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Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, December 5, 2025

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1000)

[*English*]

BUDGET 2025 IMPLEMENTATION ACT, NO. 1

The House resumed from December 4 consideration of the motion that Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Steven Bonk (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, whether someone lives in Toronto or a small town in southeast Saskatchewan, every dollar that Ottawa spends beyond its means ultimately comes out of the pockets of Canadians, either through taxes today or inflation tomorrow. Families in my riding tell me the same thing over and over: They are working harder than ever and somehow falling further behind.

I have spoken with farm families, the people who feed this country and the world, who have found themselves relying on the food bank for the first time. It is not because they are not working hard; they are. It is because the cost of running a farm, including fuel, fertilizer, insurance and machinery, has outpaced the market and the market's return. In fact, farm receipts have fallen by 26% according to FCC.

This budget only worsens that reality by maintaining the industrial carbon tax, which hikes the cost of food production and transport; increasing the regulatory burden on resource development, making energy more expensive; and adding new layers of bureaucracy instead of reducing costs for families and businesses. A government that claims affordability is its priority cannot pass a budget that consistently pushes Canadians toward the breaking point. It is a real missed opportunity to strengthen Canada's resource economy.

Bill C-15 continues a troubling pattern of policies that undermine the industries that have historically built and funded Canada's prosperity. In Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Newfoundland and Labrador, energy and mining are not abstract concepts. They are paycheques, municipal tax bases and the economic backbone of entire regions. These industries want to innovate, reduce emissions and expand op-

portunity, but they cannot do that when the federal government treats them as something to be managed rather than partners in national prosperity.

The budget implementation act does nothing to reverse the damaging emissions cap on oil and gas; create certainty for pipeline and export projects; provide competitive incentives for Canadian potash, uranium, helium and rare earths; or help provinces build the infrastructure needed for the next generation of small nuclear reactors. This is not a regional argument. A strong resource economy is a national benefit. Every hospital, school and road in this country has been financed in part by the power of the resource-producing provinces. When the federal government undermines these industries, the entire country loses.

As someone who has served at the provincial level, I have a deep respect for the constitutional division of powers. Provinces understand their communities, industries and local needs far better than Ottawa ever can. However, Bill C-15 accelerates a trend of federal expansion into areas that were never intended to be directed from the capital. Whether it is intrusion into natural resource development, agriculture, labour markets or local infrastructure priorities, this budget assumes Ottawa always knows best. Local governments, provincial and municipal, need flexibility, not a one-size-fits-all directive buried in a 600-page document. Conservatives believe in restoring respect for the federation. We believe in partnership, not paternalism.

One of the most troubling parts of the budget is how much of the new spending goes not to frontline services but to expanding bureaucracy. Canadians do not need more gatekeepers. They need timely, reliable, efficient service from the government they fund. However, we have seen longer passport delays, slower immigration processing, inconsistent service from EI and CPP call centres, and growing regulatory backlogs at CFIA and PMRA that hurt farmers, processors and exporters. Despite record spending, Canadians are getting worse results. Bill C-15 does nothing to correct this.

Government Orders

Having spent years doing business internationally, I can say with certainty that countries that succeed over the long term do two things really well. They create stable conditions for investment, and they foster a regulatory environment that rewards productivity, innovation and growth. Canada is falling behind in both. Meanwhile, our trading partners, notably the United States, are attracting investment at a pace we are not matching. That has direct consequences on jobs, wages and long-term prosperity. This budget should have been an opportunity to signal to the world that Canada is open for business again. Instead, it signals that Canada is doubling down on complexity, cost and uncertainty.

For over two decades, I lived and worked in countries transitioning from centralized control to open markets. Those experiences taught me this simple truth: The more government tries to control every aspect of the economy, the more productivity fails, the more investment dries up and the more ordinary people struggle. I see the echoes of those systems in the growing federal bureaucracy, in the layering of regulation upon regulation, and in Ottawa's insistence that central planners know better than workers, farmers, entrepreneurs or provinces. The lesson from overseas is clear: Prosperity grows from the bottom up, not the top down. That is a principle Conservatives embrace and that this budget ignores.

• (1005)

Canadians deserve a budget that reflects their priorities, not Ottawa's priorities. Conservatives will bring forward a plan grounded in three core commitments: restore affordability and lower the cost of living by axing the carbon tax and reducing unnecessary regulation and costs, strengthening competition to lower grocery and housing prices, and stopping inflationary deficits that erode household spending power; unleash the private sector by removing the barriers to resource development, accelerating approvals for energy, mining and agricultural innovation, and supporting interprovincial trade and labour mobility through initiatives like blue seal licensing and shovel-ready zones; and respect provincial and municipal authority by empowering local governments rather than micromanaging them from Ottawa, reforming federal departments to deliver timely, efficient service, and investing in national infrastructure only in partnership with provinces, which know their priorities best. This is the path to a more confident, prosperous and united Canada.

Canadians are experiencing one of the most challenging economic periods in recent memory. They needed a budget that recognized the hardship they are facing, respected the federation, supported the industries that sustain our country and restored conditions for economic growth. Bill C-15 does none of that. Instead, it doubles down on overspending, overreach and policies that undermine affordability and competitiveness.

That is why Conservatives will oppose this bill and continue to stand up for families, workers, farmers and businesses who need a government that is on their side. Canada has unlimited potential. What we need now is leadership that trusts Canadians, empowers provinces, respects taxpayers and unleashes the strength of our private sector. Those are my remarks on Bill C-15.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada and the Prime Minister do care about Canadians. That is one of the reasons we have the budget that

we presented. It does a lot of the things the member says that it does not do. Whether it is the issue of affordability or building a stronger and healthier Canada, there is lots of stuff in there for the Conservatives to recognize and vote in favour of. Of course, they have a different approach when it comes to serving Canadians. They are more interested in their own political party's interests as opposed to Canadian interests.

When will the Conservative Party realize that it is time to start moving legislation through the House of Commons, whether it is the budget implementation bill or bail reform legislation? The Conservative Party is the biggest stumbling block in Canada today in terms of progressive measures to help Canadians.

Steven Bonk: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear my hon. colleague's question. When we think of stumbling blocks in Canada, we think of bills like Bill C-48, which stops production in Canada. We have the government passing a new bill to get around their own bills that are not working and are hampering investment in Canada. The Liberals have a lot of work to do to restore Canadians' faith in the system.

• (1010)

[*Translation*]

Marilène Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was surprised at the question from our colleague opposite. He is saying that it is time to start moving legislation through the House. I have been here for 10 years and, quite frankly, I find that the government's legislative agenda is rather paltry. Right now there are not a lot of bills on the table.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on the Liberal government's legislative record.

[*English*]

Steven Bonk: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my previous answer, the Liberal government has a track record of making things more difficult for industry and private business, and more difficult and more expensive for Canadians.

Government Orders

However, instead of fixing the problems that they created with their previous legislation, the Liberals create new legislation that is a workaround. This is nothing more than a way for the Prime Minister and his cabinet to hand-pick projects that they wish to go ahead, yet we have not even seen any of them go ahead. I have to agree with my colleague from the Bloc that this is a very thin legislative project from the government.

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am interested in my hon. colleague's thoughts about the offering from the government. It is a failure to rein in deficit spending; it blew the doors off that. There is no plan to reduce that inflationary spending now, with expenses on debt outstripping what we are spending on health care in this country at a time when we are facing a health care human resource shortage across the country. There is no plan to get rid of government taxes that raise the price of food and food production, like the industrial carbon tax.

I am interested in the member's comments regarding what he would propose as an alternative to help make life more affordable for Canadians, who are lined up at food banks in record numbers.

Steven Bonk: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that excellent question because it gets to the heart of the matter in Canada right now, a lot of which has to do with affordability. Affordability comes down to being able to afford things like groceries and rent. However, what we see in Canada right now are record-high prices for housing and record-high prices for groceries and for supplies that people need. Business owners are struggling under a ridiculous amount of taxes in this country. There are many things the government could do right now, like reducing or scrapping the industrial carbon tax or reining in its ridiculous deficit spending, but the government seems unwilling to do any of it.

The Deputy Speaker: We have time for a very short question.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I will try to keep my question brief for my hon. colleague from Souris—Moose Mountain.

We need in this country to think about how we become a modern industrial economy, and I do not see an industrial strategy coming out of the current or previous governments. We seem to still think we are hewers of wood and drawers of water.

Would the hon. member agree with me that it would be better if no natural resources were shipped out of Canada in a raw, unprocessed state. We improve productivity when we add—

The Deputy Speaker: I did say a “short question”. I have to allow the member for Souris—Moose Mountain to respond.

Steven Bonk: Mr. Speaker, I agree very much with that question, actually. We could be doing so much more in Canada when it comes to value added on our products. We are known for our world-class commodities, but when it comes to things like rare earth minerals, we see there is a new refining facility in Saskatoon. When we look at canola, for example, canola crush is becoming a huge thing in Canada, which is increasing our value added.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): I am honoured to participate in the budget debate.

[*English*]

I think that the context of this budget is important. First of all, it was delayed for an unprecedented number of months and introduced in the fall, which will now be the new government's budget cycle. It was also preceded by a lot of rhetoric from the government about what kind of budget it would be, with commitments about making this a budget full of “generational investments”, saying that it would “swing for the fences”, that it would “define our next century” and that it would be “transformative”. That is the context in which this budget was hyped.

However, when we actually got the budget on November 4, it was anything but. It was not a budget like that of 1971, which introduced comprehensive tax reform that had been largely recommended by the Carter commission. It was not a budget like that of 1988, which collapsed 10 federal tax brackets into three and started the country on a transformative change to our economy. It was not like the budget of 1991, which took the difficult step of eliminating the 13.5% manufacturer sales tax and introducing a broader and lower value-added tax in the form of the GST. It was not the budget of 1996, introduced by then finance minister Paul Martin, which introduced the plan to balance the federal government's finances in 36 months.

This budget had none of the hallmarks of the budgets of those four important years.

Instead, this budget would do quite the opposite. It would continue us down the path of the last 10 years. It is another big spending, big government, big Liberal budget. In fact, this government's budget has weaker fiscal anchors than the previous Liberal governments.

The last Liberal budget had a fiscal anchor of deficits of less than 1% of GDP. This budget would double those deficits, averaging 2% of GDP in the coming years. The last Liberal budget had a fiscal anchor of a declining debt-to-GDP ratio. This budget would increase the debt to GDP.

