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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 9, 2024

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

ORDERS OF THE DAY

• (1105)

[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

ACCESS TO PARLIAMENTARY PRECINCT

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wish to very briefly add to the submissions made by my colleague, the member for Thornhill, on the question of privilege she raised last Friday.

I wish to add that the member for Edmonton Griesbach was among the NDP MPs who participated in the anti-Israel demonstration. My staff observed the member among the protesters as they blocked the driveway in front of the Confederation Building.

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from December 6 consideration of the motion, of the amendment as amended and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I start, I would like to wish everyone a merry Christmas.

Today, we will talk about the SDTC and some of the actions that happened. It can be a bit technical, but in essence it is a horrendous but fairly simple scandal. It involves the formation of an organization, a company on the behest of the government, and it had a laudable objective.

We are suffering through a productivity crisis. Our productivity is among the lowest of advanced economies. We would rank at the bottom probably in the G7 and as one of the lower performers in the OECD. Productivity sounds like working hard and all those good things, but that is not substantially what productivity gets a lift by. We can work as hard as we want, but if we do not have the appropriate innovation and technology, we simply will not get ahead as a company or, in this case, as a country.

This example is obviously an exaggeration but does well to show an example. If we are tasked with digging a hole, perhaps a foundation for a house or a building, and if our only technology is a shovel, we will be there for a long time. Even if we have the best workers in the world, we will not be able to compete with someone who has an excavator. Unfortunately, this is too often the case, granted that is exaggerated.

Our machinery, our systems, our technology are often five, or 10 or 15 years behind most of our competition. One of the most significant competitors is right across the border, in the United States of America. Its equipment will often be five to 10 years, on average, younger than ours. If we have an older car, as I do, it does not operate as efficiently or as effectively as a brand-new car, or if it is an older refrigerator, it does not operate as well as a brand-new one. Since we are using older machinery and equipment, we are falling further and further behind.

This brings me to the SDTC, which its laudable objective was to help cure this problem by stimulating the economy, by improving productivity through investments by the government, investments in the economy and in innovation particularly. The idea was that if we innovated, if we came up with some absolutely amazing ideas that we could grow into machinery, we could increase productivity. Productivity, when it is increased, affects nearly all of us. A rising tide lifts all boats.

The idea was to make some investments into these important innovations and technologies to help the Canadian economy and all Canadians. It is a laudable objective. In fact, past governments have even participated and agreed with this. There is some debate on whether a government can do this effectively or not. In this case, we really did not get the opportunity to see whether it could be effective or not. That was because instead of making those investments into equipment, technology and innovation that would help our economy, unfortunately, Liberal cronyism and corruption got the best of this organization.

What happened was the government, with taxpayer dollars, funded \$400 million. This is a fiduciary duty. The government was collecting from Canadians from coast to coast, taking that \$400 million, putting it into a pot and giving these individuals, the members of the board of the SDTC, the responsibility of finding some of the best innovation to invest in so we can lift the entire standard of living for Canadians from coast to coast.

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These people were given a tremendous responsibility, a real fiduciary responsibility. They were giving other people's money to invest on their behalf for the hopeful return of improving the standard of living for all. Unfortunately, nothing could be further from the truth of what happened. We had \$400 million, which were basically spent in corruption and given to Liberal insiders instead of actually helping innovation.

• (1110)

There are a number of different facets, including over \$50 million given to ineligible contracts. This is just saying that what we are going to do is design a framework to give this \$400 million away and in that framework, we are hopefully going to capture and design it well enough so that we are going to get those great companies, those great individuals who have those ideas that can help the productivity issue. They did come up with that framework. Then they decided to take \$50 million and not put it within that framework, making it totally ineligible.

The most troubling part of this is that, of that \$400 million, tens of millions of dollars were given away in conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest can sound a bit fancy, but what does that all mean?

Let us go back to that pot of money that was been gathered from coast to coast through income tax, sales tax and through the carbon tax. All of this money was taken, put into this pot and SDTC was given the responsibility to administrate and to award these monies. We have this \$400 million and then we have this group of people who have to decide where that money goes. Unfortunately, tens of millions of dollars of that went to people who were supposed to objectively decide where that money would go.

In some cases, this is how it would work. There would be an application and then that application would come before these individuals who would be the arbiters of where that money would go. What would happen? One board of directors or one of the members would say that they had a conflict of interest. That is company A. Therefore, that individual would walk out of the room, all the while knowing that they would hear from an individual who had ownership or who had an interest in company B, which was next in line with an application.

We have an interest in company B and we are looking at the grant for company A, knowing full well that in the next half an hour, they are going to decide whether we get the money. The idea that this would not bias someone is just this side of absurd. Hundreds of millions of dollars have gone out the door.

It is important to note, and this is the part that is really under-reported and really not expressed enough, that this money does not come from the Prime Minister's trust fund. That money does not emerge from ether. The is pulled from the hands of hard-working Canadians. It is taken from a single mom. In fact, a single mom earning \$40,000 or \$50,000 can face a marginal effective tax rate as high as 40%, 50%, even 60%. With the clawbacks and with income tax, that is absolutely what they pay. We can look it up at the Fraser Institute or we can look at C.D. Howe, which has written numerous papers on it. I trust the members to look at this and review it, because that is the reality of it. This money that is being taken from hard-working Canadians is then funnelled, in buckets full, to Liberal insiders.

I want to give one example of where that \$400 million could have been spent and where that \$400 million could have done, in my estimation, a great deal of good. I have the privilege of being the shadow minister for transportation. In the last couple of transportation committee meetings, we have been discussing and studying the "big dock". Not many of us will know what the "big dock" is and that is fine. The "big dock" is located in Fort Chipewyan in northern Alberta.

There are two first nations groups and also Métis people that utilize the "big dock", in addition to a rural municipality. The "big dock" is the centre of activity. It is where children learn to swim. It is often the time where children might throw in their first line to catch that fish. I can remember my son actually catching his first fish. It is such an exciting moment. This is the centre of community. Also, the only way people can get in and out of the community during the summer is through this big dock or wharf. At the transport committee, we learned that this dock and the vicinity was contaminated and that Transport Canada knew about this since 1997.

• (1115)

Most recently, a report in 2017 said there were hydrocarbons, arsenic, and other heavy metals and contaminants that I certainly would not want my children, or anyone's children, to swim or play in. There are even older reports that show there is perhaps radiation surrounding this dock. Transport Canada knew about this.

In the 2017 report, which there was an obligation under the environmental assessment to disclose, the government said it was looking at divesting this. It sent two out of the three indigenous groups this in a package of due diligence. It was a huge package. Those who have practised law know what due diligence can look like. It can be tens of thousands of documents at a time.

The Liberals, through Transport Canada, said it was good enough because they disclosed it. They did not disclose it. They kept it a secret. Since 2017, they knew it was contaminated. Worse, they had to be dragged kicking and screaming. We actually found out about it because the chiefs at the time realized the dock was actually getting covered as the water levels were declining, because sediment was building up around the dock. They needed to dredge it. It was not purely for recreation; as I said, it is the only way out of the community.

When the wildfires struck the area, the communities had difficulty evacuating. They asked in 2023 and again in 2024 to have the area dredged. Transport Canada was reluctant. The communities did not know why, but they knew that if another wildfire hit, the people may not be able to get out. They might literally burn to death. They said, "We are going to do it, whether you want it or not." What was the response from Transport Canada? "You will be put in jail. If you go ahead and dredge this, you will go to jail."

The communities were then left in the terrible position of letting their people down by not dredging it, meaning the next wildfire could very well be the end of their people, or they could go to jail. They actually took what I thought was a brilliant course of action. They hired their own toxicologist. They wanted to find out what was going on. They found out a couple of things: first, it was contaminated; second, after the contamination was discovered, the government did not bother to study it for the effect on human health.

The Liberal government, through its agency Transport Canada, knew it was contaminated. The next logical step from a professional toxicologist was to look at the effect of that contamination on human health. Instead of doing that to find out if it would have an impact and what that impact would be, the communities decided to keep this as a commercial port, even though anyone who has been to the big dock would easily say it is much more than an area, a barge dock, where we ship off supplies.

The big dock is a community hub. This is where children swim and fish. The Liberals chose to turn a blind eye to this. That is what they did. It was not until the indigenous people chose to hire their own toxicologist that they found out about the contamination. Here we are now, still dragging the Liberals kicking and streaming. The communities asked for \$25 million, which is a fair amount of money. Goodness sakes, for folks in my community, \$25 million sounds like a lot of money. However, the government spent \$400 million to achieve nothing but padding the pockets of Liberal insiders, and for less than 10% of that investment, we could have cleaned up and remediated the entire area around the big dock.

• (1120)

The government could have built a brand new dock so there was an area for children to swim and fish in and enjoy again, an area where the first peoples, the Chipewyan nation, could evacuate effectively. It could have done that for less than 10% of what it wasted padding the pockets of Liberal insiders.

I have been trying to speak to this in a way I hope most folks can understand when we hear the number \$400 million. With the billions the government has spent, we do not know what the deficit is because it will not even tell us. Its public accounts are due by September at the very latest. We are now in December. We still do not know effectively what the deficit is. We will hear criticisms, mostly from that side of the aisle and the folks on the other side of the aisle who support them, that sometimes we ask questions that are too aggressive or even seem petty. However, I have heard the Leader of the Opposition ask this completely substantial and reasonable question: What is the deficit? What type of government does not respond to that type of question six months after it is supposed to have published it?

Do members know what would happen in a private business if a CEO refused to tell people what its losses, revenue and costs were for this long a time? I can tell them exactly what would happen. They would be fired and would go to jail. There is a duty on all of us, as it is not the government's money it is administering or negotiating; it is not the Prime Minister's money. It is that of the people of Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Orono, Cramahe and Brighton, who work day in and day out for it. These are dollars they were hoping to utilize for their children's ed-

Privilege

ucation. For many of them, their children's education is so far off that they just want to make sure their kids can eat at the end of the week.

Instead of that money going where it can best be spent by the people who earned it, it is sent here, to the ivory white towers, where these folks will tell them they know better. The Liberals will make sure those people do not just spend their money on beer and popcorn; rather, they will take that money and invest it for them because they know better. Well, we have clearly seen that they do not and that the money belongs in the hands of the hard-working people who earned it. It belongs in the hands of our indigenous communities. It belongs in the hands of our farmers, business owners and job creators, because they earned it, they value it and they know where best to spend it.

The next time members hear some story about this great Liberal program that is going to come out and revolutionize the world, I want them to think about the single mother who is putting water in the milk to make sure her child has enough to get through the end of the week. Is it worth taking another \$20 or \$30 from her for this great imaginary program that will never do anything but build bureaucracy?

We need to return to being the freest country in the world. We need to return to being a country where everyone has opportunities, where it does not matter who they are or where they came from, but how hard they work, what they want to accomplish and who they want to be.

It has been a privilege to rise.

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it quite interesting to hear my colleague across the way make all these comments this morning. We both sit on the transport committee and he did a great job playing with the facts. He said we have turned a blind eye, but I would like to remind him that when the Conservatives, under Stephen Harper, found out about this contamination, they not only turned a blind eye but completely shut off their ears because they did not want to know anything about it. Moreover, they were ready to sell it.

Can the member explain why there was inaction in those years and why the Conservative government was trying to get rid of this problem and sell it off?

• (1125)

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, there is an epidemic on this side of the aisle. It is called "whataboutism". The Liberals refuse to accept accountability or responsibility for anything. Quite frankly, I do not care if the contamination can be traced back to John A. Macdonald. The fact is, over the last nine years, the government knew about it and did nothing.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Alfred-Pellan already had an opportunity to speak. If he wishes to have the floor again, he can rise to be recognized by the Chair.

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

*Privilege**[Translation]*

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the measure that the Conservatives put forward this morning is fairly interesting.

However, does my colleague not think that it is incomplete and that there are other more worthwhile measures that could be put in place, for example, a regular, ongoing investment by the federal government in social and affordable housing, since it is urgent that we reduce the imbalance between supply and demand on the market?

[English]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, this is not exactly what my speech was on, but I am happy to answer the question. The reality is that we have a supply and demand issue. The government benches have one solution: building bureaucracy. We have another solution: building houses. According to experts, the leader's plan of just removing the GST would create over 30,000 home builds. The more homes we build, the less houses cost and the more chances we have for folks to walk across that threshold and enjoy the dream of home ownership.

Ms. Leila Dance (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I attended the transport committee with the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South. During the meeting that he spoke about regarding the big dock, the director for the contaminated sites division from the Government of Canada informed the committee that there is a list of 24,000 contaminated sites across this country, with only 238 being monitored by the government. Will the member promise that, if he becomes part of the government, he will commit to cleaning up these sites and managing all new sites in a fast and effective way?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to serve with the hon. member. That was actually in response to my question with respect to the contaminated sites. There are 24,000 of them, and \$400 million would not have cleaned up those 24,000 sites, but it sure as hell would have been a lot more effective than the \$400 million that was spent to pad Liberal insiders' pockets.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while Conservatives are focused on axing the tax, building the homes, fixing the budget and stopping the crime, Liberals are trying to distract with their temporary tax trick. The member has a background of immense experience in supporting small business owners and understanding legal technicalities that impact businesses. One thing we have been hearing about is the administrative and compliance costs associated with how the government is going to be switching the rules around GST back and forth; this is going to create an immense burden for small business owners. Rather than our proposal for eliminating the carbon tax everywhere and for good, which is clear and simple, what the Liberals are doing imposes a major burden on small business owners. Would the member share a bit about that?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I am just going to spend a little time quickly talking about efficiency and how an economy works. We can think of capitalism as the allocation of resources based on consumer demands; what consumers want, they will get through a system of purchases and otherwise. The more efficient that is, the more those goods get out effectively and the wealthier

everyone is. Every time the government puts in a regulation, it makes the system less efficient. Some of the regulations the government puts in are needed, so members should not take me the wrong way. This means that there will be more money going to Ottawa and less money going to Canadians. Particularly where the regulations create temporary, short-term distortions, they can actually do a lot of permanent harm to the economy. This is because they disrupt the efficiency of the economy, and the buy-and-sell signals that exist in a capitalist economy are distorted. I would love to believe that this had a good intention, but I can almost guarantee that the outcome will be negative for most Canadians.

● (1130)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is a hard-working MP, and I appreciate that. However, I have to be honest. I am surprised that the Conservatives decided to talk about housing today, especially when their leader has clearly indicated that he intends to cut the accelerator program, as well as the housing infrastructure program. The accelerator program is going to build over 750,000 homes in the next decade. That is quite impressive.

Canadians can see what is happening. There is a trend. The Conservatives are now voting against many great programs, including the school food program, the child care program, the dental program and the pharmacare program. Canadians know where the Conservatives would make their cuts.

Is the member one of the MPs who has the gag order or has been silenced regarding speaking about all the good things the accelerator program has brought and will bring to Canadians?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I actually had the opportunity to ask the Minister of Housing about houses. This is a question I put to him. I was in a committee, the Minister of Housing was right there in front of me, and I asked him how many houses the accelerator would build. He said none, that it would not build any houses. We can hear the tape. In fact, if anyone has seen our commercials, they probably have seen it, but the reality is it does not build any houses. It builds bureaucracy, as opposed to our housing plan, which is the removal of GST; the Liberals' own housing expert says that it will build over 30,000 homes. We can decide between zero and 30,000.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and friend for his speech. I serve with him on the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

I also want to thank him for his introductory course on how we can build a Canadian economy that revolves around small businesses. I like how he said that his selection criteria were based on permanent or long-term measures, rather than on measures that are not good and that last only for two months, like the GST holiday. Why, then, did my opposition colleague vote against permanent measures like the Canada child benefit, the school food program and housing measures?

These are long-term decisions. Why did my colleague vote against them?

[English]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, Conservatives have a very different view and vision. The Liberals want to build bureaucracy. We want to axe the tax, fix the budget, build the homes and stop the crime. We look forward to that, and I believe fundamentally that a dollar in the pocket of a Canadian goes a hell of a lot farther than a dollar in the pocket of a bureaucrat.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has talked specifically about this program that we are debating today, SDTC, and about how it actually functioned for about 20 years with no issues. It is only in the last few years that some insider appointments by the current Liberal government have created this problem. Could he just elaborate on the damage the government has done to this program?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, the corruption and rot of the government have destroyed many institutions, including SDTC.

• (1135)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be changing the channel on the Conservative speeches that the House has been stuck with for the last two months.

For the benefit of my constituents in the great riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, I will note that the House of Commons has been held up since the end of September because of an ongoing argument over a House order to produce documents from Sustainable Development Technology Canada. That order was made by the House back in June; of course, because the government has not complied with it, we are faced with a motion of privilege. Basically, a privilege motion is brought forward by any member who feels that their personal rights as an MP of the House or the rights of the House as a collectivity have been breached. In this case, it was brought forward by the Conservatives.

The original motion that we are dealing with is very simple, and I will read it out for the record: “That the government's failure of fully providing documents, as ordered by the House on June 10, 2024, be hereby referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs”. The Conservatives, throughout the last couple of months, have been putting forward different variations of amendments and subamendments, but I will just stick to debate on

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the motion because I think that is an order with language that people can clearly understand.

On the face of it, it seems simple enough. The unfortunate thing is that neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives have found a way out of the mess that we are currently in. However, because both of these parties have abdicated their responsibility and are basically stuck in a playground fight with one another, all business of the House of Commons has come to a complete standstill. That is a problem. It costs a lot of money to run this place each and every day. We not only have the sitting members of Parliament, who are collecting their salaries, but we also have an extensive House of Commons administration, which is here to make sure that this place runs as smoothly as possible. I think Canadians would be quite full of regret if they were to see how their taxpayer dollars are being wasted in this frivolous debate, which has been going on for over two months now.

We have incredibly important bills and business of the House that could have been discussed, but instead, day after day, we are just treated to a litany of Conservative MPs, who keep on talking about the same old thing. However, I will say this for the record: I firmly believe that the House absolutely has a constitutionally protected right to send for persons and papers. The House can make an order, which is an important function of Parliament, to send for papers, and those papers could be documents of any kind, physical copies or electronic copies, but really the only limits are that they need to exist and they need to be within Canada. This is an unfettered right; it has been upheld again and again by the parliamentary counsel in rulings. Not only you, Mr. Speaker, but also previous occupants of the chair have reaffirmed that this right exists. Therefore, from the outset, I want to state clearly that I agree with the main thrust of what we are trying to achieve here, which is that the House wants to see all of those documents in their unredacted form.

However, we are at an obvious impasse. The government is unwilling to budge, and the Conservatives are unwilling to stand down. As a result, we are not going anywhere in the House, and important issues in foreign affairs, economic policy, health policy and all the things that Canadians elected us as MPs to come here and deliberate about on their behalf are not getting dealt with. In fact, the only recourse we have as members of Parliament right now is to bring up the occasional concurrence debate on a committee report that has already been tabled. It is not much of a debate because, of course, those committees have already agreed to those reports by majority vote, and they have been duly tabled. Therefore, we are left with the only option of spending three hours here and three hours there debating a report that has already been deliberated in thoroughness at its respective committee.

• (1140)

However, because that is the only avenue we have available to us, that is the only way that we have been able to bring forward important subjects on foreign affairs, on health, on economic policy and, again, on what Canadians are expecting us to do. As we are at an impasse, we have to look at this and try to be the adults in the room.

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I will remind people that the Conservatives are filibustering their own motion right now. The motion they have brought forward is to bring this matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. That is a very important committee. That committee not only determines the membership of other standing committees, but it deals with all of these really important issues. If the House is at an impasse, it falls to that committee to deliberate and find a way forward. If we were to arrive at a space where we could send this motion, again, a Conservative motion that they brought forward and are filibustering, if we could find some way to bring this to the procedure and House affairs committee, so that that committee could deliberate on the way forward, then it would allow this House of Commons to get back to the business of debating the issues that matter to Canadians.

Now there are a few things I want to raise, because I have listened to Conservative speech after Conservative speech on this matter and it is unclear exactly what details they are looking for. On one hand, there are major problems with how this funding was allocated. The Auditor General observed that and the committee in its investigation observed that there were obviously major problems. Were they criminal? That is not for me to say. Obviously, there was some gross mishandling of taxpayer dollars and people absolutely need to be held accountable for that, but it is not up to us to determine whether this is a criminal matter. That falls on the independence of the RCMP and also our criminal prosecution services. They are the only ones who can decide whether this proceeds in a criminal way.

There have been some arguments back and forth on whether the House of Commons is within its rights to hand these documents over to the RCMP or whether that would constitute interference in an independent investigation. Again, this is not a question that I am best equipped to answer, nor the House as a collective body. I have repeatedly asked Conservative MPs after their speeches, because there is this uncertainty about what role the RCMP should play in this, if it would not be best to refer this to the PROC committee, call the commissioner of the RCMP forward as a witness and get best guidance from the top RCMP official in the land. I take this very seriously because at two standing committees I serve on, public safety and justice, I can say that I have dealt with this subject matter quite a bit. I have a lot of respect for the work that our police do.

Again, in an effort to find a reasonable and adult way forward, could we not just break this impasse to find a way for the RCMP to appear at that committee to find a way forward? If the procedure and House affairs committee recommends a path forward, then if the House is still not satisfied, we can again continue this privilege debate. However, I think it is sincerely unfair that debating this now very frivolous motion has held up the business of the House for more than two months. I lay the blame equally on both the Conservatives and the Liberals. They have obviously been unable to find a way forward.

What I would say is that a lot of the Conservatives' speeches these days seem to have to fit several criteria, as set out by their leader: They have to be full of hyperbole, they have to fit on a bumper sticker and often they have to rhyme. I think we are lowering the quality of the debate that could be had in this place. I do not

think this House as a whole is rising up to the expectations that Canadians have at this moment.

Over the last two and a half months, all I have been witness to, from both the Liberals and the Conservatives, has been Liberal and Conservative members pointing to each other saying they are not as bad as the other when they were in government. To borrow from Tommy Douglas's fable on Mouseland, it is like the mice are being asked to choose between the blue cats and the red cats. At the end of the day, they are all cats and they are all bad for mice. We are not in a good situation.

• (1145)

We are in a cost of living crisis right now. I would much rather spend my time in this House talking about how, over the last 40 years of Conservative and Liberal governments, we have developed a culture in Ottawa that is full of corporate deference. We have seen our corporate tax rates slashed to one of the lowest in the G7. We have seen policies enacted by both Liberals and Conservatives that have allowed mergers and acquisitions to result in the concentrated corporate power we see in so many of our sectors right now, whether it is telecommunications, grocery retail, or even oil and gas.

We keep hearing arguments from the Liberals saying that they have done so much, and that we should look at what they have done and that ask why Canadians are not happy with what they have done. They are obviously missing the mark. They are out of tune. They are led by someone I once described as radioactive. I hope the Liberals understand that they are not going anywhere with the current Prime Minister as their leader.

However, the Conservatives are not doing any better because those bumper sticker slogans full of hyperbole and rhyming are just cheapening the debate. I do not see a very real offer coming from them, especially when their leader is fighting against a system in which he has been a member of Parliament for quite some time now. He was first elected in this place in 2004. I am the same age as the leader of the Conservatives, so when he was first elected, he was 25 years old. At that time, I was out in the wilds of British Columbia, breaking my back as a tree planter. For him to fight against the system that he is so clearly a part of and offer himself as something new is a complete and total joke.

Let us face it. He gets his politics from the time he was Stephen Harper's favourite attack dog. I can say that it was people like him who inspired me to run in this place. I remember when I first saw the Leader of the Opposition on TV and could not believe someone could be elected who was so arrogant, so full of spite and just downright nasty. It is quite obvious from the antics he displays here now that he has not changed his ways. I will always be inspired to run against that kind of politics and against the politics of the Liberals, who believe they are God's gift to Canada and wonder why everyone cannot just be happy with the incredible work they are doing. The Liberals have let people down. They are not doing enough. The Conservatives are going to bring in the exact same types of policies the Harper government was tossed out of office for in 2015, and that is a fact.

The other thing is that the Conservatives stand here and talk about affordability issues when we know the leader of the Conservative Party has already started his fundraising circuit and is going to be frequented by the exact corporate executives who are jacking up prices everywhere and taking Canadians' hard-earned money. Many Canadians would agree with me that billionaires do not need more relief, the working class does, and yet, because of the corporate deference policies that we have seen from these two parties over 40 years, we are at the natural result of those policies. They are, number one, many corporate sectors have seen record profits and, number two, those record profits are happening at a time when Canadians are suffering.

It is not a hard stretch of the imagination to link the fact that in 2023, the corporate grocery retail, five companies that control 80% of the market combined, saw profits of over \$6 billion. At the same time, we have a record number of Canadians having to visit food banks. The math is simple. I would agree with my friends that I would rather see the dollars in the pockets of my constituents, but it is not the government removing those dollars, it is corporate profits. More and more of Canadians' net incomes are being spent on the essentials of life: heating, fuel, transportation, housing and food. That is not the government's fault, it is the fault of corporations that have been unfairly jacking up prices. They are acting like a vacuum cleaner, sucking up the hard-earned net dollars of my constituents to pad CEO bonuses, stock buybacks and dividend payouts.

• (1150)

It is a system that needs to be changed. It needs a wholesale cleanup, and we cannot trust the two parties that have built this system. It is not New Democrats, the Green Party or the Bloc Québécois. It is Liberal and Conservative federal governments trading places. Canadians need to realize these two parties, at their core, are but two sides of the same coin. They may quibble over the big partisan talking points of the day, but these two parties are two different sides of the same coin. They fundamentally believe in that neo-liberal economic policy, which over the last 40 years, especially since the greed of the 1980s, has led to deregulation, mergers, acquisitions and unrivalled corporate power that has put Canadians in the economic situation they are in today.

I want to talk briefly about some of the other things that have been held up. I will be personal here. I have a private member's bill, Bill C-277, which was voted on unanimously by the House of Commons at second reading in May. It sailed through the Standing Committee on Health, with some minor amendments, but again, it was unanimously adopted by the Standing Committee on Health and reported back to the House. It is being held up by this filibuster.

There are even good Conservative bills that are being held up by this filibuster, some of the Conservatives' own legislation. There are some good bills from the government that, in those rare occurrences, we can find all-party agreement on, but we are again in a situation now where these are being held up.

Going back to my particular bill, the brain injury community has been without hope for a long time. Bill C-277, is designed to set up a national strategy on brain injuries. I have received compliments from Conservative and Liberal MPs across the political spectrum. They have told me that this is a good bill and this is what is needed.

Privilege

The brain injury community's hopes are being dashed right now because of this filibuster.

Just last week, because of the support this bill has, I sought unanimous consent to see it reported, go through report stage, through third reading and be sent off to the Senate. This was denied by the Conservatives. I have been trying to find ways we can get good legislation through this impasse, but we are at a stage right now, this last week of sitting, where the partisan emotions are so high that we are unable to see past each other's talking points, especially the Liberals and the Conservatives, to find a way to let good legislation go through. This is not only a shame on us as an institution, but it is a shame for Canadians.

With the new incoming Trump administration, the way Canadians are falling behind in the cost of living crisis and what we are going to do with the future of our foreign policy, it is a dangerous world out there. It is not good for Canadians within our borders. We are stuck in this stasis field of continuous filibustering, and the House is not living up to the expectations of Canadians. I urge my fellow parliamentarians to reach for the spirit of Christmas, if they need to, but we need to find a way to break this impasse. We need to find a way to live up to the expectations of our constituents.

I will conclude with the following. I fully agree with the unfettered right of the House of Commons to send for papers. The Liberals have some explaining to do. They need to answer why they are not releasing all of those documents and why some of those documents were redacted. However, I am not going to absolve the Conservatives of responsibility on this either. They are the ones who are putting up speaker after speaker. They are the ones who are preventing us from voting on their motion—

The Speaker: On a point of order, the hon. member for Hamilton Centre.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ACCESS TO PARLIAMENTARY PRECINCT

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to provide additional information to you, as Speaker, on the deliberate matter of privilege that was raised on Friday morning by the Conservative deputy leader, the member for Thornhill.

As the Conservative deputy whip said at the time, “a personal first-hand account is very much part of the information that the Speaker must hear.” Given that I was named by the member for Thornhill, it is only right that I be given the opportunity to respond. The member for Thornhill made a number of wildly misleading accusations of increasing seriousness and severity. She began by saying that the protesters at the Confederation Building lobby on Tuesday morning were organized and supported by me. The accusations grew into talk about NDP-organized protesters.

Privilege

Her colleague, the member for South Shore—St. Margarets, spoke of NDP complicity and said that the “illegal protest” was assisted by me. In the member for Thornhill's intervention, she stated, in her third paragraph, “The demonstration started around 8:45 a.m. The protesters said they would allow MPs with offices in the building to pass through the crowd”.

I think it important to provide my own account, given that, on personal attacks being made or members' motives being maligned, the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, chapter 13, states:

Remarks which question a Member's integrity, honesty or character are not in order....

The proceedings of the House are based on a long-standing tradition of respect for the integrity of all Members. Thus, the use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly forbidden. Personal attacks [or] insults...are not in order.

I should share with you that, like all members on the Hill, at 8:45 a.m., I received a situation advisory update on my cellphone, which is customary. That identified a peaceful sit-in at the Confederation Building. That day, in fact, that entire week, we had our constituency assistants from across the country here in Ottawa for training. That is why my staff were with me on that particular day.

A press conference will bear out that I had the role of introducing our Speaker at a press conference shortly after this advisory was sent. At 8:45 a.m., while attending to my responsibilities at the Wellington Building, I did come across an action that was happening, with people in front of the Confederation Building who were demanding for an arms embargo and an end to the Israeli genocide against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

Mr. Speaker, you may know this, and some members may know this, but I would doubt that many Conservatives would know this. As was witnessed last week, the leader of the Conservative Party called a picket line a rally for striking workers. As Canada's only labour party, we have a long-held tradition of not crossing picket lines. We view this action in the lobby of Confederation to be very much in keeping with a picket line.

While the member for Thornhill was correct that this was an action of maybe a hundred, and the member said that it was perhaps 130, people, led by many Jews against genocide, to suggest that this was somehow an NDP-organized action does not just denigrate the spirit of our parliamentary privileges but also takes away the agency of the tens of thousands of progressive Jews against genocide, and the agency of those who took it upon themselves, as referenced by the member for Thornhill, to be present in the lobby. They would allow people to pass, provided that they heard the message.

● (1155)

I rise on this question of privilege because the hypocrisy coming out of the Conservative caucus would be laughable if it were not so offensive. The actions here between January 22 and February 23, 2022, known as the convoy, shut down this entire precinct's operations, not for 45 minutes, as this action did, but for an entire month.

As is tradition with New Democrats attending picket lines, I went inside the Confederation Building. I stood in the corridor of the doorway so as to not cross what I considered an action demanding MPs to hear the voices of the 100-plus progressive Jews against genocide. I would like to report to the House what I did hear. I

heard a call for a motion passed sometime back in March on an opposition day for a full embargo, calls for an end to the genocide and a beautiful expression of Judaism with the blowing of the shofar, the recitation of the Torah and the singing of songs in the Jewish tradition that go back to time immemorial in solidarity with basic notions of justice and peace.

Evidence will show that, through a video that was posted, when I arrived, I was confronted by a PPS officer at the door. I immediately identified myself as a member of Parliament. Despite the wildly inaccurate accusations by the member for Thornhill, I actually stated in that video exchange, which you can certainly take into your consideration, that I was there to bear witness. I was there to observe what was happening with those citizens, Jewish people of conscience who want to end the genocide and are calling for the arms embargo. I also witnessed a highly organized liaison process between PPS and the organizers. PPS, I think, given the sheer number of people, accorded itself in a very professional way to negotiate the protesters' peaceful removal and retreat from the Confederation Building, which did happen and was also recorded on video. Their own organizers said that they were slowly going to leave and that they were going to retreat.

It should be noted that, in comparison, if this is what we are doing here today, photos from the convoy include the former Speaker, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle; the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster; the member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan; and the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood. In fact, the leader of the official opposition was in a photo with the member for Miramichi—Grand Lake and convoy supporters. This week, we will finally be tabling the final report on the Emergencies Act review, but it was the OPP that compiled a report on February 6, 2022, more than a week after the Conservative-supported convoy demonstrators first arrived in the national capital region, that became evidence to the public inquiry on the Emergencies Act.

The vexatious comments made by the member for Thornhill are trying to impugn the NDP for standing up and bearing witness to what was otherwise a very brief and beautiful act of what, perhaps, could be called civil disobedience there in the lobby, which will be borne out by whatever processes take place. However, a very quickly negotiated retreat happened well before most people would be coming and going from the building. I can say that I quite readily watched PPS escort many MPs in and out of that particular building.

● (1200)

As we can see, the accusations that we somehow organized this protest to intentionally disrupt or obstruct Conservative members from participating in Parliament are completely fabricated and misleading.

However, the Conservatives did not stop there. They could not help themselves from linking this protest to “mobs [that] target Jewish neighbourhoods, firebomb Jewish schools, obstruct synagogues and wreak havoc”. This is a shameful way to characterize Jewish people of this country in their civil disobedience to genocide. To characterize Jewish people in this way, in my estimation, is a form of anti-Semitism, and it is a disgusting allegation to make. To liken a group of Jewish protesters to anti-Semitic mobs is beneath contempt. Linking members of Parliament, by extension, to such disgusting acts itself can be considered a form of a prime facie breach of our privilege.

Those are my remarks. I am glad that I had an opportunity to finally put that on the record and clear the air on this particular matter.

• (1205)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also would like to take a moment to share some of my thoughts on the matter of privilege which was raised on Friday morning by the Conservative Party deputy leader, the member for Thornhill. As the Conservative deputy whip said at the time, “a personal first-hand account is very much part of the information that the Speaker must [have]” to make a decision on the matter, and I would like the opportunity to be able to respond.

It is up to the Speaker to determine whether the action amounted to a violation of privilege of the individual member. I want to make it very clear that, from my perspective, for my part, I did not experience any violation of my privilege as a member of Parliament. I was able to access my office without problem, using the entrance. I was able to have my scheduled meetings in my office without any interruption, and my staff were also able to access their office.

I will say that the meeting I had that day had nothing to do with what was happening in the foyer. I was able, with my staff, to get to my office. My guest was able to access my office and we were able to have our meeting. Then my guest was actually able to leave as well.

I want to challenge some of what was said by the member for Thornhill and her Conservative colleagues as they made extreme and misleading allegations that impugned me and my colleagues. She suggested that the action was “aided by New Democrat MPs”, that it was “NDP-organized” and that NDP MPs were “part of this protest, in an effort to impede and obstruct the work of fellow parliamentarians”. Frankly, that is just completely false. I had no knowledge of the protest action; I learned about it from the PPS email that was sent to all members.

