden of taxes on any Canadian, I, as a member of Parliament, am always open to hearing about it and receiving it.

Some hon. members: Axe the carbon tax.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, on the price for carbon, we remit all of it back to Canadians in those provinces that have a backstop, and we will continue to do so. It has no impact on inflation or on any cost. That is a fact. Go to Trevor Tombe's website, and look at the studies that are out there.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it may be late, but that does not mean my colleagues cannot behave themselves. If they cannot, they should go to bed. They can vote electronically.

I would like to know if, early on, the Liberals thought about the impact on businesses, which will have to make this very temporary change and implement it very quickly. Were the Liberals aware of the impact?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. It is very important to support small businesses across the country. We must always support them.

[*English*]

I understand that small businesses do face short timelines to convert their SKUs, as I believe they were called in back in the day, to make this change.

• (2135)

[*Translation*]

I have to work on improving my French.

[*English*]

The tax cut is benefiting Canadians and is putting more money in their pockets. I am all about helping middle-class and hard-working Canadians in my riding. When they buy diapers in a few weeks or when they take their kids to a restaurant, whether it is McDonald's or Tim Hortons or anywhere, they are going to get a tax break. It is \$1.7 billion in the province of Ontario. I was glad to see the Government of Ontario join us in providing tax relief to its residents. All Canadians are going to benefit. It is 13% in Ontario. Those are real savings for the hard-working Canadians we all represent in the House.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what happened to Canada? Everyone we talk to across this country ask the same thing. Canada is not Canada anymore, because after nine years of the weak and incompetent Prime Minister and an incompetent Liberal-NDP government, they have caused the worst cost of living crisis in Canadian history.

The incompetent Prime Minister has been supported by the leader of the NDP, who has nothing but greed for his \$2.2-million pension. He has put his pension over Canadians and country. He helped the Prime Minister add more debt to Canadians than did every single prime minister before him combined, which has resulted in the cost of living crisis for Canadians and has increased food bank usage. Food bank usage has doubled since 2019. Now, more than two million Canadians are visiting a food bank in a single month in this country, a third of whom are children.

One in four Canadians has started skipping meals, and one in five children is living in poverty now. We never used to hear about this stuff; it has been only in the last nine years. What changed? What happened nine years ago? We got an incompetent, weak Prime Minister who has been propped up by a weak leader of the NDP. That is what happened to this country.

The Liberals have doubled housing costs, doubled food bank usage and doubled the national debt; that is why Canadians are suffering more than ever before. That is why there are tent cities all across the country. There is crime, chaos, drugs and disorder all over our communities because of soft-on-crime policies and bail policies that are savaging our streets right now. It is hard for the police to keep up. This is what incompetence looks like.

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Whether someone was born here and grew up here or they immigrated here like my family, the common theme is that Canada is not Canada anymore. People just want their Canada back, the one they once knew and still love, the one where they put in hard work and earned a powerful paycheque and the one where they could afford their rent or mortgage payment and go to the grocery store and afford groceries again.

That is the kind of Canada people want back, but there is only one way to get that Canada back: It will happen in a carbon tax election when Canadians fire the incompetent Liberal-NDP government with the weak Prime Minister and replace him with the member for Carleton and a common-sense Conservative government. That will restore the Canada we all once knew.

To cover up all the incompetence and all the pain and suffering the Liberal-NDP government has spread throughout Canada over the last nine years, it has now put forward a temporary, two-month, tax trick. It would rather take pennies off Pringles, chump change off chocolate and cents off Skittles than axe the tax to actually bring down the cost of groceries.

The government has driven investment out and driven food prices up. In fact, Canada's food prices are 37% higher than those of the U.S. Do members know what the U.S. does not have? It does not have a carbon tax scam, and it has lower prices. Can members believe that? It is able to build more. It can get more energy projects built. It can get more business. It has more powerful paycheques and better jobs for its workers.

What is sad is that over the last nine years, almost a half a trillion dollars of the investment in the U.S. came from Canada. That is what the incompetent, weak Prime Minister did. He drove our jobs, our business and our investment to the U.S., and now he somehow says that Canadians are just in a vibecession; they are not vibing. That is the problem. It is the fault of Canadians, as they just do not feel it.

The Liberals' fix for the vibecession is to take pennies off Pringles and cheese puffs. That is their solution. It is almost as bad as saying we should just cancel our Disney+ service or stop driving around and use a bike.

● (2140)

This is what incompetence looks like in the Liberal-NDP government. It has been on full display for the last nine years.