It is clear that this government's fiscal anchor is weaker than the previous Liberal governments. The new fiscal anchor is some weird new invention that very few, if any, other G7 countries use. The new fiscal anchor is a balanced operating budget by 2029 and a declining deficit rather than debt-to-GDP ratio. By fiscal year 2029, the deficit will only be \$58 billion. By then, the government projects that the interest on the debt will be \$71 billion, chewing up 13¢ of every dollar, up from only six cents as recently as fiscal year 2022.

Government Orders

Last July, bond rating agency Fitch Ratings warned that a material rise in the debt-to-GDP ratio and a material rise in our deficit could lead to a credit downgrade. This budget would double deficits and lead to an ever-increasing debt-to-GDP ratio. As a result, here is what Fitch Ratings said several weeks ago after the budget was delivered:

Canada's...proposed budget, announced in Parliament on Nov. 4, underscores the erosion of the federal government's finances, says Fitch Ratings. While Canada's rating is broadly stable, persistent fiscal expansion and a rising debt burden have weakened its credit profile and could increase rating pressure over the medium term. This may be exacerbated by persistent economic underperformance caused by tariff risks and structural challenges, including low productivity.

● (1015)

In other words, the government's increased deficits and rising additions to the national debt have eroded the federal government's finances and weakened its credit profile. We are at particular risk because all of this could be exacerbated by additional tariffs and our ongoing low productivity.

We can all acknowledge that the tariffs levied by the U.S. administration are not within the control of government, but what is within the control of government is low productivity. The government has immense macroeconomic levers at its disposal to turn around this country's chronically low, if not declining, labour productivity. I would like to dwell on this for just a moment.

The deputy governor of the Bank of Canada called Canada's low productivity an "emergency". She said, "it's time to break the glass." Despite that warning over a year ago, the government failed to meet the moment and failed to introduce fundamental reforms to get the Canadian economy on track. A famous economist once said that the only long-run determinant of prosperity is productivity, and the government has absolutely failed to introduce fundamental reforms to meet the moment to get our productivity turned around.

A second point on the government's deficits and debt is that the government often touts its record on net debt, but that fails to take into account that Canada is the smallest of the G7 economies. It has the smallest currency of the G7 economies. We are not part of the eurozone. We are not the U.S. dollar, and we are not the U.K. pound. We are the smallest of the G7 currencies, and we are not a reserve currency like the U.S. dollar or the eurozone.

The government's rhetoric on net debt also fails to take into account a second important distinction from other G7 countries, which is that we are the most indebted subnational debt country in the G7. We have some of the highest levels of subnational debt in the OECD, which the federal government backstops.

I will remind the House that it was just over five years ago when a province hit the fiscal wall. It ran out of money. Now, that may not be remembered by many people, because it happened in March of 2020 when the global pandemic hit, but in March 2020, Newfoundland and Labrador tried to raise cash on debt capital markets to pay for nurses, doctors and teachers, and it could not. It did not have any money to meet payroll, and as a result, it went to the federal government and asked for an emergency transfer of cash to keep basic government operations going.

When we take into account subnational debt, and when we take into account that we are the smallest of the G7 currencies and not a

global reserve currency, the government's record on debt does not look as good as it would have everyone believe.

I will finish by asking this: Where are the fundamental reforms that meet the moment? Where are the transformative reforms that are generational? Where is the competition reform? Where is the regulatory reform? Where is the tax reform?

Many had hoped, myself included, that the government was going to commit to that comprehensive tax reform. The Liberals have been promising fundamental tax reform since their first budget in 2016. Other governments have introduced fundamental tax reforms that transformed the economy, moved productivity and created prosperity and growth. I think of the budgets of 1971, of 1988, of 1991 and of 1996.

Instead of fundamental progrowth tax reform, regulatory reform and competition reform, we are getting a bunch of special loopholes and deductions for specially targeted sectors. It is creating more big government, more "big government knows best", and more of the big programs and big sectoral focuses that will do nothing to turn this economy around or address the fundamental economic crisis we are facing in this country.

● (1020)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is ironic coming from a member who sat around, along with the leader of the Conservative Party, with Stephen Harper. When we look at Stephen Harper's record of low productivity, he will recognize that it was a disaster. He did not do anything for the productivity of Canadians during that miserable 10 years, and the member sat around in that caucus.

On the deficit situation, we are, in fact, when it comes to the debt, number one on a pro-rated basis in the G7. We are number two in the G7 on the deficit situation.

We have a new Prime Minister who has a background that is going to help get the job done. Why was the member such a failure when he was part of government back then?

Government Orders

• (1025)

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, that question highlights the financial illiteracy that pervades the House. The fact of the matter is that, if we go to Statistics Canada's labour productivity data, we will see that, over the course of the 1990s and the early aughts, right to 2015, a good part of 25 of the last 35 years in this country, labour productivity consistently marched upward. What we have seen, though, in the last 10 years, particularly in the last five, is that labour productivity has stalled, if not declined, in some years.

As far as the debt goes, I would add, for example, that the Province of Ontario has a larger debt than the State of California, so the member is wrong when he talks about net debt.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I know that one of my colleague's values involves opposing the federal government's centralization of health and social services.

Does he agree that money could have been found in the budget to increase health and social service transfers? Every province in Canada is struggling to provide quality services because they have to do more with less.

Does my colleague agree with me that the government could have reduced certain expenses in order to increase transfers to Quebec and the provinces for health and social services?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to ensuring federal transfers to the provinces for health and social services, I think the most important thing is economic growth and long-term prosperity. Economic growth is the best way to ensure long-term prosperity. We need to increase our productivity.

There is nothing about that in the budget, and I think that is a serious problem in Canada.

[*English*]

Scott Anderson (Vernon—Lake Country—Monashee, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the Liberals numerous times that somehow the problems we find ourselves with today are Stephen Harper's fault.

I wonder if my colleague could tell us if we should blame these problems on, let us say, Mackenzie King, or is this a newer problem?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, the record of the Liberals over the last 10 years has been the worst economic record in this country since the Second World War period. That is an incontrovertible fact. If members look at the labour productivity tables, for example, what will they see is that labour productivity has flatlined over the last number of years.

Even with Statistics Canada's recent upward revision in GDP numbers, per capita GDP has flatlined over the last number of years, all while our economic peer group has seen per capita GDP go up. We are falling behind, which is why we are falling behind in global league tables on a range of measures such as productivity, growth, and so many other measures.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today we have the opportunity, or maybe the misfortune, to speak to Bill C-15, which aims to implement part of what was in the federal budget. Budget implementation bills are always interesting. In theory, the goal of a budget implementation bill is to implement what is in the budget. However, sometimes other measures are included as well.

The government sometimes uses this opportunity to include all sorts of other measures in these bills that are not really related to the budget. That is something the Liberals used to decry when they were in opposition, but now they are doing the same thing. The bill before us is 650 pages long. These 650 pages contain 80 legislative measures that amend a total of 49 laws.

I predict that in a few weeks, maybe shortly after Christmas, the Liberals will start complaining that it is taking too long for the bill to get passed, that we are receiving too many witnesses, and that we are spending too much time studying it. However, they introduced a bill that is 650 pages long and that includes the equivalent of 80 legislative measures, which is practically 80 bills that amend 49 laws. We cannot be expected to adopt all of that without giving it proper consideration.

I want my colleagues to be aware that we will need time to study this bill, because it will have many repercussions. We have already determined that certain elements of this bill are problematic. Among other things, the government has made its direction fairly clear in recent weeks, with its focus on oil and the extension of the carbon storage tax credit until 2041. This tax credit was not supposed to be extended for so long, but it continues. What is more, it is not just being extended. The amounts are also being increased for the period from 2031 to 2036.

The bill also amends the Canadian Energy Regulator Act to facilitate the export of liquefied natural gas and allow for 50-year export licences.

This is all perfectly consistent with what the government has been doing in recent months. One of the things it did recently was eliminate electric vehicles subsidies. The government had promised to reinstate them, but never did. It also got rid of the EV sales mandates, or at least paused them. No one knows when this measure will be reinstated either. It eliminated the consumer carbon tax. People in English Canada no longer pay a carbon tax. People in Quebec never paid it, because we have our own model.

Basically, the government is completely aligned with the oil companies' priorities and completely aligned with what the Conservatives want, so much so that it has even announced a new pipeline. That is just crazy. These are the kinds of things this government is doing. It is sad, knowing that people elected this government to stand up to Donald Trump. That was more or less the Liberal slogan, how they characterized themselves. They kept saying "elbows up" and that it was important to be strong to stand up to Donald Trump.

Government Orders

What kind of policy has Donald Trump implemented in the United States? He has completely abandoned the energy transition in the U.S. What is the Liberal government doing here? It is completely abandoning the energy transition. A few weeks ago, I met with people from Quebec's transportation electrification sector. They are deeply concerned about the course that the government is taking. They are afraid that the entire transportation electrification industry that has developed in Quebec is at risk. That is a serious concern. All of this came about because of a Liberal government that got elected by making false statements and then decided to adopt the Conservatives' political agenda and do Donald Trump a favour.

I have another good example of the methods the Liberals are using. I am talking about Bill C-5, which is now an act meant to speed up so-called major projects and allow them to circumvent laws. Under this act, if a project pleases the government, it no longer needs to comply with legislation. It is exempt and gets fast-tracked through the process without the public having a say and without the proponent needing to obey environmental rules and laws.

In the bill before us, the government is doing the same thing it did in Bill C-5, except that it is giving itself even more power. The government did not even make an announcement about it, and it will not be studied in detail in committee. Talk about hypocrisy.

What is more, there are no oversight measures. When Bill C-5 was studied in committee, we ensured that a special committee would be responsible for monitoring its implementation and that the project selection process would be transparent. There will be mechanisms in place to ensure that things function somewhat better. We are still concerned, but at least there are a few small mechanisms in place to monitor the progress of these projects.

• (1030)

Page 300 of Bill C-15 includes something rather peculiar. I will go over it quickly. It states:

...a minister may, by order, for a specified validity period of not more than three years and on any terms that the minister considers appropriate, exempt an entity from the application of

(a) a provision of an Act of Parliament, except the Criminal Code, if the minister is responsible for the Act;

(b) a provision of an instrument made under an Act of Parliament, except an instrument made under the Criminal Code....