I did stop to listen to the protesters on my way in and out of the building, which is where my colleagues and I were photographed listening. This is part of our job. I am not from Israel. I am not from Palestine. I am not Jewish. I am not Muslim. I am not Arab. I require the perspectives of other people to inform the decisions I make as a member of Parliament. Frankly, for me, being in the Confederation Building and seeing people standing up against a genocide happening against children was a moment I will remember for a very long time.

Privilege

It is part of our job to listen. It is part of our job to understand what is being said by Canadians. I understand that the protest action was organized by a coalition called Jews Say No To Genocide. Something that I have noted that none of the Conservatives have raised is that the issue the protesters, many of whom were Jewish Canadian, were speaking out against is a genocide that has been identified as happening in Gaza and in which Canada has complicity, particularly in arms transfers to Israel.

The protesters were saying, “not in our name”. It is well known that New Democrats are deeply upset with the Canadian government's position and Canada's complicity in the genocide. However, whether or not a parliamentarian agrees with the argument, or whether they are uncomfortable or comfortable with the argument, is irrelevant to the question of privilege. For my part, I believe it is important to hear from Canadians, given the tens of thousands of people who have been killed, especially children, with Canadians' tacit support.

This is why I stopped to give a few minutes of my time to the group. However, to suggest that NDP MPs organized or were part of the protest is entirely false. For my part, I saw a peaceful and very short sit-in. I heard singing. I heard a rabbi speaking to the group about peace. I heard peaceful calls for Canada to end its complicity in a genocide. I believe that the protest action was over within an hour.

• (1210)

It was very, very different from some of the protests on Parliament Hill that have lasted for weeks and weeks, the same protests in which white supremacy symbols were shown and the same protests that my racialized staff had to cross to get to my office. However, that does not have to do with the current question of privilege.

The member for Thornhill stated, “It is not only my privilege that is breached, but it is everybody who has an office in the Confederation Building and those who try to access the parliamentary precinct.” I disagree. As I mentioned earlier, I had a meeting in my office in the Confederation Building for an unrelated issue, and I got in and out of the building with great ease, as did my guest and my staff. My parliamentary work was unobstructed.

For my part, PPS staff were helpful in ensuring that my colleagues and I got to work without a problem. I would like to take a moment to thank them for the work they do and for their professionalism.

I do want to give additional information for you to consider, Mr. Speaker, in response to the speeches made by Conservative members on Friday. First, the term “occupation” was used. It was not an occupation by any means; it was a peaceful and very short sit-in. I want to give some new information on the context of the action, as the Conservatives' choice of words is really very misleading.

Privilege

Peaceful sit-ins are a common feature of peace movements and civil rights movements. From the Woolworth's lunch counter protests during the civil rights era to women's suffrage movements and peace movements, peaceful sit-ins are a standard tactic of non-violent protest.

In July, 400 people with Jewish Voice for Peace held a sit-in in the atrium of the United States Congress to protest the United States' support for the genocide in Gaza. There was a similar sit-in protest last year at the Alberta legislature, without incident, again protesting Canada's complicity in the horror in Gaza. At the legislature in Texas, there have been a number of peaceful sit-ins over recent years on issues ranging from sanctuary cities to human rights. Other provincial and state legislatures have also had sit-in protests on a range of social justice issues. All of these people have been continuing the non-violent tradition of temporarily taking up public space to protest injustice, and Canadians certainly have the right to protest.

The issue, it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, is not the merits of the protest at the Confederation Building and what it is called, but whether it infringed on the individual member's privilege. To this I would say again that the second access to the building was open, and I personally had no challenges or issues whatsoever accessing my office. A protest's making members uncomfortable is not the same as impeding their work.

The member for Battlefords—Lloydminster said she felt unsafe, but feeling unsafe is not the same as being unsafe. What I saw was a peaceful protest with singing, with chanting in Hebrew, and with seniors and young people united together. I do not quite understand how a person could see this group, which included a rabbi and elders, and feel unsafe.

One might feel uncomfortable maybe, because it should make any person question their thinking about a genocide. We should all feel uncomfortable about our country's complicity in the killing and maiming of children in Gaza, but we should not feel unsafe. It is a case where MPs could have taken a minute to listen to protesters' concerns and hear these Canadians out.

Finally, we want to address a comment by the MP for Thornhill that I find especially troubling: "This is also a continuation of the very tactics that we have seen on our streets from unhinged mobs that think that their petty grievances allow them to target Jewish neighbourhoods, firebomb Jewish schools, obstruct synagogues and wreak havoc on our Canadian values, while abiding and abetting groups that are designated as terrorists in this country."

• (1215)

There is no question that incidents of anti-Semitism have increased in Canada, and this must be condemned by every member of Parliament in the House. Like all Canadians, Jewish Canadians deserve the right to feel safe in their communities, but the protest was led by Jewish Canadians who are advocating for peace, for human rights and for Canada to uphold its obligations under international law. To suggest that these Jewish Canadians are responsible for anti-Semitic attacks is, in my view, deeply offensive. To suggest that the protesters are part of an "unhinged" mob with "petty grievances" is offensive.

The member for Thornhill can disagree with the protesters, but to insult these people who are protesting the killing of children, the maiming of children and the starving of children is wrong. To suggest that these Jewish protesters who called for peace are aiding terrorism is offensive, and I would ask the member to consider withdrawing the comments.

The protest that happened last Tuesday was a peaceful sit-in. As parliamentarians, we have an obligation to listen to Canadians. As parliamentarians and legislators, we should be doing everything we can to amplify their voices. I would like that to be considered as part of the deliberations.

The Speaker: The hon. for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising. As the Chair has heard very complete points on the issue last week, I am looking for something new and succinct.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Actually, Mr. Speaker, I will be rising tomorrow on the question of privilege.

You will recall that on Friday, the Conservatives took over an hour and a half on this question of privilege with false allegations. We want to ensure that we have the time to respond. False allegations were levelled against a number of our members, so we want to set the record straight. There is no doubt that the question of privilege, which I believe is frivolous, requires a more in-depth response.

Unlike the Conservatives, who tried in a very childish way to disrupt the speech of our leader on Friday, our opposition day, I want to assure members that we will allow the full speaking spot for the Conservatives today on their opposition day, a courtesy they did not extend to us. We believe, in Parliament, that one party needs to step up and be adults. The Conservatives clearly did not do that on Friday. They were childish and disruptive, and we intend to respond to the frivolous question of privilege tomorrow.

We thank you for hearing the interventions today.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

It being 12:20 p.m., pursuant to the ruling of Monday, December 2, the House will now proceed to the business of supply.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1220)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL SALES TAX ON NEW HOMES

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC) moved:

That, given that, after nine years of this Liberal Prime Minister,

- (i) monthly rent and mortgages payments have doubled,
- (ii) the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) finds that Canada has the most unaffordable housing market in the G7, and the second most unaffordable in the entire OECD,
- (iii) Habitat for Humanity finds that almost one-third of Canadian millennials would consider relocating to another country to find affordable housing,
- (iv) the PBO says that chronic homelessness is up by 38% across Canada since 2018 despite Liberal promises to eliminate it by 2030,

in order to save Canadian homebuyers up to \$50,000 or \$2,500 per year in mortgage payments, the House call on the Liberal government to immediately eliminate the federal sales tax (GST) on new homes sold under \$1 million and call on the provincial premiers to match this proposal.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I want to let you know that I am going to split this time.

Today we are here, once again, to discuss the economic vandalism of the Prime Minister and his Liberal-NDP partners and what they have inflicted upon Canadians. Nowhere is that vandalism clearer than in the housing crisis today in this country. All we have to do is look at a real estate listing or talk to someone with a mortgage to realize that, after nine years of the government, the dream of home ownership in this country is simply dead.

My parents came to this country looking for opportunity and they found it. They worked hard. They made countless sacrifices. They saved up. They were eventually able to buy a home for about \$150,000 in the place that I grew up, in Thornhill. That was on a taxi driver's salary. Today, a house in that same neighbourhood is selling for close to \$2 million, but one could get a deal at \$1.5 million, a more than tenfold increase. I can assure members now that taxi drivers, small business owners and nearly everyone else who works for a living is not earning a tenfold increase in salary to match that tenfold increase in housing prices.

Because my parents had an affordable place to live in a safe neighbourhood, they could raise a family. They could start a business. They could live the life they dreamed of after fleeing one that we would never know. That dream is being cruelly taken away from too many in this country.

In Toronto, it used to take 25 years to pay off a mortgage. Now it could take more than 30 years to save up for a down payment. The average salary needed to afford the average home in this city is \$263,300. That is not a mansion or a palace, but an average home, a bungalow, in a place like Scarborough.

Who makes \$263,000 a year? It is certainly not most people in Toronto, where the average salary is \$60,000 a year. It is certainly not a new immigrant to this country who is coming here to look for a fresh start and to forge new horizons. It is certainly not new graduates, looking for a place to start their careers and thinking that

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maybe they will be able to start a family. It is not even a parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Housing.

The Liberals have made this country so unaffordable that even their own MPs could not afford a home in the place where they came from or in our nation's capital. That is not a knock on them, but a reality that their boss has inflicted upon Canadians right across the country. That is not just in Toronto. It is in Brampton, where home prices are up 139% in just 10 years, in Burlington, where they are up 101%, and in rural places like Prince Edward County, where prices are up 211%. In fact, 24 out of 28 areas in Ontario, as defined by the Canadian Real Estate Association, have seen price increases over 100% in the last 10 years alone.

I also want to tell members that it is not just in Ontario. In Prince Edward Island, housing prices are up 137% right across the province. In British Columbia, they are up 90%. Even in Quebec, which used to have some of the country's most affordable homes, they are up 81%.

Actions have consequences and the Liberal-NDP government is certainly finding that out now as the results of its economic vandalism become clearer and clearer. This is what happens when we pump a half-a-trillion dollars of inflationary spending into the Canadian economy, disproportionately benefiting asset holders and not the people who are looking for somewhere to call home. This is what happens when we ship billions of dollars off to municipalities with no strings attached to how that money is used or what it goes to. The government sent \$471 million to Toronto, but since then housing starts are down 40% and, get this, development charges are up 42%.

That is what happens when our immigration system is broken by a government that cannot do the simple math. In 2022, we accepted 437,000 new citizens and 607,000 permanent residents, but we only built 219,000 new homes. Anybody who would do the basic math on this could have anticipated what would happen next.

• (1225)

However, the Minister of Immigration at the time did not. In fact, he ignored the recommendations from his own department that warned about a housing shortage. This guy is now the Minister of Housing. The man who helped break the immigration system, in addition to losing track of all of the people that he let in, is now responsible for fixing housing in this country. It is going exactly how we might expect. Housing prices continue to rise and housing starts continue to go down.

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We know the Liberals try to distract Canadians with what is happening in other countries as a way to somehow minimize the valid concerns of the people in our own country, so let us talk about some of these foreign countries for just a moment. Housing in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal was deemed much more unaffordable than cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York. Toronto and Vancouver were also deemed “impossibly unaffordable” when compared to Australia, China, Ireland, New Zealand, Singapore, the U.K. and the U.S.

What do we do about all of this? The Liberal answer is to continue to keep funnelling money into an accelerator fund that has built exactly zero homes and to keep shovelling cash into the infrastructure bank, which has completed exactly the same number of projects. They are doubling down on the same approach that got us here and are not willing or are unable to make new housing available while, at the same time, continuing to mess with the immigration system, a mess that has the weak Prime Minister staring down the barrel of a 25%-tariff threat from the U.S.

Common-sense Conservatives have a different approach. We are going to cut the GST on new housing construction so it is cheaper, not more expensive, to build the units Canadians need. We are going to make life more affordable by increasing the supply and availability of places to live from coast to coast.

The current Liberal housing minister loves the photo ops. Most of his job is big, fancy photo ops but no meaningful results, because we cannot argue with the facts. We are going to quit the photo ops and the posturing and replace them with actual negotiation that ties the number of infrastructure dollars that cities receive to the number of homes they build. We will make sure that high-density housing gets built near critical infrastructure like public transit.

It is a common-sense approach. What we incentivize, we get. The government incentivizes inaction and delay, and that is what they are getting. We will incentivize results for Canadians so they can achieve the dream of home ownership.

Even Liberals approve of the plan, Liberals like the Prime Minister's adviser, Mike Moffatt, who called it “bold”. He said he was a big fan of the idea. He knows that it is time for real action, as do most other Canadians. It seems like everyone except the ones who sit on the other side of the House know exactly what the solution is. Conservatives are going to axe the tax, build homes and finally bring home a country where hard work pays off once again and where affordable housing gives way to that Canadian dream.

There is much more I can talk about. I could go on about the lowest projected growth among advanced economies, the 1.5 million Canadians seeking work who cannot find it, the rapid growth of our bureaucracy and the red tape here in Ottawa, the impending quadrupling of a carbon tax that will delete more than \$30 billion from our GDP or the new capital gains tax, which will send all that money down south.

I could go on and on. Unfortunately, I will run out of time. I would much rather have four years to come up with the solutions to address the problems created by the Liberals and the NDP instead of the 10 minutes that this debate affords.

All Canadians needed a carbon tax election yesterday, which is what we are hearing right across the country, so we can have a common-sense Conservative majority government led by the member for Carleton, who will fix this mess, axe the tax, build homes, fix the budget and stop crime. It is within our reach. We are going to build homes that Canadians can actually afford. We are going to bring it home after the next election, after we have a Conservative majority government in this place, led by the member for Carleton.

● (1230)

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I come from the riding of Saint John—Rothesay, which has benefited greatly from programs we have brought forward, such as the coinvestment fund, the rapid housing initiative and the housing accelerator fund.

One thing I noticed over the last few weeks was the Leader of the Opposition calling mayors across this country “incompetent”. Does the member opposite agree with calling mayors across this country incompetent, and will she get behind the housing accelerator fund, which is helping to transform communities and setting the table to build houses across this country?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, first of all, the member should remember that the accelerator builds exactly zero homes, and that is an admission by the Liberals' own housing minister.

The second thing I would ask him is this: What kind of city takes \$470 million from the federal government only to see housing starts fall by 40% and development costs go up by 42%?

We believe that money belongs in the pockets of Canadians rather than in big bureaucracies. That is exactly what we are going to do after Canadians elect a new government, after throwing out the most unpopular government in my lifetime.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives want to eliminate sales tax on new builds, and they are also calling on Quebec and the provinces to do the same, in other words, eliminate tax on new homes.

Does our esteemed member realize that that in no way concerns Parliament, much less the Conservatives? It is a provincial jurisdiction.

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Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, what we are talking about here is taking the tax off of homes under \$1 million for individuals right across the country. Not only will that spur a tremendous amount of housing construction around the country, which this government has failed to do. It has seen housing starts right across the country go down in municipalities in which it has pumped millions and millions of dollars, and it has seen development costs go up.

I think that is a responsibility of the federal government, one that this federal government has failed Canadians on over the last 10 years, which is why we are in this crisis, but we are going to fix it.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am a bit concerned that, in all of the slogans and the one-liners, we are missing quite a lot of detail in terms of the Conservative plan. I am concerned that, when the Conservatives are talking about taking the GST off of homes under \$1 million, in one breath they are talking about that and in another breath, when we have tried to reduce the GST off of some home essentials, they call it inflationary.

I am concerned that people would be confused in terms of that double standard or that hypocrisy, and I would love to hear the hon. member address that.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, nobody is confused about any of the hypocrisy here. What they are confused about is the hypocrisy from the NDP, which continues to vote with the Liberal government to raise taxes for all Canadians on everything.

Our solution is pretty simple. We are going to take the tax off of everything, for good, for everyone. The member from the NDP can go back to her people and have a carbon tax election, where one option is that she can continue supporting the government of the day, like she has, being another part of the Liberal Party, which she was not elected to do, or she can offer a permanent tax cut on everything for everyone.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, some of us were concerned that the member was not going to get her stars because she was not using the slogans, but she caught it at the very end.

It is amazing. When we talk about housing, the gentleman she is sitting beside, the leader of the Conservative Party, was the worst minister of housing in history, well, at least since World War II anyway. Six homes is how many houses he built. Now the Conservatives say, “We got an idea. We’re going to dump all over affordable housing”, and that is for sure.

How can the member say with a straight face that the accelerator fund is not doing anything to construct new homes? That is absolutely ridiculous. Does she not understand the principles of infrastructure?

• (1235)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I am glad that the member opposite is concerned about my career trajectory, but I am not going to take lessons from him.

What I will say is that, for \$89 billion in an accelerator fund on housing, the government has doubled the price of a home in 10 years, doubled the price of rent and doubled the price of a mortgage everywhere right across the country. That is awesome.

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Madam Speaker, we just learned that the Minister of Finance will finally present her economic statement on December 16. This will be the first time in the history of our country that the fall economic statement is presented so late. The government dragged its feet because it wants to avoid revealing that this Prime Minister is weak and has lost control of spending, deficits, taxes and the cost of living.

We have one message. We are asking for only one thing in this economic statement. We want the government to stop its inflationary spending that is driving up the cost of living, stop its job-killing tax hikes, stop putting Canadians in debt and stop threatening our social programs by making irresponsible decisions. That is what the Conservatives are asking for.

We rise today to call on the government to eliminate the taxes on houses and condos. The bulk of housing costs for Canadians are not incurred to pay carpenters, materials or land. It is the taxes and red tape from all three levels of government that increase housing costs and make it impossible for young people to purchase a home. That is why common-sense Conservatives will get rid of the GST on new homes and save Quebec families up to \$50,000 when they buy a nice home.

This is where we differ from the other parties. They believe that the government should take the money and give it to next level of government, which would give it to yet another level of government, which would, in turn, give it to the bureaucrats, who, in the end, would approve the housing. We feel that there is a faster route between two points, and that is a straight line. That is why we propose putting the money straight into the pockets of homebuyers by lowering their taxes.

Based on the data published by the government about the GST exemption for rental property, we estimate that our proposed measure would help build 30,000 more homes per year. Lower taxes on housing means more home construction. This is the solution that will really deliver results for ordinary Canadians.

Business of Supply

The part I am most proud of is that we will do away with the housing accelerator fund, because this program actually slows down the construction of housing. I am very proud to announce that we will eliminate this program and save the \$8 billion the Liberal government is planning to pump into it, because this Liberal program will only increase bureaucracy and give more money to greedy politicians. I find it a bit pathetic that the Minister of Housing is calling mayors to tell them he has sent them big cheques. He is telling them they must send a letter asking for his program to remain in place, even though it has slowed down housing construction. Obviously, these politicians are agreeing to this because they want taxpayer money. Politicians want money, but we are not here to work for other politicians. We are here to work for taxpayers and for young people who want to buy a home.

• (1240)

That is why I will be very proud to cut these programs. That is not because these programs do not help. It would be incorrect to say that, because, in fact, the programs actually cause harm. Every time that bureaucracies receive money, the problem is not that they do not help. The problem is that they cause harm. Multi-layered bureaucracies prevent the building of new homes. We know this because, in the past 20 years, municipal revenues have ballooned twice as fast as inflation and population growth combined. If giving more money to municipalities was enough to speed up the construction of affordable homes, we would have the most affordable housing in the world. That is not the solution.

The solution is to get rid of the bureaucracy, cut taxes and leave money in the pockets of the people actually doing the building and buying the homes. That is what we intend to do by cutting the GST on new homes sold, which will help every Canadian family save up to \$50,000.

[English]

We now learn that the Minister of Finance is finally going to introduce her fall economic update on December 16. She calls it a “fall update”. Santa Claus will already have been preparing to lift off from the North Pole and the snow will have been falling. The leaves have long disappeared into the earth, they have disintegrated and biodegraded because it has been so long since those leaves fell, yet we are waiting until December 16 because she wants to hide that the weak Prime Minister has lost control of deficits, spending and our economy. We will see if she keeps her solemn commitment to a \$40-billion deficit or if that promise will also go by the way-side.

That is why we have only one request: stop, just stop, in the name of God. The Liberals can stop the inflationary spending, stop doubling debt and stop driving up taxes on starving Canadians. They can stop everything they are doing until we have a carbon tax election, at which time common-sense Conservatives can axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Also, they can stop taxing new homes. That is why common-sense Conservatives are proposing to get rid of the GST on new homes to save up to \$50,000 on a home for a young family trying to start out. After the Liberal government doubled the cost, it is the least we could do.

Liberals would rather have the money go to bureaucrats. They believe in trickle-down government. They take from the people and

give it to one government, which gives it to another government that gives it to a third government that gives it to some bureaucrats. These bureaucrats, apparently, are going to start shuffling papers more quickly to eventually approve some homes. It is not that the housing accelerator program, which I plan, with delight, to get rid of, has not helped; it is that it has made the problem so much worse. When more money is given to bureaucrats, it is not that they do not do helpful things; it is that they stand in the way and cause even more harm.

One developer said just the other day, “Over the last 10 years, the list of application requirements has increased exponentially, and so has the number of bureaucrats looking at your application. And there’s often a pattern of staff waiting till the last day — say on Day 29 of 30 — they write back with a comment (pertaining to) something minor, which triggers another cycle. Imagine three or four such review cycles.”

The more of these bureaucrats, the more layers and the more delay. By getting rid of this program alone and doing nothing else, we will speed up housing construction. Yes, there will be greedy, fat-cat, big-city politicians who will whine and complain because they had expected to have that money to build their empires. My message to them is, “Go on whining and complaining because I am not here to build your empire. I am here to build homes for Canadians.”

That will be the choice in a housing tax election: either the NDP-Liberals, who fund local bureaucracies, or common-sense Conservatives, who axe the tax to build the homes.

• (1245)

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I say often, I am from the beautiful riding of Saint John—Rothesay, where the Leader of the Opposition has frequently visited recently. One thing I want to talk about is the pride I have in our programs, like the housing accelerator, the rapid housing initiative, the national housing co-investment fund, that have benefited my riding greatly. One thing that has certainly come to notice of late is the Leader of the Opposition calling mayors across this country “incompetent”, among other things.

Will the Leader of the Opposition stop calling mayors across this country incompetent? Is the mayor of my riding of Saint John incompetent?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I do not know the member's mayor, so I cannot comment on that, but I know that his mayor's MP is incompetent. We know that because since he became the MP, housing costs have doubled in Saint John. He was not able to get the Energy East pipeline approved. He squeals away that he does not like the carbon tax but then votes to quadruple that same tax. I do not know if that is duplicity or incompetence, but it is probably a combination of the two.

Business of Supply

One mayor was complaining the other day. The mayor in Aurora said he wants me to give the GST from new homes to him. Can members imagine that? He said to do away with this idea of axing the GST on new homes and just give him the money. Every time someone buys a home in Aurora, the GST would go to the mayor instead.

If that was going to help build homes, it already would have. His revenues are up 192% while population growth and inflation have been 62% in the last 15 years. What has that done? It has driven up housing costs. We need less money for politicians and fewer taxes for home buyers.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I find it very sad that the Leader of the Opposition would stoop so low as take cheap shots at the Liberal member.

I would like to remind him that there is no proof that eliminating the 5% GST will reduce house prices. For example, since September 2023, there has been no GST on the construction of rental housing, and this has had no measurable impact on house prices.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, he says that eliminating the GST on apartments has not yet reduced the cost of houses.

That is because houses are not apartments. There is a difference between an apartment and a house. Eliminating taxes on apartments is about reducing the cost of apartments. Eliminating the GST on houses is about reducing the cost of houses.

Does that help the member?

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, last week, the leader of the Conservative Party actually told on himself. He stood up and he called a picket line a rally for striking workers, and yet he cosplays as though he is a working-class hero.

My question to him is quite simple. Is the leader of the official opposition still adamant about turning back our labour laws and making Canada a right-to-work nation, or will he stand with New Democrats and force the Liberals to end the section 107 ministerial directions that undermine charter rights and privileges for unions and workers?

• (1250)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I will answer the member's questions very directly. We are not going to be bringing in a right-to-work law.

The second question is whether we will stand with the New Democrats for unions. That is exactly what I am asking him to do today. We have a motion in the House of Commons today that condemns the government for robbing workers of the right to strike and votes non-confidence in the government that the NDP leader has said is greedy, corporate-driven and anti-worker.

We are ready to stand up today on that vote. The question is whether the NDP will stand by its own words, stand by workers, or will it sell out once again for the Prime Minister?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad we are having a debate

on a substantive motion, and I will talk a little more about it. I will be splitting my time on this important issue with the hon. member for Kings—Hants.

I am glad we are having a debate on the substantive issue of how we build more homes in Canada. We have that challenge because of the fact that Canada is growing in size. We are at 40 million people, and it is a good thing that we are growing as a country. We have an aging population and we need to ensure that we have more young people who are working and are able to populate our country from coast to coast to coast.

However, that comes with challenges on the infrastructure. We obviously have to keep pace with the growing population. We have to build more homes. We have to build more roads and public transit. We need to ensure that the infrastructure necessary to serve these homes, like water and sewer and electricity, is there as well. Of course, all of it costs money and it takes time to build.

How we go about doing that is a really important question. That is what we are debating through this opposition day motion. I will put aside all the name-calling and the personal insults, which is beneath this place and beneath all of us. I want to give credit where credit is due. For the very first time, the Conservative Party, on this substantive issue, has put forward a policy idea. Whether we agree or disagree is obviously up to all of us. However, I am glad to see that the Conservatives have put forward the idea of eliminating GST from home purchases under a million dollars. This idea merits a debate, but from my perspective, it is really not going to help build more homes. Therefore, I will be voting against this motion, and I will lay out my reasons for that.

As I see it, what is being proposed is basically to cut 5% of the GST from all new homes that are being built at a million dollars or less. According to the Conservative math that would save about \$5,000, but it does not create any incentive whatsoever to build more homes, whether they are homes are to own or to rent.

It definitely does not create any incentive whatsoever to build homes that are affordable for people who are not able to rent or own a home and who need some sort of subsidy or support to have a roof over their heads. That particular element is missing. In fact, what we have just heard from the Leader of the Opposition is that the Conservatives would cancel all existing programs, all kinds of existing supports and funding that would help build affordable homes across the country. In a very quick moment, I will speak to affordable housing that is being built in my community of Ottawa Centre alone.

Business of Supply

The Conservative proposal would basically cut the GST and at the same time cut all programs that allow municipalities to build the necessary infrastructure like water, sewer and electricity, all those things that are necessary to then ensure that people can live in these homes. It is hard to make a house a home without plumbing or electricity. That is a very significant challenge. This is why we are seeing other levels of government, provinces and municipalities, which play a bigger role in building homes, opposing the Conservative idea. They do not support it because they see the challenges it would cause.

The Leader of the Opposition can make it all about how he does not want to support politicians creating empires, etc, but he, as we know, has no experience in building anything. When he was the minister of housing, I think he was able to build six affordable homes, and that is not a record of which to be extremely proud.

• (1255)

However, if we talk to mayors like here in the City of Ottawa, who are responsible for the rules and all the work that happens to build homes, they will tell me that a simple cut in the GST is not sufficient to build the kinds of homes we need. If it were sufficient, this idea would have been implemented some time ago. This it not to mention the hypocrisy we are seeing from the Conservatives.

The member from the Bloc mentioned earlier that when we as a government brought in getting rid of GST from purpose-built rentals, the Conservatives voted against that idea. Therefore, they cannot be speaking out of both sides of their mouths. On one hand, they thought that was not good enough, that we should not be cutting GST from purpose-built rental. Now they think that they have the best idea in place and that everybody should align behind it.

We are trying to do a mix of both those ideas. On one hand, we have cut GST from purpose-built rentals so that we can induce more building of rental properties, and we are seeing the result of that. We are seeing rent coming down across the country. At the same time, we are creating incentives for municipalities to build more homes, and that is the essence of the housing accelerator fund.

We have done two things through that fund.

First, we have been using the money to build more affordable housing in our communities and municipalities. We know that about 15 or 16 Conservative MPs have lobbied the Minister of Housing over time. I can give the full list, if anyone wants me to, but I do not want to take away from my important time. Those members have written letters to the Minister of Housing asking that money be given to their municipalities, because they need those dollars to build more affordable housing in their respective communities.

In Ottawa, for example, if we look at my community of Ottawa Centre, we see affordable housing being built at Rochester Heights, which is maybe a 10-minute drive from here. We are seeing a whole new village being build, the Gladstone Village. We are starting to develop it, and it is being supported through the housing accelerator fund. Most recently, we made an announcement at LeBreton Flats called Dream LeBreton Flats, with the Multifaith Housing

Initiative, where affordable housing along with for-profit housing will be built.

In my riding alone, we are talking 1,000 affordable units that are starting to be built because of the housing accelerator fund. That would have not happened without the fund. These are homes for real people, people who can afford market rent and people who cannot afford market rent. These people will be able to call downtown Ottawa their home. However, that would have not have happened if we had not given \$176 million to the City of Ottawa.

The second thing we are doing through the housing accelerator fund is saying to cities and municipalities that if they want that money, they need to change their rules to allow for more density. They need to get rid of rules that say, "Not in my backyard." We need for them to allow for at least four units per lot, for example.

We are the federal government, so we do not have any authority. The provinces have the authority to change their planning acts. As the federal government, we do not have any authority to change municipal rules as to how much housing they should allow for. However, through the housing accelerator fund, we have created that incentive for municipalities to change the rules to allow for more density. That is exactly what we are seeing right now.

Not only are we able to build more affordable homes, but we there are for developers. Builders and developers like more density, so we have required municipalities to change their rules so that they can create and build more housing. That is smart policy. That is why the approach we have put forward is paying dividends. We are starting to see more housing starts as a result. We are starting to see more affordable housing being built as a result.

The solution that is being put forward is worthy of debate. I am glad that the Conservatives have finally put an idea together, but it will not solve the problem of housing. It is a great slogan. It is great for the Leader of the Opposition to give fiery speeches and do his really bad acting, and he needs to get some lessons, but it is will not build the kind of housing nor the magnitude of housing we need. For that reason, I will be voting against the motion.

• (1300)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the comments of the parliamentary secretary. He told a much different story than what the Leader of the Opposition had to say. The Leader of the Opposition is being very accusatory, saying that bureaucracy and red tape at city halls are preventing building from occurring, and nobody is really denying that. He gave the example of a developer and a planning application being reviewed and then reviewed again. Nobody is denying that.

Business of Supply

We are saying that the housing accelerator fund is specifically designed. I know that in Kingston, the money that was given to the municipality was tied to reducing that red tape to ensure that more houses would get built quicker and to reduce exactly those kinds of problems that the Leader of the Opposition indicated.

I am wonder if the parliamentary secretary can provide some of his thoughts on that, and why it is so important. More important, over 15 Conservatives want this and have been advocating for this money for their ridings. Clearly, the Conservatives must see that it works. At least, the correspondence that they sent to the minister indicated that they thought the money would work for the intended purpose. Otherwise, why would they be asking for it?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, the member for Kingston and the Islands is absolutely right, and he cited Kingston as an example. I can cite Ottawa as an example. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Carleton, and I share the same city as home. I wonder whether he has spoken with our mayor, Mark Sutcliffe, about this issue and what the mayor's response would be. A very small part of the money that we have given is going toward streamlining the entire process for approving projects, which builders and developers want. They want a simpler process. We are able to use that money to create that incentive to change the bylaws to build more density, so not just one house goes up but up to four houses go up by default, as well as even higher density on bigger sites, so builders can leverage the infrastructure that is available. Then a larger proportion of that money is going toward building affordable housing.

That is the point. We are able to accomplish both. What the Leader of the Opposition would be doing, essentially, by cutting the GST only is raising the margin of profit for developers because they would not pass those savings to the consumers.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have two quick questions and a comment for the member opposite. He was expounding on the importance of the housing accelerator fund. It is supposed to be an equitable fund for all ridings across the country.

First, I would like the member to name one Conservative-held riding in Ontario that got a single penny of the housing accelerator fund. Second, because he thinks this is such a great fund, how many houses have been built in his riding with the housing accelerator fund?

My last point is a comment. The member mentioned that the Leader of the Opposition's proposal would save \$5,000 on a million dollar house. Five per cent of \$1 million is \$50,000, not \$5,000.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, I enjoy working with the member opposite, and I appreciate his public service. There are a lot of examples, and I can take him on a tour of my riding one of these weekends, if he likes. I mentioned Gladstone Village, which is right at Somerset and Preston. We can see that the cranes are up. That affordable housing is being build because of the housing accelerator fund.

We can go to Rochester Street and Gladstone Avenue by Adult High School and see housing being built. Phase 1 is already up and phase 2 is going up now. That is because of the housing accelerator fund. I can take the member to LeBreton Flats, just down the road.

Two cranes are up right now and two towers are going up. That is called Dream LeBreton Flats, and Multifaith Housing Initiative is the not-for-profit housing provider. That is because of the housing accelerator fund.

If the member opposite would like, I can go through many other lists of actual housing, and I will get him a list of all the Conservative ridings that are benefiting from the housing accelerator fund as well.

● (1305)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives are currently proposing to eliminate the goods and services tax, or GST, on the construction of new houses and condos. The question now becomes, will this actually do anything to address the skyrocketing demand for social housing?

The Liberal Party touts its various programs, including the housing accelerator fund and the public lands acquisition fund. Many programs are also available through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. However, one of the problems with these programs is that the results are so hard to gauge because these things take such a long time and because, when the federal government does decide to invest, it attaches 56,000 conditions, even though housing falls under the jurisdiction of Quebec and its municipalities.

How can my colleague say that the Liberal government's strategies are more effective than a proposal like cutting the GST?

[*English*]

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, I will say that we have a big challenge right now in terms of building housing across this country, and we need all three orders of government working together.

The hon. member is absolutely right, of course. Rules around how housing is built, the actual housing, are a provincial and municipal issue, but we are working with provincial and municipal governments to create those incentives so that we can increase the supply to reduce the demand on housing.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are here today to discuss an opposition day motion from the Conservative Party in relation to housing. I welcome the opportunity to rise in this place and talk about the importance of housing, because this is a national conversation right now.

Business of Supply

I want to give some context from my own riding of Kings—Hants. I was elected in 2019. I remember going to communities, particularly in rural parts of my riding, in Hants County and Kings County, and we would have conversations. We would knock on the door, and people would say they were worried that they would not be able to actually sell their home. It had been on the market for a year or two, and no one seemed to want to buy it.

Fortunately, that is no longer a problem in Nova Scotia, at least in the Annapolis Valley and in Hants County. There has been a growth and an interest from people who want to live in rural Nova Scotia and, I would say, also rural Atlantic Canada. Particularly during the height of the pandemic and afterward, we saw large migrations across Canada. People from Ontario and western Canada wanted to come live in Nova Scotia for the quality of life our communities offer. This is a very good thing because, for years, our province has been chasing, desiring and wanting to welcome newcomers.