The Liberals came out with this inflationary temporary tax trick. The member for Vaughan—Woodbridge was bragging that somehow it is going to create all this new business. Here is the reality: A report that came out said only a mere “4% of small business owners believe they will have stronger sales as a result” of this tax trick, and “75% say it will be costly and complicated to implement”. We are hearing from businesses that the minimum cost will be anywhere from \$1,000 to \$1,500 because they will have to change their POS system not once, but twice. The government is doing it at the worst time possible. This is one of the busiest weeks for businesses. It is Black Friday tomorrow, and this is the time they chose to do it. This is pure incompetence on full display.

A majority of businesses say that “there is not enough time to implement [it]”. A majority of businesses say that “it will be difficult to determine which items are temporarily tax-exempt”. Most “retailers of goods subject to the holiday report consumers will delay purchases”, messing with business projections and stock. A large majority says it will benefit the “big businesses and online giants”, meaning more money for Liberal-NDP friends, such as Galen Weston's family, and pain with no gain for small businesses. This is the reality.

It does nothing for the productivity crisis the Prime Minister created, in which we are seeing our investments flee to the U.S. Canadian workers are now \$32,000 poorer than U.S. workers. If the incompetent government had just kept pace with the golden plate former prime minister Stephen Harper left in 2015, workers would be \$4,200 richer in Canada. Instead, they are much poorer. It is clear to see.

The population growth created a worse housing crisis. Now students are living under bridges. Teachers and people with good jobs are living in cars. People who used to donate their time at food banks are now standing in line at food banks. There are husbands and wives at home, both earning good paycheques, who are going there. It is not just us saying this; proud Liberals such as David Dodge, a former Bank of Canada governor, has said that this is not the right package. It is a little candy today for pain down the road. I would say that this pain did not start today, but nine years ago. Our kids, their kids, their kids' kids and even their kids will be paying for this absolute incompetence.

However, we can put an end to this today. It was not like this before the incompetent Liberal-NDP government came in, and it will not be like that after it is gone. Can it find the courage to call a carbon tax election so that Canadians can fire the government? If so, a common-sense Conservative government will bring real relief. We are going to axe the tax immediately. We are going to bring down the cost of gas, groceries and home heating. We are going to axe the sales tax on newly built homes under \$1 million so that 30,000 new homes can be built a year. People will save on their mortgages and the cost of homes.

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We are going to fix this Liberal-made productivity crisis by unleashing our economy and our energy sector, which is keeping the government from bringing Canada into a recession. That is the sector it keeps attacking with its ridiculous policies, such as the oil and gas cap, which is actually a production cap that is chasing our resources, money and jobs out of Canada. We are going to unleash the economy once again so that Canada can become the Canada we once knew and still love. We are going to bring that home under a common-sense Conservative government.

● (2145)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are going to unveil the hypocrisy within the Conservative Party. Imagine, the Conservatives know no shame. They actually campaigned in the last election, every one of them, to have a GST tax break for the holiday season. Their leader actually endorsed it by retweeting what Erin O'Toole tweeted. Then, when it comes time to actually vote in favour of a tax cut for Canadians, what are they going to do? Let us wait and see. My money says that they are going to vote against it. How do we define hypocrisy? I say that they need to reflect and look in the mirror on this issue.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Speaker, this Liberal-NDP government is the king of hypocrisy.

The member wants to talk about hypocrisy. Let us not forget, this is the Prime Minister who said that he would not run deficits over \$10 billion. He blew right through that after the first year, and we still have not had a balanced budget. Do members know why? It is because he does not think about monetary policy, and he thinks that budgets balance themselves. This is the same guy who said that our government is “open by default”. Yet, this is the most corrupt government, propped up by the corrupt NDP all because of greed over a pension. The Prime Minister has had more ethics violations than all the prime ministers before him combined. This is the guy who said he has a feminist government, yet fired a strong, indigenous woman who was a cabinet minister because she stood up to his corruption. Let us not forget the racist, blackface-wearing Prime Minister.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I remember when the Conservatives were for tax cuts, but maybe it is because it is the Conservatives who brought in the GST that makes them so sensitive to cutting it.

It is funny, my hon. colleague talked about pennies for cheese puffs, and he called it chump change. However, this is what the proposed GST cut will be on: children's clothing, footwear and diapers; children's car seats; food and beverages and groceries; restaurants; children's toys; and print newspapers and printed books. It is estimated that the average family will spend \$2,000 on qualified goods, and if they live in Ontario or Atlantic Canada where the HST will also be removed, they will save about \$360 over the two-month period.