Basically, if the government thinks that doing so will help technology companies and foster innovation, then it can tailor the application of legislation to reward its own friends. Personally, I find it mind-boggling that the government is basically giving itself powers to circumvent laws in a completely arbitrary manner, as we saw with Bill C-5. Now, the government is doing the same thing quietly, in secret, with Bill C-15. There was no mention of this in the budget statement, and there was no democratic debate in society at large. It is really worrisome to see the authoritarian direction the government is taking. It boasts about standing up for the rule of law, while undermining it through a back door. The direction this government is taking is very worrisome.

That is not all. Bill C-15 contains one element that we find deeply disturbing, particularly since it is coming from a government that was elected to stand up to Donald Trump. This bill formally re-

peals the Digital Services Tax Act, which required web giants to pay a portion of their taxes in Canada. This law provided for a 3% tax on revenue, because we know that these companies often report their income in a physical establishment located in another country, such as the United States or elsewhere. This practice allows them to avoid paying taxes in Canada even though they bring in enormous revenues, because everything is done on the Internet.

We decided that the solution was to tax revenue generated here, rather than taxing based on the physical location of the company, which was problematic. Since Europe had decided to impose a 3% tax, that is what we proposed at the negotiating table. This measure obviously met with a lot of resistance from Donald Trump and the Americans. What did the Canadian government do? First, it announced that the tax would be put on hold and that the Liberal Prime Minister would not implement it. Now, this bill goes even further and rescinds the tax completely, so that is the end of standing up to web giants.

We have been speaking out on this issue for years. I sometimes get the impression that we are crying out in the wilderness here in Ottawa. Unfortunately, this is a major problem for our culture and our media. This advertising revenue, which is essential to Quebec's—and to a certain extent Canada's—cultural vitality, is going somewhere else entirely. The government is not even imposing taxes on it, even though it is money that is going abroad. This advertising revenue is leaving the country and harming our industry. I find that unfortunate. The Liberal government claims to defend Canada, but really it is not doing anything at all to defend Quebec's interests in this regard. On the contrary, it is once again capitulating to the Americans and to the U.S. President's bullying tactics.

Worse still, the government officials got nothing in return. They had said they would get something in return, that they knew how to handle the situation. In the end, they gained nothing on this issue or any of the other issues on which the Canadian government backed down. Nothing was gained. It is sad because the 3% tax on the revenues of web giants was expected to bring in \$7.2 billion over five years. That kind of money could go a long way to helping our struggling media companies and cultural sector.

The reality is that the Canadian government has money. It is offering Radio-Canada \$150 million. Meanwhile, TVA, Noovo, Bell Media, local papers, Cogeco Média and Coops de l'information are cutting jobs. All our media outlets are dying, but the Liberals are indifferent. That is the reality, yet the media is essential to maintaining our democracy.

Government Orders

English Canada clearly has no idea what Quebec culture is. English Canadians do not care about it. In fact, they could not care less. Perhaps there is a reason the Liberals just appointed the member for Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs as Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages. That member is part of the West Island clique, which views any gesture to promote French as one gesture too many. Those folks are fed up with hearing that the French language needs to be protected. They do not like it when we stand up for French. What they want is for us to quietly go away. We will never allow that to happen. Excessive funding for English is not the solution. We must defend our culture and our identity. We will fight for Quebec.

• (1035)

Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, believe me, I will fight for Quebec too, and I will fight for the French language. I agree with the investments in CBC/Radio-Canada that my colleague talked about.

I would like to know what my Bloc Québécois colleague thinks about our budget and the investments that we are going to make in the Port of Montreal at Contrecoeur, in Hydro-Québec, in culture and for the French language. What do his constituents think of the federal investments in the Canada child benefit? What do they think about the Canadian dental care plan, which must certainly be helping 20% of them?

Will my hon. colleague vote in favour of this budget?

• (1040)

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, I think it is clear to everyone that the Bloc Québécois is not going to vote for this bill any more than it voted for the budget. We voted on the budget, and the Bloc Québécois's position is clear.

The Bloc Québécois's demands were all denied by the government opposite, a minority government acting like a majority government. It is sad to see this government do absolutely nothing to defend our culture. Whenever it does do something, it always comes with a little Canadian flag. We have to sing *O Canada* at the top of our lungs or lose our subsidies. That is how it works in Ottawa.

We are not going to put up with that.

[English]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight some labour productivity statistics that members of the House may not be aware of. This is from Statistics Canada, table 36-10-0480-01: In 2006, labour productivity was \$56.8 per hour. In 2015, it was \$61 per hour, an increase of \$4.2 an hour. In 2024, it was \$63.2 an hour, an increase of only \$2.2.

It is clear that the record of the previous Conservative government on labour productivity for all industries, all sectors, was far better than that of the current Liberal government. I just wanted to make sure that was read into the record for the elucidation of members of the House who may not be aware of that.

[Translation]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises some interesting points.

What I heard him say is that productivity is calculated based on the average hourly rate; however, that rate did not increase significantly at the time and did not keep pace with the cost of living.

I could draw a parallel with Canada's immigration policies. In the past, Canada's immigration policies were designed to select people based on their level of education and their compatibility with the labour market. The idea was that these people would raise the overall standard. Unfortunately, there has been a complete change of direction by the federal government opposite. Now, the federal government's policy is to welcome as much cheap labour as possible. As a result, when we welcome people who are paid less than the average, it drags Canada down.

I do not mean that these jobs should not be filled. The government is simply taking the easy way out instead of looking at innovation, automation and job retention, with incentives for people who may want to stay in the labour market. These positions are filled by people who are more vulnerable and who will be paid less. Then they are weaponized when they are told they have to vote Liberal because they owe their citizenship to the Liberal government.

It is sad to see.

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague's excellent speech. He basically expressed and illustrated a great irony.

The recent trade war with the Americans has led to a bit of a surge in Canadian nationalism. At the same time, the current government is making a lot of concessions. The Liberals say they want to defend Canadian sovereignty, but they are aligning themselves with American policies on the environment and when it comes to the taxes on digital giants. They want "autocratization", that is, a greater concentration of power in the hands of cabinet ministers.

Does my colleague not think that this is yet another reason why Quebec needs to be independent now more than ever?

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, I find my colleague's comments interesting.

The federal government is a bit like a wolf in sheep's clothing when it comes to culture. It keeps the community on a tight leash and tries to keep a close eye on everything. Those who misbehave will lose their subsidies. Everyone has to sing *O Canada* at the top of their lungs. The sector is being watched closely.

At the end of the day, what the government is doing is letting Quebec culture die a slow death. It says not to worry, that it will pay for palliative care and that it will be painless.

The reality is that we do not want Ottawa to just pay for palliative care. We want to live, we want to exist, and for that, we need our own country.

[English]

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-15, the budget implementation act.

Government Orders

The best that can be said of this budget is that it is not as advertised. The finance minister advertised the budget as a generational shift. The Prime Minister advertised the budget as bold. This budget does not represent a generational shift, and it most certainly is not bold. If anything, it is completely underwhelming. It represents more of the same. There are more of the same failed policies we have seen over the past 10 years from the Liberals, more spending, more debt and more broken promises.

Indeed, just about every fiscal and budgetary commitment the Prime Minister made to Canadians a few short months ago during the federal election has been broken with this budget. The Prime Minister said he was going to get the deficit under control and that he would preside over a government that reduced the level of debt. As recently as September 17, the Prime Minister said in the House, "We are going to have a declining level of debt."

In the face of that unequivocal statement, people would have expected to see some follow-through in this budget, but if they guessed that, they are wrong. Instead of a declining level of debt, the Prime Minister delivered with this budget a deficit that is an eye-watering \$78 billion. It is double last year's deficit, which was \$36.3 billion.

By the way, the deficit of \$36.3 billion under the big-spending, debt-addicted Trudeau Liberals was too much for the then Trudeau finance minister, the member for University—Rosedale. She resigned in protest. However, here we have the so-called financial genius coming to the rescue, and he delivers a \$78-billion deficit. It is not only a \$78-billion deficit; it is the largest deficit in Canadian history, outside of COVID. It is quite an accomplishment, but for all the wrong reasons.

The so-called new government and the so-called new Liberals, just like the old Liberals, are delivering a sea of red ink. They plan to rack up one-third of \$1 trillion of new debt over the next five years. They plan \$330 billion in new debt, deficit after deficit, year over year, without any meaningful plan. There is no plan at all to get to a balanced budget and no plan to restore any semblance of fiscal responsibility with the so-called new Prime Minister and new government. It is Justin Trudeau 2.0. It is Justin Trudeau, but even worse.

We have seen the debt climb to \$1.35 trillion. For a lot of Canadians, it seems like 10 long years, but in Canada's 150-year history, it has been 10 short years that the government has been in office. In those 10 short years, the Liberals have managed to add more debt than all of the previous governments combined. They have managed to more than double the debt they were left with when they took office in 2015 from the previous Conservative government, which delivered, in fact, a balanced budget.

In the face of this sea of red ink, it is not surprising that debt servicing costs continue to increase. The debt servicing costs for the fiscal year 2025-26 are \$55.6 billion. To put \$55.6 billion into some perspective, that is more than the government collects in GST. It is more than the government spends on health care. This is at a time when Canadians face record wait times, when six million to seven million Canadians do not have access to a primary care doctor and when somewhere in the neighbourhood of 17,000 to 30,000 Cana-

dians are dying on a wait-list for specialist care. The government is spending more on servicing the debt than it is on health care.

• (1045)

If anything, it speaks to the completely misplaced priorities and the misplaced focus of the government. It speaks to how it has so badly screwed things up over the past 10 years. If we think that \$55.6 billion is a big number, after the government throws in the \$330 billion of new debt it is going to rack up over the next five years, that debt servicing cost is going to increase to \$76.1 billion, but with the Liberals, who is counting?

What do the Liberals have to show for all of the spending, all of the deficits and all of the debt? They have a flatline in growth. Look at the GDP. At present, Canada's GDP per capita is 75% of the U.S.'s GDP per capita. When the Liberals took office, Canada's GDP per capita, relative to that of the United States, was about 90%. As the member for Wellington—Halton Hills North detailed, we have seen declining productivity. In fact, productivity grew at about half of the rate it did under the Harper Conservative government. In recent years, it has not increased; in fact, it has declined. It is no wonder that we see a productivity gap between Canada and the United States that is now at 30%.