It may sound like a very modest number, but we just eclipsed a million people about a year and a half ago in our province. This was a number that came after projections showed that our population was going to decrease. As Nova Scotians, we should be welcoming the fact that people want to live in our communities. I live in East Hants, one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Atlantic Canada.

At the same time, we need to make sure that we have the proper housing, infrastructure and social services to keep pace. This is what the conversation is about today. The Conservatives have put on the table a suggestion that the government should move forward with a GST cut for newbuild homes in the country up to a million dollars. I will be honest; in and of itself, that idea is not a terrible one. The catch is the fine print that the Conservatives do not put in the opposition day motion, which they have said outside this place. That is the way they would go about paying for that type of expenditure, which would be to cut the programs that are driving supply.

It is extremely important for Canadians at home to understand that, when we rob Peter to pay Paul, that is not getting us any further ahead. In fact, it is actually narrowing the portion of Canadians who could benefit from a housing initiative. I am one of the younger members of Parliament in the House. There are a lot of people in my age bracket who are looking to buy their first home, looking to get in and start a family. They may not be in a position to purchase a brand new, just-built home.

One thing I have not heard the Conservatives address so far in the debate is why we are going so narrow on just newly built homes. Why is this not an affordability measure that is extended all the way across? Why are they proposing to get rid of the programs that are increasing supply, which could help support this initiative in the first place? By stunting the ability to build the supply, they are narrowing the benefit they would even be offering as part of their public policy choice to Canadians.

First and foremost, the Conservatives have to be clear on why they are cutting the programs that are important for the supply that is needed. We have heard premiers and, frankly, all members of Parliament on all sides of the House say that we need more supply

in this country. I agree. Why are we taking away the programs that are giving us just that?

This gives us an opportunity to examine the programs the government has put out. I am not the housing minister, but I would suggest that the government has four different cadres of initiatives. We have put out support directly to developers to build, whether that is in very low-cost financing for developers to be able to build either new homes or new rental units, or whether it is in money given directly to the provinces to support public housing.

Part of the reason we are in this situation is that, for 35 years, starting with the Chrétien government, there was an exodus of federal involvement in social and public housing. I have a lot of respect for Mr. Chrétien. His government was good for this country. However, it is the current government that has sought to actually return these things. These things do not turn around overnight. This is part of the reason we find ourselves in the situation that we do.

• (1310)

The third element is working directly with municipalities, whether that is providing the infrastructure needed for housing or putting money on the table that is tied to incentives. We have heard a lot that the Conservatives want to sit down and negotiate with the municipalities and withhold federal funding. On the positive side of the stick, that is exactly what the government is doing. It is sitting down with municipalities and putting in funding that is conditional on homes getting built in their local area. It is not pulling back federal funding if they do not hit a 15% target. I will get into more of what the member for Carleton's plan entails; experts have said that it would build less housing in this country, not more, and it is actually a very benign policy.

Finally, we are also working directly with the people who would buy the homes, primarily young Canadians, via the first home savings account. There are a number of initiatives to try to help support young Canadians in getting into a home, with ways they can save up tax-free to do just that.

What is the evidence of our plan working? In Nova Scotia, we have good news. In 2023, Nova Scotia had the most housing starts since 1940. I want to repeat that. By virtue of federal leadership on this file, our province of Nova Scotia had the most housing of the last 83 years. Even better news is that Nova Scotia is actually on pace to exceed that this year.

I can see concretely, in my own backyard, the work that the federal program is doing to increase supply. We know it cannot just be supply. Yes, that is important and that, in and of itself, will create more of an affordability context for Canadians, but we have targeted programs to actually help with affordable housing units. What the Conservative Party is offering my constituents is to cut the programs that are promising to help deliver almost 5,000 new housing units in Kings—Hants over the next decade.

The leader of the official opposition stands up and calls mayors incompetent. Does that extend to Mayor Dave Corkum in Kings County? Does that include the warden, Eleanor Roulston, in East Hants? Is he going to come into the place and tell her that she is incompetent? How about Mayor Abraham Zebian in Windsor-West Hants? Is he incompetent? How about his council? How about the Conservative candidate in Kings—Hants who was a municipal councillor? Is the leader of the official opposition suggesting that he is incompetent as well? I would like to know the answer on that because, of course, he was part of the Kings County council that welcomed the federal investment in housing to build more housing in Kings—Hants.

It is not constructive to have someone who wants to be the prime minister of this country going around trying to beat up every other level of government. That is not the type of leadership we should expect in this country. It is not the way we should be going about it.

I want to get to the leader's plan and talk about the ridiculousness of his plan. His private member's bill, which has been widely critiqued by housing advocates in this country as being ineffectual compared with the government programs, actually proposes that if municipalities do not build 15% more housing, then they do not get federal funds. There is irony in that.

We may have a municipality that is doing very well, working in a pro-development way to build new housing. Let us say it built 100 houses this year. Under the leader of the official opposition's program, if it did not build 115 next year, he would not give the municipality any federal money to help support the continued growth.

However, what if a municipality was perhaps underperforming, doing terribly and standing in the way? With the big bureaucracy that the leader screams against, if it built five houses, it would only have to build one more in order to get his 15% funding on the Government of Canada side. It makes absolutely no sense, and it is the result of policy and slogans being written on the back of a napkin. It is not good public policy.

I welcome a conversation on housing, as the member for Ottawa Centre said, but let us have a conversation about concrete ways to get out of this situation. It is not going to be by cutting programs that are helping to build more housing in this country. It is not by cutting programs that are helping with affordable housing units. The Conservatives suggest that they will cut funding to municipalities that, in many cases, need the critical infrastructure to build out. It is easy to say that we want to build a house, but if we do not have the waste water and water infrastructure to do it, it is not going to happen.

● (1315)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member made some good points, but after nine years, there have been too few homes built in Canada to come anywhere close to keeping pace with the need.

It is very obvious in the fact that the only thing that has happened is that rents, mortgages and housing costs have doubled. However, the Liberals do not think that taking the GST off any homes built below a million dollars would be helpful. It certainly would be to the young people I speak to.

Business of Supply

Can the member for Kings—Hants indicate why the Liberals have not been anywhere near successful in meeting the demand?

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, I actually think the proposal as is would be helpful. My speech gave another level of nuance. I hope the member for Brandon—Souris can have a conversation with the leader of the official opposition to say that it is fine if we want to have this policy, but it should not be on the back of actually cutting the federal funding. The funding is helping to build the homes that would be necessary for people to take advantage of the tax credit that we are putting in place or the GST relief.

We have built 500,000 homes in this country. There are a lot of good initiatives. There are issues in western liberal democracies right now around homebuilding. A lot of them came on the back of the pandemic, when we did not have supply by virtue of almost 30 years of governments of Canada, successive Liberal and Conservative governments, getting out of the space of federal housing at a time when interest rates from the central banks were very low. Housing prices took off because of the fact that mortgage lending space opened up and there was not enough supply. However, the way to get where we want to go is not by actually cutting the programs that build the supply for the homes we need.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, essentially, that is a way for the Conservatives to pass the cost on to the provinces and to Quebec.

With \$18 billion in projected housing starts, the same amount it will cost the government in taxes could help build roughly 20,000 social housing units.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about that.

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I missed part of my hon. colleague's question. However, I completely agree that it is important to invest in social housing.

The reason we are having this problem is that for 30 years, the federal Conservative government—but also the federal Liberal government—moved away from investing in non-profit organizations and the provinces for building social housing.

Business of Supply

• (1320)

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I share my colleagues' concerns with some of the language that is being used by the Conservative leader. I look at Mayor Scott Goodmanson of Langford, Mayor Michelle Staples of Duncan, Mayor Rob Douglas of North Cowichan and Mayor Tim McGonigle of Lake Cowichan. These individuals and their councillors are people whom I value incredibly, and we have a great working relationship.

Another province that is doing great work, of course, is British Columbia, with the BC NDP. Our housing starts right now are 40% higher than they were under the previous government. We are leading the way on tax measures designed to clamp down on speculation, and the province has stepped in to change the zoning laws where some municipalities are not keeping up with the demand.

I am just wondering if my colleague thinks that maybe there are additional measures; maybe we need to look to our past for examples. During and immediately following the Second World War, the federal government stepped in with the creation of a Crown corporation to deal with returning veterans and the influx of workers, who were helping with the war effort, to our cities.

Does he think that such a measure might be beneficial here and now or that it is at least an idea to be considered, given the housing crunch that we are currently facing and the fact that the market has not met the demand?

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, I agree. We should be concerned when there is criticism of our local mayors and the people who step up to serve our communities. The member for Carleton should actually stand in this place and start naming them. Are they my mayors? Are they the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford's mayors? Who is the member talking about? He likes the bogeyman, but these are people trying to serve their communities. As federal representatives, we should be trying to provide support to build the housing that is needed.

In relation to the question around a Crown corporation and whether we should create another Crown agency, I do not know. However, I like that the Minister of Housing has put out the idea of using federal lands and federal resources in a public sense to try to build more housing. We have to utilize all tools at our disposal.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the Conservatives' motion on housing. Many, if not all, of the members of the House give genuine priority to housing. However, although everyone here sincerely prioritizes housing, their solutions can vary. One person who genuinely puts a lot of effort into the housing file and will be enlightening us on the subject is the legendary member from Jonquière, who is renowned for his verve and punchy delivery. He will follow up on my speech, so I will be sharing my time with him.

The Bloc Québécois agrees with the motion in principle, but we have a major problem with how it is drafted, in particular its proposal to have the provinces eliminate the provincial sales tax. The Conservatives are calling on Quebec to eliminate the tax on new

housing units. It is not up to the federal government to tell Quebec and the provinces what to do, especially in these desperate times, when we are facing a fiscal imbalance.

A few days ago we saw a perfect example of the fact we are facing a fiscal imbalance. The Prime Minister announced that he wanted to grant a three-month GST holiday on a package of goods—here we could have at least discussed what type of goods would be included—and give a \$250 cheque to everyone with a net income of \$150,000 or less a year, which is a ridiculous measure. That same day, the Quebec finance minister regrettably announced that there was not enough money to maintain the health care and education systems and that he was forced to demand that his various departments stay strictly within their budgets because the books had to be balanced at the end of the month. We saw both of these things on the same day: Santa Claus giving out presents, while the provinces tightened their belts. That actually happens every day. That is Canada in 2024, and that has been our reality for a long time now. We would like to see things change in 2025.

That said, the federal government has no business telling Quebec what to do, but the federal government could decide to remove the GST on the construction of new housing, and we think that could be a positive thing. However, it is important to remember that new housing represents only 30% of the market, so this measure will have a limited impact on the market. It is also important to remember that, in general, the real estate market in Quebec and Canada is overheating. There is not enough supply to meet the demand.

Inflation has caused housing prices to skyrocket. We are talking about a 68% increase over the past three years in Quebec. Where did that inflation come from? It came from the fact that every time a house goes on the market, there are 22 potential buyers. Buyers know when they make an offer that they will not be the only ones doing so. That creates a bidding war and drives up housing prices. The value of such transactions affects the value of future transactions. That is a really big problem.

Removing the GST from housing construction could allow for some breathing room, but we are concerned that this 5% will simply end up in the pockets of developers and sellers. We are concerned about that, but we cannot be against a good thing or against a measure that makes it easier to buy housing. That is why we will be supporting this motion. However, since we have serious concerns, I think it would be a good idea to amend that part of today's motion.

• (1325)

We need a lot of housing units. Let us talk percentages. The Liberal government has implemented various programs to facilitate access to housing. The leader of the Conservative Party says he would eliminate these programs at the earliest opportunity to finance his tax cuts. I am not sure that that is the way to go.

Quebec is already not receiving its share of these programs. Quebec represents 22% of the population of Canada, but it has received only 14% of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's housing accelerator fund. Quebec has received only 6.2% of the budget for the affordable housing fund, even though it represents 22% of the population of Canada. These percentages are bad enough, but it gets worse. CMHC says that 31% of Canada's housing needs are in Quebec. That is strange, because Quebec is expected to pay more for programs in other provinces with smaller populations because the goal is to provide uniform services across the country, yet when Quebec should be getting more than the percentage of the population that it represents, not only does it not get 31%, it does not even get 22%. It gets 14% and 6%. That is preposterous.

At the same time, Quebec is left waiting for funding for its projects, because the federal government's funding always comes with strings attached and specific expectations. It wants to negotiate with Quebec, but this is Quebecers' own money that it is sending back to them. This money is not a gift from the federal government. It comes from the sales tax and income tax that Quebecers have paid throughout the year. Quebec should not have to beg for it.

Consider the last round of negotiations on the affordable housing program. It took three years for the federal government to loosen its purse strings and transfer the funds to Quebec. There were three long years of negotiations. The projects could and should have started in 2017. The housing crisis might be less serious today if we had started earlier. However, because of the negotiations, the projects did not start until 2020. That is the story of housing in Quebec and Canada. If anyone is looking for arguments to support Quebec's political independence, it is not hard to find them in the House. Every day of the week, we find good reasons for Quebec to become independent.

The Liberals make all kinds of promises and come up with wishy-washy programs that do not amount to much. The Conservatives want to replace them and say that they are going to get rid of everything. There will no longer be any taxes, and the invisible hand of supply and demand will balance out the market. They are day and night, but they both look similar at dawn. They are like two different shades of grey, and both are unsatisfactory for Quebecers. We need clear, drastic measures on housing.

In the last minute that I have left, I will cite some of the things that the Bloc Québécois proposed in its last platform. We proposed putting 1% of the federal government's revenues into social, community and truly affordable housing. That is another topic that cannot be resolved in 10 minutes. When the so-called affordable housing is not affordable in real life because it is too expensive, then we need to have another look at the criteria. We need to recalculate everything. We also proposed that all of the federal government's surplus properties be prioritized for housing development. We proposed charging a tax on real estate speculation to stop people from moving too often or from flipping homes for profit. We proposed a change to the home buyers' plan. We proposed creating an acquisition fund to help first-time buyers come up with a down payment. We also proposed transfers to Quebec with no strings attached. I will close on that.

Business of Supply

• (1330)

I have a message for all the federalist political parties: The best way to increase the housing supply is to transfer the money to Quebec and the provinces. They will figure it out with the municipalities. The federal government has no business telling the municipalities and provinces what to do.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have to say that my colleague made some good points.

He recognized that a combination of measures is needed to achieve the objective of addressing the housing crisis. Let us not forget that the Conservative Party members are saying that they have the best strategy. They are going to get rid of all the other strategies that we proposed and that are on the table today. However, the mayors are thanking us for introducing them. I recognize the jurisdictional issue, but a Canadian is a Canadian. To keep from wasting time, they need to work closely with the federal and provincial governments to achieve the goal of building housing quickly.

Does my colleague agree that the Conservative Party members should not be muzzled? We know that they are not allowed to talk about this.

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to hear that the parliamentary secretary agrees with my entire speech. I am very pleased to hear that.

Of course I want members to have freedom of speech. It is more than a little worrisome to find out that some political parties forbid their members from speaking out. Even more serious is the fact that members are forbidden from promoting programs that could provide money for their constituents.

Our primary task, ahead of representing any political party, and ahead of serving as a parliamentary secretary, a minister or a member of the shadow cabinet, is to represent the people who elected us and put their interests first, ahead of our own views. I do think that is a very serious problem.

• (1335)

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, in 1992, the Liberals pulled out of the national housing strategy at a time when we were building 25,000 non-market housing units a year.

An hon. member: Where were you?

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I grew up in co-op housing, to answer my colleague who just heckled me. Thirty-two years without building those 25,000 units has obviously left us in a huge deficit. In fact, right now we are the lowest in the OECD in non-market housing, at 3.5%. We can look to the Netherlands, where it is at 34%; Denmark, where it is at 21%; or France, where it is at 17% and its goal is 20%.

Business of Supply

Does my colleague believe that maybe it would be better if we took the GST and returned it to communities where it was collected to build non-market housing? He talked about not telling communities what to do, but how about putting it back in the hands of communities for non-market housing so we could scale up? Maybe he could speak to the importance of that.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that great question, and yes, that would be wonderful.

What I want, as I said in my speech earlier, is for the federal government to stop imposing conditions. The member has suggested taking the equivalent of the money collected for the GST and returning it to the communities to fund non-market housing, in other words, community or affordable housing. I applaud and would welcome that.

The problem my colleague raised in his question goes deeper than that. He mentioned the housing deficit. Our governments are too focused on short-term action, on four-year horizons, to win votes. The \$250 cheque is a good example of that. Such measures are hogwash.

We need to think about the long term. We should not be having a housing crisis. Long-term plans should have been made ages ago. There is a labour shortage. I taught my high school students about this in the 1990s. I told them there would be a labour shortage if nothing was done to prevent it. I cannot believe that I knew that, but our leaders did not. There are no long-term measures.

It is important to look ahead to the future.

[English]

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am really glad to see that my colleague from Quebec agrees with me in regard to our Conservative idea of taking some of the government buildings we have and turning them into affordable housing. I think affordable housing has proven to be the area of most need in Canada.

I wonder if he could expand on anything else, besides using those buildings for affordable housing, he thinks would be of benefit to those who cannot afford a home today, and what he thinks of the idea of taking the GST off of homes built by anyone, but particularly younger people in Canada, that are under a million dollars.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I do agree. We support any measure that can significantly improve access to housing.

My colleague asked me whether I had any other ideas. We have plenty, but since I have only 30 seconds to speak, I will simply reiterate our main proposal. Money must be invested regularly over the long term for affordable, social and community housing. We must think outside the box in terms of transforming existing buildings and prioritize the co-operative model. There are many things we can do, and we must act in a non-partisan manner.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am surprised that the motion the House is taking up today is not a motion of non-confidence. I thought the Conservatives had said they were going to take advantage of every opposition day to try and topple

the government. I do not know what is going on, but it does seem like part of a pattern, because today's motion strikes me as typical of the tactics employed by the member for Carleton. I call this the Carleton method.

What does this method look like? It often involves focusing on populist proposals based on simplistic notions in response to complex problems. Every time I see a Conservative motion, that is what it looks like. My colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé said earlier that the Bloc Québécois was going to vote in favour of this motion. However, we are doing so somewhat reluctantly, because the motion contains a trap. Reducing taxes may stimulate housing construction, but we need to go a little further.

That is why I think we need to ditch the Carleton method, which consists of overly simplistic proposals that often take the form of political rhetoric and catchy sound bytes. It seems to me that, during their last leadership race, the Conservatives chose a leader who would be better suited for an advertising agency than for the job of prime minister. I say this without rancor. He is great at coming up with slogans, but as for innovative solutions, I have yet to see any.

It is symptomatic of what we have been seeing in the House for a while now. For the Conservatives, politics seems to be boil down to chanting slogans. Some of my colleagues may have seen groups of people laying hands, chanting and expecting results. That is what I think of when I hear the Conservatives. Some of my colleagues may be familiar with the Conservative Party's chants: axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget. I do not know whether they intend to use a drill and a screwdriver, but they want to fix the budget and stop the crime.

Every time I hear the leader of the Conservative Party, all of those chants make me think about François Truffaut's films, of which I am a fan. It makes me think of the film *The 400 Blows*, as well as the sequel, *Stolen Kisses*. There is an interesting character in these films called Antoine Doinel. To illustrate his lust for Fabienne Tabard, Truffaut shows him in front of a mirror for a long time compulsively repeating the name Fabienne Tabard. He thinks he will get somewhere if he just keeps repeating it, but in the end, his lecherous desire will go unrequited. I feel like I am watching a cheap new version of a Truffaut film when I hear the leader of the official opposition repeat his political rhetoric and formulas ad nauseum.

The solution put forward in this political rhetoric is fundamentally cosmetic. When faced with complex political problems, one needs structuring measures. I will explain why I believe the Conservatives' proposal is not a structuring measure, even though we will be voting for it.

First, I listened to the leader of the official opposition's speech earlier. He clearly said that we needed to end bureaucracy. The most populist discourse is the one that accuses politicians of taking money away from workers, wanting to steal from them and rob them of what is theirs. They forget to mention that we also collect sales tax and income tax to be able to offer services. The leader of the official opposition is very careful not to mention that we collect sales tax and income tax to be able to offer services. In his speech, he said he wanted to take money away from the politicians and give it directly back to citizens, to workers.

I have a different interpretation of what he is proposing. I get the impression that the leader of the official opposition is funding a populist measure on the backs of the provinces. We see at the end of the motion that the member for Carleton clearly intends to ensure that the provincial premiers also remove the sales tax on new construction. In Quebec's case, that would be the QST.

● (1340)

That is quite problematic because, as my colleague indicated earlier, in Quebec's case, the forecast for housing starts next year is \$18 billion. Removing the QST would mean a \$1.8-billion shortfall for Quebec. The leader of the official opposition is not saying so, but in his motion he is asking the Quebec government to forgo \$1.8 billion when Quebec's deficit is nearly \$13 billion. Any reasonable person would understand that Quebec cannot agree to that.

There is a relatively simple notion in the Canadian federation, and that is fiscal imbalance. What does the federal government always do when it needs to tighten its belt? It cuts transfer payments and transfers the tax burden of its policies onto the provinces. That is the oldest trick in the book. Even Jean Chrétien said that it was the best thing since sliced bread, because that means there is no political price to pay. When the leader of the official opposition says that he will put more in workers' pockets, he means that he will get the money from the provinces, like Quebec, that are already having difficulty carrying out their responsibilities in education and health care. My colleagues know as well as I do that health care and child care in Quebec is chronically underfunded. If \$1.8 billion is cut from Quebec and the deficit increases, that would once more compromise Quebec's mission, which is to put in place the social safety net that is helping families who are already having a hard time. Eliminating a service on the one hand and allowing them to save on the purchase of a house on the other is not a structuring measure. In my opinion, it does nothing to solve the fiscal imbalance. Let us take this a bit further. A quick calculation shows that, with this \$1.8 billion, Quebec could finance almost 20,000 social housing units. In some way, the leader of the official opposition would deprive Quebec of 20,000 social housing units. For these reasons, the motion put forward by our Conservative colleagues could benefit from an amendment. I will get back to that later.

Why do I say this is not a structuring measure? It is because I feel that my Conservative Party colleagues never tackle the real problems. What brought on the housing crisis in Quebec? Immigration is responsible for much of it. I have never seen my Conservative colleagues hold an opposition day to oppose the Century Initiative, the Liberals' political commitment to act in such a way as to ensure that Quebec loses all control over immigration and that un-

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precedented pressure is exerted on the various services. I have never heard the Conservatives talk about that. They are not tackling a central problem, namely immigration. They have only started doing that recently.

Another problem they have been silent on is the one raised by the the Canadian Construction Association. The people in this association have made it clear to us, in numerous meetings, that home construction and housing cannot be considered in a vacuum. It takes infrastructure, but the municipalities' infrastructure deficit is so high that it might well take \$128 billion to build this infrastructure.

I will close by discussing the TECQ program, or the gas tax and Quebec's contribution. If we want better municipal infrastructure, it is inevitable that the municipalities must have access to the funding they need. Unfortunately, however, the government did not renew the TECQ.

I move the following amendment: That the motion be amended by deleting the words "and call on the provincial premiers to match this proposal".

● (1345)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion. If the sponsor is not present, the House leader, the whip or the deputy whip of the sponsor's party may give or refuse consent on the sponsor's behalf.

Since none of them are present in the House to give consent, the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one of the things that I have found disrespectful, coming from the official opposition, is the fact that the Conservatives are completely ignoring and, I would suggest, abusing other levels of government.

The current leader of the Conservative Party is likely the worst-ever minister of housing since World War II and even pre-World War II. At the same time, he is now downplaying the importance of the accelerator fund, even though some of his own Conservative members are writing in support of the fund.

I am wondering if the member could provide his thoughts in regard to the fact that, when governments work together, they can in fact get more accomplished, and that the accelerator fund is something that is good for all regions of the country.

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• (1350)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I rarely agree with the member for Winnipeg North. I am not trying to be unkind, but for once he said something that made sense, and I completely agree with him.

It is not by calling the mayors of Quebec's biggest municipalities incompetent that we are going to generate more housing construction. As I was saying earlier, I call this the member for Carleton's method: He either recites slogans or hurls insults. That is what we have seen from the member for Carleton.

I do not know whether he will be changing his ways any time soon. I would encourage him to do so and to, for once, propose policy directions that get away from the unbridled populism that does not in any way serve the interests of any segment of our society.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I very much enjoyed my colleague's reference to the "Carleton method", which in some quarters of Ottawa is also known as the "Stornoway method."

I would caution him on repeating Conservative slogans, because otherwise the Conservative whip's office might come and give him a gold star. However, I do share his concerns that what the Conservatives are proposing these days does not have a lot of substance to it. It might look good on the surface, but I would agree with him that we need more of a wholesale structural change, because we are facing a housing policy that is in deficit from 30 years of combined Liberal and Conservative governments. That is why we are where we are today.

Could the member offer a few more comments? Maybe he could expand on his remarks about how we need to take a deep dive into this, and how it needs to be a wholesale structural rethinking of how the federal government interacts with both the provinces and the municipalities. It cannot be a relationship based on petty insults and grievances, but one where there is collaborative working together.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I think the most sustainable solution for Quebec in the long term is independence, but I will not play partisan politics.

We definitely need more autonomy. Who knows about housing needs? I will be frank, it is not the federal government. It is the municipalities and the Quebec government that know what they need in terms of infrastructure to build more housing units. Yet that is completely the opposite of what the leader of the official opposition suggested earlier when he said he wanted to take money away from the politicians and give it directly to workers. Giving money directly to workers by means of a tax credit is one thing, but if we do not have the infrastructure to build housing units, we are no further ahead. That looks suspiciously like the member from Carleton's usual populist approach. It is not a structuring measure, but a good political pitch. It comes back to what I was saying earlier.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, at least the motion addresses housing and the housing crisis we are currently experiencing. However, I am not sure that this measure aimed at eliminating the GST will mean more housing units, and especially not social housing units.

The Liberals are happy to argue with the Conservatives, because their own strategy does not work. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

Recently, in response to the homelessness crisis, the government decided to invest another \$250 million in the Reaching Home program, except there are bloody strings attached. As a condition, Quebec would have to submit all of its projects. We do not need to submit any projects. The tents we all see on the streets speak for themselves.

I would like to hear the comments—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Jonquière has time for a short response.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville is absolutely right. She asked the question and actually gave the answer too. The Liberal government is adding conditions to most of these issues, without taking into account the jurisdictions of the provinces and cities. The Conservatives are trying to starve the provinces and Quebec by passing on part of the cost and calling mayors—

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry, but the hon. member's time has expired.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, since I only have a few minutes of speaking time, I will start by saying that the Conservative Party, which imposed the GST on new homes, is now proposing to eliminate the GST that the party itself imposed. It just goes to show how insincere the Conservatives are on this issue.

It should also be said that the mover of the motion is not present in the House right now, so the amendment just moved by the Bloc Québécois could not be moved. I, of course—

[English]

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the NDP member fully understands that he cannot refer to a person's presence in the chamber.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry; I was not paying attention as I was listening to advice. However, the hon. member knows that we cannot refer to presences or absences in the House.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby has the floor.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I found it sad that the amendment was not able to be proposed. I will be proposing another one in two minutes. I would expect the House leader, the deputy House leader, the whip or the deputy whip of the Conservative Party to be here. If they take this motion seriously, that is how—

Statements by Members

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Again, the hon. member knows that we cannot mention presences or absences in the House. The hon. member can say that they would accept or not.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I am just repeating your words, which were in order, which is why I am going to be proposing the motion.

However, the fact that the Conservatives imposed the GST on new homes and now they are proposing to take it off is a bit passing strange. The Conservatives have never apologized for doing that, neither have they apologized for refusing to support what the NDP has been pushing, which is taking the GST off family essentials, telecom, home heating and all of those things. Conservatives say they are concerned about the cost of living, but aside from 12 words they use in their multiple slogans, they have not shown sincerity in any of these cases and in actually doing something that would help people.

Of course with the NDP, Conservative constituents have gotten dental care, and they are getting pharmacare, anti-scab legislation and affordable housing. The NDP has proposed, and Conservatives will be voting on it shortly, to ensure that the GST be taken off family essentials. The NDP wants to make it permanent, and the Conservatives will be judged on how they vote.

Without further ado, I would like to amend the motion in the following way, seconded by the terrific member for London—Fanshawe. I move that the motion be amended by replacing the word “homes” with the words “principal residences”.

[Translation]

I am moving this amendment because this motion is unclear. It should specify whether it applies to housing or to homes. The French version is not clear.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion, or in the case that he or she is not present, consent may be given or denied by the House leader, the deputy House leader, the whip or the deputy whip of the sponsor's party. Since none of these members has risen in the chamber to give their consent, the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's proposal to remove the GST on home sales has been universally accepted as a good plan, a plan that puts money back in the pockets of potential homeowners. Does the hon. member not agree that this would be a good plan to put money back in the pockets of people who are buying homes, so they can afford them?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the Conservatives did this in the first place. They imposed the GST on new homes. Now Conservatives are saying they made a mistake. The NDP certainly agrees. The Conservatives have made a hell of a lot of mistakes; this is only one of so many they have made.

The fact that a number of amendments have been moved in good faith by a number of parties, including the Bloc and the NDP, and

not a single Conservative proposer or House leader, deputy House leader, whip or deputy whip has been in the House shows how seriously Conservatives take the motion before us today.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

SOMALILAND

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 13, Somaliland held its presidential election. I extend my congratulations to President-elect Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi, Irro, for his landside victory. It is a testament to the trust and confidence the people of Somaliland have placed in his leadership.

I want to recognize the outgoing president, Muse Bihi Abdi, and thank him for his service. I also congratulate the KAAH party on winning to become one of the three officially recognized political parties.

We are in a world where elections are often disputed, as recently witnessed in a couple of countries in Europe. The use of biometric voter identification and the peaceful transfer of power are not just a triumph for Somaliland but also a powerful inspiration to Africa and to democratic countries around the world.

* * *

ELVES SPECIAL NEEDS SOCIETY

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to honour the Elves Special Needs Society, an organization that has made a profound impact on so many people in Edmonton. We are fortunate to have many charities and not-for-profits that serve Edmonton, and Elves stands out as truly one of the best.

Recently celebrating its 50th anniversary, Elves, named for its benefactor, Milton Elves, and not for the North Pole elves, began with just three staff members and seven children. Over the years, it has grown to a vital service, supporting over 400 learners with severe disabilities and special needs. Now with two facilities, Elves provides personalized education and day programs that significantly enhance the lives of individuals and their families. With more than 200 dedicated staff now, Elves continues to offer inclusive, family-centred services.

For five decades, Elves has remained true to its commitment to service, continually adapting and evolving to the needs of our community. Elves provides hope, love, dignity and opportunity to the people who need it the most.

*Statements by Members***CHRISTMAS**

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I say this every year, but I cannot believe it is December already. When I was a young girl, Christmas was a time of magic, lights, foods that we rarely got to taste, the school nativity program, and early Christmas morning mass when I really wanted to be home with my toys. Then and now it was a time of joy, new beginnings and peace, and a season to remember acts of kindness.

I thank all the frontline and essential workers for all they do. To the many volunteers who work tirelessly for a more equitable society, I say thank you. I thank my constituents for their ongoing support. To my family, with love, I say thank you, and to the members visiting today, I say that I love them; I could not do this without their support.

I wish my colleagues and all in the House a Merry Christmas.

* * *

[*Translation*]

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THREE ORGANIZATIONS IN BERTHIER—MASKINONGÉ

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is a lot to celebrate this year in Berthier—Maskinongé, where three community organizations are marking their 30th anniversary. What an amazing milestone.

The Réseau des aidants naturels d'Autray has made it its mission to improve the quality of life of caregivers by providing them with services and a place to meet other caregivers in order to break their isolation.

The Maison des jeunes Le Gros Orteil in Saint-Jean-de-Matha is a place where local youth can participate in wholesome activities and work on their social skills in a safe environment.

Lastly, the Centre L'Étape du bassin de Maskinongé welcomes people struggling with addiction in a supportive, judgment-free environment. Its activities are focused on intervention, prevention and awareness.

The people who operate these three organizations are making a real difference in the community. They are changing and saving lives. I congratulate them on reaching 30 years and thank them for what they do. Long may they continue.

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SHEILA FRASER

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House of Commons of Canada that, at a ceremony held in New York in November, the International Federation of Accountants honoured Sheila Fraser, FCPA, as the 2024 recipient of its Global Leadership Award.

Originally from Quebec, Ms. Fraser was Canada's first auditor general, a position she held from 2001 to 2011. She has received multiple honours, including the CA Émérite award and the designation “fellow” from both the Ordre des comptables agréés du Québec and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, in addition to several honorary degrees. Ms. Fraser has been a tireless

advocate for transparency and good governance in the private and public sectors. Her career has been a shining example of integrity and accountability.

• (1405)

[*English*]

Congratulations to Sheila Fraser, a fellow CPA.

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JOHN MCDERMID

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk about my friend, the Hon. John McDermid. He was the member of Parliament for Brampton—Georgetown from 1979 to 1993 and a cabinet minister in the Mulroney government from 1988 to 1993, when he retired.

John generously gave of his time in the community. He was an honorary colonel in the Lorne Scots. He was the chair of our local hospital board.

I met John in 1988, when I was 17 years old, and I volunteered on his campaign. John returned that favour in spades in 2019 when he helped me get re-elected. Over the five years that followed, John became a mentor and a friend, and he shared so many amazing anecdotes from his time in Brian Mulroney's government.

On Thursday night, I had the opportunity to give John a King Charles III Coronation Medal in his hospital room, surrounded by many of his closest friends. On Friday night, John passed away, surrounded by his family.

John was a true gentleman. He was a patriot. He served his country with honour and distinction. Godspeed, John. God bless him and his family.

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HOLIDAY HEROES CAMPAIGN

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 12, the 28th annual holiday heroes toy and food drive was officially kicked off by York Regional Police. Over the years, it has helped over 100,000 Canadians in need by collecting donations of cash, gift cards, toys, non-perishable food items and children's clothing.

I thank the Newmarket Soccer Club for hosting, and I thank the York Regional Police. I thank the partners, the Salvation Army and Victim Services of York Region, which play a key role in distributing these items throughout the community. I thank, also, our community. We live in a place I am proud to call home. I am proud of how we support each other and of our willingness to give.

To quote Dr. Seuss, “Christmas Day will always be just as long as we have we”.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the persecution of Ahmadi Muslims is a harsh reality in many parts of the world, where they face violence, discrimination, and the denial of their basic rights simply for practising their faith. This injustice highlights the importance of religious freedom. Here in Canada, we are fortunate to live in a society that values and upholds this freedom. Every individual has the right to worship without fear of persecution. I am proud that many in the Ahmadiyya community, under the leadership of national president Lal Khan Malik, have chosen Humber River—Black Creek to call their home.