Does my colleague say that saving people \$360 is chump change? Is that what he is telling families, that \$360 means so little that it is chump change to him—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Speaker, this is not a tax cut; this is an inflationary tax trick. It would temporarily take the tax off things like cheese puffs and take pennies off Pringles. Does the member really have the courage to face Canadians for once instead of the NDP members propping up this corrupt Prime Minister because of the greed of their leader for a \$2.2-million pension? They should put Canadians over their leader's pension. Call a carbon tax election now so common-sense Conservatives can fire all these clowns and we can replace them with a common-sense Conservative government that will axe the tax for good.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, calling parliamentarians “clowns” in this place is unparliamentary, and it is unbecoming of him. I would ask him to withdraw that comment immediately.

● (2150)

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I would say that it is offensive to clowns to be compared to the NDP.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, an apology is warranted, considering the comments by the colleague from Perth—Wellington.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn used language not conducive to making sure that a debate can happen here. Because it was not directed at a particular member, usually there is a lot of latitude in terms of the language used, and so we are going to move on.

[*Translation*]

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[*English*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to point out that the member said he was going to fire the “clowns”. It was directed at people. He does not have any power to fire anyone. That is the problem—

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member. The Speaker has already ruled on that.

The hon. member for Manicouagan has the floor.

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[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, clearly it can be hard to discuss this in a way that is constructive for society. The fact that this bill will not go to committee is problematic. Everyone is accusing everyone else of hypocrisy. Personally, I think that is unfortunate. People are having trouble defending this bill, and the choice of goods on the list seems somewhat arbitrary. Even regular people think this is a vote-getting measure. There are issues because this seems like it was hastily cobbled together.

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

[*English*]

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member. It seems as though the plan or policy was written on the back of a napkin and put together as quickly as possible to try to distract from the pain and misery the Liberal-NDP government has caused Canadians for the last nine years, or from the fact that inside the House, we have been discussing for the last two months the absolute corruption of the government that keeps on happening. It is just another ethics scandal under the belt of the government, which of course the NDP keeps propping up.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how about some mixed Liberal-NDP improv? The theme is: climbing in the polls. The duration is: the length of time allocation. This is like bad improv. Quebec's national improv league could do better—at least they are prepared for what they are getting into. I am ashamed of what I am seeing. I wish it were a joke or just a skit, but unfortunately it is not. What we are witnessing is total and complete improvisation by the government and its dance partner. No one in Laurentides—Labelle has ever talked to me about a GST holiday, not once. It will have a direct impact on businesses, but will be of very little benefit to the people. We all agree that the die has already been cast.

When someone's entire income goes to meet basic needs, the GST holiday offers very little. Rent is already zero-rated. Groceries are already tax-free. Heating is taxed, but Bill C-78 does not remove the GST from heating. It does, however, remove the GST from alcohol. If I decide to go to a restaurant for dinner and treat myself to a nice bottle, it seems only fair that I should pay GST on a luxury product. However, the government has decided that it is a good idea to give a GST rebate to those who can afford a bottle of Veuve Clicquot this holiday season. In fact, some people may have had some tonight. They can go out and buy it by the case. For members' information, this morning I checked the website of the SAQ, Quebec's liquor board, and a 750-millilitre bottle of Veuve Clicquot sells for \$84. That is definitely a luxury.

A tax holiday is being offered to the well-heeled. Those with the bare minimum in their bank accounts count every dollar, and every expense counts. Moreover, those expenses are for products that are already tax-free.

Earlier, I heard the member for Alfred-Pellan say this will help business owners. A person would have to be completely out of touch to say that. The government definitely did not think of small businesses owners, who are struggling to keep their businesses

afloat. I know this because it is something I myself will go through. Let me name just one of the people who contacted me. Marc Hallée, the owner of Bistro des Chutes in Chute-Saint-Philippe, contacted me this morning. He was irate. I get it. He said this measure makes no sense. There is one technician for about 300 businesses. How are they going to reconfigure their cash registers? It will cost thousands of dollars. They will deal with it, but they definitely will not be ready by December 14. What will they do on February 14 to reinstate the GST on February 15? Nobody knows.

This is a double standard for a measure that will end up forcing business people like Marc Hallée to bring in technicians twice, and that will cost them money. I do not get it.

In the restaurant industry, profit margins are slim. I am thinking of everyone tuning in right now. This is really detrimental to the small business ecosystem. It is happening because the government and the NDP are so far down in the polls that they are looking for a gimmick that will help them claw their way back up into the light. Let us be honest. That is what is really going on here.

● (2155)

I am thinking of the businesses that ship products across Canada. Billing is done according to the province where the product is ordered and delivered. Imagine the headache for a business that is shipping products for Christmas. Honestly, it is a nightmare. No, this is not going to help businesses. It is going to help the large multinationals and big box stores. No shops on main street in Saint-Sauveur, Saint-Jovite or Mont-Tremblant, or on Madone street in Mont-Laurier is applauding this measure. These people are tearing out their hair trying to figure out how they will manage.