The Prime Minister said that, under his watch, he would bring investment home to Canada. This was after we saw a flight of half a trillion dollars of investment out of Canada under the Liberals over the past 10 years. Instead of seeing more investment in Canada, we have seen, over the past six months, \$50 billion of investment go directly to the United States.

In the face of that, what is the Liberal government's solution? It is more spending, more debt, more interest costs and no tangible measures to make life more affordable for Canadians who are facing an affordability crisis. Canadians, after all, have seen housing costs double, rent double and food prices double. We saw inflation at a 40-year high. The budget does nothing to address the cost of living pressures Canadians are facing. In fact, under the Liberals, overall, taxes have gone up on Canadians by 32%. Canadians are paying more and getting less under the Liberals.

In short, the budget is not a blueprint for a generational shift. It is a blueprint for a government that is presiding over and managing decline. It is a budget that does not meet the mark, and it ought to be defeated.

• (1050)

Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately for the member, that is not what I am hearing. I am hearing that this budget meets the moment and it is a budget that we need. I am hearing it from some people in my community who were traditionally Progressive Conservatives and do not now see themselves in the party that is across the aisle.

In the context of everything the member just said in the last two or three minutes, I want him to reflect on the fact that, in addition to the tens of thousands of jobs that were created earlier in Canada this fall, we saw the job numbers for November today, with 54,000 jobs added in November alone. Unemployment is now down to 6.5%.

Could the member please, in the context of everything he just said, explain to us why, despite his doom-and-gloom scenario, the employment numbers keep going up and unemployment keeps going down?

Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, if Canadians were to listen to the member for Kingston and the Islands, they would be led to believe that they have never had it so good.

He talks about job numbers. How many of those jobs are part-time jobs? The youth unemployment rate is over 13%. That is hardly a figure to celebrate.

Is the member for Kingston and the Islands celebrating the fact that two million Canadians, a record number, are lined up at the food banks?

• (1055)

Hon. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, youth aged 15 to 24 drove that.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order, and the chief government whip knows that.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it seems odd to me that two government representatives are causing disorder in the House this morning. I do not think that they are setting a good example. I find it rather odd that two government representatives are causing disorder by talking and preventing us from speaking.

My question for my colleague is this. All along the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River, many smaller ports are clamouring for CBSA container clearance services. Unfortunately, the budget provides no funds for CBSA officers to clear containers at small ports like Valleyfield.

Given the current economic situation, does my colleague think it is right for the government to put the brakes on economic development in small rural regions that have small ports in their communities?

[*English*]

Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, it speaks to the misplaced spending priorities of the government. Simply put, never has a government spent so much and delivered so little for Canadians.

By the way, speaking of spending, the Prime Minister said he would spend less, but spending has in fact gone up by 7.2%, when he promised to bring it down by 7.5%. I would just add that as another promise made and broken by the Prime Minister.

Government Orders

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my friend from Kingston and the Islands has given me the opportunity to highlight the jobs numbers that came out this morning. Zeroing in on the province of Ontario, we saw the loss of about 7,000 full-time jobs. I certainly acknowledge that there was a gain in part-time jobs, but there was a significant loss in full-time jobs and a response in part-time jobs.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, the member for Kingston and the Islands should recognize the reality. Canadians are poorer, they are struggling, they are desperate for—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan on a point of order.

Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, since the sitting began, we have been having a hard time hearing certain speeches because the government side is talking very loudly and paying no attention to what is going on in the House. I would like to see more respect for people who rise to speak. We are having a hard time hearing what is being said because of the noise, and the same could be true for the interpreters.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for reminding all members that the appropriate time to make comments is when the Chair gives them the floor. The period for questions and comments is not a group effort. It is an individual effort.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan can finish asking his question.

[*English*]

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I, too, am shocked by the heckling by the member for Kingston and the Islands, and I hope his whip will bring him into line.

I wonder if the member can say what he identifies in the fact that full-time jobs are down across the country and, particularly, in Ontario.

Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, it is just more of the same with the government. It is part of the failed economic legacy of the government, which has seen declining productivity, flatlined growth, unacceptably high unemployment and Canada falling further and further behind peer countries.

I think the numbers today, having regard for that record, are not surprising, but they are concerning.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[English]***SANTA SLICES**

Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the holidays celebrate kindness and togetherness. For the fifth year, the Canadian Colours Kingston Foundation, led by Jimmy Hassan, is reviving the Santa slices initiative, a tradition started in 2020 that has become a beloved holiday effort.

What began as a plan to deliver 500 pizza slices during the pandemic has evolved into a significant campaign. Last year, over 2,500 slices were provided to shelters and outreach programs in Kingston, proving that small gestures can make a big difference. As Santa slices 2025 launches, Jimmy's goal remains to deliver food to people in need, supporting organizations like Martha's Table and Kingston Interval House.

I thank Jimmy and all the volunteers and donors this year. Their effort is not just about pizza; it is about unity and kindness in the festive season.

* * *

● (1100)

*[Translation]***LÉVIS—LOTBINIÈRE**

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during this magical festive season, I want to wish my dear constituents in Lévis—Lotbinière good health, peace and happiness. May these times of celebration give them the opportunity to share precious moments with their loved ones and to celebrate what unites us all as a community.

I also want to sincerely thank them for their trust and loyalty over the past 20 years. Their commitment, ideas, and support are the driving force that enables us to move forward together and build an even more dynamic, supportive, and prosperous community. In 2026, I will have the privilege of continuing this work alongside them with the same determination, representing their interests with diligence, respect, and transparency.

May the new year bring them success, joy and serenity. Merry Christmas and happy holidays.

* * *

*[English]***VANCOUVER WHITECAPS**

Wade Grant (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the eyes of the soccer world descend upon Washington, D.C., today as the World Cup draw comes near, the eyes of Vancouver soccer fans and soccer fans across Canada will be on Miami tomorrow as we celebrate the exciting achievement of the Vancouver Whitecaps, who are western conference champions in Major League Soccer and will play in the championship game for the very first time, to face off against Lionel Messi and Inter Miami. The achievement reflects remarkable teamwork, leadership on and off the field, and the unwavering passion of supporters, specifically the Southsiders at BC Place.

As we head into tomorrow's final, our whole country should be behind the Vancouver Whitecaps. We are proud of their success, proud of their heart and proud of their determination. I hope they can bring us an early Christmas present by bringing the championship home, back across the border into Canada.

Go 'Caps, go.

* * *

HOUSE FIRE IN BRAMPTON

Amarjeet Gill (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the chamber heartbroken and with profound sadness. The Brampton community is mourning an unimaginable tragedy. Five family members, Harinder Kaur, Gurjit Kaur Grewal, Bantvir Singh Deol, Anudeep Kaur and a baby boy, lost their lives in a devastating house fire. This heartbreaking loss has shaken families across Brampton and far beyond.

The funeral service is taking place at Brampton Funeral Home, followed by a religious ritual at a gurdwara in Brampton West. I extend my deepest and heartfelt condolences to the loved ones of the victims, and I urge Canadians to keep this family in their thoughts and prayers.

As we enter the winter season, I urge everyone to check their carbon monoxide detectors, smoke alarms and home ventilation system to help prevent tragedies like this and to protect our families and our homes.

May God bless the victims, and may their souls rest in peace.

* * *

*[Translation]***SNOWSUIT FUND**

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier—Gloucester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to recognize Joanne Andrews for her 32 years of outstanding leadership at the Snowsuit Fund of Ottawa, an organization that, for 44 years, has been helping thousands of vulnerable children have access to warm snowsuits to weather our winters.

Under her leadership, the fund has been giving out 16,000 snowsuits every year to children in need, bringing warmth, dignity and hope to families. For three decades, Joanne has been an example of generosity, solidarity and unwavering commitment, which has changed lives and strengthened our community.

[English]

Thanks to Joanne and to volunteers, The Snowsuit Fund has become a true pillar of solidarity in Ottawa, providing warmth and dignity to thousands of families. Its impact is immense and deserves to be recognized.

On behalf of the residents of Ottawa—Vanier—Gloucester, I want to thank Joanne for her remarkable dedication and exemplary service. Her work is inspiring, essential and deeply appreciated.

HARVEST BOWL

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Harvest Bowl, a tremendous initiative in Elgin County that tackles reducing food waste and food insecurity. Harvest Bowl collects food such as vegetables from local farms that would otherwise go to waste and turns it into delicious and nutritious dehydrated soup mixes. Harvest Bowl founder Donna Lunn and her incredible volunteers distribute thousands of soup mixes to communities and agencies across Elgin—St. Thomas—London and the surrounding region.

Today, in just a few hours, Harvest Bowl supporters and volunteers will gather in Springfield to sample some of its delicious soups, and, more importantly, to start delivering food to people in need. This is made possible by our amazing farmers who work to ensure that their harvests do not go to waste. So far, Harvest Bowl has served over 20,000 bowls of soup, and it is not slowing down.

I thank the farmers, producers, volunteers and community partners that have rallied behind what Donna and Harvest Bowl have created. This generosity is the very best of Elgin County, and it shows what is possible.

Ladles up.

* * *

● (1105)

WHITBY FIRE SERVICE GRADUATES

Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Whitby fire service recruits class of 2025 on their graduation.

The recruits powered through demanding training, long days, early mornings and more ladder drills than anyone should be able to brag about at family dinners. This week they joined one of the most respected fire services in the country, and they have earned every bit of this moment.

I grew up in a family of first responders, so I learned that service is not a job but a duty. That same sense of duty is alive in each of the graduates. Firefighters step forward when others step back. They bring calm to chaos, and their work goes far beyond emergency calls. They support families and strengthen our community every single day.

I thank the Whitby firefighter graduate class of 2025 for choosing this path. Their community is proud of them and grateful for their service.

* * *

TATJANA STEFANSKI

Scott Anderson (Vernon—Lake Country—Monashee, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honour a family in my riding, in Lumby, British Columbia, who have endured a devastating loss.

Tatjana Stefanski's loved ones carry not only the grief of her murder but also the painful knowledge that she died almost a full year before Bailey McCourt, and that nothing was done. Tatjana's husband, Jason, has worked tirelessly to bring attention to the need for real, meaningful change. Had he been heeded earlier, it is possi-

Statements by Members

ble that Bailey might have been protected by a Tatjana's law. As a country, we must do better at protecting our vulnerable. We must enact common-sense rule of law and then enforce it.