Our community is undoubtedly better for having the Ahmadiyya community among us, as they inspire us with their values of peace, tolerance and community service. As Canadians, we must appreciate and protect religious freedom for all, ensuring a world where respect, understanding and inclusion flourish.

Love for all, hatred for none.

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LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, will the NDP leader stand by his words or is he just a walking, talking pile of contradictions? Do members remember when the NDP leader said he was going to rip up his supply and confidence deal? That was just a stunt for the Elmwood—Transcona by-election.

As it turns out, the Prime Minister names the tune, and the NDP leader is happy to sing along. The NDP leader was happy to sing along to the tune of doubling housing costs. The NDP leader was happy to sing along to letting dangerous criminals out on bail. The NDP leader was happy to sing along to the tune of driving food bank use to an all-time high, leading to two million visits in just one month. The NDP leader is going to sing along to the tune of quadrupling the carbon tax, which will drive up the cost of gas, groceries and home heating.

Will the NDP leader start singing his own tune and finally vote non-confidence so that Conservatives can axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime, or will the NDP leader sing along with the Liberals, so that the Prime Minister gets the power, he gets his pension and Canadians get the bill?

* * *

• (1410)

[*Translation*]

DENIS GRATTON

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with profound sadness that I rise today to pay tribute to renowned Franco-Ontarian journalist and columnist Denis Gratton, who left us on December 7. A native of Vanier, Mr. Gratton was a towering voice for the Ottawa—Vanier community and for Ontario's francophones.

A veteran scribe for the daily newspaper *Le Droit*, he not only wrote about the realities of everyday life but also gave a voice to

Statements by Members

the voiceless. His courage left an indelible mark, including the time in 1993 he accompanied Canadian peacekeepers in war-torn Bosnia. He played a key role at historic moments, such as when he supported the fight for Hôpital Montfort's survival. His commitment to the francophonie, his humanity and his ability to make us think, laugh and cry touched an entire community.

Denis was much more than a journalist. He was an ambassador for our culture and our rights. My thoughts are with his family. I am grateful to Denis for all that he did.

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[*English*]

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP will get his \$2.2-million pension while Canadians get the misery and the bill. The leader of the NDP continues to keep a prime minister in power who has doubled the cost of housing, doubled rent, and created record-high usage of food banks and record-high increases in child poverty.

Why have we not had an election? It is because the leader of the NDP continues to keep the Prime Minister in power. He told Canadians he was ripping up the supply and confidence agreement, yet here we are again. Members do not need to take my word for it. I will quote the leader of the NDP. Here are his exact words: "The fact is, the Liberals are too weak, too selfish and too beholden to corporate interests to fight for people".

There is only one person responsible for keeping the Prime Minister in power despite the genuine suffering and misery of Canadians, and that is the leader of the NDP.

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[*Translation*]

FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, fall economic statements were introduced by Liberal finance minister Paul Martin in order to combat the deficit. Mr. Martin's legacy seems to have been tarnished by the new practices of this incompetent Liberal government. The \$40-billion deficit target seems to have been exceeded, and then some.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer now forecasts a 2024-25 federal deficit of \$46.4 billion, exceeding the already astronomical targets. Canadians are calling the government to account and demanding that it immediately reveal the true size of the deficit, whose consequences will be borne by future generations.

Statements by Members

A Conservative government will fix the budget by enacting a dollar-for-dollar law that requires all new spending be offset with an equal amount of savings. That is how Canadian families manage their finances and make it through to the end of the month. This is how a responsible Conservative government will fix the budget.

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[English]

TAX RELIEF

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a tax cut for Canadians is exactly what this government is going forward with, beginning on December 14 and carrying through to February. We have heard from Canadians. We know the challenges they have been through in previous years. During the pandemic, we stood with Canadians, and into the modern day, we stand with them. I have stood with my constituents during this time.

I know what this will mean for them, this lifting of the GST and HST off of the cost of groceries and off of the cost of a night out for a meal for a family of four. Members can imagine what that will do at a family restaurant and what that will do for the entrepreneurs of those restaurants. It is no surprise that restaurant owners across the country, including restaurant associations, are completely behind this measure. I also think about the young families looking forward to bringing a new little boy or girl into the household. Those car seats are expensive. I have personal experience with that. Lifting tax on that is going to go a long way.

That is why we did it. We are going to continue to stand there for the people of this country.

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CANADA POST POSTAL WORKERS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand with all postal workers across Canada and in my riding of North Island—Powell River. Can members imagine being paid so little that they could not afford the very basics for living while their bosses were making hundreds of thousands of dollars every year? Why is it that management feels comfortable padding its pockets and then points the blame at those who strike? They are people brave enough to put themselves in a place where they are not getting paid, and they have now have lost their benefits. I say shame on them.

I have stood on the picket line with some of these folks, and when I get home, I will join them again if they are still not able to do the jobs they desperately want to do. The Conservatives will never stand on the picket line, fighting alongside those brave union members, who have made this country better for every single Canadian with their actions. The Liberals need to stop interrupting the process and allow for fair negotiations.

I thank the postal workers who are still collecting letters for Santa and delivering, in some cases without pay, cheques to the most vulnerable. I stand in solidarity with them.

● (1415)

[Translation]

CLUB RICHELIEU VERDUN

Mr. Louis-Philippe Sauvé (LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I want to highlight the 75th anniversary of Club Richelieu Verdun.

In my riding, the people who volunteer on behalf of this club work hard to promote the francophonie and improve the lives of people in our community through a host of charitable activities, in keeping with the club's motto, which is "peace and fraternity".

Club members are tireless at holding fundraisers that squeeze the wealthy for all they are worth for the greater good of the young and the less fortunate. Examples include the club's past poker tournaments, silent auctions and dinners. Since 1949, the club has raised funds for a long list of causes like the Harmonie Richelieu Verdun choir, the Ancre des jeunes, Camp Richelieu St-Côme, Petits Renards and Toujours ensemble, not to mention its support for the Société Saint-Vincent-de-Paul.

While this may not ring a bell for my colleagues, its meaning rings loud and clear to the people of Verdun. We who live in the southwest are a tightly knit bunch, and that is a beautiful thing.

Long live Club Richelieu Verdun.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, common-sense Conservatives have one simple request for the Prime Minister, which is to please just stop: stop the tax hikes, especially the job-killing carbon tax; stop fuelling inflation by cutting inflationary spending and axing the sales tax on homes so homebuyers can save up to \$50,000; stop adding debt by confirming that the deficit has not risen above the \$40-billion guardrail promised by the Prime Minister.

Never before has so much been spent to achieve so little. The Prime Minister has spent so much, he has added more debt than every other prime minister in Canadian history combined. Even former finance minister Bill Morneau agrees that inflationary spending has driven up the cost of everything.

There is an old adage that once one has dug oneself into a hole, it is time to stop digging. It is time for a carbon tax election so common-sense Conservatives can axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

TAX RELIEF

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know that, when the Conservatives hit the campaign trail, they talk a line of tax savings, but when it comes right down to it, what are their actions on the floor of the House? When it came time to give a tax break to Canada's middle class, they voted no.

Let me pose a question. How would one define hypocrisy? The Conservatives all campaigned on giving a GST holiday in the last election, including the leader of the Conservative Party. When we brought forward a tax holiday on the GST, what did members of the Conservative Party do? They voted against tax relief for the holiday season. Talk about the leader being a grinch.

At the end of the day, we cannot trust the Conservatives. If people want a tax break, they need to vote for the Liberal Party.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just before Christmas, under a blanket of snow, the minister is finally going to present her economic update. She will do so after this Prime Minister has doubled the national debt, adding more debt than all other previous prime ministers combined. He has doubled the cost of housing and created more bureaucracy, which prevents housing construction. He has doubled the number of people using food banks because of taxes on food.

We are asking for just one thing: stop raising taxes, stop the inflationary spending and stop putting Canadians in debt.

• (1420)

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of our economic record, which we will present to the House next week, on December 16. We will be presenting our economic record. The inflation rate has remained within the Bank of Canada's target range for several months now. The Bank of Canada has cut its key interest rate four times in a row to date.

That is our economic record, and we are very proud of it.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he is so proud of an update that his government wants to bury in the snow.

We want the government to stop taxing people. Eliminating the GST on new homes would be one way to end the inflationary taxes that have driven up the cost of living.

We also want the government to keep its promises. The minister said that the deficit would not exceed \$40 billion. Will she keep that promise?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that housing is too expensive. That is why we eliminated the sales tax on new apartment complexes.

Oral Questions

Today, Canada is building housing faster than it ever has. We are building more homes than they did when the Conservative leader was the minister responsible for housing. We are seeing the results: Rents have come down this year in big cities like Montreal. The Conservative leader wants to bring back the tax on building rental properties. His plan would drive up the cost of housing.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after doubling the debt with inflationary spending, doubling the cost of housing with more bureaucracy that blocks building, doubling the number of people using food banks with carbon taxes on farmers and truckers who bring us our food, finally the Liberals are planning a fall update but will do it in the snow on December 16. Our message is "stop": Stop the inflationary spending; stop the tax increases on food and homes; stop indebting Canadians. Will they please just stop?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on December 16, we will present our economic record in this chamber and we will talk about the fall economic statement. I anticipate that we are going to hear a lot about the economic record that we have amassed. One thing I anticipate we will hear about is what we have done with respect to child care. With respect to child care and the economic affordability model, we have brought it down to \$10 a day in eight provinces. That has resulted in 110,000 women joining the workplace. What is that record? Eighty-five per cent of women are now participating in the workforce in Canada. That is a record high. That is what we stand behind on this side of the House.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the Liberals have amassed is a lot of debt. In fact, they have doubled the debt. This Prime Minister has added more debt than all prior prime ministers combined, which has caused the worst inflation in 40 years, and is now rising as the debt is rising. The finance minister said that she had a guardrail for the deficit; it would not go beyond \$40 billion. If the Liberals go up to \$40 billion, that means they have hit the guardrail. If they go higher than \$40 billion, they have gone through the guardrail. What is on the other side of a guardrail? It is a cliff. Is this minister leading us off a cliff?

Oral Questions

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the spending that our government is doing. Let us talk about what observers are observing. Tiff Macklem, and I am pretty sure the Leader of the Opposition knows who that is, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, says, “We’re no longer trying to get inflation down. Government spending is not pushing against us getting inflation down, we’ve got it down.” Let us talk about David Dodge, the former Bank of Canada governor, who was in place when that member was in cabinet. He said that “because it was obsessively focused on reducing the federal deficit over fiscal years 2011-12 through 2015-16, the Harper government unnecessarily contributed to a slower, rather more muted recovery....” We are not going to follow that playbook, because it did not work.

• (1425)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of non-partisanship, we have put forward a motion inspired by the leader of the NDP. He has said that the Prime Minister is “weak”, greedy, “selfish and... beholden to corporate interests”. He has pointed out that the Prime Minister has violated the rights of workers. We took the NDP leader’s words and put them in a motion that includes non-confidence.

Will the Prime Minister allow the NDP leader a free vote so that he can vote non-confidence?

The Speaker: That is stretching the limits of questions dealing with the administration of government, but I see that the hon. government House leader is on her feet.

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing we know is that the Leader of the Opposition certainly does not allow any free votes for his members of Parliament. We also know that he does not allow them to speak for themselves. What we do know is that when they try to advocate for their communities, what does he say? “No, do not do that, because I do not think it is politically expedient for me.”

He muzzles his own MPs, does not allow them to have free votes and keeps them from standing up for their communities.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Saint-Maxime school has made the news with prayers in class, homophobic comments and students resisting sex education.

The Government of Quebec has had enough of attacks on secularism. It is calling on Ottawa to repeal the religious exemption in the Criminal Code and wants to strengthen Bill 21 on secularism.

In Ottawa, it is the exact opposite. The federal government is challenging Bill 21. It is waffling when it comes to the religious exemption. First it is going to get rid of it, and then it is not going to get rid of it. Ottawa is doing nothing at all to defend state secularism.

When will the government stop undermining secularism in Quebec?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as our colleague likely knows, education falls under provincial jurisdiction.

If he wants to talk about education and how to protect children in the Quebec school system, then he should talk to the Government of Quebec. The House of Commons is not really the proper forum for talking about such issues.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec is a welcoming society that opens its arms to those who choose to integrate.

Successful integration is dependent on everyone sharing values that unite us and bring us closer together, such as gender equality, separation of religion and state, French as a common language and the right to love whoever we want.

Canadian multiculturalism preaches the opposite: no need to integrate, no need to adhere to any values, no need to change.

Does the federal government realize that multiculturalism hinders the integration of new Quebecers and our ability to live together in harmony in Quebec?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unity and connection are exactly what the Canadian federation encourages. That is why in Canada, including Quebec, we are proud to be part of a united country that defends the right and freedom of each and every person to do what they think is best for them.

Once again, the Quebec government has jurisdiction over education. I invite our colleague to ask good questions not here, but at the Quebec National Assembly.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, imagine this: a woman in her seventies has worked her whole life, raised her kids and done everything right. Now she is retired and her pension does not go far enough and she has to skip meals.

The Prime Minister believes that someone earning \$140,000 a year deserves a cheque of \$250, but she does not. Why?

Oral Questions

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are going to stand by our record of defending seniors. On multiple occasions in this chamber over the last nine years, we have done things like change the retirement age from 67, as proposed by the Harper Conservatives, back down to 65; made targeted investments to improve old age security for those over the age of 75; most recently, we have put in place a dental care plan for seniors that has had, despite assertions by the Conservatives that it does not even exist, two million people sign up and over one million people actually receive services for the first time in decades. That is a record of serving seniors, assisting seniors and meeting them where they are. We will stand by that record.

• (1430)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want seniors to pay attention to the fact that the minister did not answer the question as to why they do not deserve cheques of \$250.

[*Translation*]

Imagine someone else, someone with a disability or someone unable to make ends meet. The Prime Minister does not think this person deserves a helping hand.

Will the Prime Minister finally see the light and include these people on the list of recipients of his \$250 cheque?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the measures that we, on this side of the House, are taking target poverty and people with disabilities.

As far as people with disabilities are concerned, we have introduced a benefit specifically for them already. In the past few weeks, we made a change to the GST that impacts all Canadians.

We are always going to fight poverty. The numbers show our success when it comes to the poverty rate. It was fairly high under the Conservatives, but dropped over the past nine years with us.

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[*English*]

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, the NDP leader has a chance to prove he did not sell out Canadian workers for his own pension. He famously promised Canadians that he ripped up his coalition with the Liberals, saying they were “too weak, too selfish and too beholden to corporate interests to fight for people”. Conservatives agree and Canadians want a carbon tax election.

Will the Prime Minister allow the NDP leader to vote for his own words or did the PM whip the NDP vote to block a carbon tax election?

The Speaker: I am afraid that question does not, again, meet the relevance of the administration of government. I do see the government House leader rising to answer.

Colleagues, I will point out a couple of things. First, let us make sure that, when someone has the floor, no one else is taking the floor. Second, I would hate for us to repeat what went on on Friday.

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as mentioned, there was actually no question for the government there. If the member opposite wants to talk about pensions, he could talk about the pension of the leader of the opposition, which, because he has been here for two decades, is estimated at being about \$2 million. If he wants to talk about muzzling of members of Parliament, he should probably pose the question to the leader of his own party, who does not like MPs who do not ask the questions he wants them to ask. In fact, we see all of them around the outskirts of the Conservative area in the House of Commons.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it looks like the Prime Minister has lost control of everything, except his control over the NDP. According to the NDP leader's own words, “You're never going to count on us if you're going to take away the rights of the workers. Never.” We have seen that the Prime Minister has done just that, ordering binding arbitration.

What has the Prime Minister promised to the NDP in exchange for their support for his failing government and his failed carbon tax?

The Speaker: Again, that is not relevant to the administration of government. The Chair will have something to say about this at the end of question period. I do see that the hon. minister is rising; I do not know if he wants to respond.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I see no minister rising.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every time there is a ruling about the government on this issue, there is an absolutely material question. The NDP members say one thing over and over again, and then come in and support the Liberals. What have the Liberals promised the NDP in favour of their support? After time and time again saying all of these things, they keep supporting the government.

What has the government promised the NDP to avoid a carbon tax election?

• (1435)

The Speaker: I am going to be offering a ruling at the end of question period. Perhaps I wish I could have done that earlier, but I see that the hon. minister is rising to her feet to answer.

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

Oral Questions

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to respond to the member's question, which, as I think we all know, does not actually have to do with government business. However, the member opposite and in fact most of the Conservative caucus know a thing or two about saying one thing and doing the opposite. They have been talking about cutting taxes, but at the first opportunity to cut taxes for Canadians, they said no.

Conservatives talk about standing up on behalf of their constituents, but when they try to do that, the Leader of the Opposition takes away their ability to pose questions in this place. If they do not repeat the slogans ad nauseam of the Leader of the Opposition, they are simply not allowed to speak. They are pretty good at saying one thing and doing another.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to be very clear, the leader of the NDP has gotten up and railed against the Liberals for the GST measures, for being against workers, for every possible thing. The NDP has said the government is incompetent. New Democrats have said they cannot vote for it, yet every time there is a confidence motion, New Democrats stand up and do what? They vote for the government, so it is the business of this place.

How much is this costing Canadians? What has the administration promised the NDP to get its members to vote against their leader's own words?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member knows something about railing against a leader, but one question she might want to ask the leader of her party is why he will not get a security clearance. I believe last week at committee we heard from another Conservative leadership contestant about alleged interference by India in the Conservative leadership race. However, the Leader of the Opposition refuses to get a security clearance to actually learn about what happened. He should put the security interests of Canadians ahead of his own personal interests.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on September 4, every Canadian saw the NDP leader put on a big show of tearing up the agreement with this Liberal government.

He was really convincing at the time. He said that “the Liberals are too weak, too selfish and too beholden to corporate interests to fight for people.” That was true on September 4. However, we want to know if the Prime Minister will let the NDP leader vote for his own words.

If, by some misfortune, the NDP leader votes against his own words, how much will it cost Canadians?

The Speaker: The Chair is once again in an unenviable position, because this matter is not directly relevant to the administration of government, but I see that the minister is rising.

The hon. Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question was indeed irrelevant, but here is one that is relevant. Why does the member not speak for

himself? Why does he not speak for his constituents and for the other Conservative members from Quebec?

The Conservative leader claims that the affordable housing being built in his riding and in other Conservative ridings does not exist. He says that housing projects do not exist, and yet several hundred affordable housing units are currently being built in the ridings of Conservative members.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was extremely simple. How much will it cost Canadians? No minister can answer that. None of them know how to count. However, they know how to spend a lot.

The problem is that the NDP doubled down with that infamous statement. The NDP leader said, “the Liberal government will always cave to corporate greed, and always step in to make sure the unions have no power”. That is our motion, word for word.

What does he think of a leader who could end up voting against his own words, this Prime Minister who never kept his budget deficit promise even though he predicted and told Canadians that we would have a balanced budget by 2019?

• (1440)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, knowing how to count helps. One, two, three, four, five, six affordable housing units; that is all the Conservative leader built across the country during his entire career as minister responsible for housing.

There are 8,000 affordable housing units being built right now in Quebec thanks to the \$2-billion agreement we have with the Quebec government. Several hundred of those affordable housing units are in Conservative ridings.

We have built 50,000 affordable housing units across the country in recent years.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the problems with the CARM app is yet another fiasco for the CBSA. The app, which took 14 years to develop and cost taxpayers \$556 million, crashed 22 times in one month. We are talking about half a million dollars, which was a 50% cost overrun, not to mention the fact that the CBSA hid important documents from parliamentarians.

Today, the Standing Committee on International Trade voted unanimously to ask the Auditor General to investigate this latest Liberal fiasco. Will the government support our audit request?

Oral Questions

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our colleague is well aware that the government does not give instructions to the Auditor General. We respect the freedom of committees to study what they want and to invite the Auditor General to look at issues that are important to Canadians.

The CARM replaced a 36-year-old system that was likely to fail. We understand the concerns of businesses and the private sector. I have full confidence that we will be able to quickly address those concerns.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is a real cost to the CBSA's fiasco with CARM. The cost to taxpayers is \$556 million, but there is a cost to business people as well. Their imports are stuck at the border. They have to cope with billing mistakes, automatic withdrawals made twice and endless delays. There is no client service when CARM crashes. It takes weeks for the CBSA to fix these mistakes.

What is the government doing to stop making businesses pay for its fiasco?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, we obviously share our colleague's concerns.

We want to support Canadian businesses and ensure that their payments are accurate and efficient. We want to avoid extra costs for these businesses. That was the point of modernizing this technology, a process, I would remind my colleagues, that began in 2010. It is not just one government that made the decision to take on this modernization. Two governments decided to improve a system not only in terms of ease of access, but also of duties that have to be paid.

We will address all these issues.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the fiasco with the CARM app is not a first for the Canada Border Services Agency. The CBSA was also responsible for the ArriveCAN app, which was supposed to cost \$80,000 and ended up costing \$60 million. Clearly, there is a fundamental problem at CBSA when it comes to being transparent, tracking expenses and staying on budget.

The Bloc Québécois and the Standing Committee on International Trade have asked the Auditor General to investigate. The government cannot afford to wait for another fiasco before taking action. Will it put the CBSA under administrative supervision?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here in the House, we have repeatedly talked about the how important the work of our border services officers is. They keep our country safe, process immigration cases when necessary and prevent drugs like fentanyl from crossing our borders. CBSA officers do important work for our country every day. We have full confidence in that work.

We are going to invest more to support their important work. That is exactly what we are going to do.

[English]

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP leader continues to hold the country hostage, playing political hokey-pokey to secure his pension by February. First, he put himself in a coalition agreement with the Liberals, and then he took himself out, ripping up the agreement while shaking his fist all about. Now he has put himself back in, taping the agreement together and turning himself around after saying he would vote no confidence.

What deal did the Prime Minister make with the leader of the NDP to secure his vote of confidence, and how much will it cost Canadians?

Some hon. member: Oh, oh!

• (1445)

The Speaker: In the opinion of the Chair, this question is pertinent to the administration of government.

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

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the Conservative members of Parliament, all they do is say one thing and do another. They are pretending to support workers' rights when, in reality, it is the Leader of the Opposition who brought forward some of the most draconian anti-worker legislation in this country's history.

We are going to continue to stand up for workers right across this country. It is a record we are proud of. It is not something that Conservatives can say they have ever done.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, words matter. The leader of the NDP said he ripped up his supply and confidence agreement with the Liberals, saying the Liberals are "too weak, too selfish and too beholden to corporate interests to fight for people". Speaking to poor workers, before the Liberals violated their right to strike, he said, "If there is any vote in Parliament that in any way impacts your rights...I can tell you right now, we'll vote no. Whether that vote is a confidence vote or not".

What deal did the Prime Minister make with the leader of the NDP to secure his vote of confidence, and how much will it cost Canadians?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 will go down in history as some of the most oppressively anti-labour legislation ever passed in Parliament. One of the very first acts of this government was to repeal both of those pieces of legislation. The author of those pieces of legislation was none other than the Leader of the Opposition, its chief architect and chief salesman. He is the most anti-worker leader ever elected to the House of Commons.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP leader said that he tore up the agreement with the Liberals last fall. The NDP leader said the Liberals are too weak, too selfish and too beholden to corporate interests. The NDP leader also said that the Liberal government will always give in to corporate greed at the expense of workers.

With that in mind, will the Prime Minister allow the NDP leader to vote for his own words, or will the Liberal government pressure the NDP caucus to vote against the NDP leader's words?

The Speaker: Once again, I am not sure the question has anything to do with government business, but I see that the Minister of Labour and Seniors is rising to answer.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-377 and Bill C-525, some of the most anti-labour legislation in western history, passed in a previous Parliament. The spokesperson and main architect of those bills was none other than the current Leader of the Opposition. That makes him the most anti-union leader in Canadian history.

I invite that member to explain his position.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Women's Shelters Canada says that the housing shortage is trapping people in abusive circumstances, especially in cities where rent is skyrocketing. In Saskatchewan, victims are fleeing to rural areas with cheaper rents but with fewer social supports and public resources, and shelters in the greater Toronto area are overwhelmed because rents are out of reach. Liberals have let people down. Survivors need affordable housing to seek safety from abusers now.

When will the minister deliver affordable rent-geared-to-income housing to save lives?

• (1450)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right. We do need more affordable housing in Canada. We do need more shelters in Canada, and that is why the federal government put forward the national housing strategy, which is doing just that.

The member began her question by pointing to vulnerable women, and I sympathize. In my own community and communities across the country, it remains not just a challenge but a crisis, and that is why the housing strategy that I mentioned just now has placed a focus on ensuring women who have experienced domestic violence are housed. The rapid housing initiative is doing the same thing.

We have more to do, and we will do that work in partnership with any interested party. I know the Conservatives will not be there.

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, families in Nanaimo—Ladysmith are trying to get by, but times are tough, with more and more people relying on food banks.

Loaves and Fishes and its many volunteers have gone above and beyond, but they require funding to expand and meet the growing need. Despite ample attempts, the Liberals have not delivered.

I will ask again, will the government finally provide Loaves and Fishes with the funding required so people on Vancouver Island are not left to go hungry?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I often take the opportunity to meet with volunteers at food banks in my community here in Ottawa and across the country. What I hear about consistently is what a difference the Canada child benefit has made for families who are relying on a food bank for service. The Canada child benefit provides monthly support for families, up to \$7,800 a year per child. This is timely support that we know the Conservatives would oppose.

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is introducing a two-month tax break for all Canadians. After all their talk about cutting taxes, one would expect the Conservatives to walk the walk and support this measure, but they voted against it.

Can the Minister of Small Business speak more about what the government is doing to make life better and safer for Canadians and businesses?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are all talk and no action.

Starting December 14, Canadians will get a GST holiday. The Conservatives talk about axing the tax, but they voted against removing the GST from groceries and family essentials. They say they will build the homes but vow to cut the housing accelerator fund, which is helping build hundreds and thousands of homes right across the country. They say they will stop the crime, but they vote against our gun control measures.

As Canadians can see, the Conservatives are the ones putting a stop to the measures that are helping Canadians and small businesses.

*Oral Questions***THE ECONOMY**

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal-NDP government created a fall fiscal fiasco as it failed to table its fall economic statement. After nine years of inflationary deficits, adding more debt than every government before it combined, it has a lot to hide. Even the Parliamentary Budget Officer said this feudal finance minister blew through her own fiscal guardrail of her \$40-billion deficit.

Why does the government not just stop the economic arson, stop the tax hikes, stop the inflationary deficits, stop adding to the debt and call a carbon tax election now?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know the only thing the Conservatives are serving up for Christmas dinner is stale slogans. They have been trying to change the channel.

The Bank of Canada governor said at a Senate committee recently that government spending is not pushing against us getting inflation down. The Parliamentary Budget Officer recently said the current fiscal policy in Canada is sustainable. He also said we could spend up to 1.5% more of GDP.

What is appalling is that the Conservative Party of Canada will not step up to support a tax break with their obsession about tax cuts.

• (1455)

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Liberals brag about turning temporary two-month tax tricks, like taking dimes off Doritos, common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax for good because the Liberal carbon tax scam is driving more than two million Canadians to a food bank in a single month and one in four to skip meals.

If the Liberals are so sure about quadrupling their carbon tax scam, why do they not just stop breaking the country further and call a carbon tax election now, so Canadians can choose between more tax tricks or a common-sense Conservative government that will bring home lower prices and powerful paycheques?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives want to talk about tax tricks, but what I think is interesting is tricking Canadians into thinking the Conservatives are actually serious about cutting taxes for Canadians. At the first opportunity they get to stand up in the House and support Canadians who they well know have been struggling through an inflationary period, the Conservatives will not. They stand up against it. They oppose the very tax cuts they campaigned on.

A GST holiday for Canadians on essentials over the next two months is a good thing. I do not know how the Conservatives can deny the support that Canadians deserve.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year the finance minister said the deficit would be less than \$40.1

billion, and now Parliament is still waiting for the public accounts to confirm whether the minister kept that promise. Can the minister spare us the suspense and tell us what the deficit was for last year?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has stuck to our fiscal guardrails and that is exactly why inflation has come down for 11 months in a row. It has been within the Bank of Canada's target range for 11 months in a row. We were the first in the G7 to cut interest rates and we have had four consecutive rate cuts. We are looking forward to this Wednesday when the Bank of Canada will have another meeting. We are looking forward to its announcement.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Colleagues, especially the hon. member for Abbotsford, please do not speak unless recognized by the Speaker.

The hon. member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is the point of making promises that the Liberals do not intend or try to even keep? In 2020, the finance minister said that when the need for stimulus was over, it would be withdrawn. The Liberals did not withdraw it. Then it was that the debt-to-GDP ratio would continue to go down, except one year later, it went up. Then she said the deficit would be less than \$40.1 billion, and lo and behold, we find out she broke that promise too. When will someone at least admit these folks are committing economic vandalism and tell us what the deficit is, or are they just worried it is going to shred all the credibility she has left?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will stack up and compare our record to the Conservatives' and run on that any day of the week and twice on Sundays—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I am going to ask hon. members to please not have conversations, especially over those who are using devices to be able to listen to the proceedings of the House.

The hon. parliamentary secretary, from the top, please.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, our government will stack up and run on our record, our fiscal and economic record, against the Conservatives' any day of the week and twice on Sundays. I am happy—

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Colleagues, the more time the Speaker has to spend on his feet, the fewer questions we have to get through in question period.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, we have an AAA credit rating, the lowest deficit and the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio. We have seen that Stats Canada has revised the forecast for Canada for the last three years up, which is significant. We are also rated by the IMF to have the strongest GDP growth in the G7. I think that economic record stands for itself.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order please.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

* * *

• (1500)

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has been sounding the alarm since the safe third country agreement was renegotiated in 2023.

There is a loophole that enables people who cross the border illegally to claim asylum after hiding for 14 days. On Friday, a CBSA report obtained by the media confirmed that, just between April and September 2023, nearly 2,000 people took advantage of that loophole and claimed asylum. According to the CBSA, the exact figures are almost certainly higher than that.

Will the government finally take action to close this 14-day loophole?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I understand correctly, my colleague wants me to take immediate action here, on the floor of the House of Commons, without informing the United States.

Of course, we are concerned about border security. We will continue to strengthen and guarantee border security.

I hope the Bloc Québécois will support the reforms to the asylum system that we will be proposing in the near future, because the last time we proposed such reforms in May, the Bloc Québécois refused to support them and even said no, despite the Government of Quebec's pleas.

The Bloc members need to be more consistent.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is basically the minister's job to answer questions. This is question period.

The government has known for over a year that the 14-day loophole is being exploited. The Liberals have known for over a year that thousands of people are crossing the border illegally to seek asylum. They have known for over a year that criminal smugglers are abusing vulnerable people for as much as \$45,000. They have done nothing, and it is inexcusable. It is inhumane.

Why did it take Donald Trump's threats for this government to take action against illegal immigration and organized crime, when it has known about it for a year?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member seems to be forgetting recent history, and specifically the renewed visa requirements for Mexican nationals. The Bloc Québécois itself claimed victory on this issue. We have been tightening up the immigration system for the past year, and the fact is, it is working.

It is important to note that, since November, the number of border crossers being intercepted at the north-south border has hit an all-time low. We will continue this important work to ensure our border is secure.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister's failure to table a timely fall economic statement goes to the core incompetency of the government. Canadians need a government to axe the carbon tax, build more homes by exempting the GST from new home construction and fix the budget by getting spending under control. Canadians are tired of waiting.

Can the finance minister confirm whether she will keep her promise that the deficit will not exceed her \$40-billion fiscal guardrail? Yes or no, please.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to learn today that our government will announce the fall economic statement. It will be tabled on December 16, which is good news.

What is interesting is that when the Conservatives say "fix the budget", what they really mean to say, and what Canadians should hear as translated, is "cut programs and services Canadians rely on". Whether it is dental care, pharmacare or early childhood education, any of the signature programs that have supported Canadians through this inflationary crisis, Conservatives are going to cut all of them.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is nearly Christmas and we are still waiting for the fall economic statement and the public accounts, both of which should have been tabled in October. That is just basic management.

Canadians need to know how much debt the government is piling on. If the government cannot even manage the basics, like giving Canadians the straight facts about the public's finances, will it call an immediate election so Canadians can elect a government that will?

Oral Questions

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been here for five years, thank God, for the people of Whitby. I have never seen the level of obstruction in the House that I have seen over the last 40-something days, when the Conservatives have continued to filibuster and block every aspect of parliamentary functioning and work. Are they standing up complaining that the fall economic statement is just a bit too late for them? Well, you have done it to yourself.

The Speaker: I remind all members to make sure they pass all comments through the Chair.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

• (1505)

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, stopping tax hikes, the debt, inflation and bureaucracy seems to have no meaning for the “Liberal Bloc”. To common-sense Conservatives, all of it is essential.

Our vision is to manage carefully and leave money in Quebecers' pockets. The Bloc Québécois voted twice against a non-confidence motion to keep this government in power when this same government shows us how incompetent it is every day.

When will there be an election so that Quebecers can take home bigger paycheques?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our colleague talks about common sense.

I want to talk about their nonsense. In her own riding, 100 affordable housing units are being built on Guillaume-Couture Boulevard with the Lévis municipal housing office, the City of Lévis and Mayor Lehouillier, as well as Minister Drainville, from the Government of Quebec. They are very proud of these 100 housing units. However, she is allowing her Conservative leader to claim that these housing units do not exist and that he wants to stop the construction, to boot.

[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has introduced a GST tax break during the holiday season that will help Canadians keep more money in their pockets, especially families with young children who need it most. Meanwhile, the Conservative leader and his party voted against this holiday tax break, all while they keep preaching in favour of tax cuts and helping Canadians.

Can the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion please tell us what the federal government is doing to support hard-working Canadians during the Christmas season?

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed ironic that the Conservative leader, who loves to talk about cutting taxes, was quick to vote against the very tax cut that would put real money back in the pockets of Canadians. We have already cut taxes for the middle class and small businesses. Now, with this GST cut, we are giving even more support for families. It is too bad that the Conservatives are only allowed to serve the needs of their leader rather than their own constituents.

Our government will continue to focus on what matters, and that is delivering for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everyone is reaching the same conclusion. For the past nine years, this Liberal government has wasted money and saddled Canadians with more debt. Unfortunately, the Bloc Québécois has voted to keep the government in power on two occasions. I know that Quebecers deserve better.