Wanting to give tax breaks to the rich makes even less sense coming from left-wing political parties. It makes no sense. We know that the Liberals are going to blame us for voting against the measure. I can hear it, but that does not bother me because I do not underestimate people's intelligence and they understand us. We are voting against this measure because it is a bad measure for Quebec and Quebeckers. A GST holiday is not going to help those who struggle to feed their family, those who have to wait in line at a charity or a food bank. These people need direct help and support for their real needs. Let us just say it: The purpose of this measure is to support consumer spending of the well-off. The Liberals and the NDP would rather support champagne socialists than help people who really need it. That is the reality. I cannot get over the NDP supporting this. They may change their minds yet. There are still a few minutes left.

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It is also strange to see that, in the provinces where the sales tax is harmonized, no one in the government, not the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs or anyone in their offices, thought it would be a good idea to warn the provincial governments. The provincial governments found out about this 24 hours before the Prime Minister held his press conference in a chic kitchen in Toronto. That says a lot. First, it proves just how much contempt the federal government has for the provinces. Second, it proves just how quickly this measure was thrown together. Everyone here is talking about this measure this evening without really having had the chance to think about it. There is more. This might be news to my English Canadian colleagues, but Revenu Québec collects the GST in Quebec. The federal government pays Revenu Québec for that service. However, the Liberal-NDP alliance—people like to call it that, so I will too—did not seem to think about that and did not consider compensating Quebec for that. We are not talking about huge amounts here, but it shows how the government is making things up as it goes along.

I am going to close by telling the House that I am totally opposed to this bill. I do not want to vote in favour of a tax holiday for the wealthy. I care too much about people who are in need right now, who are living in extremely vulnerable situations. If any parliamentarian wants to criticize the fact that we are opposed to this, they should come and see me. We will have a nice little chat. I will introduce them to some people. The purpose of taxes is to provide services and help people. I am telling the citizens of Laurentides—Labelle that the government is not doing its job. The government is throwing this at us before Christmas, business owners are stuck with it, people are furious and, honestly, using time allocation is an insult to the power of legislators.

• (2200)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must say I am disappointed in the Bloc, because what we see is what I would suggest is an unholy alliance between the double blue, where we have the Bloc siding with the Conservatives, not recognizing the true value of giving constituents throughout the country a holiday GST tax break. Giving the impression that her constituents would not support the tax break, I believe, is not fully the truth. At the end of the day, I believe people deserve it. Providing that holiday GST tax break would be a good thing, and we should all be supporting it.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, I have to accept the fact that every time we vote with a party, there is an alliance.

As I said, the Bloc Québécois always asks the same question. Is this good for Quebec? If so, then we vote in favour of it. Is this bad for Quebec and Quebecers? If it is bad, then we vote against it. We are not voting against this measure because we are an opposition party. We are voting against it because, like I have been saying, the measure is ill-conceived. What is more, we are not even going to have an opportunity to examine it in committee, and it will last for only two months.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for my colleague. How is helping struggling Quebecers by sending them several hundred dollars at a very expensive time during the holiday season bad for Quebecers or for Quebec?

• (2205)

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, it is one thing for someone who earns \$100,000 to get a temporary discount on luxury items. However, people who are using food banks are spending their money on necessities that are not even taxed. These people will not be going out to eat in restaurants. They still will not be able to afford to.

If we really want to help those people, we need to look at the necessities: a roof over one's head, food on the table and a little money in one's pocket.

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question for my colleague from the Bloc Québécois is quite specific to the provincial jurisdiction side of this. A number of agreements have been signed with provinces that have a harmonized sales tax and also with provinces that just have the GST, or that have the GST and the HST. There are aspects of the act that governs those, which actually seem like what the Liberal government has proposed and are supported by the NDP. They would actually be in violation of those things, which would then, in fact, be a direct attack on provincial jurisdiction.

I wonder if my colleague from the Bloc could talk about whether she has heard that. Has she had a chance to look into the impacts this bill would have and the possible impacts that would specifically be related to Quebec, which I know would be similar in the province of Alberta and in those other jurisdictions that have HST?

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, of course, things are different in Quebec, and there will be a shortfall. However, I am primarily concerned about the real cost to individuals. I am no tax expert, but from a tax perspective, it is certainly something of a headache. There will be enormous consequences, if only in terms of corporate taxes or filing corporate returns.

This will clearly be harmful to Quebec and we have not heard the last about the collateral damage it will cause.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, millions of Canadians are struggling to make ends meet. We have a cost of living crisis and an economy that is seeing an ever-widening gap between the wealthy and the rest of us. A few stark facts bear this out. According to Statistics Canada, nearly half of Canadians report that rising prices are greatly affecting their ability to meet day-to-day expenses. Rent has increased by over 21% and grocery foods have increased by over 20% over the last three years. According to Equifax Canada, 50% of Canadians are now living paycheck to paycheck.