Tatjana's family has shown remarkable strength in unimaginable sorrow. We honour them and Bailey's family by turning their pain into real change that protects the vulnerable when it matters most. I thank the member from Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola for bringing forward Bailey's law. Let us remember Tatjana as well.

* * *

[Translation]

60TH EDITION OF THE SALON DU LIVRE DE RIMOUSKI

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the 60th edition of the Salon du livre de Rimouski, which once again this year brought together hundreds of authors, publishers and volunteers as well as thousands of visitors. This reminds us once again that people in the regions can accomplish great things.

The Salon du livre de Rimouski was founded in 1964 by the Dames de Champlain and is now the oldest book fair still active in Quebec. For six decades, this cultural beacon of the Lower St. Lawrence has been a powerful affirmation of the vitality of Quebec culture and the French language.

I want to recognize the invaluable contribution of the many volunteers who have been the lifeblood behind the salon from the very beginning, as well as its executive director, Robin Doucet, who has been proudly leading the organization with passion and care since 1996.

I encourage my colleagues to join me in wishing long life to the Salon du livre de Rimouski.

* * *

FOOD DRIVES

Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at this time of year, when helping one another becomes especially meaningful, I want to draw the House's attention to the importance of the many food drives that are being held in our communities.

Thanks to the generosity of our fellow Canadians, hundreds of families are getting essential support and finding a bit of hope as the holidays approach. I want to express my sincere gratitude to all the volunteers who make these initiatives possible. Their commitment makes a real difference. I am thinking in particular of the cadets, scouts, Knights of Columbus and all the organizations and volunteers who spend countless hours helping others.

I want to thank all those who give of their time, energy and kindness. They are living proof that generosity is one of the strongest pillars of our society. I want to wish all the families in my riding and in Canada a holiday season filled with warmth, caring, hope, love and peace.

Statements by Members

[English]

COST OF FOOD

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told Canadians to judge him by their experience at the grocery store. Well, eight months later, that judgment is clear and devastating. When the Liberals took office in 2015, the weekly grocery bill was \$159. Today it has more than doubled to \$338, over \$17,500 a year, and the 2026 food price report released yesterday confirms that Canadians will pay another \$1,000 next year, the largest increase in years.

In London the impact is severe. Nearly 10,000 people in the region have turned to food banks, totalling more than 45,000 visits. Across Ontario, food bank use continues to climb, and for the first time, nearly one in four food bank users is employed. Having a job no longer guarantees food security in Canada.

Canadians are hungry, and they cannot afford the Liberal government anymore. Conservatives will help Canadians so they can once again put nutritious, affordable food on the table.

* * *

● (1110)

STEEL INDUSTRY

Aslam Rana (Hamilton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the world is changing, and Canada must change with it. At this critical moment, we cannot afford to be reliant on a single trading partner. We must build an economy that is stronger, self-sufficient and resilient to global shocks, which is why last week I was joined by the Minister of International Trade along with the CEO of Dofasco in Hamilton Centre to announce our government's new measures to protect and transform Canada's steel industry.

We are taking bold actions to protect our steel sector, tightening limits on foreign steel imports and unlocking over \$1 billion in new domestic demand for Canadian steel. We are lowering steel transportation costs by half and implementing the buy Canadian policy. We are standing shoulder to shoulder with our workers and businesses to modernize and to stay competitive.

This is how we protect Canadian jobs, and this is how we build a stronger, more secure Canada.

* * *

PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hard-working Canadians are struggling with the cost of living, but in Sault Ste. Marie, the Prime Minister handed 400 million taxpayer dollars to a company, knowing it was going to lay off 1,000 workers. The Prime Minister's response was "bah, humbug". Although prime minister Scrooge talks about fairness and sacrifice, after his spending years at Brookfield helping it dodge paying taxes here in Canada, even Jacob Marley's ghost paid more taxes in Canada than Brookfield does.

However, all that is part of the Prime Minister's master plan to help his friends at Brookfield, like Denis Turcotte, the former CEO at Algoma Steel. Algoma is undergoing a multi-year transition to electricity, but do members know where that electricity is going to

come from? It will come from Brookfield-owned hydro plants. While Brookfield's billions vanish into Bermuda bicycle shops, Algoma's families are left in the cold.

Conservatives will never stop fighting for Canadians this Christmas.

* * *

SANTA'S PARADE OF LIGHTS

Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 29, our community came alive as thousands of residents, including families, children and even a few pets, all gathered along St. Joseph Boulevard to witness the magical Orléans Santa's parade of lights. More than 60 beautifully designed floats made their way down our main street, each meticulously crafted and decorated, and sprinkled with that special Orléans charm.

The parade is more than just a tradition; it is a testament to the Ottawa Professional Firefighters Association, the volunteers and the partners whose dedication brings our community together year after year.

[Translation]

In closing, I want to wish the community of Orléans and everyone a happy holiday.

[English]

Merry Christmas, happy holidays and happy Hanukkah.

[Translation]

May this season bring us peace, warmth and meaningful moments with our families, friends and loved ones.

I wish everyone a happy 2026.

* * *

[English]

COST OF FOOD

Ziad Abouttaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens wrote, "Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts". Under the Liberals, it is millions who are in need. My constituent Enide says, "I can barely afford to eat, a lot of people are in the same situation and feel helpless."

In 2015 the Canadian grocery bill was \$159 a week. After a decade of Liberal government it has doubled to \$338 a week, which is \$17,500 a year. The Prime Minister told us to judge him by Canadians' experience at the grocery store.

Scrooge famously said, “I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry.” Why does that seem to be like a quote from the Prime Minister?

* * *

• (1115)

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ginette Lavack (St. Boniface—St. Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people go missing, delays cost lives. Every minute matters.

Last week, I had the honour of attending, on behalf of the Minister of Crown and Indigenous Relations, the launch of the report of Manitoba's indigenous-led red dress alert pilot program. The organization, Giganawenimaanaanig, which translates as “we all take care of them”, led the engagement sessions and the development of this important report, which lays the groundwork for a holistic safety framework, providing rapid response, trauma-informed support and resources for families and communities.

I would like to sincerely thank Dr. Sandra DeLaronde for her leadership and dedication, along with all the community members who contributed to this life-saving initiative. During these 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, let us stand together and act with urgency, because every alert matters, every minute matters and every life matters.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with every trip to the grocery store, it seems like the prices we pay are getting higher and higher, because they are. If groceries feel expensive right now, then it is only going to get worse, because a new report this week shows that the price of groceries is going to go up \$1,000 per family next year. It is no coincidence that the Liberals are also raising taxes on the people who grow and ship and sell the food.

Does the government not realize that higher taxes on farmers and truckers mean more expensive groceries for struggling families?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every farmer knows that we reap what we sow.

What the Conservatives are sowing every day in this House is the distrust of Canadians, because they are insincere when they weaponize people's struggles for their political gain while voting against every single affordability measure that puts more money in Canadians' pockets. That includes an income tax cut for \$22 million, the Canada child benefit, cutting the consumer carbon tax, child care, dental care and over \$2,000 of support in direct benefits that put more money in the pockets of Canadians with young children.

How can they say they are—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Thornhill.

Oral Questions

THE ECONOMY

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are standing in food banks and food bank lines in record numbers while the Liberals pat themselves on the back. Feeding kids starts with making food more affordable.

This is the same government that forced millions of Canadians to food banks and is now saying that people should be thankful for the programs that it cannot quantify and cannot deliver. Just 10 years ago, we used to be able to go grocery shopping for a week and spend \$160. It has now more than doubled, to \$340.

When will the Liberals admit that their policies have failed and Canadians are struggling?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what feeds Canadian families are good-paying jobs and a strong social safety net, both of which the Conservatives oppose. They cannot even bring themselves to recognize when job numbers exceed expectations month over month over month. For three months in a row, the Canadian economy has added 181,000 new jobs, including 54,000 this month. We have seen a drop in the unemployment rate in this country.

Conservatives cannot even acknowledge when the Canadian economy does well, because it does not fit their narrative.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the actual job numbers the member was trying to reference: 9,400 full-time jobs were lost in the last month.

The Liberals want to try to pretend that they are doing better by adding part-time numbers in, but the fact that Canadians are desperate and are turning to part-time work because full-time jobs are not available and they desperately need that part-time work to feed their families is not something to celebrate. A continuing decline in full-time jobs in this country is not something to celebrate.

When will the Liberals recognize the reality that Canadians are losing the full-time work they need to provide for their families?

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Hon. Anna Gainey (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact, we have good employment news this morning. I am proud to say that 50,000 young people found work in November. In October, 21,000 young people found a job. The numbers are moving in the right direction.

We are there to support young Canadians. Budget 2025 does that. On this side of the House, we are proud of the job numbers.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in that member's province, Quebec, 35,000 full-time jobs were lost.

[English]

More than 35,000 full-time jobs were lost in Quebec. The minister says that this is an improvement, that this is good news.

It is shocking that the government would celebrate a significant decline in full-time work. Canadians are looking for full-time jobs, so that they can provide for their families.

When will they stop congratulating themselves and recognize the problem?

- (1120)

[Translation]

Hon. Anna Gainey (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that opposition members are currently shutting down committee work.

In committee, we are trying to move forward with Bill C-15, which will provide the support and investment that Canadians need right now. What is happening in committee is shameful. I encourage opposition members to change course and support the measures in place in committee.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told Canadians to judge him on the price of groceries, and we now live in a country where 20% of the population depends on food banks to put food on the table. We now live in a country where groceries for a family of four is going to cost \$1,000 more in 2026. We now live in a country where the price of beef, pork and chicken are all going up at the same time. The country is Liberal Canada, where the cost of groceries has more than doubled since 2015.

When will the Liberals stop their inflationary spending so that Canadians can finally get enough to eat?

Hon. Anna Gainey (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will not take any lessons from the members opposite who are against everything. They are against children and families and giving children access to food at school. They are against investing in affordable child care and investing \$13 billion in the construction of affordable housing. It is shameful.

We are against them. We are investing with budget 2025. We will protect and strengthen these measures to support families.