This minority government is once again proving that it has lost control of finances by tabling its economic update on the eve of a House break.

Does the most wasteful government in history have another deficit in store for us as a Christmas present?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Before I yield the floor to the hon. minister, I remind all members not to speak unless they are recognized by the Speaker.

The hon. Minister of Innovation.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier for his question.

I know it is Christmas. Conservatives love fairy tales and slogans, but the reality is that even the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, for whom I have a great deal of respect, knows that we have attracted record investments. In 2023, Canada was the third largest recipient of foreign investment in the world. We are investing in Canadians. We are investing in industry. We are investing in Canadian workers.

We should be celebrating the investments being made in Canada.

Oral Questions

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Harshandeep Singh was just 20 years old when he came to Canada to build a better life. He got a job, like many other students, as a security guard in Edmonton. Just three days after starting his job, he was murdered on the job. Our heartfelt condolences go out to his family and friends at this very difficult time. However, his killer was a violent criminal with past police interactions and a potentially long criminal history.

The government changed the laws to make it easier for repeat violent offenders to roam free in our communities. When will it take the safety of our communities seriously?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I, like every member of Parliament, am very troubled by that story about that young man losing his life so cavalierly. Our condolences go out to his family and to his entire community.

With respect to keeping Canadians safe is this, we are working on multiple fronts. Part of that deals with gun control, and that is assault weapons and handguns. Another part of it is the bail reform, which we implemented at the behest of the provinces. If there is more that needs to be done under the Criminal Code, we are open to that. However, we are also keen on seeing in the province of Alberta and other provinces investments being made in courtroom spaces, in police officers, in JPs and in Crown attorneys, so we can all do the work we need to keep Canadians safe.

• (1510)

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, violent gun crime has gone up over 100% since the Liberals have been in power. In one year, 256 Canadians were murdered by somebody who was out on bail or out on some type of condition.

Harshandeep Singh's murder and many others cannot be accepted as just unfortunate unavoidable incidents. It is a serious systemic failure when the government allows violent criminals with long criminal records to roam freely in our communities.

When will the NDP-Liberals stop this madness and prioritize the safety of Canadians? If they will not do it, we are ready.

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the safety of Canadians is all of our responsibility. The tool that we have in this chamber is the Criminal Code of Canada. The tool that the provinces have is implementing the administration of criminal justice in their localities.

What does that mean? That means hiring police officers. It means hiring Crowns to argue about bail cases. It means ensuring JPs have the training to apply the law. It means ensuring that there are detention facilities to house people who are being denied bail. These are critical facets that need to be invested in.

We are doing the work we need to on the Criminal Code, and we will continue to do so. What we expect is co-operation from the provinces.

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, countries and businesses around the world are heavily investing in artificial intelligence. The benefits of this cutting-edge technology are already growing, finding efficiencies and spurring innovation. It is imperative that we secure the Canadian advantage.

Could the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry update the House on how he is making sure that Canada leads the global shift to AI and that our workers, like the many AI companies in my hometown of Richmond, are the ones benefiting from the jobs and growth that come along with it?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, AI is, in fact, the defining technology of our time. It is going to have an impact on every industry and every sector of the economy, and it is going to help with productivity.

Just last week, we announced our Canadian sovereign AI compute strategy to help build more data centres in Canada, to build essential infrastructure and to make sure that small and medium-sized businesses can access compute capacity.

We are going to work on this side of the House to make sure that we continue to be a leader in AI, and responsible AI, attracting investment and talent. Let us celebrate Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with help from the Liberals and private investors, the Norgate apartments purchase has gone through. It is the biggest housing purchase in Quebec this year. Given the raging housing crisis, this news has a lot of people worried, because the Liberal government has turned its back on them.

Montrealers cannot afford the rents they are paying now. Instead of lining the pockets of private investors, the Liberals could have ensured that those apartments remained truly affordable.

Why put the interests of private investors ahead of the interests of Montrealers?

*Business of Supply***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CONFIDENCE IN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE GOVERNMENT

The House resumed from December 5 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:16 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Carleton related to the Business of Supply.

Call in the members.

Before the taking of the vote:

The Speaker: Before the House proceeds to the taking of this deferred recorded division, I wish to remind hon. members of the following passage from *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at page 587 under the heading “Decorum During the Taking of a Vote”: “from the time the Speaker begins to put the question until the results of the vote are announced” members are not “to enter, walk out of or across the House”, nor may they “make any noise or disturbance.”

[Translation]

I am sure that hon. members will follow this instruction to ensure that our work proceeds in an orderly manner.

The question is on the motion.

Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

● (1530)

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

(Division No. 913)

YEAS

Members

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

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 his question. It gives me the opportunity to tell him, in case he does not know already, that we just announced, precisely in my riding, that 720 housing units would be saved and taken off the market.

One of the challenges we face is not only to build affordable and social housing, but also to ensure the long-term sustainability of affordable housing and to take thousands of units off the market.

That is exactly what we are going to do.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Council for the Arts has not only had its funding cut in recent years, but significant inequities remain, leaving communities like mine dramatically underfunded.

Today, MPs from four parties in the House have co-signed a letter again bringing this to the attention of the minister and calling for action.

Will the Minister of Canadian Heritage commit to working with all interested MPs to restore federal arts funding and ensure all communities get their fair share?

● (1515)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, whether it is funding for the Fringe Festival in Vancouver or the Mermaid Theatre in Kings—Hants, our government will always be there to support the arts. I want to assure the member that we will work with him and any members who are interested in ensuring long-term sustainable funding for the cultural sector in our country.

This afternoon, I will be meeting with the CEO of the Canada Council for the Arts. We will take this conversation up as well.

Unlike Conservatives who believe that arts are only an elite topic, our party, and on this side of the House, believes that arts are the soul of the nation, and we will be there to support artists and the culture sector at every turn.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Ms. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a joint recipient of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Business of Supply

Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Casey	Chagger
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Chahal	Champagne
Ferreri	Findlay	Chatel	Chen
Fortin	Gallant	Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Gaudreau	Généreux	Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Genuis	Gill	Coteau	Dabrusin
Godin	Goodridge	Damoff	Dance
Gourde	Gray	Davies	Desjarlais
Hallan	Hoback	Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Jeneroux	Jivani	Diab	Dong
Kelly	Khanna	Drouin	Dubourg
Kitchen	Kmiec	Duclos	Duguid
Kram	Kramp-Neuman	Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
Kurek	Kusie	El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Lake	Lantsman	Fisher	Fonseca
Larouche	Lawrence	Fortier	Fragiskatos
Lehoux	Lemire	Fraser	Freeland
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)	Fry	Gaheer
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert	Gainey	Garrison
Lloyd	Lobb	Gazan	Gerretsen
Maguire	Majumdar	Gould	Green
Martel	Mazier	Guilbeault	Hajdu
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean	Hanley	Hardie
Melillo	Michaud	Hepfner	Holland
Moore	Morantz	Housefather	Hughes
Morrison	Motz	Hussen	Hutchings
Muys	Nater	Iacono	Idlout
Normandin	Patzer	Ien	Jaczek
Paul-Hus	Pauzé	Johns	Joly
Perkins	Perron	Jones	Jowhari
Plamondon	Poilievre	Julian	Kayabaga
Rayes	Redekopp	Kelloway	Khalid
Reid	Rempel Garner	Khera	Koutrakis
Richards	Roberts	Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Rood	Ruff	Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Sauvé	Savard-Tremblay	Lamoureux	Lapointe
Scheer	Schmale	Lattanzio	Lauzon
Seeback	Shields	LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Shipley	Simard	Lightbound	Long
Sinclair-Desgagné	Small	Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Soroka	Steinley	MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
Ste-Marie	Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's)	MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake)	Strahl	Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Stubbs	Thériault	Masse	Mathysen
Therrien	Thomas	May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Tochor	Tolmie	McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
Trudel	Uppal	McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Van Popta	Vecchio	McLeod	McPherson
Vidal	Vien	Mendès	Mendicino
Viersen	Vignola	Miao	Miller
Villemure	Vis	Morrice	Morrissey
Vuong	Wagantall	Murray	Naqvi
Warkentin	Waugh	Ng	Noormohamed
Webber	Williams	O'Connell	Oliphant
Williamson	Zimmer — 152	O'Regan	Petipas Taylor
		Powlowski	Qualtrough
		Robillard	Rodriguez
		Rogers	Romanado
		Rota	Sahota
		Sajjan	Saks
		Samson	Sarai
		Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
		Serré	Sgro
		Shanahan	Sheehan
		Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
		Singh	Sorbara
		Sousa	St-Onge
		Sudds	Tassi
		Taylor Roy	Thompson
		Trudeau	Turnbull
		Valdez	Van Bynen
		van Koevorden	Vandal
		Vandenbeld	Virani

NAYS

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

Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi—180

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

[English]

The hon. Leader of the Opposition is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, you went out of your way before the vote to point out that members are not allowed to come and go during the vote. I did note that the NDP leader came in right in the middle of the vote, having missed the fact that the vote was on his own words.

Would you please call the NDP leader to order for having had his team vote against his own words?

The Speaker: The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is also rising on a point of order.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, that is very rich coming from the Leader of the Opposition, who has left the House during his own motions on opposition days and refused to vote. As we know, it is proper—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I very patiently listened to the leader of the official opposition. I would like to hear the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby; I did not catch the last bit of his comment.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy from the leader of the official opposition is a bit rich. As you know, in virtual Parliament, we have the right to vote remotely and come in for a second vote. That is indeed what has happened in this case.

The Speaker: I would say the fault is mine, as Speaker, for not making it clear for the purposes of electronic voting. There is a possibility, with the advent of electronic voting, as all members know, and members have from time to time exercised that privilege, to come in.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, you took the time to explain the rules before the first vote to ensure that there was no movement in the House.

I would like the video footage to be checked, because the Leader of the Opposition stood up during the first vote, left his seat and sat down again before the vote was finished.

• (1535)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his intervention.

The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, on the screen earlier, we saw a member addressing the House virtually without her headset. Is that acceptable?

Business of Supply

I think the instructions are very clear out of respect for our interpreters. The rules must apply to everyone.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier would be quite right if this happened during a debate, but the member was confirming a vote because of technical problems. That is another practice. Under our rules, members may address the clerks without having the microphones and headsets required to participate in the debate.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—COST OF LIVING RELIEF FOR CANADIANS

The House resumed from December 6 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of Mr. Singh relating to the business of supply.

The question is as follows.

[English]

May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

• (1545)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 914)

YEAS

Members

Angus	Ashton
Bachrach	Barron
Blaney	Boulerice
Cannings	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Dance
Davies	Desjarlais
Garrison	Gazan
Green	Hughes
Idlout	Johns
Julian	Kwan
MacGregor	Masse
Mathysen	May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
McPherson	Morrice
Singh	Zarrillo—28

NAYS

Members

Aboultouf	Aitchison
Albas	Alghabra
Ali	Allison
Anand	Anandasangaree
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Atwin
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech

Business of Supply

Bendayan	Bergeron	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Berthold	Bérubé	MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Bezan	Bibeau	Maguire	Majumdar
Bittle	Blair	Maloney	Martel
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas	Martinez Ferrada	May (Cambridge)
Block	Blois	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Boissonnault	Bradford	McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
Bragdon	Brassard	McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Brière	Brock	McLean	McLeod
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins	Melillo	Mendès
Caputo	Carr	Mendicino	Miao
Carrie	Casey	Michaud	Miller
Chabot	Chagger	Moore	Morantz
Chahal	Chambers	Morrison	Morrissey
Champagne	Champoux	Motz	Murray
Chatel	Chen	Muys	Naqvi
Chiang	Chong	Nater	Ng
Cooper	Cormier	Noormohamed	Normandin
Coteau	Dabrusin	O'Connell	Oliphant
Dalton	Damoff	O'Regan	Patzer
Dancho	Davidson	Paul-Hus	Pauzé
DeBellefeuille	Deltell	Perkins	Perron
d'Entremont	Desbiens	Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Desilets	Dhaliwal	Poilievre	Powlowski
Dhillon	Diab	Qualtrough	Rayes
Doherty	Dong	Redekopp	Reid
Dowdall	Dreeshen	Rempel Garner	Richards
Drouin	Dubourg	Roberts	Robillard
Duclos	Duguid	Rodriguez	Rogers
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Dzerowicz	Romanado	Rood
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	Rota	Ruff
Ellis	Epp	Sahota	Sajjan
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Saks	Samson
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Sarai	Sauvé
Ferreri	Findlay	Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Fisher	Fonseca	Scheer	Schiefke
Fortier	Fortin	Schmale	Seeback
Fragiskatos	Fraser	Serré	Sgro
Freeland	Gaheer	Shanahan	Sheehan
Gainey	Gallant	Shields	Shipley
Garon	Gaudreau	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Généreux	Genuis	Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Gerretsen	Gill	Small	Sorbara
Godin	Goodridge	Soroka	Sousa
Gould	Gourde	Steinley	Ste-Marie
Gray	Guilbeault	Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's)	Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake)
Hajdu	Hallan	St-Onge	Strahl
Hanley	Hardie	Stubbs	Sudds
Hepfner	Hoback	Tassi	Taylor Roy
Holland	Housefather	Thériault	Therrien
Hussen	Hutchings	Thomas	Thompson
Iacono	Ien	Tochor	Tolmie
Jaczek	Jeneroux	Trudeau	Trudel
Jivani	Joly	Turnbull	Uppal
Jones	Jowhari	Valdez	Van Bynen
Kayabaga	Kelly	van Koeverden	Van Popta
Khalid	Khanna	Vandal	Vandenbeld
Khera	Kitchen	Vecchio	Vidal
Kmiec	Koutrakis	Vien	Viersen
Kram	Kramp-Neuman	Vignola	Villemure
Kurek	Kusie	Virani	Vis
Kusmierczyk	Lake	Vuong	Wagantall
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Warkentin	Waugh
Lamoureux	Lantsman	Webber	Weiler
Lapointe	Larouche	Wilkinson	Williams
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Williamson	Yip
Lawrence	LeBlanc	Zahid	Zimmer
Lebouthillier	Lehoux	Zuberi— 303	
Lemire	Leslie		
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)		
Liepert	Lightbound	Nil	
Lloyd	Lobb		
Long	Longfield		

PAIRED

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Points of Order

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, during this important vote for the NDP to ensure that the GST was taken off family essentials, home heating and telecom, the leader of the official opposition ran away; he fled the scene. He could not come up—

[Translation]

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

* * *

• (1550)

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order coming out of question period.

I am afraid that an extremely dangerous precedent is being set with respect to how you, Mr. Speaker, are allowing questions to continue when they are clearly not about the administration of business. Today, we had a number of Conservatives bringing up issues and talking about the NDP for the entire question. Finally, at the end of the question, they said, for instance, “Will the Prime Minister let the NDP leader do something?” However, this was clearly not in line with government business.

I go back to my question from a week and a half ago. I started by talking clearly about government measures. My question started, “Mr. Speaker, last week our government announced measures”, and it went on. At the end of my question, I specifically asked the Prime Minister why the leader of the official opposition should allow his MPs to vote in favour of that legislation. Somehow, Mr. Speaker, you deemed my question out of order, but when we see what is going on today, you routinely allow those questions to stand.

Finally, I would like to add the following. I think that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order please.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, to conclude, one of the things you are doing, which I think is a huge mistake, is to allow an entire question to be asked, and then say that you see the minister rising on his or her feet. When you do that, of course somebody has to provide a response, but it neglects the fact that the question had nothing to do with the administration of business.

I asked this last week, on Friday, and I have asked it routinely. Once again, I would ask that you go back, consider all of this, consider other interventions that have been made and come back to the House with a concrete ruling that we can then rely on.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just noticed the virtually unprecedented attack on a sitting chair occupant in real time.

As the member should know, if he has specific complaints about the actions of a chair occupant, he should put it in a formal motion. However, when that was done in this chamber, the member voted against that motion. I just wanted to point that out.

I would also point out that, many times in the House, we hear Liberal members who have entire preambles to questions or asks that have nothing to do with government business. Sometimes they have both. However, you, Mr. Speaker, have allowed those questions to stand. Nevertheless, having the guidance that you gave, we did not get up afterwards and challenge your ruling or insult your ability to handle question period. We just simply adapted and followed the precedents that you have set out for the chamber.

I would say that it is absolutely relevant and within the purview of government to ask the Prime Minister what promises, policies or deals he offered another party in order to keep its support so that he can stay in power. That is exactly what those questions were today. I just find it shameful that the parliamentary secretary for the government House leader would challenge your authority and your ability to handle question period, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, I have a problem. My seat is a ways away from yours and when members of the House are bringing forward points of order for your consideration, I often cannot hear what those points of order are, even with my earpiece, because the Conservatives are causing such an uproar. I have to say it appears that sometimes decisions are being made by the Table based on how much uproar and rude behaviour we see from the Conservatives. My perspective is that the loudest, squeakiest, whiniest wheels in the House should not be the ones to dictate the behaviour of the House.

When I cannot even hear what those points of order are because Conservative members of the House seem to feel they have the right to instruct you on what your decision will be, Mr. Speaker, that is a problem because it means that I cannot participate fully as a member of Parliament.

• (1555)

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, on that same point of order, even though I am a little closer to you, during question period, I was unable to hear what was going on because of the way members of the New Democratic Party, specifically the member for New Westminster—Burnaby and the member for Timmins—James Bay, were carrying on, giving instruction to the Speaker and making it very difficult for members, even on this side, to hear what the Speaker was saying.

The whip of the New Democratic Party has folks within her own area she needs to address her concerns to because it is obstructing the business of the House.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to say this is very rich coming from my colleague, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, who, when he was Speaker from 2011 to 2015, systematically cut off any question that did not deal with government administration after 10 or 12 seconds. This was the “Scheer doctrine”, so to speak. During that period, if we did not—

The Speaker: The member knows that we cannot use a sitting member's last name.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, if it was established that it did not have to do with government administration at the beginning of the question, the question was cut off halfway through. Conservatives know this. That is what was put into place.

Conservatives need to respect the rules of the House and you should use the tools you have, Mr. Speaker, to cut them off when it has nothing to do with government administration.

[Translation]

The Speaker: The Bloc Québécois has not had a chance to speak. The hon. member for Drummond.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I find it quite rich to hear the NDP and the Conservatives passing the buck about who is disrupting the House the most. The Bloc Québécois sits between the two parties. Members on both sides are yelling and hurling insults at each other. There is clearly a lack of decorum in the House. This is not the first time we have risen to point that out.

Once again, I appeal to you, Mr. Speaker. Even during Statements by Members, we hear a lot of noise and conversation. During question period, it is absolutely unbearable. I think that all parties should make an effort. We ask for your vigilance on this.

We should be able to do our work with a modicum of decorum and respect for one another, and especially for the interpreters, who are finding it increasingly difficult to do their job because of the chaos in the House and the lack of respect among the parties.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay would like to make a short statement. I will give him the floor.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I notice that I am allowed a short intervention. The issue speaks to our lack of faith. Every member should be treated fairly, and they are not. We have learned very quickly that, if the Conservatives create enough chaos, the Speaker bends to that. When New Democrats raise points of order, they are shut down. We are told to sit down. In fact, one of the only times I remember the Speaker standing up on a point was when my colleague was wearing a brooch, yet we have seen outrageous insults and attacks, and that is considered okay.

Everything is based on precedent. If the Speaker bends to toxicity, then New Democrats will fight back because we have the smallest number and the fewest questions. If the Speaker does not allow proper fairness and continues to bend to the Conservatives and their toxic behaviour, then there will be push-back, and it undermines the House.

The Speaker: Colleagues, I have entertained a round of questions from all the political parties here. First of all, a number of the issues raised are issues the Chair has engaged to come back to the House on, and the Chair, indeed, will be coming back very shortly. This is an issue we have been working on, and we will move very quickly on that front. I thank members for their interventions.

[Translation]

I recognize how important respect and decorum are to ensuring equal participation in the House.

• (1600)

[English]

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is rising on a point of order. I hope it will be new and relevant.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, in an effort to avoid bogging down the House, I do not rise to contribute to every debate. It does not mean that the Green Party of Canada does not exist in this place. The Speaker said that he had heard from all parties in this place. I try to be helpful, not invisible.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member, and if the hon. member had risen, I certainly would have given her an opportunity to speak.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[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 nine petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, a report of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas respecting its participation at the sixth Gathering of ParlAmericas' Parliamentary Network on Climate Change, held virtually on June 23 and July 5, 2022.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I move that the third report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, presented on Monday, June 13, 2022, be concurred in.

I will be sharing my time.

Christmas is approaching, and I want to wish colleagues a merry Christmas as they begin their preparations. As I have been reflecting on the Christmas story, it seems closer to home than ever. We have a distant, unfeeling Emperor Caesar Augustus who is bent on raising taxes, and this poor young couple who travels to Bethlehem. There is a housing shortage, so they have to give birth in a barn. If only Caesar Augustus had axed the tax and built the homes, it would have been a more comfortable first Christmas. However, it does show that God can come to us in the midst of challenging circumstances, so I do wish colleagues a merry Christmas.

Conservative priorities are clear. They are to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Today, we are focusing on the need to build the homes. Indeed, Conservatives are ready for a carbon tax election. If the Liberal government does not want a carbon tax election, how about a housing election? We are ready to contrast our constructive proposals to build the homes in this country with the demonstrable record of failure that we have seen from the Liberal government.

The Liberals put forward something called the housing accelerator fund. They think that people will believe that it is accelerating homes just because it is in the name. However, they admit that this program they have put forward does not build homes. It gives extra money to already inflated bureaucracies, and it feeds those bureaucracies instead of actually contributing to the construction of homes.

The Conservative opposition has put forward a meaningful and constructive proposal that is being debated today. It is about providing real relief to homeowners. In order to save Canadian homebuyers up to \$50,000, or \$2,500 per year, in mortgage payments, our motion is to call on the Liberal government to immediately eliminate the federal sales tax on new homes sold under \$1 million and to call on the provincial premiers to match this proposal.

Particularly this afternoon, we are debating the concurrence of the third report of the indigenous affairs committee, which deals specifically with indigenous peoples and the need for housing policies that allow indigenous Canadians, all Canadians, to be able to access the homes that they need. This is why we have put forward proposals that do actually build homes.

In this debate about housing policy, we can see the old story of New Democrats and Liberals wanting to be judged by their intentions instead of by results. Conservatives believe that the effectiveness of a political party and of their policies should be judged not by the intentions or by how much money is being spent, but by the actual results in terms of the affordability of homes.

What Canadians care about when it comes to housing is not fundamentally how much the government is spending on housing. It is how much Canadians who are renting or buying have to spend on housing. That is really the acid test of a housing policy. It is not how much money the government is spending, but how much money the individual who is buying or renting has to spend in order to make that purchase.

In fact, under the Liberal government, the record of failure is very clear. Housing prices have doubled, rent has doubled and costs are way up as a result of the policies of the government. There are many different reasons why these policies they are proposing are not working. It does not take much of an analysis to know that they are not working. One simply has to look at the results. Canadians of all backgrounds are paying more for housing than they ever have. They are paying more for housing in a country that has an abundance of land.

Liberals have blamed inflation on supply chains, yet they have not reckoned with the fact that the land we use is right here. We have more land than almost any country around the world, yet our housing prices are higher than almost anywhere else.

● (1605)

If we compare where we were nine years ago, in 2015, and where we are now after nine years of the Prime Minister, the record is clear that Liberal policies are failing. Under the leadership of the member for Carleton, we have sharply put the spotlight on the problem of housing affordability and the centrality of building new homes, so we have put forward a constructive proposal for how to do this. We have been very specific in our proposals around housing. We have been very specific in what we have put before the House and what we have put before Canadians.

We have proposed a framework, and the member for Carleton, our leader, has put forward a private member's bill on it, whereby municipalities would be expected to meet certain targets in terms of new home construction. They would have flexibility in terms of how they do it. It would not be up to the federal government to decide precisely what to build or where to build it, but there would be an expectation, as there has to be an expectation, that every level of government would work together to ensure sufficient construction of new homes. If municipalities fail to meet those targets, they would face clawbacks in terms of federal funding, and if they meet or exceed those targets, they would receive a bonus.

The policy would tie federal spending to the requirement of results when it comes to housing. This would bring the kind of results orientation that Canadians expect from their government. I heard a member opposite say that this is common sense, and I agree. He is coming around. It is common sense to measure one's housing policy by the results. We would hold ourselves to that standard—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Routine Proceedings

• (1610)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am just going to interrupt, because someone else was actually interrupting. I would just ask members to please wait for questions and comments before they try to indulge themselves in the conversation.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has the floor. I would also ask him to speak directly through the Chair and not to individual members.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, that reminds me that I want to recognize the very good work being done by Mr. Guglielmin, who I know is a strong advocate for responsible housing policy in the area of Vaughan—Woodbridge.

The focus of Conservatives is on delivering results for Canadians, and our housing policy would hold us to that standard of delivering results. It would also hold our municipal partners to the expectation of meeting the requirements around new home construction. We have also put forward a motion today that, on top of the existing plan, would build on it by providing tax relief directly to facilitate the construction of new homes and to make it easier for Canadians to purchase new homes.

The third report of INAN deals specifically with housing for indigenous people, and the failure of the government to build homes has ripple effects across all dimensions, all communities and all parts of Canadian society. The government has made many promises with respect to indigenous reconciliation, yet right now we are seeing its scandalous failure to follow through on those promises.

It is a scandalous failure because Liberals have actually allowed a whole industry of non-indigenous elite insiders and pretenders to take advantage of programs and policies that were promised to indigenous Canadians. There are people inside the government, like the member for Edmonton Centre, who have pretended to be indigenous in order to advance their own commercial interests as well as their own political interests. Moreover, there is a turning of a blind eye to the whole industry of fake, non-indigenous pretenders.

It was reported in today's *Globe and Mail* that an auditor was trying to draw attention to the problem of abuse of programs that are supposed to benefit indigenous people, yet that auditor had continuous roadblocks put in the way. The government actually imposed new rules to constrain and limit the work of auditors at the same time as those auditors were coming forward to identify the rampant issue of pretenders taking advantage of the policies. The government, it seems, wanted to allow the abuse to go on so it could make it look like it was doing better and could say, "Look at all this money we are giving to indigenous people," when, actually, fraudsters and non-indigenous elites were taking advantage of the programs.

Therefore we need to build the homes in this country and restore the promise of reconciliation, and that is exactly what a Conservative government would do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I would like to seek the unanimous consent of the House to table the report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, please.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Yes, there seems to have been some difficulty earlier.

Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: No.

[*English*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member. The Conservatives appear to want to leave everything up to developers in a private sector context to build homes, yet the affordability crisis means that we need to build more social housing. Why are the hon. member and his party seemingly against the use of public funds for social housing the way the national housing strategy requires or promotes?

• (1615)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, quite obviously, anyone listening will note the way the member created a question by creating a premise and then asking why that premise was true, rather than asking whether the premise was true.

Let us go back to what we are actually talking about today, which is the proposals we have put forward for strong action by the government around the construction of new homes. I talked about two key areas: One is the position we would take with municipalities, requiring them to meet certain targets in terms of the construction of new homes, and the other is around tax relief associated with the construction of new homes, a tax relief that would save people purchasing their first home significantly in terms of the cost they will pay. These are substantive and real measures that would deliver results.

I put it back to the member. Why is his government failing? Why has his government done so badly in terms of achieving the results that clearly are required: the construction of new homes so that housing can become affordable in this country again?

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to give my honourable colleague the opportunity to elaborate even further on why policies and legislation, anything that comes out of the House, should be metrics-based, should be built on results not on virtue signalling and not on putting more money into the government bureaucracy but on actually achieving things. Specifically, in this case, we are discussing the incredible affordability crisis, the shortage of housing right across this country and even how it is impacting our indigenous communities.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This is just a friendly reminder to members to not use possessive terms when talking about indigenous people, like "their indigenous people" or "our indigenous people".

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member recognizes the issue that was raised.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has the floor.

*Routine Proceedings***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, why is it important to look at the results? The last nine years provide us with some good evidence of what happens when there is a government that is focused on trying to signal concern about certain issues but is not actually concerned about the results.

As I mentioned, I have been doing a lot of work on the issue of abuses in the area of indigenous procurement. It is a situation where the government wants to look like it is achieving a certain target in terms of procurement from indigenous businesses. It has achieved that target by padding the numbers with a lot of joint venture arrangements or companies that are not actually indigenous-owned and indigenous-controlled. This allows it to say it has reached its target. The AFN is saying it is more like 1% of contracts, even though the government says it has met its 5% target.

When there is a government that is not interested in the results but is interested only in looking like it cares, people are trying to find workarounds to say they have achieved the target, they have checked the box, rather than being concerned about the results. On housing, again, it is very clear that the conversation with the government is all about how much it is spending and not about how much Canadians have to spend. The acid test of a housing policy is how much Canadians have to spend.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, when it comes to housing for indigenous communities, the important thing, the thing they are really looking for, is to for the power to finally be given back to them. They already have projects in place. I recently met people at my office who have projects in their community that are working.

It is important to not impose anything on them, but to truly engage in dialogue and collaborate with the communities to ensure that the existing projects work and that they have the funding they need to complete them.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I think we should be committed to the idea of actually working with and listening to indigenous leaders. It has been clear in some of the work we have been doing at the government operations committee and elsewhere that too often the Liberal government claims to be concerned about reconciliation but is not actually listening to what indigenous leaders and indigenous people are saying their priorities are. I think that has been a big problem with the government, and it is something that needs to change.

• (1620)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I understand that there have been discussions to allow me to ask for unanimous consent to go to Questions on the Order Paper.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 3101 to 3104, 3108 and 3112 to 3117.

[*Text*]

Question No. 3101—**Mr. Richard Cannings:**

With regard to bicycles on VIA Rail trains: (a) what is the rationale behind the decision to not allow non-folding bicycles on VIA Rail trains as carry-on luggage when golf bags, hockey bags, skis, snowboards and paddleboards are allowed as carry-on luggage; (b) what is the rationale behind the decision to allow bicycles as checked baggage only on trains running on the Toronto–Vancouver, Montreal–Halifax, Sudbury–White River, Senneterre, Jonquiere, Winnipeg–Churchill and Jasper–Prince Rupert routes, and only on those with a baggage car; (c) what is the rationale behind the decision to charge a \$25 fee for checking as baggage a bicycle, electric bicycle, folding bicycle, child bicycle trailer, recumbent bicycle or a tandem bicycle when golf bags, snowboards, skis, skateboards, surfboards and paddleboards are free; (d) how do VIA Rail's bicycle handling policies compare to those of railroads in France, the United States, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand; and (e) when will VIA Rail change its current policy on bicycles?

Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), Via Rail only authorizes sports and recreational equipment with a linear dimension of 158 linear cm (61 linear inches). Linear dimensions are obtained by adding length, width and height.

With regard to part (b), Via Rail is continuing to replace its Qu bec City–Windsor corridor fleet with new and modern trains. As such, travel with bicycles as checked baggage will be progressively reintroduced as of spring 2025, and cyclists will be able to reserve and pay for their bicycle transport on trains where the service is available when they book their ticket on Via Rail's reservation system.

In the case of routes outside the Qu bec City–Windsor corridor, such as Toronto–Vancouver, Montreal–Halifax, Sudbury–White River, Senneterre, Jonquiere, Winnipeg–Churchill and Jasper–Prince Rupert, for safety reasons, bicycles must be stored in our baggage cars, which can accommodate larger items and are equipped with bike racks. This is why a baggage car is required to authorize their transport.

With regard to part (c), this long-standing distinction in Via Rail's baggage policy is currently being re-evaluated and the policy will be adjusted to charge uniformly for sports and recreational equipment of comparable size and requiring the same handling effort.

With regard to part (d), rolling equipment and train sets, as well as passenger's needs, differ from country to country. As a result, passenger train operators' baggage policies may vary. Via Rail cannot speak on behalf of other companies.

With regard to part (e), travel with bicycles will be progressively reintroduced in the Qu bec City–Windsor corridor as of spring 2025. By then, cyclists will be able to reserve and pay for their bicycle transport on trains where the service is available when they book their ticket on Via Rail's reservation system.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 3102—Ms. Melissa Lantsman:**

With regard to the government's listing of certain organizations as terrorist entities under the Criminal Code: (a) why hasn't the government listed the Houthis as a terrorist entity; (b) what specific criteria are not met or what other reason is the government using to justify their decision to not list the Houthis as a terrorist entity; and (c) does the government plan on listing the Houthis as a terrorist entity in the future, and, if so, when?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Inter-governmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada's Criminal Code listing regime is an important tool for countering terrorism in Canada and globally, and is part of the government's commitment to keep people in Canada safe. The listing of terrorist entities is a rigorous process, based on evidence, intelligence and the law, as a listing carries significant consequences. Throughout this process, any decision to designate as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code is based on solid and factual considerations.

The government remains concerned with the Houthis' ongoing attacks against commercial and naval vessels transiting the Red Sea and surrounding waterways, which continue to threaten the lives of innocent mariners and global trade in one of the world's most critical waterways. Houthi attacks have also endangered the lives of the Yemeni people as ships carrying aid have been targeted. Canada will continue to support the United States-led Operation Prosperity Guardian, alongside the United Kingdom, Australia, Bahrain, Denmark, the Netherlands and New Zealand.

In collaboration with allies and like-minded partners, the Government of Canada is exploring all possible measures to constrain the activities of those who would threaten the safety and security of Canadians.

Question No. 3103—Ms. Melissa Lantsman:

With regard to the government's listing of Samidoun as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code: what specific action, if any, has the government taken since the listing to shut down Samidoun operations in Canada, including details and values of any assets seized to date from Samidoun, and details of any charges laid or other legal action taken to date against those who are aiding Samidoun in Canada?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Inter-governmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the Criminal Code, financial institutions are not allowed to provide financial services to entities that meet the definition of a terrorist group, and must notify the RCMP and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS, of the freeze. The RCMP federal policing national security's role is to conduct a review and determine if any enforcement actions are necessary. This requirement is not just a legal formality but a crucial part of the broader strategy to identify, disrupt and deter the financial streams that could potentially fund terrorist activities here and abroad.

The RCMP plays a central role in the terrorist listings enforcement framework, working in close collaboration with financial institutions to ensure these obligations are met effectively. This partnership is underpinned by a collaborative approach, whereby the RCMP does not merely act as an enforcer but also assists and educates financial entities on best practices for identifying and reporting suspicious activities. This includes offering guidance on compliance with the relevant laws and regulations, such as the Proceeds

of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act, and its associated regulations, which mandate the reporting of terrorist property.

In accordance with this framework, the RCMP was notified by financial institutions that accounts linked to Samidoun have been frozen, with the frozen assets remaining in the possession of the respective financial institutions. At this time, due to the low amount frozen, the RCMP has not initiated forfeiture proceedings under section 83.14 of the Criminal Code.