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Income inequality in Canada has hit the highest level ever recorded. The top 20% of Canadians hold more than two-thirds of our country's wealth. By comparison, the bottom 40% of Canadians account for only 2.8% of our country's wealth. According to the Salvation Army, one in four parents cut back on their own food consumption this year to ensure their children had enough to eat. Eight in 10 Canadians, or 80%, believe that owning a home in Canada is now only for the rich. Seven in 10 say they have given up on ever owning a home.

A majority of Canadians say that thinking about holiday spending causes them financial anxiety and 80% plan on cutting back on spending during this holiday season in a few short weeks. That is why the NDP recently pledged to permanently remove the GST from daily essentials and monthly bills, such as grocery store items, including pre-prepared meals, diapers, children's clothing, Internet, home phone and cellphone bills, and all types of home heating. We will note that all of these items are unavoidable expenses. Everyone has to heat their residence and buy food at the grocery store; cell-phones and Internet are now essential utilities.

We estimate that our plan would save an average family over \$500 per year. This commitment stands in stark contrast to the Conservatives' proposed cuts to essential programs, such as dental care, child care and pharmacare. Losing that support would cost families thousands of dollars per year. That is money they cannot afford.

We would finance this permanent tax cut with an excess profits tax paid by very large corporations that abuse their monopoly market power and unjustifiably hike their profit margins. Canadians should know that excess profit or windfall taxes are used worldwide, including in the United Kingdom, Spain and Australia. In fact, Canada has a history of using excess profits taxes. During both world wars, excess profits taxes were implemented to help fund the war effort and ensure that companies did not engage in profiteering. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has estimated that an excess profits tax would have generated almost \$8 billion in federal revenues for 2020.

The Liberal government responded to the NDP's tax-free essentials plan but, in true Liberal fashion, did so only partially. Instead, it proposed a two-month GST holiday on certain items, starting December 14, and a one-time payment of \$250 delivered in spring 2025 for individuals who reported net employment income of up to \$150,000 in 2023. It has completely ignored the NDP's call for an excess profits tax on large corporations, which are making huge, historic profits. This is far from the substantial, fair and permanent relief the NDP wants to give Canadians.

As usual, the Liberals are letting people down with their choice to make this a short-term tax holiday on a limited list of items. By leaving out things like home heating and cellular and Internet bills, their scheme also largely fails to capture the life essentials that the NDP plan captures. New Democrats are profoundly disappointed that the Liberals have chosen to exclude the most vulnerable Canadians from their one-time payment proposal. Perversely, the Liberals have chosen to send cheques to individuals earning \$149,000 or couples earning \$298,000 a year, but not to seniors on fixed incomes of \$25,000 or people with disabilities so severe that they cannot work. That completely defies logic and fairness.

• (2210)

This plan was announced without consultation or negotiation with the NDP. Our position is that everyone under the income threshold should receive the \$250 payment, and we will not support the Liberals' rebate payment unless this support is expanded to include everyone in need. The NDP forced the Liberals to split these two measures into two, so we could proceed with the GST holiday right away to give people immediate relief, while we continue to pressure the Liberals to fix the \$250 benefit to include all vulnerable Canadians.

New Democrats will vote for the GST holiday proposed in the legislation before us today because working and middle-class families are desperate for relief, even if it is temporary and less than ideally aimed. We will continue to campaign hard on permanently scrapping the GST on daily essentials and on monthly bills. We will continue to fight for a fair taxation system through which the rich pay their fair share and all working and middle-class Canadians can live comfortable lives with dignity.

I have a few words with respect to the bill before the House. This legislation would amend the Excise Tax Act to implement a temporary GST/HST holiday between December 14, 2024, and February 15, 2025 on qualifying goods. This would help Canadians by lowering the cost on a range of products that are particularly needed during the upcoming holiday season. These would include children's clothing; footwear and diapers; children's car seats; food and beverages in grocery stores and restaurants; children's toys, including games, building sets, puzzles and video consoles; print newspapers; printed books; and even Christmas trees or similar decorative trees.

Removing the GST from these goods for two months would provide an estimated \$1.6 billion in federal tax relief. A family spending \$2,000 on qualifying goods would realize GST savings of at least \$100 over the two-month period, but in provinces where the HST would also be removed, such as Ontario and the Atlantic provinces, further savings would be realized. The same \$2,000 basket of qualifying purchases would realize a savings of \$260 over a two-month period.