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 36% of Quebecers experience some form of food insecurity. Three million requests for food assistance are made every month in Quebec. We now have a Prime Minister who spends his time travelling instead of acknowledging that 20% of Canadians have to line up at food banks. That is Canada after 10 years under a Liberal government. It is unprecedented. Quebecers are going hungry, and groceries will cost \$1,000 more in 2026.

Why does the Prime Minister care more about the value of his stocks than he does about the suffering of Canadians?

Hon. Anna Gainey (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that in order to move forward, in order to support families and children, we need to invest in our future. That is what we are doing with budget 2025. We are investing in jobs for young people. We are investing in affordable housing. We are investing in school food programs. We are investing in affordable child care. We are investing in dental care. All of these things are helping Canadian families get ahead. We are proud to support these measures.

It is a shame that the members opposite do not support these measures.

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FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Listuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, the Prime Minister is meeting with Donald Trump in connection with the FIFA World Cup. He should not be talking about sports. He should be talking about the economy. He was elected on a promise to protect us from the American President. So far, not only is no one claiming victory, but yesterday we learned that the Prime Minister is giving up on our forestry industry's main demand in order to appease Mr. Trump. He is refusing to support our companies when it comes to countervailing and anti-dumping duties because he is afraid of the President.

When will we see progress instead of concessions?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true that we need to continue having conversations with the United States. We need to be at the table for these conversations and negotiations. At the same time, we continue to diversify our supply chains and our trade partners, like India, Indonesia and Mexico.

On this side, we are continuing to build our economy. On the opposition side, that is not the case. Every single time, they vote against—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Listuguj.

Oral Questions

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is not the first concession the Prime Minister has made out of fear of Donald Trump. He abandoned the digital services tax, which would have forced American web giants to pay their fair share. Then he abandoned the anti-evasion measure known as the global minimum tax in order to spare the people who are financing the President's new ballroom. Today, he is abandoning our forestry industry by refusing to respond to its main request for support.

When will the Prime Minister stop backing down on Quebec's interests and start defending them?

• (1125)

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the rest of the government are here for the whole country, not just for one province, not just for one territory. We are here for Canadian jobs, for our industries and to build the strongest economy in the G7. At the same time, we are building supply chains and partnerships with all global economies. The reason is that the world is changing, the geopolitical situation is changing, and we continue to respond—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan.

Marilène Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister needs to appease lumber workers, not Donald Trump. By refusing our forestry industry's main request—support for dealing with the countervailing and anti-dumping duties—the Prime Minister is turning his back on them. The softwood lumber dispute has been wreaking havoc since 2017. Donald Trump's tariffs are just making existing problems worse. Our industry is at the end of its rope, and layoffs are on the rise.

When will the federal government stop neglecting our lumber workers?

[English]

Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously, the unjustified trade war that the United States has brought on softwood lumber is unacceptable. We are working hard to resolve it. Today, the United States Chamber of Commerce called on the Trump administration to drop tariffs on lumber. We are seeing that the pressures are beginning to build.

We will continue to work at all levels to resolve this, and we will continue to provide supports. We welcome suggestions from members opposite on what supports to bring.

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THE ECONOMY

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told Canadians that he should be judged by the prices at the grocery store. Well, the verdict is in. The 2026 “Canada's Food Price Report” warns that grocery costs will rise by 4% to 6% next year, meaning the average family of four will pay nearly \$1,000 more, bringing annual food costs to over \$17,500.

One in four Canadian households is already food insecure, and Canadian families, seniors and single moms are being squeezed at

the checkout. Why are these Liberals not cutting their inflationary spending, the industrial carbon tax and their new fuel tax, so that Canadians can afford to eat?

Sophie Chatel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the rise in food prices is difficult for families, which is why we are helping lower grocery bills through, for example, the national school food program.

However, Professor Sylvain Charlebois, the lead author of the recent study that my colleague just quoted, said that obviously what comes back every year is the impact of climate change on prices, and he noted in particular the effect of drought on the price of beef. If the Conservatives want real solutions, they have to start to look at real facts.

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is blaming climate change for the rise in food prices.

The Liberals will say that things have never been better, but the reality is that things have never been worse. In Ontario, there were 8.7 million visits to a food bank, and grocery prices are expected to cost families \$1,000 more in 2026. The Prime Minister said he should be judged by the prices at the grocery store. Well, the verdict is in, but there is still time for him to enter a plea deal on his lower grocery price promise. Will he plead guilty of breach of trust, fraud or both?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is good jobs and a strong economy that are going to benefit all Canadians. Statistics Canada this morning announced that we created 54,000 net new jobs, with 50,000 for young people alone.

We stood up in the House last week, last Friday, and talked about how our GDP is growing. Today, we are telling members that wages are up, rents are down, unemployment is down and youth unemployment has dropped by almost two points in two months. That is no accident. That is a plan that is working, and that is a plan that these Conservatives continue to vote against.

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister asked to be judged by the prices at the grocery store. Canadians are obliging, and the result is a political receipt he does not want to read. After 10 years of Liberal government, Canadians already pay \$17,500 a year for groceries, and “Canada's Food Price Report” confirms that, next year, Canadians will pay an extra \$1,000.

When will the Prime Minister finally stop driving food prices through the ceiling and end this daily grocery store misery for Canadian families?

Oral Questions

• (1130)

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is jobs and a strong economy will benefit every family in this country, which is why it is significant that, just this morning, Statistics Canada confirmed that we have created over 54,000 net new jobs this past month. When jobs are there for families, families benefit, but it does not stop there. Just yesterday, we announced a new early learning and child care deal in Ontario. Parents are going to be saving over \$10,000 a year on child care.

These are the kinds of real actions that help Canadian families, and these Conservatives vote against them.

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a single mom of two, I know first-hand that moms and dads want affordable groceries they can buy themselves. They do not want to rely on a government handout. The Prime Minister is giving better deals to his Brookfield buddies than everyday Canadian families. Moms and dads want affordable, nutritious groceries that, again, they can buy themselves.

Will these Liberals ever stop living in their own elite bubble and start living in the real world with the rest of Canada?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, we announced a new child care agreement with Ontario that is going to save families up to \$10,400 per year, but do not take my word for it. Kristina Medow is an Ontario mom here in Ottawa, and she says that early learning and child care has changed her family's future. She says, "Having access to high quality affordable childcare is the biggest piece of mind that you can ever have as a parent, so we are...happy about the announcement today". This is delivering for families, delivering for kids.

Why will the Conservatives not support affordable child care?

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the latest food price report confirms what Canadian families were well aware of, that grocery prices are still going up. The average Canadian family will spend an additional \$1,000 on groceries next year, and this is seven months after the Prime Minister said Canadians would judge him by the prices at the grocery store. Well, that is what Canadians are doing, and they are wondering why the Liberals are increasing their industrial carbon tax, which makes it more expensive to grow, ship and sell food. They are wondering why the Liberals are not stopping their inflationary spending.

We have given Liberals the solutions. Will they please steal these ideas too?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to start with a quote from an infamous author and professor: "climate change is our agri-food sector's greatest challenge, and we need to address it." Do we know who said that? It was Sylvain Charlebois, the food professor, on November 1, 2024,

in response to my question at committee. What is interesting is that the members do not take the time to read the report. They will not acknowledge that climate change is real at their conventions. They have no plan to fight climate change, yet the very person they quote every day cites it as the greatest challenge for our food system that is increasing food prices—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Elgin—St. Thomas—London South.

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, groceries are so expensive that Canadians cannot afford the baloney the Liberals are selling. What the average Canadian family will have to spend on groceries this year is \$17,500. A single parent in my riding making minimum wage would need to work 1,000 hours, half their year, just to put food on the table for their children. This has doubled since the Liberals took office in 2015. The Liberals may not do their own grocery shopping, but Canadians do and they cannot afford it.

I have a simple question for the parliamentary secretary: How much is a litre of milk?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that I do my own grocery shopping and all the cooking in my household as well. What is interesting is that Canadian families want an empathetic, compassionate government that actually acts on the challenges and struggles they are facing, not one that weaponizes their struggles for political gain. We are standing up for Canadians every day. We have offered an income tax cut for 22 million Canadians. We have cut child care fees by more than half, saving families \$10,000 per year. The Canada child benefit puts hundreds of dollars into Canadians' pockets. That is how we feed families for generations to come.

Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said he should be judged by grocery prices. Eight months later, they have only gone up. Today's 2026 food price report says things will only get worse. Grocery bills have doubled since 2015. Next year, Canadians are projected to pay \$1,000 more on groceries. Instead of lowering costs, the Liberals keep spending more and raising taxes, which drives up prices, especially for food.

When will the Liberals cut their inflationary spending, scrap the industrial carbon tax and cancel their new fuel tax so Canadians can afford to eat?

• (1135)

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a shame the Conservatives have attached their political fortunes to the failure of the Canadian economy and the struggles of the Canadian people. They rejoice when our economy does badly. On this side of the House, we are looking for indicators and signs that our plan is working, and guess what. Today, we had another sign that our plan is working to build a strong Canadian economy, which was 54,000 new jobs added to our economy. This is 181,000 jobs added in just the last three months. Real GDP has grown faster than expectations. Inflation is within the Bank of Canada's target range—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Rimouski—La Matapédia.

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[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' climate betrayal was not the only reason why the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie resigned as minister.

We have learned that two expert members of the Canadian Environment Domestic Advisory Group, who were supposed to advise the Prime Minister on the climate, have also thrown in the towel. They say that they were accustomed to giving advice that was not followed. Now, they are not even given a hearing. In other words, the Prime Minister pushes away everyone around him who cares about the environment, whether they are ministers or experts.

How can the Liberals support a Prime Minister who refuses to listen to the science?

[English]

Wade Grant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we would like to express our gratitude and thanks to Mr. Donner and Made-moiselle Abreu for their years of service and leadership at the net-zero advisory board. Their important contributions to the board have helped guide our government's work in advancing decisive climate action in Canada, and we are better off for their contributions.

[Translation]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the environment, the Prime Minister is ignoring the science. If that was not obvious enough from all the recent resignations, then take it from Canada's chief science advisor, Mona Nemer. I asked her questions about the Liberals' plan to push through major projects such as the pipeline by circumventing every law but the Criminal Code. She called it a nightmare scenario. She also confirmed that she was never consulted.

Oral Questions

Do the Liberals think it is normal in their country for the chief scientist to be completely left out of the process?