To date, no criminal charges have been laid by the RCMP in relation to the activities of Samidoun. The RCMP is not able to confirm or speak to any ongoing investigations against people or organizations with suspected or confirmed ties to Samidoun.

Question No. 3104—Ms. Melissa Lantsman:

With regard to the government's listing of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code effective on June 19, 2024: what specific action has the government taken since the listing to shut down IRGC operations in Canada, including details and values of any assets seized to date from the IRGC, and details of any charges laid or other legal action taken to date against those who are aiding the IRGC in Canada?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Inter-governmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the Criminal Code, financial institutions are not allowed to provide financial services to entities that meet the definition of a terrorist group, and must notify the RCMP and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS, of the freeze. The RCMP federal policing national security's role is to conduct a review and determine if any enforcement actions are necessary. This requirement is not just a legal formality but a crucial part of the broader strategy to identify, disrupt and deter the financial streams that could potentially fund terrorist activities here and abroad.

The RCMP plays a central role in the terrorist listings enforcement framework, working in close collaboration with financial institutions to ensure these obligations are met effectively. This partnership is underpinned by a collaborative approach, whereby the RCMP does not merely act as an enforcer but also assists and educates financial entities on best practices for identifying and reporting suspicious activities. This includes offering guidance on compliance with the relevant laws and regulations, such as the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act, and its associated regulations, which mandate the reporting of terrorist property.

To date, no financial institutions have reported the freezing of any assets linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, IRGC, to the RCMP.

To date, no criminal charges have been laid by the RCMP in relation to the activities of the IRGC. The RCMP is not able to confirm or speak to any ongoing investigations against people or organizations with suspected or confirmed ties to the IRGC.

Question No. 3108—**Mr. Garnett Genuis:**

With regard to the Framework for Cooperation on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism between Canada and India, signed by the current government: (a) is the framework still in effect; (b) has any information been shared between the law enforcement or security agencies of Canada and India since June 18, 2023; and (c) was any information shared at any time between the law enforcement or security agencies of Canada and India regarding individuals who were subsequently murdered or who have faced credible threats against their life?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Special Advisor for Water, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, following the 15th meeting of the Canada-India Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism, JWGCT, in February 2018, the Framework for Cooperation on Counter Terrorism was published through a joint statement. It remains in effect.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RCMP, as the national police force, has the authority to share information with other international police forces to further investigations in accordance with existing policy and applicable legislations. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) Act, with the Minister of Public Safety's approval, also allows for information sharing with foreign partners, including police forces. The scope of sharing for all agencies depends on a number of requirements, including compliance with the Avoiding Complicity in Mistreatment by Foreign Entities Act (ACMFEA). Given the specific mandate and operational requirements, and in order to protect the safety and security of Canadians, CSIS and the RCMP cannot disclose any details related to information sharing.

In order to respect and preserve the integrity of ongoing investigations and prosecutions, details related to co-operation between law enforcement and security agencies of Canada and India cannot be disclosed.

Question No. 3112—**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:**

With regard to work permits issued under international agreements or arrangements, since September 20, 2023: (a) how many work permits were issued to foreign nationals performing work under (i) an agreement or arrangement between Canada and the government of a foreign state or an international organization, other than those concerning seasonal agricultural workers, (ii) an agreement entered into by one or more countries and by or on behalf of one or more provinces; (b) how many work permits in (a) were issued to individuals employed by the American Climate Corps; and (c) what are the details of all work permits in (b), including the (i) location of work, (ii) length of work, (iii) type of work being undertaken?

Mr. Paul Chiang (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a)(i) and (ii), between September 20, 2023 and September 30, 2024, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, or IRCC, has issued 12,298 work permits to foreign nationals performing work under an agreement or arrangement between Canada and the government of a foreign state or an international organization, other than those concerning seasonal agricultural workers. As per IRCC data release procedures, the cut-off date is put in place to allow for the preparation of complete, consistent and accurate reporting.

During this same time period, there were no work permits issued to foreign nationals with an agreement entered into by one or more countries and by or on behalf of one or more provinces.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (b) and (c), the department does not possess records relating to the American Climate Corps in the following fields: how many work permits were issued to individuals employed by the American Climate Corps and the details associated, including location of work, length of work and type of work being undertaken.

Question No. 3113—**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:**

With regard to funding programs offered through Environment and Climate Change Canada, since September 20, 2023: (a) were any funding programs used to hire members of the American Climate Corps to undertake work in Canada; and (b) what are the details of each funding program identified in (a), including the (i) number of American Climate Corps workers hired, (ii) amount of funding allocated to hire American Climate Corps workers, (iii) name of the eligible group, organization or individual who received funding?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Environment and Climate Change Canada has no funding program related to Q-3113.

Question No. 3114—**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:**

With regard to the Sustainable Development Technology Canada fund from 2015 to present: (a) which companies were allotted funding; (b) how much funding was each company allotted; (c) what was the reasoning for allotting funding to each individual company; and (d) what are the results to date of each company's work?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, is an arm's length organization that was created by an Act of Parliament in 2001 to provide funding to support Canadian companies with the potential to develop and demonstrate new environmental technologies that address climate change, clean air, clean water and clean soil. SDTC maintains a public list of active and inactive projects that have received funding from the organization since its creation, which is available at <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sdtc.ca%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2024%2F09%2FFunded-Project-Information-EN-as-of-Aug-31-2024.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

With regard to (b), contribution amounts for SDTC projects are included in SDTC's public project list, which is available at <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sdtc.ca%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2024%2F09%2FFunded-Project-Information-EN-as-of-Aug-31-2024.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>.

With regard to (c), projects allocated SDTC funding are required to meet specific eligibility criteria that is available on SDTC's website.

The eligibility criteria for start-up and scale-up funding are available at <https://www.sdtc.ca/en/start-up-scale-up-funding-application-guide/>.

The eligibility criteria for seed funding are available at <https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/GetUrlReputation>.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (d), the project objectives, including expected environmental benefits, can be found in SDTC's public project list, which is available at <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sdtc.ca%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2024%2F09%2FFunded-Project-Information-EN-as-of-Aug-31-2024.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>.

According to SDTC's Annual report for 2022-2023, the total portfolio of SDTC-funded companies has, since 2001, generated an estimated 24,492 jobs, both direct and indirect, attributable to SDTC-funded projects; \$3 billion in estimated annual revenues, attributable to SDTC supported technologies; and \$13.27 billion in follow-on financing. SDTC-supported technologies have also reduced annual GHG emissions by an estimated 24.7 megatonnes of CO₂e.

Question No. 3115—Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:

With regard to the \$32.9 million non-competitive contract awarded in October 2022 to McKinsey, issued by the Trans Mountain Corporation: (a) what were the reasons behind awarding this non-competitive contract without justification; (b) what were the scope and results of McKinsey's work; (c) on what day did work by McKinsey begin; (d) on what day did work by McKinsey end; and (e) how were the contract funds spent?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), in accordance with Trans Mountain Corporation, or TMC, procurement policies, the contract was awarded to quickly identify cost savings and efficiencies in the construction of the Trans Mountain Expansion Project in the face of urgent construction season deadlines.

With regard to (b), the scope of the contract was to identify cost savings and efficiencies in construction of the Trans Mountain Expansion Project. For every dollar spent on this contract, \$20.60 of cost savings were realized. Overall, over \$700M in cost savings resulted from Trans Mountain's cost and productivity program.

With regard to (c), TMC began its contract with the firm in October 2022.

With regard to (d), TMC ended its contract with the firm in November 2023.

With regard to (e), contract funds were spent on identifying cost savings and efficiencies in construction of the Trans Mountain Expansion Project. For every dollar spent on this contract, \$20.60 of cost savings were realized. Overall, over \$700M in cost savings resulted from Trans Mountain's cost and productivity program.

Question No. 3116—Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:

With regard to the government's commitment to plant 2 billion trees by 2031: (a) what are the total expenditures to date in relation to the commitment; (b) how many trees have been planted to date; and (c) what is the projected number of trees to be planted under the commitment in (i) 2024, (ii) 2025, (iii) 2026, (iv) 2027, (v) 2028, (vi) 2029, (vii) 2030, (viii) 2031?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), from February 2021 to March 2024, the total expenditure for the 2 Billion Trees program was \$267.7 million, namely \$67.9 million in 2021-2022, \$82.3 million in 2022-2023 and \$117.5 million in 2023-2024. As of October 29, 2024, Natural Resources Canada, or NRCan, has spent/committed \$176.9 million in signed Grants and Contributions agreements for fiscal year 2024-25.

With regard to (b), in the first three years of the program, which were 2021-2022 to 2023-2024, some 157 million trees were planted, and agreements signed or under negotiation are in place to plant 716 million trees towards the federal government's commitment to plant 2 billion incremental trees over 10 years.

With regard to (c), on November 6, 2024, the 2 Billion Trees program released an update, stating that as of June 2024, the Government of Canada has signed or is negotiating commitments to plant over 716 million trees by March 2031.

Question No. 3117—Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:

With regard to the government's approach to the long-term drinking water advisories on public systems in First Nations communities, since December 11, 2017, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity: (a) does Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg (KZA) have safe-to-consume drinking water; (b) how many individuals remain affected by a lack of access to clean drinking water within KZA; (c) what areas of KZA have access to clean drinking water; (d) what is the government's plan to address a lack of access to clean drinking water in KZA; and (e) what is the timeline for the government's current plan of fixing a lack of access to clean drinking water within KZA?

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for specific information on the status of water infrastructure in First Nations, the best source of information would be the First Nations themselves.

As of October 31, 2024, there are no long-term or short-term drinking water advisories affecting public water systems on-reserve in Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation. The last long-term drinking water advisory affecting public water systems on-reserves in Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation was lifted in December 2017.

As of October 31, 2024, there are no long-term or short-term drinking water advisories affecting public water systems on-reserve in Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, furthermore, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 3099, 3100, 3105 to 3107, 3109 to 3111 and 3118 to 3121 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled in an electronic format immediately.

[Translation]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 3099—Mr. Alex Ruff:

With regard to the AgriScience Program, Projects Component: (a) how many applications have been (i) received, (ii) approved, since the program's inception; (b) how much funding has been awarded to date, in total and broken down by sector (beef, dairy, pork, etc.) and by province or territory; (c) what are the details of all funding provided through the component to date, including, for each instance, the (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) recipient, (iv) location, (v) project description or purpose of the funding; (d) what are the funding criteria and related formulas; and (e) what factors were used to determine the funding criteria and related formulas?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3100—Mr. Alex Ruff:

With regard to government information on the Canadian information and communication technology (ICT) sector: (a) how many Canadian registered companies, broken down by (i) size of the firm, (ii) revenue, (iii) sector, have been acquired by foreign entities each year since 2015; (b) what is the estimated GDP loss due to these acquisitions; (c) what is the estimated tax revenue loss due to these acquisitions; (d) has the government conducted studies and reported on the economic impact of the foreign acquisition of ICT companies on (i) Canadian employment in this sector, (ii) foreign influence, cyber security and Canadian privacy; (e) if the answer to (d)(i) or (d)(ii) is affirmative, where are these studies published and available to Canadian industry; (f) if the answer to (d)(i) or (d)(ii) is negative, why not; (g) what future studies is the government undertaking to consult with the ICT sector to determine causes and impacts of foreign acquisitions and effective policies to maintain economic growth and security in the Canadian ICT sector; and (h) for each study in (g), will the results be (i) made public, (ii) tabled in Parliament?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3105—Mr. Alex Ruff:

With regard to the bare trust reporting requirements from which the government announced there would be an exemption for the 2023 tax year: (a) how was the \$250,000 reporting requirement determined; (b) were any consultations held to determine the reporting requirement; (c) if the answer to (b) is affirmative, what groups were consulted, how many people or groups were consulted, and where did consultations take place; (d) what prompted the March 28, 2024, announcement that bare trusts are exempt from trust reporting requirements for 2023; (e) how many individual pieces of correspondence did the minister and the CRA receive in support of new bare trust filing requirements; and (f) how many individual pieces of correspondence did the minister and the CRA receive with complaints or confusion regarding the new bare trust filing requirements, broken down by (i) province, (ii) federal riding adjusted to 2024 boundaries, (iii) communication medium (email, phone call, letter, etc.)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3106—Mr. Blake Desjarlais:

With regard to the Canada Public Land Bank and properties with potential for constructing housing units: (a) for each property identified, on which traditional Indigenous territory is the property located; (b) has the government sought permission from the appropriate Indigenous government to build housing units on the land identified; (c) has the government offered the right of first refusal to the appropriate Indigenous government before beginning construction or offering the sale of the land or property; and (d) what compensation is the government offering to First Nations, Inuit or Métis communities for the sale or use of land on their traditional territory?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3107—Mr. Garnett Genuis:

With regard to Canada's relationship with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): (a) what are the complete details of all development assistance spending intended to have an impact in the DRC over the last two years, including, for each spending item, the (i) amount spent, (ii) recipient and any additional delivery partners, (iii) allocation timeline, (iv) amount spent on each item; (b) what are the complete details of all development assistance spending intended to have an impact on Congolese refugees outside of the DRC over the last two years, including, for each item, the (i) amount spent, (ii) recipient and any additional delivery partners, (iii) allocation timeline, (iv) amount spent on each item; (c) what is the position of the government regarding the activities of the March 23 Movement (M23) rebels; (d) what is the position of the government regarding other nations supporting the M23 rebels; and (e) what is the position of the government regarding the end of the Unit-

ed Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3109—Mr. Gord Johns:

With regard to federal funding and reserves and treaty settlement lands within the federal electoral district of Courtenay—Alberni, between the 2005-06 fiscal year and the current fiscal year: what are the federal capital investments and funding contributions for infrastructure projects, including, but not limited to, projects related to water and wastewater facilities, solid waste management, roads, bridges, connectivity, structural or disaster mitigation, fire protection, health facilities, cultural and recreation facilities, education facilities, housing, energy systems, and band administration buildings, invested in or transferred to (i) Ahousaht First Nation, (ii) Hesquiaht First Nation, (iii) Huu-ay-aht First Nation, (iv) Hupacasath First Nation, (v) Quilicum First Nation, (vi) Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations, (vii) Toquaht First Nation, (viii) Tseshaht First Nation, (ix) Uchucklesaht First Nation, (x) Ucluelet First Nation, broken down by fiscal year, project, total contribution, funding program, and type of funding?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3110—Mr. Gord Johns:

With regard to the communities which comprise the federal electoral district of Courtenay—Alberni, since the 2005-06 fiscal year: (a) what have been the federal investments and funding contributions for housing projects, including loans and direct transfers provided by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), invested in or transferred to the municipalities of (i) Tofino, (ii) Ucluelet, (iii) Port Alberni, (iv) Parksville, (v) Qualicum Beach, (vi) Cumberland, (vii) Courtenay, (viii) Deep Bay, (ix) Dashwood, (x) Royston, (xi) French Creek, (xii) Errington, (xiii) Nanoose Bay, (xiv) Cherry Creek, (xv) China Creek, (xvi) Bamfield, (xviii) Beaver Creek, (xix) Beaufort Range, (xx) Millstream, (xxi) Mount Washington Ski Resort, broken down by fiscal year, project, total contribution, funding program, and type of funding; (b) what have been the federal investments and funding contributions for housing projects, including loans and direct transfers provided by the CMHC, invested in or transferred to the regional districts of (i) Comox Valley, (ii) Nanaimo, (iii) Alberni-Clayoquot, (iv) Powell River, broken down by fiscal year, total expenditure, and project; and (c) what have been the federal investments and funding contributions for housing projects, including loans and direct transfers provided by the CMHC, invested in or transferred to the Island Trusts of (i) Hornby Island, (ii) Denman Island, (iii) Lasqueti Island, broken down by fiscal year, project, total contribution, funding program, and type of funding?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3111—Mr. Gord Johns:

With regard to national parks, national urban parks, and national marine conservation areas in Canada, broken down by fiscal year and park or area since 2005-06: (a) how many visitors accessed each national park, national urban park, and national marine conservation area; and (b) how much funding did each national park, national urban park, and national marine conservation area receive for (i) operating expenses, (ii) capital expenses?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3118—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

With regard to the government's approach to fentanyl: (a) when did the government first become aware that Canada's domestic supply of fentanyl was surpassing the demand; (b) how much fentanyl does the government estimate has been exported out of the country, broken down by year for the last five years; (c) what are the circumstances, if any, in which fentanyl is permitted to be included as a "safer supply" drug; (d) how much fentanyl does the government estimate has been distributed through "safer supply" programs, broken down by year for the last five years; and (e) has the government analyzed the impact of Canada becoming a net exporter of fentanyl on any other aspect related to the government, such as Canada's international trade, and, if so, what are the details of what was analyzed and what were the results?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 3119—Mr. Dan Albas:**

With regard to the government's Oil to Heat Pump Affordability Program: (a) how many applications for funding have been (i) received, (ii) granted; (b) how many heat pumps have been installed through the program; and (c) what is the breakdown of (a) and (b) by province or territory?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3120—Mr. Garnett Genuis:

With regard to the government's Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business, since November 4, 2015, and broken down by department or agency which participates in the strategy: (a) what individuals are responsible for reviewing adherence to Indigenous procurement requirements, specifically broken down by who is responsible for enforcing adherence to the (i) rules regarding proper identification of an Indigenous business, (ii) rules regarding subcontracting, (iii) rules regarding joint ventures, (iv) other rules; (b) of the total number of contracts allocated under the Indigenous procurement set-aside, what percentage went to businesses with (i) no employees, (ii) two or fewer employees, (iii) 10 or fewer employees; (c) of the total number of contracts allocated under the Indigenous procurement set-aside, what percentage went to companies that are not listed in the Indigenous business directory of any organization other than the federal government; (d) what is the percentage of times in which the procurement rules were followed, particularly broken down by (i) rules regarding proper identification of an Indigenous business, (ii) rules regarding subcontracting, (iii) rules regarding joint ventures, (iv) other rules; (e) of the total number of contracts allocated under the Indigenous procurement set-aside, what percentage went to shell companies; (f) looking at companies who received contracts under the Indigenous procurement set-aside up until one year ago, what percentage of them are still in operation; (g) looking at companies who have received contracts under the Indigenous procurement set-aside, what percentage of them received their contract through a joint venture with a non-Indigenous company; (h) looking at companies who have received contracts under the Indigenous procurement set-aside, what percentage of them were founded (i) before 2015, (ii) before 2018, (iii) before 2020, (iv) before 2023; and (i) looking at companies who have received contracts under the Indigenous procurement set-aside, what percentage of them were identified as Indigenous on the basis of having ownership that is (i) First Nations, (ii) Inuit, (iii) Métis?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 3121—Ms. Raquel Dancho:

With regard to firearms statistics held by the government, broken down by year since January 1, 2022: (a) how many firearms were seized by (i) the RCMP, (ii) the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), (iii) other police forces, broken down by source (domestic or foreign); (b) how many firearms were seized and traced by (i) the RCMP, (ii) the CBSA, (iii) other police forces; (c) how many firearms seized by other police jurisdictions were traced by a police jurisdiction other than the RCMP; (d) how many (i) long-guns, (ii) handguns, (iii) restricted firearms, (iv) prohibited firearms, were traced by all police services, broken down by source (domestic or foreign); (e) how many (i) long-guns, (ii) handguns, (iii) restricted firearms, (iv) prohibited firearms, were traced by the RCMP, broken down by source (domestic or foreign); (f) how many (i) long-guns', (ii) handguns', (iii) restricted firearms', (iv) prohibited firearms', sources (domestic or foreign) could not be traced across all police services; and (g) how many of the (i) long-guns', (ii) handguns', (iii) restricted firearms', (iv) prohibited firearms', sources could not be traced by the RCMP?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I just want to take a moment at the top to acknowledge the good folks of Parry Sound—Muskoka, particularly on the south end of Muskoka, who have endured a pretty brutal welcome to winter. It is my first opportunity to do this in this place. Not last week, but the weekend before, the area of Gravenhurst received just over five feet of snow in two days. It was a pretty tough time. Highway 11 is the main corridor in and out of the eastern side of Muskoka, and it was closed both northbound and southbound for more than 24 hours.

I just want to take a moment to thank all those frontline workers. We had Muskoka paramedics, the OPP, the fire department, Hydro One workers and municipal operations crews, who were all on the front lines. We did not lose a soul, which is amazing. The mayor, Heidi Lorenz, had to declare a state of emergency in Gravenhurst. They got through it. It is still snowing a bit, but it is a little more manageable now. I think we are going to get through it. I just wanted to give that quick shout-out to all those frontline workers. I know we appreciate them in all of our ridings; they can quite literally save lives. They certainly did over the last few days in Parry Sound—Muskoka.

During this study on indigenous peoples, indigenous people shared some pretty alarming experiences related to housing in their communities. They emphasized the housing shortage. Its effects are well known. Numerous studies have been conducted and we keep studying the issue, even though the situation is one in which we need action. This is a pretty common theme with the government, really. After nine years under the Prime Minister, housing problems are fairly well known, not just on first nations but also across the country. Rents, mortgages and house prices have doubled, and indigenous peoples are still suffering from inadequate housing. We see it all over the place. Here we are: Let us have another study and see how bad the situation is.

I do not think we need any more studies. We need action. I think back to the good folks in Muskoka and just imagine if, in the face of those horrible weather events, we decided to do a study instead of acting. This is a crisis. In crises, we act, but we are not acting. We need action on housing.

Routine Proceedings

In March, the Auditor General released a report covering housing in first nations communities. They found that, overall, since 2018, the government has supported only 4,379 completed housing units. That is about 700 per year. Here are some headlines, some real key quotes from the report: “Indigenous Services Canada and the [CMHC] had not provided the [housing] support needed by First Nations” and “Indigenous Services Canada and the [CMHC] have made little progress in improving housing conditions in First Nations communities.” Here is another one: “The department and the corporation were not on track to meet the government’s commitment to close the housing gap by 2030.” Another finding was that indigenous services and the CMHC have made little progress in supporting first nations to improve housing conditions in their community.

This sounds awfully familiar in terms of what we have been hearing at our HUMA committee over the last little while, as well as from MPs all over the country. We have heard back that the CMHC is really difficult to work with. It is a broken institution. It is a lot of paperwork and a lot of bureaucracy, and it takes forever to get responses. In many cases, particularly for smaller community groups that have their ducks in a row, they go to the CMHC and just give up. In many cases, the CMHC seems to be the place where projects go to die. We heard that the government does not have a strategy.

Another quote from the report said, “We found that Indigenous Services Canada and the [CMHC] accepted the Assembly of First Nations’ 2021 estimate of the housing gap. However, the department and the corporation did not have a strategy to support First Nations in closing the housing gap by 2030.”

There was a lack of collaboration between the department and the CMHC. We heard from this report that there are 13 programs at the CMHC alone and that this cumbersome application process continues to be a problem. This is not only for the small community groups we hear from in our ridings but also, certainly, for first nations. Another quote from the report says, “We found that a significant challenge for First Nations communities in general was navigating the different application and reporting requirements of the many programs”.

This is a pattern with the government. The bureaucracy put in place by the government has been expanded dramatically. It obstructs homebuilding.

• (1625)

Many MPs have heard from organizations in their communities that are trying to get housing built. It is often impossible to get an answer. There is so much red tape and bureaucracy that they often give up, and it is no different in first nations communities. The CMHC has also created a whole new consulting class, it seems, of high-priced consultants who are hired to fill out these applications. People need a degree in filling out government applications to get answers. Sometimes, organizations spend years stuck at the CMHC, waiting for an answer to their applications; sometimes, the rules change partway through the process.

Conservatives have a different approach. We will reform the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation from a bureaucracy of policy, paperwork and painfully slow approaches to a “get homes

built” corporation. We will do it by putting executive bonuses and salaries on the chopping block unless a 60-day response requirement is met. People will get a response in 60 days.

Another thing we heard about in this report was that housing on reserve may not be built according to building codes. Here is another important bit of information: “Indigenous Services Canada and the [CMHC] did not have assurance that all housing units built and repaired with the support of their funding programs met applicable building code standards.”

This is another interesting one. We have heard at HUMA as well that, in some cases, CMHC forces builders, community groups and housing providers to go above and beyond the national and provincial building codes. This often comes in the form of additional energy efficiency requirements. The cost can be as high as \$30,000 per door. Of course, this means Canadians are paying that price. In this case, the housing that was constructed may not have met the current building codes, never mind going beyond.

There can be no doubt that we need building code reform in this country. Our building code has been developed over decades without any consideration of affordability. However, at the same time as we need that reform, we have to be sure that the homes Canadians live in are safe. That is certainly true for first nations communities as well. Indigenous communities have incredible potential to really drive the change that they need to see. Indigenous people are the leaders in their community, and they know what they need.

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I have met with Justin Marchand, the CEO of Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services. He has become a good friend, and we have met a number of times. Just recently, we met in my office, and he was telling me that OAHS has expanded; it now manages 3,000 units. That is an asset base of about \$320 million. This makes it one of the premier indigenous housing providers in this country. When Mr. Marchand was in my office the other day with one of his other team members, we talked about how burdensome and painful the red tape at the federal level can be in terms of getting housing built. Interestingly enough, he also spoke quite favourably about the Conservative plan to make available 15% of the federal real estate portfolio to get housing built and get it built quickly.

He pointed out that his group would prefer, instead of some kind of lease, to own the land. There are a couple of reasons for that. The first one is that, as he pointed out, indigenous people do not need some bureaucrat here in Ottawa to tell them how to do things and get things done, and all the red tape and conditions are the last things they need. The other point is that if the OAHS owns the land, then it can use the asset to leverage the asset and leverage the projects it builds to get the next ones built. It could actually get more units built, which makes complete sense. Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services has demonstrated it can do that and do it very well. Mr. Marchand pointed out that, in some cases, the best thing for aboriginal people is to get the government out of the way. We really see that across the country; there are lots of statistics and data about what is going on. What we see in this report is a mirror of what is going on in the rest of the country; of course, in many ways, it is worse.

We have talked a lot about housing. The government members have talked a lot about their national housing strategy. It is an \$80-billion strategy that, in the end, has had precisely the opposite effect of what we needed to have. It cannot be this way any longer. It takes Canadians too much of their hard-earned money to buy or rent a home. When 30% of the cost of every new home in this country is government, that is a problem. Nobody makes more money on housing than governments. One of the most effective ways we can get the cost of housing down is to get government out of the way. Conservatives would actually do that by reforming the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation; however, most importantly, we would eliminate the federal sales tax on the sale of homes under \$1 million, which could save Canadians \$50,000.

• (1630)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member's speech did not deal specifically with this, but the previous member's speech did. The bill by the Leader of the Opposition on housing was discussed in an article in *The Globe and Mail* not long ago by Campbell Clark. The headline was about a town in my riding. It was, "Pointe-Claire demonstrates the non-sense in [the Leader of the Opposition]'s housing formula".

Under the Leader of the Opposition's bill, a municipality where the housing stock rose by 15% vis-à-vis the previous year would get some kind of bonus, but one where the rate of increase did not exceed 15% would be penalized. The problem is that it really hurts municipalities that have built a lot of homes in the previous year because they have to exceed that by so much more. There is an example in the article, in which they talk about the city of Kirkland.

This is a small municipality next to the city of Pointe-Claire that only built one unit in 2022. This means that Kirkland only has to build two homes the following year to get the incentive, whereas a bigger city would have to build so many more homes to get the incentive or not be penalized. I would like to hear the hon. member's views on that.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, I guess there was not really a question, but the language around that is designed to identify areas in this country where it is particularly expensive and slow to get homes built. Our point in this discussion is that, right now, governments make too much money on housing. They charge too much and, at the local level, they take far too long to approve the development of new housing.

When it can take six years to get a piece of property zoned to precisely what is on either side, it costs money. In the real world, time is money, and that makes housing more expensive. That is not the case around here, of course; this place is ridiculous.

The fact of the matter is that we need to reduce the cost of government on every new home. The way we are going to do that is not by shovelling more money out the door and hoping municipalities do better; there have to be consequences.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, this is an interesting debate. Housing in indigenous communities is a real problem. Several of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women's reports on housing mention it, particularly how housing issues disproportionately affect indigenous women and girls and prevent them from escaping the cycle of violence.

That said, I would like to talk to my colleague about a very simple solution. Along with other members of the Bloc Québécois, I had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Yänonhchia' initiative. Basically, those representatives are asking for \$150 million. The initiative has been tested in certain communities, and it works. It has been a resounding success. It is a model where indigenous people meet their own needs.

I would like my colleague to tell us about that. Does he agree that the Yänonhchia' initiative needs that \$150 million?

• (1635)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, I am sorry; I did not really understand what the question was. I was listening, but I did not quite catch the program the member was speaking of specifically, so I cannot answer the question. I am happy to talk about it, but I do not know what she was saying.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I recognize the hon. member as the former mayor of Huntsville. His party's leader has gone on the record calling mayors incompetent and saying that they are the major roadblock for housing.

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Could the hon. member please rise and share whether he agrees that small-town mayors like himself are the problem and that their incompetence led to this housing crisis?

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, in many cases they are. The fact of the matter is municipalities charge way too much and take too long.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands should probably be quiet, so he can actually hear the answer. It is a fact that municipalities take too long to get things approved and that they keep raising charges at the local level. When I was a mayor in Huntsville, yes, I made sure that we kept things moving along and we made sure development—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands to hold off. If he has questions and comments, there is an appropriate time for that.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

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

The hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka. We are out of time, but I will let him wrap up.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, when I was a mayor, we got things done because I moved applications along and did not wait for the NIMBYs to delay things. We made things happen. Now we need to make things happen even faster because the crisis is worse today than it has been in generations in this country, and doing things the old way, as the government likes to do, is not going to work.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, Housing.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a number of thoughts I would like to share with members, particularly with members opposite.

However, before I do that, I wanted to highlight, and I used the word earlier today in a member's statement, the hypocrisy. The degree to which the Conservatives will say one thing and vote in a different direction surprises me. Quite often, they say things that really just do not make sense.

Now, let us think about this. We have the Conservative Party saying that we need to do more on indigenous housing, but one of their major policy election platform issues for 2025 is to get rid of the housing accelerator. Now, one would think that they would have looked at some of the recipients who are receiving the benefits of the housing accelerator fund.

An hon. member: That requires a little work.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as my colleague says, that requires a little work. Well, obviously, they are not working on the other side. The number of recipients that are benefiting through the housing accelerator fund is truly amazing. It is a very long list. Let us remember, the Conservative government would cut it. Conservatives have made that very clear. They actually mock it.

In fairness, not all of the Conservative members of Parliament oppose it, even though they have been told that they are supposed to oppose it, and they have kind of held back on their comments on it. At the end of the day, the Grand Poobah, the leader of the Conservative Party says, “accelerator fund, bad. We are going to vote against it, and if we are ever in government, we are going to get rid of it.”

I have done a little homework. There is a long list, and I am going to run out of time, but the number of first nations is fairly significant. Let me give a couple of examples where these are Conservative-held ridings, where the accelerator fund is there to support indigenous communities: Skowkale First Nation in Chilliwack—Hope and the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation in Manitoba. There is a very lengthy list of individuals, cities and indigenous groups that are receiving significant amounts of money through the housing accelerator fund.

The Conservatives will say that it is not building homes. It is not simply here is a plot of land, build a house. There are all forms of things that need to be done, like infrastructure. There is some red tape out there. We have a federal government that has recognized that we can play a role in providing supports through the accelerator fund to get more homes built.

If the Conservatives did their homework on this file, they would find that indigenous housing would benefit from this program, the very same program that they are saying they are going to cut. On the other hand, today, they are saying that we are not doing enough. I will get back into some more comments on the accelerator fund shortly.

This is the first time that I have seen an opposition party introduce a concurrence motion on its very own opposition day. I have been trying to think why the Conservative Party would do that, and I think I might have figured it out. Apparently, last week, the leader of the Conservative Party was embarrassed because he was all primed and pumped, and ready to deliver a speech here on the floor of the House of Commons, and the NDP outmaneuvered him by moving concurrence on a committee report. That was an embarrassing moment for the leader of the Conservative Party.

● (1640)

The Conservatives played a game on Friday. They are trying to pay back, but I guess they learned something from that and they wanted to be able to talk about housing today. After all, that is what their opposition motion is on. They dug up a report on housing to move concurrence on, so they could prevent the NDP from potentially bringing in a concurrence motion. That would spoil the Conservatives' day because they did not like the concurrence motion the NDP brought in last week.

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That is the only thing I can think of, in regard to why the Conservatives raised this particular report, because it is a game to the Conservative Party. What surprises me is that the Conservatives have an opposition day and I would have thought, as a Conservative Party, that they would have been following issues like trade, given what has taken place with the new president-elect, that trade would have been a hot discussion within the Conservative Party. It would have been a very productive day to have a discussion on trade. The Conservatives could have drawn some sort of a motion that would actually be voted on, which would have told Canadians exactly what they would be dealing with on that issue.

It is important. In fact, just this last five or six days, I participated in a trade mission in the Philippines with our Minister of International Trade. It was an incredible experience. We had arguably one of the largest delegations in Manila; even President Marcos made reference to it. It was like speed dating among businesses between Canada and the Philippines, trying to make connections, and we had some wonderful announcements. An exploratory discussion is taking place soon on coming up with a trade agreement between Canada and the Philippines. Air Canada came forward and talked about increasing the number of direct flights between Vancouver and Manila: four coming up in April.

Trade matters. As a government, we recognize that. As an opposition party, the Conservatives are found wanting. Today would have been a good opportunity to have that discussion because the last time, outside of an emergency debate, was when the Conservatives actually voted against the first-ever trade agreement, the Ukraine trade agreement. I would have thought the Conservative Party would deal with something of that nature, and that is not to take anything away from housing. Yes, they are the official opposition. They get to choose the issue, so they have chosen housing.

On the housing file, no government in generations has done more for Canadians than the current Prime Minister and government, in terms of dollars and real, tangible results. We recognize the federal government has a role to play. I contrast that to the leader of the Conservative Party, who, when he was the minister responsible for housing, did absolutely nothing, nothing at all. I should not say that; he actually managed to build six houses, I am told. I have no idea where those houses are, but I am told he built a half-dozen homes, but nothing else, and now he wants us to listen to what the Conservatives have to say about housing. We have heard that story before.

• (1645)

The Leader of the Opposition had an opportunity, and had he done his job when he was the minister of housing, maybe we would not have the shortages we have today. It is not like a house appears out of nowhere. There is a planning component to it. Has anyone ever heard the leader of the Conservative Party stand in this place and talk about what he did as minister of housing for indigenous people, or for Canadians as a whole, beyond those six hidden houses? Who knows where they are.