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The Liberals' plan to only offer temporary GST relief would not only provide to families less than half the relief that the NDP's plan would have provided, but also present a significant burden on business owners, especially small business owners, who would have to adjust their cash registers and payment systems twice in two months. That is yet more reason that the NDP plan to permanently eliminate the GST on these essential items would be better for business owners and better for consumers.

I would like to address one of the major reasons that Canadians are feeling such economic pressure, and that is corporate price gouging. New Democrats understand that the inflation over the last two years was not caused by unreasonable wages, increased demand by consumers or even excess government spending. It was caused by corporations who inflated prices.

Canadians are eating the same food they did before inflation. They are driving the same cars the same mileage they did before inflation. Frankly, people are probably eating and driving less. Governments have been running large deficits for almost 20 years by both Conservative and Liberal administrations without causing rampant inflation, so that cannot possibly explain why grocery prices are through the roof, suppliers are shrinking their portions and oil companies have jacked up their gas prices.

Here are the real facts: Profit margins surged in early 2022 following the COVID pandemic, when many sectors used the cover of the pandemic as an excuse to raise prices. Despite the normalization of supply chains, easing of shortages and weaker consumer demand, aggregate corporate profits hardly changed in 2023. Last year, corporations in Canada recorded \$644 billion in pre-tax profits, which are 54% higher than they were in 2019, the last prepandemic year, and over double the average profit level of the prepandemic decade.

A quick look at three highly concentrated industries, the grocery, telecom, and oil and gas sectors, revealed this clearly. Coming out of the pandemic, operating profits in the oil and gas sector increased tenfold from \$6.6 billion in 2019 to \$66 billion in 2022. That is the highest profit ever recorded in Canadian history. Grocery giants' profit margin doubled from 2% prepandemic to 4.1% in 2023. A 1% increase in gross margins at grocery stores adds over \$1 billion to Canadians' food bills. The telecom sector reported total revenues of \$66.8 billion in 2022, which is another all-time high.

Why do we have high prices in Canada? It is because large corporations raise them. Why do we have a problem with productivity in Canada? It is because corporations are not investing in machinery, equipment, technology and employee training. The NDP will continue to fight for working and middle-class Canadians and bring a fair taxation system in for this country so everyone has a real shot at a good life in this country.

• (2215)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot about the cost of food being higher in Canada than in the United States. That is true, but there are many reasons for that. One is economies of scale. The United States has a much larger population. It is the same reason the price of food is lower in cities in Canada than in the regions. Another reason is that

wages are much lower in the United States. For example, in Canada the minimum wage ranges from \$13 to \$16.77, and in the United States the federal minimum wage is \$7.25.

Does the member not agree that the Conservative recipe for high food prices is keeping wages low? Does the member not agree that the Conservatives are fake friends of labour?

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, to say the words "Conservatives" and "labour" in the same sentence is an oxymoron. I have been in the House for 16 years and have watched the Conservatives vote every single time to order striking workers back to work. I have watched them oppose every single proposed minimum wage hike. I have watched them try to increase the retirement age from 65 to 67.

If someone works in the House of Commons, that is one thing, but members should try being a bricklayer, roofer, drywaller or carpet layer working at 67 years of age. That is what the leader of the Conservative Party, when he was in the Harper government, proposed and supported. The Conservatives not only are no friends of labour; they will make life harder for every worker in this country.

• (2220)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the last nine years, and in particular over the last three, we have watched the NDP enable all of the corruption and incompetence of the Liberal government. It has really been on display with how this bill came into being. The NDP and the Liberals seemed to be somewhere writing on the back of a cocktail napkin, trying to cobble together some kind of a bill that could distract Canadians from the corruption we have seen, wherein the Liberals have let insiders profit from their slush fund.

Will the member explain why the NDP keeps propping up the Liberal government?

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, I serve with the hon. member on the finance committee, and I would think that someone on the finance committee would be quite careful with numbers. There was a majority Liberal government in this country from 2015 to 2019. Nobody was propping up the government; it was a majority government.

The hon. member says "nine years", but that is factually incorrect. I would not trust the member or his party with running a pop-sicle stand if they cannot even get basic numbers like that correct. Also, they are so ethically slippery that they will continue to use propaganda and nursery rhyme politics like that to try to confuse Canadians.

Government Orders

The Conservatives are proposing a cut to the carbon tax, but they are opposing a cut to the GST. Let us try to explain that to Canadians. I certainly cannot.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, Nunavut's birth rate is double the national rate, meaning there are a lot of expenses for Nunavummiut, including diapers and children's clothing. I wonder if the member can share with us what it will mean for Nunavummiut to know they will have some relief.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this moment to say that I think my hon. colleague is the most powerful speaker in the entire House of Commons. One thing that is disturbing to me, listening to the speeches, is the disdain and the elitism I hear coming from the Conservatives. By talking about Pringles and cheese puffs, and by saying that this is insignificant and that it is chump change, it shows absolute disrespect and a lack of understanding of the real lives of most working families in this country.