[English]

Wade Grant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I want to express our thanks and gratitude to Mr. Donner and Made-moiselle Abreu for their years of service. Our government values the role of the net-zero advisory board as an independent expert body that provides important advice to inform climate policy. We remain committed to working closely with the board, as we continue advancing Canada toward a net-zero future.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the holidays are fast approaching, but for many families, there will be no festivities on the menu. Today, nearly 85% of Canadians say that the cost of food is their main financial concern. A record 2.2 million visits to food banks were recorded in a single month. Many of those lining up for food are children. Families are reducing portion sizes, skipping meals and turning to less nutritious food options to make ends meet.

How can the Liberals claim that they are helping families when their policies are literally pushing families to hunger?

Hon. Anna Gainey (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are here for families. We are investing in the support measures that families need. These include investments in affordable child care, which puts more than \$10,000 back into Canadians' pockets and reduces costs by 50% across the country. This helps families pay for rent and all sorts of fees. The same goes for the Canada child benefit. Canadians receive \$8,000 per child under six. These measures are there to help families. These are support measures that the members across the way keep opposing and keep voting against.

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is pretty obvious that Scrooge is in charge. Since he came to power, production and transportation costs have skyrocketed. The cost of energy, fertilizer and farm fuel has gone up. Farmers have seen their debt load jump by 14% in one year. That is the sharpest increase since 1981. Nearly a quarter of Canadians would eat healthier food if they could afford it. Across-the-board increases are hitting everything in the grocery store, and this Mickey Mouse government is patting itself on the back for its work.

When will the Liberals realize that their policies are costing Canadians dearly?

Hon. Anna Gainey (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no parent should have to struggle to feed their children. That is indisputable. On this side of the House, we are investing \$13 billion to build affordable homes. This will help families.

Oral Questions

We are investing in child care and dental care. These measures are helping families keep more money in their pockets so they can get ahead and have money to cope with the cost of living. We will continue to invest in those supports and continue to invest in families and children. I encourage the members opposite to help us do that.

• (1140)

[English]

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told Canadians he should be judged by the prices at the grocery store. Perhaps he should be careful what he wishes for. Grocery prices are climbing, families cannot afford the basics and 85% of Canadians say food costs are their top concern. “Canada’s Food Price Report” says that, next year, families will pay \$1,000 more for groceries.

When will the Liberals cut their inflationary spending, the industrial carbon tax and their new fuel tax, so that Canadians can simply afford to eat?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, instead of harping on about imaginary taxes that the Conservatives know are not real and are not affecting the price of food, they should think about their own conduct in the House. They should think about their votes. When it comes to our budget, our budget does some key things. It improves access to the Canada disability benefit. It strengthens EI to protect workers. It increases investments in social and affordable housing. It makes the national school food program permanent.

Do we know who considers those four things a priority? The Daily Bread Food Bank in Toronto says that those are the four things we should be doing to help Canadians with the price of food. That is what we are doing. The—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford.

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SMALL BUSINESS

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are eight million kids in Canada, and last I counted, the national food program is not even feeding two million of them.

While families struggle with soaring grocery bills, small businesses are also being crushed by those same inflationary policies and the loss of the purchasing power of Canadian families. Canada has 100,000 fewer entrepreneurs today than it did in the year 2000. That is 100,000 fewer businesses able to support families and communities. Rising costs, higher taxes and endless red tape are driving people out of business.

When will the Liberals admit their taxes and red tape are crushing—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State

(Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it appears the members opposite have spent so long on the opposition benches, and have become so disagreeable, that they cannot even agree with the things they have advocated for. It is a shame.

There are things like tax cuts for 22 million Canadians, a GST cut of \$50,000 on new home purchases for families, automated tax benefits and tax deductions for businesses so they can invest in themselves to boost their productivity and growth. That is what increases real wages relative to the cost of living. That is how families get ahead.

That is how we support Canadians. Why do the Conservatives not get on board?

* * *

THE ECONOMY

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told Canadians he should be judged by the prices at the grocery store. The average weekly food bill was \$159 a week when the Liberals took over, but today that has doubled in the big cities. That does not address remote areas, such as Grande Cache and most of my riding, where it is much worse.

New fuel standards, the industrial carbon tax and inflationary spending all increased the cost of transportation. When will the Liberals consider the consequences of their legislation and stop the measures so Canadians can afford to eat?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when will the Conservatives recognize what farmers already know, which is that the industrial carbon price has zero impact on food prices? We have heard this from experts in the House.

Let us talk about what is going to benefit all Canadians, which are good jobs and a strong economy. Today, Statistics Canada says we are doing both. We have created over 54,000 net new jobs in this past month. Unemployment is down. GDP is up. Wages are up. Rents are down. That is delivering for Canadians right across this country.

Oral Questions

Alana Hirtle (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a newcomer to politics, I am finding the Ottawa approach to problem-solving quite perplexing. I am proud of this government's focus on delivering for hard-working families through tax cuts for 22 million Canadians, making sure every kid gets a healthy meal at school, investing billions in infrastructure projects and creating good jobs in our local communities, but these plans for tax breaks and infrastructure investments are being met with obstruction.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance tell us why our practical solutions are being reflexively blocked when hard-working families expect us to work—

• (1145)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary of the Minister of Finance.

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to serve with the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

There is only one reason that key pieces of legislation are not moving through this House, and it is the opposition, which is blocking them in committee and in the House. It is wasting time and blocking key legislation. It is the opposition that is stopping the first-time homebuyer's tax savings of \$50,000 for first-time home purchases. It is the opposition that is stopping the creation of tens of thousands of high-paying jobs. It is the opposition that is stopping the national school food program from feeding more hungry children—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

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FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Drax pellet plant in Williams Lake announced it was shutting down. This week, Domtar pulp mill in Crofton announced a permanent closure. That is over 1,000 direct and indirect jobs lost and another 1,000 families that are facing financial uncertainty. It has been 10 years, and the Liberals have failed to negotiate a fair softwood lumber agreement with the U.S.

The Prime Minister is now in Washington for a third photo op, this time for FIFA. Will he stand up for our devastated forestry families, or will he once again kneel before Donald Trump?

Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously, we stand with the affected communities. It is terrible to see the job losses. The minister has talked to Domtar and the B.C. minister of forestry. We want those jobs back, and we are going to work very hard to get them back.

Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they say they stand with the workers who have lost their jobs. Have they stood with them in the unemployment line? Have they stood with them in the food bank line? Have they stood with them when the bank forecloses on their home? Have they stood with them

when they have lost their business? That is the reality our families are facing.

I am not sure the member fully understands the dire situation we are in. Entire communities are drying up in the province of British Columbia.

When will the Prime Minister get serious about forestry, protect our families, grow a spine and stop caving to Donald Trump?

Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we stand with them. We stand with them with supports that allow them to keep those jobs. We stand with them when they lose those jobs and are in those unemployment lines, with more supports there as well. We stand with the companies by investing in them heavily. We will always stand with our forestry communities.

I invite the member to work with me to bring even more supports to those communities, because this is vital to Canada's culture and economy.

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THE ECONOMY

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister invited Canadians to judge him by the prices at the grocery store. Seven months later, shoppers are still going home with half the cart for twice the price. The latest food price report says it is going to get 1,000 bucks worse next year. Meanwhile, another mill is closing in my community.

As more people lose their jobs, anxiety is the only thing up more than the cost of food. With even full-time workers starting to rely on food banks, when will the Liberals cut their inflationary spending, so Canadians can afford groceries again?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of good news that has been coming out over the last few months related to jobs. If members take a look at the month of September, there were over 50,000 jobs created. Most of that was in manufacturing. In the month of October, there were over 50,000 jobs created. Most of that was in the province of Ontario. Today, we got an announcement of 60,000-plus jobs. In total, that is well over 150,000 jobs.

That is actually good news. The members opposite should recognize when good news hits them in the face and say this is a good way for our building a strong—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Oral Questions

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these Liberals must be shopping in the fantasy aisle because Canadians are still getting skewered at the checkout. Conservatives voted against policies that make life more expensive. This Parliament, the Liberals voted against our motions that would have saved jobs, kept communities safe and lowered costs.

Inflationary Liberal spending is driving students, seniors and now full-time workers to food banks. When will the Liberals stop raising taxes on the people who grow, transport and sell our food, so Canadians can put food on the table?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, talk about fake outrage. Time and time again, we get the Conservative Party of Canada preventing legislation from being able to pass, even the budget legislation and the implementation of the budget. Day after day, we hear Conservative baffle-gab, as opposed to them allowing legislation to go through. Day after day, we hear obstruction on important legislation, such as bail reform legislation to make our communities safer.

Whether it is providing supports for Canadians or providing a sense of security, the Conservative Party is more focused on the Conservative Party than it is on Canadians. Shame on them.

• (1150)

Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said he should be judged by prices at the grocery store, but seven months later, prices are skyrocketing and Canadians are struggling to put food on the table. Canada's food price report shows that Canadians will have to pay an extra grand to buy groceries next year. To make matters worse, sawmill workers across the country are facing job losses as their mills close.

The Prime Minister promised he would negotiate a trade deal. He has failed to do so, and now he just says, "Who cares?"

With more Canadians struggling to buy groceries, more job losses and more broken promises, what is it going to take for the Liberals to finally care?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to take the Conservatives at their word in the House when they stand up every day to complain about the Canadian economy, while we receive good news on this side and rejoice in it. The economy is actually faring well. The IMF just came out with a report that said Canada's economy is weathering the shocks of the tariff war, or the trade war, better than expected.

We have heard that message again and again. The numbers show the same thing with job numbers exceeding expectations three months in a row, real GDP growth and real wage growth over 33 months in a row. That is more money in the Canadian economy.

Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a report from the IMF means absolutely nothing to the workers from Ear Falls sawmill who have lost their jobs. They do not want more big government programs. They just want their jobs back.

The Prime Minister said he would negotiate a win. That has not happened. He said that Canadians should judge him by prices at the grocery store and prices keep rising. By every standard the Prime Minister has set for himself, he is failing.

If the Prime Minister cannot negotiate a trade deal, will he at least cut the inflationary spending, the industrial carbon tax and the new fuel tax, so that Canadians can afford to buy groceries?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when our government moved forward with the first round of major nation-building projects, which would create tens of thousands of good-paying jobs and add to Canada's GDP and economic output, what did the Conservative leader say? He called those projects "pathetic".