There is a lot of room for improvement. Our government is the first in generations to put forward a housing strategy for Canadians. It is more than just words. We are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars, going into billions of dollars. It is a housing strate-

gy that deals with affordable housing and ensures someone could have ongoing income supports, where rent is based on a percentage of one's income in non-profit housing units. The government has invested in different ways.

Ironically, the Liberals made a commitment for purpose-built rentals. Members will recall that from a couple of years back. That was actually taking away GST on new builds. The Conservatives voted against it: GST forgiveness for purpose-built rentals and the Conservatives did not support that. For every housing initiative by the government, the Conservatives have avoided any accountability on housing, and they vote against it. Does anyone wonder why? I would suggest we know the reason.

I wanted to get what I find to be an absolutely delightful quote. At the end of the day, everything is driven through the leader of the official opposition's office. When we think of the quotes the leader of the Conservative Party uses, and we have already witnessed it today, he likes to reward Conservatives who say the slogans or the bumper sticker words. If they do that, they get rewarded with gold stars. I figure they have individuals in the back who keep track and say, "Oh, so-and-so said it three times: three stars for the day."

There are some Conservatives who get offside, like the 15 or 17 members of Parliament who wrote to the Minister of Housing to say how wonderful the housing accelerator fund was. Obviously, it was because they were asking for support in their communities. That was offside. They were not supposed to do that, so they might have lost some stars. If a Conservative member does not do what they are being told to do, they lose stars. It is frowned upon.

It is amazing. I cannot give an exact quote, but later I can table a document if the Conservatives will let me. If they want to come and talk to a Liberal MP, that is considered a bad thing. They are not supposed to fraternize with—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1650)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are members on both sides of the House who are trying to intervene during the member's speech. I would ask members to please wait. There will be 10 minutes for questions and comments. I would ask members to please hold off until then. They can jot their ideas down.

The hon. member still has five minutes and 20 seconds left.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, in this situation, Conservatives are supposed to support whatever the leader of the Conservative Party says; they do not really have a choice in that matter. The member for Abbotsford is one of the individuals who went a little offside and we all know what happened with him.

The housing accelerator fund has benefited communities in every region of the country, including indigenous communities. There is so much potential with that program and looking at the expansion of housing co-ops. Last month, I was at a press conference hosted by Raising the Roof. Funding was provided by the federal government to Raising the Roof, an organization based in Ontario and now in Manitoba, to remodel and revitalize a home on Mountain Avenue. The house was dilapidated and the organization turned it into a wonderful rental. It is a great example of how the federal government, whether through the accelerator fund or other programs, is working with different municipalities, indigenous leaders and others.

It is something that is very local, involving many different stakeholders. Raising the Roof went to Manitoba, found a project on Mountain Avenue and went to Purpose Construction. Purpose Construction is a social enterprise that has done phenomenal work in hiring individuals, increasing their skill sets and showing them, in many ways, the benefits of the construction industry. They are the ones who did the work on Mountain Avenue.

Then if we look at the tenants, Siloam Mission, another non-profit organization, is the filter. It provides homes for two families and possibly a third individual, such as a student or something of that nature, of indigenous background. As a government, we have the national housing strategy, we have been working with the different levels of government on programs like the housing accelerator fund, and we have been working with different non-profit stakeholders like Habitat for Humanity, Raising the Roof and others that encourage and promote housing co-ops.

The federal government and the Prime Minister have been focused on the housing issues of Canadians. Let us contrast that to likely the worst minister of housing in Canada's history, the current leader of the Conservative Party. I love the contrast on that file, and I hope members will reflect on it.

Therefore, I move:

That the question be now put.

• (1655)

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

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil. Thank you,

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member was airing a lot of grievances, apparently, about the Conservatives. I am wondering if he can comment on the threats that were made by the member for Surrey—Newton to a member of his caucus, the member for Nepean.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, given it is kind of a free-for-all, let me comment on Patrick Brown's testimony, which clearly demonstrates that the leadership of the Conservative Party was heavily influenced by foreign interference. I would suggest that is one of the reasons the Conservatives do not want to have an opposition day on foreign interference.

I believe the leader of the Conservative Party still needs to get the security clearance, but we are beginning to understand why he does not want it, and it is because he is hiding something. It is a lot

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more than the leadership race he went through with individuals like Patrick Brown and the issue of foreign interference. There are a lot of questions that need to be answered. I appreciate the question posed by the member.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, we learned today that there will be an economic statement on December 16. I would like to ask my colleague if he is aware that a letter was sent to the Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister about the Yānonhchia' project.

It is a really wonderful project, and all this group is asking for is a \$150-million investment to facilitate access to affordable capital and expand the model, which has already been proven effective in Quebec and could be spun out to five other regions of Canada. The interesting thing is that this could help increase the number of available housing units while giving indigenous peoples some responsibility for their housing projects. We would be giving their power back to them.

Does my colleague agree that the \$150 million should be allocated in the next economic update, as requested by the Yānonhchia' project proponents? It is a great, easy solution for housing in indigenous communities.

• (1700)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, like the member opposite, I too am very much looking forward to the fall economic statement. It has been a long time coming, because the Bloc and the Conservatives have continuously filibustered, but we are going to get a fall economic statement. I think there are going to be a lot of wonderful things in there, and through it, I am sure there are many ideas.

I can tell the member opposite that the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance is very keen on trying to be sensitive to all the needs out there, and I suspect it is not an easy job establishing those priorities. However, when it is presented to the House, I am sure it will be a reflection of what Canadians really and truly would like to see.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is the first time I am rising today, and I just wanted to take a moment before I asked my question to acknowledge the heartbreaking event that happened in Edmonton this weekend, where Mr. Singh, a young 20-year-old student on his third day of work as a security guard, was shot dead doing the work of trying to protect people in Edmonton. It is a really devastating time for our community, and I want to take a moment to express my deep sympathies and my condolences to his family and those who loved him.

I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for his contributions today. It was disappointing, of course, to see him stand to vote against the NDP motion to take the GST off home heating and things like cellphone bills. I understand that the Liberals believe Christmas trees are more important, but I did think those were important.

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My actual question for him is with regard to housing. When we have a housing crisis issue in Canada and municipal, provincial and federal governments are implicated, what do we do when a provincial government, such as Danielle Smith and the UCP in Alberta, is not working with the municipalities or the federal government and would rather pick fights than actually get housing for Canadians?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we continue to work with those who are prepared to work, and at times, that means we put more of an emphasis on sitting down with the municipalities or other stakeholders to get the housing programs that are necessary.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, members are never going to believe this. Members will recall about 30 minutes ago there was an exchange between the member for Hamilton Centre and the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka. The member for Parry Sound—Muskoka referred to mayors as being incompetent. Then he stood up to say that, when he was mayor, he got so much done and made sure that housing got built.

It did not take that long to find something out from an article in the Huntsville Doppler. It is true that, when the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka was on city council, the council decreased the development charges in the municipality, but when he was mayor, the council increased development charges by 16%. There is literally no bigger gatekeeper than the former mayor, the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, the now sitting MP, who had the audacity to stand up in the House to accuse other mayors across this country of being incompetent.

I am wondering what the parliamentary secretary would have to say to all of that new information.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, what is there to say to something of that nature? It is truly amazing. I look at it in the sense that the member is following his leader. His leader will say things, and we wonder where those things come from, just like how he says they want to give a tax break, yet they voted against giving a tax break. They literally voted against it.

The member for Parry Sound—Muskoka has done the same thing. He comes out to say that there are all those bad mayors, or bad councillors, and so forth, because they are wasting dollars. On the other hand, he held, as my colleague and friend has just pointed out, a very different position, both in policy and as a mayor, than he holds now as a member of Parliament. Consistency is a problem. The word hypocrisy is what often comes to my mind when I think of the Conservative Party.

• (1705)

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, listening to the Liberal parliamentary secretary, I have to scratch my head and wonder what country he is living in or, maybe, what planet. He talks about a housing accelerator program when it actually should be called a housing decelerator program. The Liberals have put a break on housing starts. In Vancouver and Toronto, housing starts are down to levels that they were at in the seventies.

We can compare that with the Conservative plan, which would put up to \$50,000 into people's pockets when they purchase a new home, and ensure a savings, also, of \$2,500 a year. If the Liberals

do not want to do a carbon tax election, why not one on the housing plan that we have?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would love to see a contrast between the leader of the Conservative Party and the Prime Minister with detailed documentation of who has done what on the housing file.

The member opposite will find that the leader of the Conservative Party, with all seriousness, all kidding aside, was likely the worst housing minister in the history of our nation. Contrast that with the Prime Minister. We would have to go back generations to find a prime minister who has invested more resources and energy into the development of a housing policy.

I truly believe that the Conservatives have absolutely no credibility. They, for example, say that they would get rid of the housing accelerator fund, even though some of the member's own colleagues are asking for support from that fund. There is no credibility within the Conservative Party whatsoever on the housing file.

If I had the time to cite some very specific examples, I would go into housing co-ops. I would go into supports for non-profit housing units. I would talk about their lack of any form of a housing strategy. Ultimately, there are retrofits and programs to support improving housing stock. The government has worked on these types of things, and the leader of the Conservative Party did absolutely nothing, zero, on those—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary has run out of time.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue,

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is an honour, once again, to rise in the House to speak about access to housing, which is a fundamental issue, particularly for first nations. I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

I would like to start by mentioning that question period in the House is always a bit ironic. For months now, the government has been responding to questions from the leader of the official opposition by sardonically pointing out that when he was the minister responsible for infrastructure and housing, he built only six housing units. They keep pointing at him and repeating the word “six”. What is the reality for indigenous communities, however? What is the actual budget that the government gives to each community to build housing?

It is important to remember that Canada's fastest growing populations are first nations, Métis and Inuit. What is the current government doing? It is not doing anything more. It is allowing the construction of two, not six, but two housing units per indigenous community, even though the need is much greater. What does that mean? It means that the further north we go, the more we see three or four families living in the same home. We hear of situations where people have to take turns watching television and sitting on the couch in the evenings. The reality is that they do not have access to beds because three or even four families are sharing the same home. In the community of Long Point in the village of Winneway in my riding, there are 21 people living in one house. Is that normal? The answer is obviously no.

Why does that situation exist? It is because this government is stingy with first nations. It is stingy when it comes time to give communities the means to take control of their own destiny, particularly when it comes to economic reconciliation, which includes the ability to build housing.

Obviously the motion being debated in the House today is important. One of the most tangible solutions that has to be adopted comes from the first nations themselves. I think that is the right path to take in a context of economic reconciliation. I am, of course, talking about the Yānonhchia' initiative, which comes to us from leaders, including the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador, or AFNQL.

I want to acknowledge the remarkable work of Lance Haymond, the chief of Kebaowek First Nation, which is in my riding. His lifelong mission has been to give the members of his community and first nations in general access to housing and property. He has also worked to ensure that the indigenous middle class could have access to prosperity. I think that is our common objective. This must be shared and accessible to all first nations members.

There is something else I would like to talk about. Today, I had to leave the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, which had invited the Minister of Indigenous Services and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement to testify. We wanted to ask them about the fundamental issue of "pretendians" who receive government contracts even though they do not qualify as indigenous. This is a real problem. I wanted to raise the issue of government funding with the minister to see whether it is going to the right places.

I have to say I have some concerns at the moment. Last week, the Assembly of First Nations was here in Ottawa. We learned that the Liberal government organized a cocktail party with members of the first nations. If they wished to have access to the Prime Minister or the minister in order to ask them questions, particularly about housing, they were asked what was the maximum contribution that each individual could give. Is that the norm? I have been thinking about that a lot.

We hear through the grapevine that the Minister of Indigenous Services has yet to make a formal request to the Minister of Finance to ensure that initiatives such as Yānonhchia' are funded by the government. Many representations have been made. About half an hour ago, I asked the minister directly whether she had sent an official letter to the Minister of Finance to ask her to fund the

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Yānonhchia' initiative, which she seemed to strongly support. She has had several meetings with the NACCA proponents and Lance Haymond. The answer I received is that no, the letter has not been sent. Does this government know how to make any effort? I seriously wonder.

As of today's date, December 9, those letters should have been sent.

● (1710)

In fact, we know that if a budget has to be tabled in March, this has to be done. The Minister of Finance has to be asked. No formal request has been made, and that raises a number of questions in my mind.

We are talking about letters. Sending a letter is complicated. For one thing, the request has to be made formally and received by the federal bureaucracy. I sent a letter on March 12 to the Minister of Finance. She cannot deny that this request came from the House or that it was formally made with the support of the first nations.

At the time, I was already making an urgent appeal to the minister for federal support for the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association, or NACCA. I still appreciate that organization for its leadership to this day. I asked for increased funding for NACCA because the solution will come from first nations being financially self-sufficient. I asked for that increase because solutions will come from first nations members themselves and because these funds will be managed by and for first nations communities. A specific request was made as early as March last year. I would like to point out that the request was successful, because NACCA did receive additional funding.

The same thing needs to be done for housing, which is what I did on November 21 when I wrote another letter to the Minister of Finance. I am going to read from that letter, because I think it is in the public interest, especially right now.

Dear Minister,

I am writing to express my support for extending the Yānonhchia' housing finance network, an initiative that has already proven successful in indigenous communities in Quebec and that could be a key solution for addressing the housing crisis in first nations communities across the country. As the member for Abitibi-Témiscamingue, I have seen first-hand the difficulties encountered by indigenous families in accessing safe, adequate and affordable housing. However, in addition to taking immediate action to address this urgent situation, we also need to think about sustainable solutions that will enable indigenous communities to develop their own real estate market and become homeowners.

Need for urgent action to address indigenous housing crisis

The housing crisis in first nations communities is an urgent reality. Many families are living in precarious housing conditions, often in substandard, overcrowded homes. These conditions are harmful to their health and well-being and undermine future opportunities. In that regard, I fully support initiatives like Yānonhchia', which facilitates access to affordable financing for housing construction in indigenous communities. An immediate investment of \$150 million to extend this model to other regions is an essential first step in dealing with this crisis.

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However, it is also important to point out that indigenous communities have a middle class, people who are not living in an extremely precarious situation or are unable to access affordable housing. These families want to be able to own their own homes, a fundamental right that would help them strengthen their economic autonomy and social stability. Housing affordability for these groups must be supported by responsive funding policies that would enable these middle class families to become homeowners, while ensuring that social housing continues to be reserved for those who need it most.

A long-term vision for autonomy and prosperity

In addition to meeting immediate housing needs, it is crucial to develop an independent indigenous real estate market that will enable communities to take charge of their own real estate development projects and buy homes. This market must respond to the needs of extremely vulnerable people, who need adapted social housing, and those of the indigenous middle class, who must have the opportunity to invest in sustainable and accessible housing.

By supporting real estate development projects that enable indigenous communities to manage their own land resources, we are also promoting self-sufficiency and creating sustainable economic opportunities. That requires financial mechanisms suited to these communities, such as low-interest loans, targeted subsidies and training programs to help families navigate the process of purchasing property and managing real estate.

In the next part of my letter, I spoke about a targeted response for the most vulnerable and support for the indigenous middle class. I can come back to that, but there is a tremendous opportunity there that the government cannot afford to miss.

• (1715)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed my colleague's speech. The whole issue of financial independence is closely related to the work that I was doing before I became an MP. I am far from an expert on the problem that first nations are experiencing, but I heard my colleague talk about Yānonhchia', and I would like to know more about how it works.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, it is to her credit that she wants to know more.

Yānonhchia' is an initiative by and for indigenous people. That is the first thing we need to remember. Yānonhchia' also has links to major organizations such as NACCA, the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association, and the AFNQL, the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador, which is very active when it comes to addressing the needs of first nations. There are also concrete proposals for an inclusive future, including providing \$150 million in immediate funding for housing projects, creating dedicated financial mechanisms for the indigenous middle class, prioritizing social housing for people in very vulnerable situations, simplifying land processes, which is a major issue for communities, and training programs to support home ownership. Yānonhchia' supports these values, and this government must also allow first nations to embrace them.

• (1720)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very interesting speech. Over the past few years, the NDP has managed to wrestle nearly \$8 billion from the minority government for indigenous housing, but that is not nearly enough. A lot more than that is needed. We consider it extremely important that this housing be for and by first nations.

I would like my colleague to tell me a little about the needs of his community and why the federal strategy has failed to produce results since 2017, despite all the money spent on it.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his interest in this important issue.

The study made several recommendations aimed at strengthening first nations' capacity and autonomy to invest in housing. I could talk about recommendations 8, 15, 16 and many others, but I want to focus on recommendation 9, which concerns one of the important needs that complements what I have mentioned. I am referring to the whole matter of recruiting, retaining and training indigenous staff who work on housing. Two housing units are made available by the government every year, if that. At the same time, these units have to be built in a ridiculously short amount of time. Quite often, money intended for indigenous peoples is returned to the federal treasury because of the many bureaucratic requirements and standards that indigenous communities are unable to meet.

An initiative like Yānonhchia' also provides indigenous leadership in the fields of architecture, engineering and advising communities on plans, specifications and urban development. It is about making it easier for indigenous people to settle on their own land. I would add that this government must be more generous towards indigenous communities through autonomous funding, but it must also give much more realistic deadlines so that indigenous people can keep the expertise they have, particularly in housing, within their communities.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women has just completed a study on the rise in femicides. Sadly, women are being murdered because they cannot escape the cycle of violence. We studied the issue of inadequate housing for indigenous women and girls which, unfortunately, means that they make up a disproportionate number of homicide and human trafficking cases.

We just marked the end of the days of activism against gender-based violence. I would like to hear my colleague talk about the link between the importance of housing and these missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her dedication to this cause, year after year. I want to talk to her about recommendation 3, which states the following:

That the Government of Canada continue to address the 231 Calls for Justice in the National Inquiry's Final Report, Reclaiming Power and Place, and that particular attention be paid to...improving access to housing for Indigenous women and that housing has impacts on Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people...

People are sensitive to this issue. Obviously, when many families are living under the same roof, it creates major social problems. How can we promote access to education and health care when one of the foundations of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, access to housing, is compromised? This is the foundation of society.

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Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak to this issue, even though it all feels a bit rushed.

I do not quite understand. The Conservatives have an opposition day, and on that opposition day, they bring forward another motion to discuss a related topic. I would like to point out that this is an important matter, unlike what we have been doing in the House for the past month and a half. Finally, we are discussing a fundamental issue. I think the housing crisis—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I must interrupt the member.

We can hear a telephone ringing. I believe it is Santa Claus calling to see who has been naughty and who has been nice. I think Santa is going to save time this year.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, housing and the housing crisis are fundamental issues. I talk about them often here in the House. In my opinion, the housing crisis, the language crisis and the climate crisis are the most fundamental challenges that Quebec and Canada are facing. This evening, we are talking about indigenous housing.

I will not repeat everything my colleague said. He did a fine job talking about Yānonhchia', an indigenous-led initiative to provide access to home ownership on reserves. It is a very important project, and I hope that, a week from now, the Minister of Finance will announce in her economic statement that she is providing funding to the initiative. That \$150 million in funding would allow the communities to be more self-sufficient. The communities would benefit from that money. Indigenous people could create their own fund to promote home ownership, which is not common. That would be truly important.

As we talk about housing, I feel compelled to mention something that is very important right now. It is cold outside. There is snow on the ground, and winter is right around the corner. I spoke about homelessness two weeks ago when I addressed the House. I mentioned the \$250-million fund, which is related to what we are talking about. When it comes to homelessness and indigenous homelessness in Montreal, half of the people living on the street on the Island of Montreal, as far as we know, are indigenous. Homelessness is a fundamental problem.

In its budget last March, the federal government announced a \$250-million fund to tackle encampments. We were pleased. Everyone was happy that the government was finally allocating this \$250 million. It seemed to understand there was a problem. Anyone who walks out of this building will see an encampment within five minutes. There are tent encampments and homeless people in every riding in Quebec and Canada. It is endemic. I have no idea how anyone can allow such a thing to happen.

The government announced a \$250-million fund in March. The discussions with Quebec dragged on, and things started to get complicated. The federal government was imposing bureaucratic hurdles. It was willing to provide funding, but first it wanted to know how big the space and the beds would be, how many pillowcases would be needed, how many pencils would be used to count the

number of homeless people using the shelter and what colour the walls would be painted. There were all sorts of bureaucratic hurdles, which meant that the agreement did not get signed and the money was not allocated.

Quebec was prepared to match Ottawa's offer, which was close to \$60 million. Quebec was prepared to put in the same amount. There were negotiations. Finally, the agreement was signed two weeks ago, but the devil is in the details. Not only is it winter now, but the deadline for projects submissions for this funding is January 7. I am not making this up. The fund was announced in March. The deadline for submissions is January 7. These projects will not see the light of day until the end of this winter. They will not help this winter. I have to pinch myself. When we talk about delays related to the housing crisis, this is what we are talking about.

I wrote a report that is related to the report on indigenous housing. I toured Quebec. I set out on a pilgrimage. One time, I had a meeting with a group in Saint-Hyacinthe, I think. I thought I was being so smart. I got the numbers from CMHC and I presented them to the representatives of the community groups sitting across from me. They did not know what I was talking about. They said that the situation was much worse than my numbers suggested. On the ground, the situation was serious. They needed far more housing than what I was saying, and the vacancy rates were much lower than what I was saying. The numbers did not reflect the reality on the ground.

I travelled all across Quebec last year. Over the course of a few months, I travelled everywhere, including Lac-Saint-Jean, Abitibi, the Gaspé, Sherbrooke, Montreal, Quebec City, Gatineau and Granby. I went to every region. I met with people from more than 600 organizations that work every day to build social and community housing, to help the most vulnerable people in our country, in Quebec and Canada, find a place to live. These organizations help women who are victims of domestic violence, seniors, people with substance abuse problems and the many vulnerable populations that we need to take care of, that we have a responsibility to care for. I toured Quebec and then produced a 150-page report. The summary is about 20 pages long, and I have it here—

● (1725)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the hon. member that he can reference his document, but he cannot hold it up.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, I am talking about the report that I have in my hands right now. My colleagues cannot see it, but they can sense that there is something important in it, and I am going to tell them about it.

It is a bit funny, I have 12 recommendations. Just before the first one, I wrote that the federal government should get out of housing. I will explain why.

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Every time the federal government has made a new funding announcement in the past few years, Quebec has said that the federal government is not going to spend a penny in Quebec without the Quebec government having a say in the matter. Then the negotiations begin. The federal government launched its grand national housing strategy in 2017. It allocated \$82 billion across Canada. The government spent money just about everywhere. We are still wondering where exactly. It spent money in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary and St. John's, Newfoundland. There was not one penny for Quebec because Quebec declined, as is its prerogative. We wanted money, not programs. We wanted money, not criteria. We wanted money, not conditions. That led to three years of waiting. Earlier I was talking about the \$250-million homelessness program. It took a year before a decision was made.

Too many players are involved in housing. At the end of the day, housing is built in cities. Cities make bylaws, manage urban planning and organize construction. In fact, cities need money. The infrastructure fund is another fund that has a critical role to play in relation to the housing crisis. This \$6-billion fund is currently being negotiated with Quebec. Just building housing is not enough. Sewers need to be built too. Homes need to be connected to the sewer system. Roads need to be built. All these things are important for housing. Two or three weeks ago, the Association de la construction du Québec came to Ottawa to say that infrastructure is fundamental and that this funding is needed.

Cities organize housing construction. Quebec also has a housing department and various programs. Then, on top of all that, the federal government comes in and adds its own conditions. Take Rimouski, for example. There are problems there. The city should and would like to house women fleeing domestic violence. That is true everywhere in Quebec, but I want to focus on Rimouski. There are needs in this area. Every day, a woman knocks on the door of a shelter for women fleeing domestic violence and then goes home. We know what going home means. It happens every day. There is a desperate need for resources. In Rimouski, creating a shelter like that would mean building a 32-unit building for women who are victims of domestic violence. As it happens, Quebec has a program for that. It might be through the Fédération des associations et corporations en construction du Québec. It used to be AccèsLogis Québec. An organization would apply and wait one to two years. Finally, it would get the go-ahead. Great, it was getting funding.

If there is not enough money, it can apply to Ottawa, which has another program that grants funding. The criteria are different, however, especially when it comes to affordability. The affordability criteria make absolutely no sense. They are a disaster. Another two years is spent waiting on Ottawa. Often, in the meantime, the four-year-old offer to purchase the property falls through. In short, the whole thing is infuriating. The process takes years.

While I was touring Abitibi, I met Stéphane Grenier, a really amazing guy. He is a university professor who cares for homeless people, including homeless indigenous people. I attended the opening of a magnificent shelter, a brand-new building with 41 spaces. It opened a year ago, but people had been working on the project for eight years. That means eight winters, eight years of people looking for an emergency shelter, only to give up because one did not exist. It is infuriating.

Here is my first recommendation. Fiscal tools are available here in Ottawa. If Ottawa agreed that this is a provincial jurisdiction and if it gave the money to Quebec, just as it does for health care, there would be fewer players involved. This would achieve two things: it would shorten project approval times and lower costs. Everyone would win.

• (1730)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed my Bloc Québécois colleague's speech. He is so energetic.

I would like his opinion on the partnership approach. In Châteauguay, we are very proud of a project that was built in 2022 as part of the federal government's rapid housing initiative. It included contributions from the Quebec government and the City of Châteauguay, in partnership with the Mohawk community of Kahnawake. We are very proud of this project.

Does my hon. colleague think we should continue along this path? Will he support us in that endeavour?

• (1735)

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, my colleague asked a very good question.

The rapid housing initiative is a very good program; everyone applauds it. There have been three phases. The first phase was \$1 billion, and the other two were \$1.5 billion, unless I am mistaken. These are 100% subsidized social housing units. Everyone in Quebec loves this program.

Except now we have learned some things from talking to people from the Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain, or FRAPRU. Two weeks ago, at the summit on homelessness, we learned that there is apparently a fourth phase, but the criteria have been changed. They have added an affordability factor that is really scaring organizations in Quebec. In other words, it appears that the nature of the rapid housing initiative, which is a very good program, is going to change. No one knows how much money is still in the fund, but the criteria have already changed. This is very scary for people.

I have a message for my Conservative friends: The Government of Canada's rapid housing initiative is a very good program. They should renew it if they come to power.

[English]

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently, I met with a chief from a nation south of Montreal. Decades ago, he started a program of developing mortgages and home ownership on the nation. It has continued to grow and is extensive, but to be replicated, it needs to have a connection with the government. He has been a year trying to get a meeting with the minister to explain how successful it is to have home ownership, a mortgage and a credit rating.

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What does the member believe the response should be from the government when a first nation has been able to do that, yet cannot get a meeting with the minister for more than a year to explain it?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, it is not very surprising. It is hard to think about that despite the major headlines in the papers every day. There is talk of evictions. Earlier we were talking about homelessness. In the past five years, deaths in the streets of Quebec have tripled. In the past five years, the number of homeless in Quebec has doubled. The numbers are just as staggering across Canada.

After everything I said in my speech, it is hard to imagine that the federal government across the way understands the gravity of the crisis. At one point, we heard that 5.8 million housing units needed to be built by 2032 to achieve market equilibrium. It is fascinating. These numbers are astronomical. Watching the Liberals across the way in action makes us think that there is something that they fail to understand.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to ask a question that may be a little off topic. On the subject of housing, I think that my colleague and I share a passion for social housing and co-operatives.

We in the NDP used our opposition day to ask that the GST holiday be extended to essentials such as diapers, children's clothing and food prepared at the grocery store. We also wanted it to extend permanently to heating and cellphone plans to give people, workers and their families a break. The Bloc Québécois voted against it. I was surprised.

The GST is a regressive tax that hurts the middle class and working people the most, in terms of the proportion of the impact it has on people's wallets.

I would like my colleague to take a moment to explain why the Bloc Québécois opposed this measure put forward by the NDP.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, my colleague asked an indirect question, so I will give him an indirect answer.

Five years ago, when I became an MP, I did not know the difference between social housing and affordable housing. Now I do. I have also developed a passion for this issue. I cannot believe that we are seeing this sort of thing in a G7 country.

I believe in an interventionist government. I think that the government has an important role to play in housing people. We were talking earlier about Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and I mentioned the rapid housing initiative, which is a very good program. In general, the government is investing a lot of money in a not very efficient way, so it does not really help people.

I am in favour, and I hope that a future NDP government will implement a massive social housing construction project in its first term. That is what I hope, and I will be there to support it, if it ever happens.

• (1740)

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to rise today to provide a response from the NDP on the report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, entitled "The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada". There are 20 recommendations set out in this report. I want to speak to a couple of them.

Before I speak about that, I want to talk about the level of injustice and the fact that, in the place that is now known as Canada, there are so many indigenous folks who are without housing.

I am going to talk about my community of Winnipeg Centre. Of those who are precariously housed, 75% are indigenous. Many come from the local Treaty 1 nations and are on their very own Treaty 1 lands. Many of those who are currently houseless live in my riding. I have talked to different elected officials about how tragic it is that, on the very lands that we occupy, the folks who are the stewards, the people from those lands and territories, are not even housed on their own territory, the very lands, territories and resources that have allowed this country to be rich.

Indigenous people throughout the country are homeless on our very own lands, some of whom are my family members. Many folks and family members who are currently houseless reside in Saskatchewan. I come from a very small community, Wood Mountain Lakota First Nation, which was nine by nine and is now three by three.

The federal government issued an apology to our nation a few months back for calling us squatters on our very own lands. There is incremental justice in dealing with this. What is so disturbing about that goes back to what I said about all the riches in Canada and all the wealth that has occurred. Sometimes, when I am talking about issues of social justice and human rights, I wish I could dress up like a pipeline because that is the Conservatives' main focus, the very riches, the tar sands. They are reaping the benefits of indigenous lands, yet so many of our people live unsheltered in urban centres and on our lands, territories and resources.

When we talk about housing, there always seems to be a lack of money. The NDP fought for and got a for indigenous, by indigenous housing strategy with \$4 billion issued to this particular housing fund. Where is the money? How much money have the provincial governments made off of our resources? The extraction industry is based in our communities and wreaks havoc on our lands in places like Beaver Lake Cree Nation, which is putting forward a precedent-setting case to talk about the long-term impacts of the tar sands on the treaty right to hunt and fish. That \$4 billion is not even enough to begin to address the housing crisis on reserve. Where is the money?

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● (1745)

I hear the member from Winnipeg North talking about Sioux Valley and investments in housing. I want to talk to the chief of Sioux Valley Dakota Nation, and I hope maybe we will post this part of the clip. I want to talk to the chief to find out whether his housing crisis has been solved by the Liberal government, because I know he is going to tell me that no, it has not. It does not matter whether it has been consecutive Conservative or Liberal governments; nobody has even begun to deal with the housing crisis in first nations communities.

Let us not forget Nunavut, where there is the most dire housing crisis in the country. We could fix it, but for whatever reason, the genocide and the normalization of institutional poverty, of legislated poverty of indigenous peoples, is perpetuated today. This is so much the case that I have to listen even today, and I have been going off for the last week so maybe it is time for a break, to what a supposedly great job the Liberal government is doing dealing with the housing crisis, when every year indigenous people die, frozen on the streets, some of them on their very own lands. Can members imagine that?

This was indigenous land. It still is indigenous land, even the House of Commons. There are so many people around the House of Commons, this multi-billion dollar building, who are unhoused, on unceded Algonquin territory, our land. Indigenous brothers and sisters are living on the streets, and we walk by them every day.

In my community of Winnipeg Centre, people walk by and drive by indigenous folks every day, not even noticing the grotesque and violent human rights violation because it is normalized. This is why the government and Conservative governments have felt it okay to say, "Hey, listen, we are giving \$50 million this year for housing", and everybody is supposed to stand up and cheer. They say, "We are going to promise \$4 billion in housing", and then they pretend they never even promised it. In fact, they say they are going to put it in the budget, but then they never get the money out the door. Meanwhile, people die.

I want to focus on a couple of recommendations. One I am going to focus on because it has been a lot of the work I have done is recommendation 3, which says:

That the Government of Canada continue to address the 231 Calls for Justice in the National Inquiry's Final Report, Reclaiming Power and Place, and that particular attention be paid to the 10 calls for improving access to housing for Indigenous women and that housing has impacts on Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people, and incorporate the wrap-around care that is required.

Do members want to know why? There is a direct correlation between gender-based violence and poverty. In fact if we look at the final report on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, one of the comments it makes is that it was not uncommon for women to know the person who perpetrated violence. This is because poverty forces women and gender-diverse folks to stay in unsafe situations because they have nowhere else to go, and to be exploited and to experience violence.

● (1750)

Our shelter system was originally set up for men who were dealing with alcoholism. It was never designed for women or gender-diverse folks, and many of the shelters are not safe for women and

gender-diverse folks to stay in. There are reports of sexual assaults, violence and exploitation. That is one of the reasons I, along with advocates from my community, fought so hard for Velma's House, a 24-7 safe place for indigenous girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

It is not enough. We hear in the news about the latest serial killer in Manitoba. I shall not name him. He is undeserving of being named.

Let us not forget about Tanya Nepinak in 2011, who was with an unsafe guy, a youth, with another youth in the house, one I know very well, a lovely person, and thank goodness she survived. What a wonderful mother, mentor, courageous and brilliant young woman. I am glad she survived. What about Tanya Nepinak? What would have happened if Tanya Nepinak had had safe housing or safe shelter? There is a level of disconnect in this place when we are dealing with life-and-death situations.

I am going to tell a story. I am one of those folks who has a history of family and intergenerational impacts. My grandmother, before my mom went into care and it was one of the reasons my mom had to go into the child welfare system, lived on the streets. She had to live in different places throughout her life. I had the privilege of meeting her two times in my life: one time when I was 13, and a second time just before she died. She was 85. I do not know how my grandmother lived that long. She had this rough, tough, hard life.

My mom took her into our house. I asked my mom, "Why are you taking her into the house? She abandoned you, Mom." She said to me, "Leah, she did the very best she could with what she had. In spite of being a brutal alcoholic, she gave me a healthy body, a healthy mind. She gave me all the tools I needed to be successful in life. She chose through her whole pregnancy not to drink and for that, I will always love her." When they removed her lung, which was the last surgery that finally ended her life, they said, "Miss Warren," because she married one of the fellows along the way, "we found an ashtray with a cigarette butt in it." She had a hard life.

I share that story because sometimes in this place, I feel like we forget that everybody has a story. Sometimes in this place, we are so busy judging, pathologizing and talking about how somebody lived in a tent or about somebody being an addict that we do not even bother hearing their story. We blame people for their circumstance. Then we have this callous response: "Why do you not pick yourself up by your bootstraps? Get a job."