My hon. colleague raised the point about people in the north who have to spend money on diapers, footwear and clothing. For people in harsher climates, there are probably additional clothing expenses, and this will give real relief, yet the Conservatives scoff at that.

For people in the House of Commons who make \$200,000 a year to scoff at hundreds of dollars going to some of the poorest people in the country, it is frankly shameful.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the debate is a tough one, because we were told about the original plan that there would be a \$250 cheque to certain Canadians, not to the people most in need but to people who worked in 2023, which would not include many people living on very fixed and small incomes, people on disability benefits and seniors.

We were the first party to notice that it was not a fair plan. On November 22 we put out a statement asking how we could give a cheque of \$250 to some Canadians but fail to notice that it would not apply to retired Canadians living on a fixed income and would not apply to people living on disability benefits.

After all the time that we have in the House called for a Canada disability tax benefit, it has still not been delivered, and the \$250 cheque was dangled out there. We do not know where it has gone now, because in the last 24 hours it has crystallized that we were going to be debating in this place and fast-tracking only a GST tax holiday on only certain goods that would qualify as necessities. Furthermore, it would be for only a two-month period on and around Christmas. It would be at a cost of \$1.6 billion from the treasury of Canada.

It is a tough issue. It is less difficult now that the government has pulled away the \$250 that should have been targeted at people who need it most. Who knows? Maybe it will come back to us in some other form, but there is something about it. I struggle with it. I probably have to say, knowing how much Canadians need a break right now, that I do not know that I can vote against a GST tax holiday on certain goods over a two-month period.

However, I have to say that it makes me feel queasy. It makes me feel as if I am voting for something that Doug Ford would have come up with. In fact I think Doug Ford did come up with it, and it is not good policy. Whether it is good politics, we will see.

It would be a GST tax break on certain items. I heard earlier from a Conservative in this place that it would apply to jigsaw puzzles, and I thought, "Well, we do not have to worry about that." We have all seen the Conservative commercials. We know the leader of the official opposition has jigsaw puzzles. We get to see them on TV quite a lot.

It is not good policy when it is not targeted to people who need it the most, and it is not good policy when it is \$1.6 billion without the government's saying it is going to pay for it with an excess profit tax on the big grocery stores and their corporate management and corporate greed. It is not good policy when we do not say that we are going to actually pay for the GST tax holiday by finally applying an excess profit tax on big oil and the obscene levels of corporate profits they have been making, especially since Putin invaded Ukraine, which amounts essentially to war profiteering by big oil.

Therefore we struggle with this, and as Greens we struggle with it, because we know Canadians need a break on things that are essentials, but there is a very complicated list of what would be considered essential and what would not.

The break would also not be permanent. We look at it as a two-month break over the holidays. It is transparently a vote-buying scheme. Would it deliver relief to people who need it the most right now? It certainly would be of benefit.

I think of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. It is very clear that the retail sector does not see that the tax holiday would help it a lot through the Christmas season. However, it would help restaurants with respect to both in-restaurant meals and takeaways, and that is a perk for families and for people who have been pinching pennies. Nonetheless, the people who have been pinching pennies and not going out for restaurant meals are not the same people who are lining up at the food banks.

I have to say it is rare for me and my colleagues here to struggle with how to vote on something. I am usually pretty darn sure from the get-go. I read a bill and I think, "Well, this is something I can get behind. This is something I believe in."

• (2225)

What do Canadians really need right now? We need a comprehensive security policy that protects us from the ravages of the climate crisis, which itself drives up grocery prices, makes food more expensive, makes life in Canada more precarious for those who live in flood plains, who are flooded year after year, or who are in communities that get fire evacuation orders year after year, or who live with the ongoing trauma of the effect of living through a heat dome in British Columbia. There are numbers of people who still feel that trauma, or the trauma after hurricane Fiona.

Government Orders

We need comprehensive policy that makes sense. While the Conservatives want to axe the carbon tax, that tax is rebated to people. The GST is something that was put in place under the Mulroney government. The GST, overall, is not a progressive tax; everybody pays it. If people are buying really big luxury items, they are going to pay more. This tax holiday for a two-month period is at least not designed around really large luxury goods.