Some stories are really tragic for indigenous people in this country. If members spent the time to talk to some of the folks, my neighbours, and I am very proud to have them as my neighbours, they would tell a story or two.

Routine Proceedings

• (1755)

The fact that many of the folks who are without housing are still surviving, like my grandmother, speaks to their strength and resilience. It speaks to their strength and resilience because, in addition to that, in my riding, where 75% of the people who are unhoused or precariously housed are indigenous, they are still fighting to survive. Even though everything has been put in our way through colonization to strip us of our human rights, we are power.

I know a guy who was in the sixties scoop and is a military veteran. He is unhoused right now, but he is smart and strong. It is not any fault of his; it is a disrespect of society. He is a veteran. He is a guy who was kidnapped from his family and shipped off for no other reason than because he was indigenous. That is not a fault of his lack of hard work and labour. He is the result of a colonial project that has done exactly what it was designed to do, except some of us are surviving. Is that not amazing?

Some of us, for whatever reason, are like me. My mom figured it out and I am thriving. What my mom always told me was, “Never think you are too good because we are all one paycheque away from the welfare line, all of us. We never know what can happen in our lives.”

Sometimes I think we forget about that humanity in here. It is like we are somehow above the fray. However, none of us is above that fray, ever. I share these stories because maybe we should listen to people when we are passing budgets and making policies and doing legislation that really could deal with this human rights crisis.

Right now, I can say that all levels of government, the current government, the former Conservative government, provincial governments and municipal governments, are failing to ensure that every person residing in what people now call Canada is afforded the basic human right to housing.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the telling of stories is an important part of listening and understanding what people are living with. I appreciated that my colleague brought that personal side to it because it is important to tell those stories.

In my constituency, Siksika Nation embarked on a very interesting building project. It was 3-D house building, where they were building houses with a firm from Ontario for under \$200 per square foot in 30 days. I saw the process. I saw how they were built and the leadership Siksika Nation took to build housing for needy people in their nation. However, Indigenous Services administration bureaucrats have no interest in this. I find this very disheartening to see, when indigenous nations take leadership, but the bureaucrats do not want to pay attention to the leadership that indigenous people are bringing to this particular issue.

With regard to the challenges we face, the barriers that are there, the member might identify, as I do, a bureaucracy that does not want to change. I think that is a difficult part of the process we deal with.

• (1800)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, it is normalized racism in this country. It is a normalization of the exploitation of indigenous peoples, lands, territories and resources, where everybody benefits and very often not the nations. That is one of the issues.

However, we have to just stop talking about bureaucracy. That is one of the problems, but government after government has underfunded the housing crisis. It started with Paul Martin and the 2% cap, and now we are in a crisis. That happened in the 1990s. Governments have never lifted the 2% cap, and now we are in a crisis.

Therefore, I do not want to hear about how great the Liberals are doing. I certainly do not want to hear how great the Conservatives are doing. We have to stop patting ourselves on the back, and we just have to develop policies and legislation that work.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I are fortunate enough to work together on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. I would like to point her toward solutions to this issue. Last week, the House debated a report from the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. It discussed Canada's feminist policy.

A Liberal member asked me what we were proposing. I mentioned a few ideas, but I could have told him to read the report. It contains dozens of recommendations. The government needs to stop shelving these reports. If it worked a little harder on implementing the ideas in the committees' reports, maybe it could get down to work on solutions.

Getting back to the report under discussion today, I would like my colleague to talk about recommendation 3. My colleague, the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, addressed it a little earlier. It states the following:

That the Government of Canada continue to address the 231 Calls for Justice in the National Inquiry's Final Report, Reclaiming Power and Place, and that particular attention be paid to the 10 calls for improving access to housing for Indigenous women and that housing has impacts on Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people, and incorporate the wrap-around care that is required.

That is quite a recommendation. There is indeed a connection, because freeing indigenous women and girls from violence is only possible if they are given housing.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the comment. However, we are many years out from the national inquiry, and the Liberal government has implemented two calls for justice. Housing is a critical piece of this. If we want to deal with gender-based violence, whether it relates to indigenous women, gender-diverse people or any person, we have to deal with housing. In that way, people are not put in a position in which they are forced to stay in places that are unsafe, on the streets or in violence.

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I just asked a question today from Women's Shelters Canada. It was about how shelters are overwrought because of demand; the government has not built enough affordable housing with rent geared to income. We need to listen to indigenous people, for indigenous, by indigenous, and that is certainly what our party fought for. It is time for the Liberals to deliver on that.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is not a single time that the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre rises in the House and does not impart to us what she has learned, with lessons, teachings and things we should be taking away. In her remarks, she talked about the genocidal settler colonial project that is really about the displacement of first nations, Métis, indigenous and Inuit peoples from their lands.

When no levels of government provide adequate funding, the result is that people have to leave their home territories to go to cities to seek services, health care and education. They not only lose their connection to their original homelands, but they also end up living in precarity and in what I will call the social murder of homelessness.

Can the member comment on how the settler colonial project and genocidal logics are not an event that happens but a process of land displacement? Can she reflect on purposeful government underfunding of nations in a nation-to-nation relationship that results in people leaving their home territories?

• (1805)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I am going to give an example, just because I do not have a lot of time.

South Indian Lake, prior to Manitoba Hydro's coming in, had 70% employment in the whitefish industry, but because of the damage that was done as a result of Manitoba Hydro, its fishing industry was destroyed. Now there is 10% employment, mostly in administrative positions, in South Indian Lake. That has rippling effects; it forces people to leave their community to search for work and for housing.

Even for folks who are looking to survive and thrive, to enjoy and live a traditional way of life, because of what has happened through resource extraction, like in Beaver Lake Cree Nation, the very land and waters are too polluted and food sources are impacted. The people who very often go to urban centres, trying to find a better life, get an education, get a home and a better life for their kids, face non-stop racism and discrimination. That is the reality.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I heard a Conservative come in here and ask whether he had missed much. I wish he had taken the time to listen. That is what I am talking about when I talk about humanity, because there is a whole lot of stinking privilege around here. Maybe if the member took a moment to listen, he would be a little more kind, a little more gentle, a little bit more compassionate and a little more caring, but he does not want to listen.

That is how people end up on the streets. It is one example of a broader systemic issue of systemic racism.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had the honour to serve on the human re-

sources committee with the member, and she has given a very eloquent speech. I think it is important for all of us to take note of her focus on people and some of the tragic situations that can happen in a heartbeat. We all have constituents who are in precarious situations, so I applaud the member on her tone tonight.

I have a quick question. Since the government made changes and divided one bureaucracy for indigenous-Crown affairs and services into two separate organizations, just from the member's opinion, has there been an improvement? If there has been, where? If there has not been, where as well?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I will tell members when things stopped improving; it was when we put in place the Indian Act. It was bad from the start and it is still bad, because that is what we call legislated racism: the Indian Act. The fact is that even I, as a woman under the Indian Act right now, do not have the same rights as other women, never mind as men. As well, we still have not amended the Indian Act, and we talk about amending it incrementally.

It impacts the safety of women. In fact, it was only less than 20 years ago that the Divorce Act was amended so women who were getting divorced on reserve had property rights. I am divorced, happily. However, if I had been living on a reserve at the time I divorced, I would have zero property rights. That is called legislated racism, which has been perpetuated in the House.

We can call it Indigenous Services Canada or a Crown-indigenous relationship. We can call it Kermit the Frog. We need to get rid of the Indian Act and replace it with human rights in this country.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the member for Winnipeg Centre for her remarks and for sharing her experiences every time she rises to speak in the House. I think we should all pay attention to the hon. member's remarks and her lived experience. We all have our lived experience in life, some different from others, but it is always important to be respectful to individuals

I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague and friend, the member for London North Centre, from the beautiful city of London, Ontario, which I have had the pleasure to visit and where we had one of our caucuses two years ago.

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Tonight, we are speaking about the report, “The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada”. Obviously, we know how important housing is and having a roof over one's head here in this country that we live in. Frankly, all over the world, we are grappling with housing issues, but more so for indigenous communities here at home. We need to make sure that we are doing everything we can to assist all folks here in Canada and to build this nation-to-nation relationship.

We wish to thank the Auditor General for her work and welcome the important recommendations in the report. Of course, as a government, we accept and will implement every recommendation that has been made by the Auditor General. As we all know, decades of underinvestment, discrimination and racism has led to a tremendous lack of safe, affordable housing and housing supports for indigenous peoples. We, as a government, have been taking action and will continue to take action to support indigenous peoples no matter where they live.

Since 2016, we have increased funding for on-reserve housing by 1,100%. We supported the construction, renovation and retrofit of over 34,000 homes in first nations communities. We are also working with first nations partners to co-develop a 10-year housing infrastructure strategy. If my memory serves me correctly, I think it was in one of the last two budgets that we committed, I believe, \$4 billion to indigenous housing and the northern strategy on housing, which is very important.

All levels of government have a role to play to solve this crisis and create tangible, lasting, indigenous-led solutions to address these housing gaps. It is so important that we do so. One of the things that I think differentiates parties and their philosophical views in terms of how we approach and collaborate with different levels of government is that, on our side of the House, we wish to work and will continue to work with municipalities. In the area I live in, there is the City of Vaughan, the Region of York, the Province of Ontario and the federal government. We will continue to respect the jurisdictions within that space.

As members know, cities in Canada, under the Constitution, are called “creatures of the province”. We can work directly with them at the federal level, but we should always respect them and collaborate, as we have with the housing accelerator fund. In the city of the Vaughan, for example, we made an investment of \$59 million in the housing accelerator fund. One of the tranches of that housing accelerator fund in the city of Vaughan has been put to use in an infrastructure investment that will allow the acceleration, I believe, of 3,300 homes in the city of Vaughan to be built quicker and on schedule.

As I am speaking about the city I live in, and as one of the members of Parliament there, I respect greatly all of the City of Vaughan's employees, from the planning department to bylaw, to parks, to animal control. Everyone who works at the City of Vaughan, all of the municipal employees there, do a fantastic job. In no way are council members or the planning department gatekeepers. They work hard. They issue permits, and it is up to the builders to build the houses afterwards. However, they issue their permits, and that is something I am very proud of. I want to give a shout-out to them, because not all political leaders respect our municipal politicians, at whatever level of government they may be at, and that is a shame.

• (1810)

Again, with respect to the City of Vaughan council, mayor, and all the employees of the City of Vaughan, I have their backs. I know the hard work they do. I wish to say thank you and I hope the other MPs who represent the City of Vaughan would admonish the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada for taking direct shots at our mayors, at the local councillors and at the folks who work in the planning departments with urban planning degrees.

In both indigenous and non-indigenous communities in this beautiful country, before people can build a house, they need to have sewer, they need to have pipes and they need to have the infrastructure put in place. That requires planning. It does not just happen overnight. It requires collaboration.

We have been there for cities across this country. When it comes to continuing to invest in indigenous peoples, we will take no lessons, absolutely none, from the Conservative Party of Canada and its leader, who we know in the past has made disparaging remarks. That is on the record and a fact. When the Leader of the Opposition was responsible for housing, his \$300-million boondoggle program only managed to get 99 homes built in first nations communities. During marathon votes, Conservatives voted against funding for housing projects for first nations, Inuit and Métis.

We know one of the Conservatives' promises is to reduce the GST on new builds. This is approximately \$4.5 billion to \$5 billion of a promise of expenditure. They promised to increase pensions for seniors from 65 to 74. That is another \$4-billion promise. As such, on both sides, there would be a \$9-billion spend. Whether it is reducing taxes on one or increasing spending on the other, there is a \$9-billion promise that has not been accounted for.

In order to do that, we would have to eliminate a couple of different programs, like the national early learning and child care program or the Canadian dental care plan, which now has three million Canadians covered, including nearly 25,000 in the riding I represent. We cannot cut CBSA officers again, like the Conservatives did in the prior government, and then say our borders are secure having made these devastating cuts, which we have had to rebuild. The Conservative plan is to make cuts and these cuts would have real-life impacts on indigenous communities, and we cannot go back to the years of shortchanging indigenous communities.

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We will continue as a government to support projects that support first nations' leading the path forward. In my last two minutes, I will give a few examples of indigenous-led housing projects. The Daylu Dena Council constructed a new six-plex for the elderly and people with reduced mobility to continue living in their home community. Council members designed the building with the community's northern climate in mind and used green standards to ensure energy efficiency.

The Mistawasis Nêhiyawak in Saskatchewan, to reduce overcrowding, constructed three new duplexes in the community and renovated 10 existing homes to increase their lifespan and address health and safety concerns caused by overcrowding.

The Tobique First Nation in New Brunswick and the Government of Canada have worked to strengthen the governance structure of Tobique's housing program to help develop a healthier and sustainable indigenous community. The program included the construction of a triplex housing unit, additions to four units and a capacity development project.

On shelter supports, since 2021 we have provided ongoing support for 38 emergency shelters and 50 transition homes for first nations, Inuit, Métis and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in urban, rural and northern communities.

In my last minute, because I know in a few days we will break for the Christmas holidays, I want to wish all residents a merry Christmas and all members of the House, independent of which side of the aisle and which party they represent, a merry Christmas and to all their families all the best, a safe and peaceful holiday season, and all the best for the New Year. I say that sincerely.

• (1815)

I would like to tell my daughters that I love them very much, and I will see them later this week. To my wife, I thank her for always supporting me in this endeavour, which I know is taxing on all of our families.

• (1820)

The Deputy Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for those good wishes.

With questions and comments, the hon. member for Hamilton Centre has the floor.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have been talking about housing in general today, but, specifically, there was an emphasis on for indigenous, by indigenous, in this report. Of course, we talked a lot about the urban indigenous experience.

We know that there is a disproportionate number of first nations, Métis and Inuit who have to rent. In fact, in 2021, the Liberal campaign promised to support people who rent their homes. Instead of doing that, the Liberals have allowed housing investors, such as real estate income trusts, to completely capture the market. There has been corporate capture of the housing market, and, I would argue, regulatory capture of the different levels of government.

What does the member have to say to those families, including first nations, Métis, and Inuit, who are being renovicted from their

homes every single day so that landlords and real estate income trusts can make a profit on their investments?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to something the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre said in her comments, which was, in life, it does not cost anything to be kind. I just want to thank her for saying that because I, too, go by that adage. It does not cost anything to be kind to another person.

To the member for Hamilton Centre, the financialization of housing, whether it is here in Canada or anywhere in the world, is absolutely and utterly wrong. Many of the folks who know me in this place know that I am a big believer in capitalism with guardrails, capitalism with proper governance structure.

When it comes to the financialization of housing, REITs do have a place to play in society, whether it is industrial REITs or commercial REITs and so forth. Landlords do have a role to play in society, of course. At the same time, we are talking about individuals, individuals who need a roof over their heads and families trying to get ahead in life. If it is through algorithms or the financialization of the housing market, we need to take appropriate measures to stop that and to reverse it.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about supporting capitalism with guardrails. I just really wish this member would support a government that would keep fiscal guardrails.

Moving more to a local level, the mayor, Steven Del Duca, former Liberal leader of Ontario, said that development charges are unfair on new homebuyers, something that I agree with. In fact, the City of Penticton, where I was a councillor, recently increased its development cost charges, something I disagree with. In the next order of business, it actually applied for the housing accelerator, which the government has put forward, on a promise that it would look to lower development cost charges. The hypocrisy that we see from some municipal leaders is huge.

Does the hon. member agree that development cost charges need to be reduced? Does he believe that his housing accelerator is causing some of the problems, where they are seeing some councils increase them, only to say that they are going to backtrack them later?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the hon. member on the other side, and the hon. member knows that. I would say that, when it comes to development charges, the situation in Ontario, from my understanding, is significantly different from the situation in British Columbia.

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The situation in Ontario is that the cities obviously have limited means of raising revenue. They need to put in infrastructure to build new subdivisions and so forth. Whether it is DCs on commercial buildings, which are, frankly, very high in York region, or DCs on residential, which are, again, high, we have differing opinions from different mayors. I know that the mayor of Vaughan, who I have known for many years and am quite good friends with, and who I have much respect for, has decided to go down one pathway in looking at their DCs.

The mayor in Markham has decided to go down a different path with the DCs. If we speak to other folks in Ontario municipalities, the former mayor from Huntsville, who is in the House and is an honourable gentleman, would also know that those DCs pay for the infrastructure.

We need to be frank. If we did not have the development charges in Ontario, it would fall on the property tax base, and we would have huge increases on property taxes. When the official opposition leader criticizes the municipalities or criticizes the HAF, what he is implicitly saying is that the Conservative Party of Canada—

• (1825)

The Deputy Speaker: We are out of time. I really need to say to the hon. members to try to keep the questions and comments as short as possible so that everyone can get to participate in this debate.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House of Commons and speak about the issues of the day, especially ones pertaining to housing, which is arguably the most important issue facing the country at this moment.

Before I begin, in the Greek Orthodox faith, today is the day on which Saint Anne, or Agia Anna, is recognized and honoured. My mother is named after her, so today is her name day. We love her very much, and I have never had the chance to wish her a happy name day.

[Member spoke in Greek]

[English]

This is from myself, my wife, Katy, and our daughter, Ava.

The Conservatives have raised housing today in two different ways. First, they raised it on the overall housing crisis facing the country. Second, they raised the matter of housing in indigenous communities and in urban areas.

I begin with the second addition. The Conservatives moved a concurrence motion on the report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, and they are perfectly fine to do that; they have the right to do that. However, I take issue with their record and their sincerity on the matter, to be frank. I say that with all due respect. I see Conservative members regularly raising such matters but not looking back to the previous government. That is not an irrelevant point; nothing happened during those years.

When the current government took office in 2015, we put in place a number of measures, especially investments, to address the plight and uplift the position of indigenous peoples. There is much more work to do in this regard, of course, but we have seen that 34,000 units of housing in first nations communities have either been newly built or repaired. My hon colleague, the MP for Vaughan—Woodbridge, just explained this; he is still in the chamber. That is not nothing; that is an important result and one that, as I said, we need to continue to add to. There is much more work to do in this regard, but it is a very important starting point.

We can add to that, of course, the housing-enabling infrastructure. In budget 2024 alone, a few months back, we saw close to \$1 billion put forward specifically for indigenous communities to ensure that vital connections, whether roads, bridges or water systems, are connected to housing. Sometimes I would like to remind my Conservative colleagues of this before they make claims that would have the effect of cancelling infrastructure programs, but I digress: It is vital to have infrastructure because we cannot have housing or communities without it. When the Conservatives raise these points on housing in indigenous communities, it is important to remind them that they would, in fact, cancel the very infrastructure needed to make those housing commitments and those communities possible.

What do we also see? We see an urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy, the first of its kind in Canadian history. The NDP is right to continue to raise this point; I know it is critical to them, and I think it is critical to every member of Parliament in the House who believes in this kind of a vision. It would allow the federal government to work with organizations based in different parts of the country in urban, rural and northern areas and put in place more housing for indigenous peoples. It is an ongoing commitment, one we take very seriously and one that, it has to be said, has not been lived up to. It will not be lived up to until indigenous people in every part of this country are housed. Until we have addressed that, the challenge remains.

I will also speak to the matter of the main motion that was introduced today by the Conservatives on housing in general. I am the first to admit that we do not have a housing challenge in front of us; we have a housing crisis. We have to call it what it is. However, I also need to emphasize that the Conservative record on this is dismal. It is a point about credibility. I am not insensitive to the point that the Conservatives have raised about the Harper years. That goes back. However, it speaks to credibility. It is relevant to raise this because, when the current opposition leader was housing minister during those years, we saw 800,000 units of housing lost and only six affordable housing units built. It is not really serious.

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● (1830)

If the Conservatives had a record on housing to speak of that was credible or if they had a record on housing we could look to that had real results, then I would be much more sympathetic. I hope everyone will forgive me if I do not have much sympathy for the Conservative position on this because they did not care about it then, and I would say they do not care about it now. Why do they not care about it now? The motion talks about, among other things, homelessness, which is certainly a huge issue in our communities. It is an issue in my community of London and in communities across the country.

The Conservatives, by raising this, fail to recognize one other key point, which is that they have had the opportunity to raise this matter and present real options, real solutions, a real path forward to address homelessness, but they have never done it. Instead, the Conservative members of Parliament frequent encampments, for example, make videos in front of encampments and then post them on social media for political purposes. If they were serious about a vision on housing and homelessness, then they would certainly present a tangible idea.

Homelessness exists. It is present. We need solutions to get people housed, to get them out of tents and into homes. This government put \$250 million forward in the most recent budget. We have asked interested provinces to match that, and almost all have; Ontario and Saskatchewan are still outliers. That funding will allow for local communities to, as I say, get people out of tents, get them sheltered and, ultimately, get them into housing. That should be the vision. The Conservatives have never put something forward like this at all. They are very quick to make the videos I just talked about, but do nothing serious when it comes to homelessness.

The other matter that is raised in the motion relates to rent. Rent prices are far too high because vacancy rates are too low. We cannot have vacancy rates at or around zero, as they are in many communities, and not expect to have a consequent rise in the cost of rent. A healthy vacancy rate, as most economists and other housing experts will say, is between 3% and 5%. The question is how we get there. There are many ways to get there, but we have to incent builders. Builders have to be a part of this.

This is where I part company with the NDP, in fact. Builders can be a partner in the response to the housing crisis. That is why we lifted GST on the construction costs of apartments for the middle class and lower-income Canadians. We see a record amount of building now when it comes to the issuing of permits for apartment construction. There are cranes across different communities. In my own community, there are cranes in the sky everywhere we go and in other communities. It is because of this incentive that has been provided to that sector in the context of high interest rates, high construction costs and high labour costs. We needed to do this.

Finally, broader systemic change is needed to incent more building in this country. Unless we have more building, there will still be high prices, whether it is for renters or for prospective homeowners. What has the government done? We have put forward the housing accelerator fund, which is a very important program. Why? It leads to the systemic changes that we all know are standing in the way of more affordable options being built. Zoning, for example, stands as

the single biggest impediment in this country and others, in fact, to getting more homes built.

In exchange for municipalities making those commitments to allow for more building, zoning changes, in other words, the federal government is willing to partner with municipalities to have funding for housing, infrastructure, community centres and other basic needs, but they need to make the zoning changes. In fact, we have now partnered with close to 180 communities, large and small, to ensure that they are doing just that, making those vital changes, so that in neighbourhoods, for example, there are not only single-family homes, which are a great option if one can afford it, but duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, mid-rise apartments, row houses, the example of the missing middle that housing economists have talked about. This is how these changes are made, and it is happening.

In communities across Canada, councils are putting in place these vital changes to zoning that are going to create the systemic change needed to allow for more housing affordability. However, what do we see? The Conservatives have opposed it every step of the way.

● (1835)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight that just on Friday, I was able to make an announcement in Acton in the riding of Halton Hills, which is very close to Milton, with the mayor, Ann Lawlor, and the regional chair, Gary Carr. The announcement was about a project that used three different federal programs: the enabling accessibility fund, some CMHC funding and a reaching home grant. It is more than \$2 million in federal funding, adding up to about a \$6-million project, which is going to contribute to that community in big ways with 12 fully supportive units, thanks to an organization called Support House.

I would like to highlight Paul Gregory, the executive director of Support House, who did a fantastic job, particularly on the land acknowledgement. He transitioned from the land acknowledgement directly into an acknowledgement that indigenous people are overly represented in encampments and that colonialism has had an impact on first nations, Métis and Inuit folks.

Could the member speak to the importance of using all of these great federal programs to create supportive housing in his riding?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me commend the advocacy of the member. He is very modest. He does not talk about his own role in helping to secure funding for his community in Milton and in that region more generally.

Routine Proceedings

What he points to is a very important idea, and that is that the federal government has a role to play in allowing housing to happen, which is another way of saying that the federal government has a vital role in ensuring that people's basic needs are met. When we talk about housing, we are ultimately talking about people's fundamental basic needs, their fundamental rights being respected and lived up to. How do we do that? We do not do it on our own. We do it through partnership. We do it through working with other levels of government and not-for-profit organizations, and we will continue to do that work.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are experts at making big announcements, but seeing results is another story. My riding of Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge had an announcement of a \$1-billion battery plant. The Liberal-NDPs announced it, and now they are pulling back. It is the same story with the cricket bug plant, where it was announced that millions of dollars would be added to it, which has also been pulled back. Will the Liberals not recognize it is fine to have fanfare, but it is another thing to get the actual results?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want commend the member. I have shared this with him before, but I never tire of saying it. This is a Conservative member who supports carbon pricing. When he was a member of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, he supported that. I hope his example transfers over to other Conservative MPs.

However, he talks about the Liberal record on housing and says we are not doing anything. In fact, I would look to over 20 Conservative members of Parliament who are active in pushing for the housing accelerator fund in their communities, which is the fund I talked about in my speech. They want it in their community. The only thing standing in the way is the leader of the Conservatives who does not want Liberal programs to be accessed for political reasons. Conservatives are standing in the way of homes being built in this country.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I could not agree with my friend more on the idea that the federal government should actually be taking care of people's needs. The reality is successive Liberal and Conservative governments have not done that. When the Paul Martin Liberal government ended the national housing program, it created misery right across the country. Liberals promised every election they would do something, and so did Conservatives. Neither party did until the NDP gave the Liberals a backbone and an ultimatum and said that they had to reinvest in housing. It was the same thing with dental care and pharmacare. It was the same thing with all of these important programs that help people meet their basic needs. My question is very simple: Why do Liberals never do it on their own? They only do it when the NDP forces them to.

• (1840)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, I would love three hours to respond to that. I have great respect for my hon. colleague. We have worked together on the finance committee, but he knows very well the housing strategy of the Paul Martin government was not put in place because the NDP forced an election. I will not go too far on that. As for results on the key points he points to, when it comes to getting homes built, the national housing strategy is leading to the

construction of 400,000 homes in this country, or to the repair. That is not nothing. We have much more to do, and we will.

Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is decimating Canada's middle class. I would like to share the story of a resident in Durham region to help illustrate exactly how Liberal policies are hurting our communities.

I met a man who has experienced what one might call invisible homelessness. Many people know him but did not know that he did not have a place to live. He was living with his mother, and their incomes together allowed them to be able to afford rent. When his mother had to be put in a long-term care facility, his income alone was no longer able to keep a roof over his head. He wound up moving into his car and sleeping in the parking lot of the ONroute in Newcastle, Ontario, in Durham region.

When I met him, he explained to me that he had done everything society had asked him to do. He went to school, got a job, worked hard and paid his taxes, yet when the time came when his family faced a crisis and an emergency, Liberal policies were not there for him. Liberal policies have let him and his family down.

The problem in our country right now, or one problem of many, is that more and more Canadians are in precarious situations, where one bit of bad luck, one person getting sick, or one issue hitting a family, sideswiping people unexpectedly, can put them in a situation of great desperation. Housing is a key fundamental aspect of this, of course.

A recent survey from Habitat for Humanity showed that 82% of Canadians worry that the housing crisis is impacting our overall health and well-being, and 78% believe that the inability to own a home is contributing to the wealth gap in Canada. The numbers get even worse when we look at younger generations of Canadians, who have family members, friends and neighbours going through precarious situations. Then they see a government continuing to do photo op after photo op, advertising policies and programs that are supposedly able to fix the issues, but the government is instead entirely tone-deaf and unresponsive.

The numbers, again, speak for themselves. Let us look at what has been announced by the Liberal government and its buddies in the NDP. Let us look at Toronto, with \$471 million announced for a housing photo op fund, and home building starts down 20%. In Vancouver, the NDP-Liberal photo op fund is \$115 million, and the result is that home building starts are down 19%. In Kingston, the NDP-Liberal photo op fund is \$27.6 million, but home building starts are down 67%. The NDP-Liberal photo op fund in Guelph is \$21.4 million, with home building starts down 65%.

Adjournment Proceedings

The government in this country has abdicated any responsibility for middle-class families and instead wants to tell people over and over again that it is doing this and that, and that it is trying to solve the problems. It is spending more tax dollars, yet the result is more people struggling, more people worried they may never afford a home, and more people raising children who believe that home ownership is now only for those who are the wealthiest, that it is now a luxury. This is opposed to a time, not very long ago, when home ownership was a defined part of the Canadian dream.

I am trying my best to channel the frustrations and concerns of many of my constituents across Durham region who believe, fundamentally, that they are not the priority of the Liberal government. More numbers come out that affirm that Canadians are pessimistic about the government's ability to solve any of the serious problems in our country, to look out for the best interests of middle-class families and to address the very real crisis of our country's housing shortage.

• (1845)

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings on the motion at this time. Accordingly, the debate on the motion will be rescheduled for another sitting.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL SALES TAX ON NEW HOMES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 81(16), it is my duty to put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of motion to House*]

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

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until tomorrow, Tuesday, December 10, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

The hon. deputy House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 7 p.m. to start Adjournment Proceedings.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

HOUSING

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am back again tonight to continue to call for action on the housing crisis we are in, in particular, to call for one very tangible action the government could take in the lead-up to the fall economic statement we now know is set to be announced a week from today.

I have been pressing for six specific items to be included in the fall economic statement, including this one on the housing crisis. I want to start, though, by sharing the extent of the crisis we are in and what it looks like in my community. First of all, when it comes to those who are living unsheltered, between 2018 and 2021, the number of folks living unsheltered tripled from just over 300 to just over 1,000. In the most recent three years, as we just had the point-in-time count study in my community completed a few weeks ago, it almost tripled again. The number of folks living unsheltered is now up to over 2,300, and that is likely an underestimation.

Meanwhile, house prices are eight times the median income today. Back in 2005, they were around three times the median annual income. This is because house prices have gone up almost 300%. Rents have doubled. Wages, meanwhile, have not caught up in any way; they have only gone up 42%. Meanwhile, in my community, research shows we are leading the country in the number of affordable housing units we are losing. We lose 39 units of previously affordable housing for every one new unit built.

When it comes to government investments in housing, it has gotten to the point where, in Ontario, 93% of affordable homes were built prior to 1995, back when both federal and provincial governments in Ontario and the federal government of various stripes invested in affordable housing at the scale required. It is part of why I have been pushing for a number of items, including doubling the social housing stock with ambitious federal investments, similar to what we used to see in the 1970s and even into the 1980s.

I have been calling to have the government fix the definition of housing that CMHC is using so that affordable housing dollars go towards building truly affordable housing, and for an end to the tax exemptions for large corporate landlords like real estate investment trusts.

Tonight, I want to speak specifically about this, because I know in the House there has been a lot of talk about Habitat for Humanity. Habitat for Humanity has one specific call. It wants to see parliamentary support ending HST so it can build more affordable homes. Last fall, the government gave an HST exemption to for-profit developers of rental units, a helpful measure to address the housing crisis, but left out were non-profit, affordable, home ownership builders like Habitat.

In my community on Kehl Street, a Habitat home build site built 45 homes. It would have had an extra million had this measure been in place to build more affordable units. In fact, Habitat estimates that, for every 100 homes built, it could build an additional five to 20 homes if it was exempt from this.

It is why I sent a letter about this, back on October 25, to the ministers of finance and housing. I asked about it in question period on November 1, but I did not get an answer then. I got a reply to my letter on November 12, directing me to ask the question of the Minister of Finance. I did that earlier today at the industry committee and did not receive an answer there either.

What I have put forward as well is that we could actually pay for this measure if only we got rid of that tax exemption for the REITs. If we had the REITs pay their fair share, this is what we could use to pay for removing the HST for Habitat.

Will the parliamentary secretary at least share where the government stands on this important measure?

• (1850)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by focusing on what we agree on. I have a lot of respect for my colleague, in large part because he always raises issues related to vulnerable Canadians. He began his speech by talking about those who are unhoused. We have in place a government that hears him, that sees the issue in Canada and is responding.

A few moments ago, I talked about encampments in Canada and how the federal government has put \$250 million toward ensuring that people are taken out of camps, sheltered and ultimately put into stable housing. There are other examples I could point to relating specifically to the issue the member raised. I am not unsympathetic to the idea that we need to support not-for-profits, and we do. We do in a variety of ways, like through low-interest loans, for example.

The member talked about initiatives in his home community. In my community of London, I am thinking about the Vision SoHo project, a great housing project that is going to see hundreds of people housed. This includes people who have very difficult and acute needs, people who have experienced deep trauma, physical abuse, sexual abuse and trauma that has led to them being on the street and addicted to all sorts of unfortunate things. When it comes to drug or alcohol addiction, the wraparound supports are available. The organizations that made this possible secured a low-interest loan of around 3%. That is not uncommon. Working with CMHC, not-for-profits can do that.

Adjournment Proceedings

What not-for-profits can also do by working with the federal government is obtain access to grants. Grants allow for housing to be built. I emphasize “built” because that is what the federal government takes care of. We work on the capital side, ensuring that homes are built. We do ask, and I look to provinces especially on this, for the operating dollars when it comes to supportive housing for people facing those particular challenges. Of course, not-for-profits are taking care of the ultimate administration and execution of these programs, and municipalities have a role to play too.

The member talked about the high cost of rent. Of course, we know that is an issue in Canada and we lifted GST costs on the construction of apartments. We did so for a specific reason. Interest rates, labour costs and construction costs have been very high. We needed to do it, and now we see cranes across the country building homes for Canadians. If we add to supply, we bring down costs.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Speaker, I want to start by thanking the parliamentary secretary for adding some substance to this conversation. I think that is what debate in Parliament is supposed to be about.

However, it continues to be the case that I do not understand how the government, when it removed GST from for-profit builders of rental housing, just forgot there were other non-profit affordable home ownership builders like Habitat. Habitat has come around and shared this oversight with the government. I think that would be a kind assessment. Maybe it was an oversight. The government recognizes we are in a housing crisis. Non-profit affordable home ownership builders like Habitat are ready and waiting to build more, likely in the member's community and certainly in mine.

Now that the government understands this, and Habitat has met with it as well, why is it not more obvious that this measure is important to take up? Why have we not seen it done yet?

• (1855)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, there are different ways to get to the same results, the results we all want. I talked about low-interest loans. A low-interest loan to a not-for-profit of around 3% is very significant considering the current economic context. I talked about grants that are available, and they certainly are, through the affordable housing program and other initiatives of this federal government.

Adjournment Proceedings

I talked about how the GST lift, taking GST off the construction costs of apartments, will add to supply. We have vacancy rates in this country hovering around 0% in many communities. That is unacceptably low. We need a vacancy rate between 3% and 5%. With high interest rates, we needed to do something to incent the private sector. That has done it.

If I had more time, I would have talked about the housing accelerator fund and the systemic change it is leading to by zoning changes and other things to make home ownership a real opportuni-

ty. We have more to do, but I am excited about the prospects ahead because we are serious about this.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:56 p.m.)

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