It says it is about the necessities that Canadians need, like car seats and diapers. I just had a baby granddaughter. My gift to my daughter for her baby, Lily, will not get a GST tax break because it is a service. My daughter and my granddaughter will never see a throwaway diaper because they are buying cotton diapers. I got them a laundry service. That actually saves people a lot of money. Buying throwaway diapers costs about \$6,000 a year for the average infant. Buying cloth diapers up front costs a bit more. It is just the work and the labour for a new mom to have to do all that laundry. It is usually the new mom and not the new dad.

I do not want to dive into all the questions of what really costs in our society, where we can save money by doing things differently, by avoiding the throwaway or by investing in something that is a service in community. There is a small business that delivers, every week, clean and healthy cotton diapers for babies. That is not what anyone means when they talk about how everybody needs diapers when there is a new baby. The whole time my daughter was in diapers, I did not buy a throwaway diaper, not once.

I did not suffer for my sacrifice. I had really good, reusable diapers, and I still have one left. I treasure that one diaper left from my 33-year-old daughter. My gosh, it is the best rag ever for washing up a mess. They cannot be bought anywhere; people just have to save them if they were smart enough when they had a new baby to invest in cotton diapers. It is a really good product.

I am struggling with this because I do not know that a two-month GST tax holiday on some goods and not others is what Canadians really need the most. What we really need is to eliminate poverty, focus on food security for all, invest in our society with the kind of tax changes that make the biggest difference, and give Canadians the chance to know that this is a caring society that has eliminated poverty with a national, guaranteed, livable income for all. That makes real change. This makes small change.

• (2230)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all have an opportunity to do something very positive for our constituents. We know things have been difficult, and we are providing them a significant tax break for the holiday period.

As the member said, it is a difficult decision for her. However, at the end of the day, how do we say no to constituents and to providing them a bit of support during the holidays? The member made reference to restaurants. For restaurants and those working in that hospitality industry, it is going to have such a wonderful, positive impact. I think February 15 is the deadline. February 14 is Valentine's Day, and we know that is a busy time.

There will be many different benefits. Could the member tell us to what degree it would have been better to see all members of the House support an initiative like this?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I know that Canadians are feeling a sense of deep anxiety about our future. Going back to the question of affordability, for most people the idea is about buying a home. We also have people who are looking at living rough, living in encampments and living in tents. I can hardly believe that in a country as wealthy as Canada, we are prepared to tolerate people living rough and outdoors in a country that has bitter winters. We can do better and we must do better.

This is \$1.6 billion that I cannot help but feel could be spent in better ways than a short term and very small, if welcome, benefit over Christmas. As I said, and I say to my colleagues, I will probably vote for this, but I will not feel great about it.

• (2235)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if we vote against the bill tonight, we should not do so just because we are in the opposition, and if we vote for the bill, we should not do so just because we think that, when all is said and done, it might help a few people. We need to look at the big picture.

I am not going to ask my colleague why she is voting in favour of the bill, but I will ask her the following question. Does she believe that the government carefully crafted and analyzed this measure before bringing it forward and putting it to a vote in the next few minutes?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from the Bloc Québécois. It is not easy, but I think we lack policies that show courage and leaders who clearly understand the affordability issues that Canadian families, children and youth are experiencing. This measure is not enough, but it may do some good, and that is why I am voting for it.

As I said, we need to do more. We need to build a society for the well-being of everyone, and especially for people who cannot afford basic necessities. Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and the homeless come to mind. These are populations in Canada that need our help.

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we have before us is a tax trick and that member called it a vote buy. Through you, should all members not vote against this?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, fortunately for me, in the Green Party, nobody tells me how to vote. This is a tough one. I would share with my friend from Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, that I am sure she can think of people in her community who will wonder why she did not vote for this because they would have liked to have this.

I am sorry, but that is the reality. We need to think about the individuals who will hear about this on the news and think, “I needed that. I wanted that, and that would have made my Christmas better”. For those people, I feel very much as though we should go along with this, but fight to make sure that we can pay for it and that we do better by aiming for a permanent change to help those people.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: It being 10:39 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of Bill C-78 is deemed put, a recorded division is deemed requested, and the division shall not be deferred.

Call in the members.

• (2320)

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

(*Division No. 904*)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Ali
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Blaney
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
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Dabrusin	Damoff
Dance	Davies
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Gainey
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner

Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Joly	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saamich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
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McLeod	McPherson
Mendès	Mendicino
Miao	Miller
Morrice	Morrissey
Murray	Naqvi
Ng	Noormohamed
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Robillard	Romanado
Rota	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schieffe
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Singh	Sorbara
Sousa	St-Onge
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The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Accordingly, pursuant to order made earlier today, this bill is deemed referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

(Bill read the second time, considered in committee of the whole, reported, concurred in, read the third time and passed)

[*English*]

The Speaker: The hon. government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, February 28, the motion is deemed adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10. a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:24 p.m.)

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