He stood out there in the media and said that about projects that would create tens of thousands of jobs, yet here we are being lectured by the Conservatives today about good job numbers that exceeded expectations three months in a row. They cannot seem to even get their stories straight. Whose side are Conservatives on? Are they on the side of Canadians? Are they on the side of affordability?

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, fertilizer production is essential to our Canadian farmers. Over 118,000 people are directly or indirectly employed by the industry, but the Liberal government's industrial carbon tax puts producers at a global disadvantage, burdening them with up to \$1.3 billion in carbon costs by 2030. Domestic fertilizer producers cannot pass those costs down to our farmers as they have to absorb them to compete toe-to-toe with the rest of the world.

When will the government finally level the playing field and scrap the industrial carbon tax on Canadian-made fertilizer?

Sophie Chatel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our farmers are at the front line of something very difficult and very challenging. They are fighting against tariff disruption of trade and also extreme weather events.

That report clearly said that increasingly violent and unpredictable weather patterns are disrupting agricultural production, creating supply challenges and continuing to influence food prices across Canada. The solution is to stand with our farmers.

Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if only fertilizer's challenges ended with the industrial carbon tax.

To add to that billion-dollar burden, the government's mandatory bulk fertilizer label changes will cost the industry over \$120 million. The Liberals' 30% by 2030 fertilizer emissions target could also lead to \$48 billion in losses. These costs are ultimately passed on to Canadian farmers and, by extension, Canadians at the grocery store.

Why is this government so obsessed with making it harder and more expensive for Canadian farmers to do what they do best, which is feed our country?

• (1155)

Sophie Chatel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I fully understand that fertilizer use is very important for our producers to supply the country and the world with really healthy food.

We are working with the farmers and the industry to find solutions to a fertilizer made in Canada, because in Canada we grow the best food in the world. We will continue to work with our farmers to ensure their long-term competitiveness and to help protect the environment.

Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has adopted a perversely restrictive interpretation of the bulk labelling regulations under the Fertilizers Act. If enforced, the interpretation would impose \$120 million in compliance costs on retailers, which will be passed on to farmers to achieve, quite literally, nothing.

If the Liberals are truly committed to reducing red tape, they could instantly override the CFIA by making marginal clarifications to these regulations. Will they do so, or will they allow the CFIA to drive small retailers out of business and drive up costs for Canadian farmers?

Sophie Chatel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this new government is committed to reducing red tape across government, especially with our agencies, such as CFIA and PMRA.

In committee, we just finished a study on how to effectively reduce red tape across the sector to support our producers and farmers to increase their productivity. On this side of the House, we work with our farmers and our agencies to find concrete solutions to help productivity.

* * *

[Translation]

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, December 6 marks 36 years since the murder of 14 women at École Polytechnique in Montreal. This was a horrific event that shook the entire country.

Oral Questions

We have a collective duty to fight gender-based violence.

Can the parliamentary secretary tell the House what measures have been taken to honour the memory of these young students and ensure that such a tragedy never happens again in Canada?

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on December 6, 1989, time stood still.

Our society still bears the scars of this mass femicide, 36 years later.

As a government, there is no doubt that we need to invest in the fight to end gender-based violence.

Certainly, one of the tools is to strengthen the Criminal Code, which we are working on. Prevention is another.

Through Canada's national action plan on women, peace and security, we have invested up to \$500 million, and we will continue to do so.

The dignity and safety of women in this country are a priority.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the chair of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

The Liberals have been in a panic ever since we brought up in committee how they, through Canada Post, have given contracts to companies involved in the Driver Inc. scheme.

The committee chair has cancelled three meetings in the past month. Twice, we have had to use emergency powers to force him to do his job.

Will the committee chair go ahead with next Tuesday's meeting, or will he continue to hide behind his minister?

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal chair's behaviour shows contempt for this institution. He refused to call three meetings. On Tuesday, he even suspended the meeting for technical reasons and then never came back. That is obstruction and abuse of power.

We were talking about the safety of our roads and the safety of Canadians. This is an urgent and serious issue.

The Liberal chair needs to decide whether he serves the government or Canadians.

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at last we get a good answer.

Oral Questions

The Minister of Transport is ordering his members to disrupt the work of the committee, with more than 10 hours of Liberal obstruction. What a waste of money. They are throwing money out the window.

Why is the minister doing what it takes to avoid transparency? Why does the minister want to hide the truth from Canadians? Why is the minister condoning these obstruction tactics? Why is the minister preventing the committee from doing its work, to the detriment of road safety for the residents of Beauce?

• (1200)

[English]

Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport and Internal Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are unwavering in our support for victims and their families, who have been impacted by the exploitation and illegal operation within the trucking industry.

The Conservatives are always looking to block things at committee. At this particular committee, they have an opportunity to focus on solutions, yet they bring up problems, like they bring up problems here. When the time comes to vote on solutions for Canadians, they bring up the problem and vote against the solution every single time.

Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Clarke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to the chair of the transportation committee, it should not take opposition parties calling emergency meetings to get a parliamentary committee to meet, like it is supposed to, but that is exactly what the opposition parties have been forced to do. When we had a meeting, in the middle of it, the Liberals suspended and ran out the back door.

Will the chair confirm that there are scheduled meetings, or will they run out the back door again?

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal chair's conduct shows contempt for this institution. He has refused to convene meetings three times, and even suspended one for technical reasons before leaving, never to return. Worse, a Liberal MP has been filibustering for the past month, not only resisting hearing from victims, but deliberately delaying recommendations that could save lives. Every day those recommendations are stalled, the Liberals put Canadians at risk. That is shameful.

A Conservative notice of motion has been filed, condemning this misconduct. The Liberal chair must decide if he is a political operative serving the government or an impartial chair serving this country.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Bruce Fanjoy (Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Ukrainians are fighting bravely for their freedom in the face of unwarranted aggression from Russia. Right now, Ukraine needs military resources, such as fuel, medical supplies, communications equipment, winter gear and more.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs update the House on how Canada and NATO are supporting Ukraine at this time?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past three and a half years, the Government of Canada has provided approximately \$22 billion in multi-faceted support for Ukraine's military, as well as financial and economic support. This week, at NATO, I committed another \$235 million for Ukraine in the defence of its sovereignty and security, and to ensure that its soldiers can make it through the winter as they fight on the front lines against this illegal and unjustifiable invasion.

Canada will always stand for the rules-based, international order that has kept us all safe since the end of the Second World War.

FARM CREDIT CANADA

Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in last month's budget, the finance minister said he made tough decisions to find savings, so I was surprised and disappointed to learn that the CEO of Farm Credit Canada racked up \$300,000 in travel expenses this year and last year. Furthermore, almost all of those expenses were within Canada, to talk with FCC employees at their offices.

Why can the FCC not spend \$20 on a Zoom subscription, instead of \$300,000 on the CEO's travel expenses?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure members that in the preparations leading up to budget 2025, there was a comprehensive expenditure review that looked at all possible operational savings the federal government could make in order to invest in the Canadian economy. This will ensure that we have a capital budgeting framework that ensures we achieve capital formation; that we grow the Canadian economy; that we attract investment; that we diversify our trade; that we build infrastructure, defence capabilities and the housing that Canadians want; that we can defend our sovereignty; and that we can build an affordable future for all Canadians.

That is exactly what this government is up to. We are building Canada strong.

THE ECONOMY

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, food prices are exploding. Groceries are up 4% to 6%, costing the average household as much as \$1,000 more per year. Experts point to extreme weather events, supply shocks and corporate greed.

Not only do the Liberals not have a climate plan; they keep protecting their corporate friends, while people across Canada are starving for a fair deal at the checkout. When will the government act and deliver a real public option for food?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2025 set out to make life more affordable for Canadians. The member voted against the very programs that are going to support families in her community.

Budget 2025 cuts taxes for 22 million Canadians, makes the national school food program permanent, delivers automatic tax filing for over 5.5 million Canadians, makes generational investments in housing and infrastructure and supports important programs like the Canada disability benefit. These are exactly the programs that are going to help families and make life more affordable for them and their kids.

* * *

• (1205)

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, coastal communities are running out of time. Key federal programs to protect wild salmon and restore critical habitat expire in March, and they were not included in this budget. The government still has not confirmed their renewal, and communities cannot wait for a spring economic statement.

On the west coast, wild salmon are vital for food security, culture, the ecosystem and the economy. First nations, hatcheries and restoration groups are doing the work, but they cannot plan without federal certainty.

It is essential that we not take our foot off the gas. Will the minister renew these essential programs now?

Hon. Joanne Thompson (Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member that the program funding continues through to March 2026. I am actively engaging with members across the country to talk about the effects of the program in their communities, what was very strong and what we need to look at in the future.

The climate changes and the stock of salmon and other seafood changes. We need to be able to align our programs to the reality in the waters and in communities.

I am happy to continue to dialogue with the member.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Hon. 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 responses to seven petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

Routine Proceedings

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, entitled “Supplementary Estimates (B), 2025-26: Votes 1b and 10b under Department of Citizenship and Immigration”.

* * *

PETITIONS

FIREARMS

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to present a petition on behalf of the people of Port Perry and Blackstock, in my riding of York—Durham, on the Liberal gun confiscation program.

Residents in my riding draw attention to the fact that Canada already has a sensible firearms regulation system, that legal firearms owners are strong advocates for that system, and that criminals who illegally obtain firearms do not follow that system anyway. Therefore, residents in my riding are asking the government to do three things.

The first is to repeal the orders in council, former Bill C-21 and all other relevant laws that confiscate and prohibit firearms. The second is to cancel the gun confiscation scheme. The third is to apologize to legal firearms owners and compensate them for the loss of the use and enjoyment of their firearms.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on behalf of constituents from Hague, Osler, Warman and Rosthern, to table a petition on their behalf.

The petitioners believe that Canadians who find themselves struggling with mental illness should be given support and resources to address the challenges they face. They also believe that vulnerable Canadians deserve compassion and care, and should not be offered medical assistance in dying. As such, they call on this House to support Bill C-218.

Routine Proceedings

• (1210)

GAZA

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling this petition that was collected by Doctors Against Genocide. They state that under common article 1 of the Geneva Conventions, Canada is required to respect international humanitarian law.

The petitioners highlight that under article 59 of the fourth Geneva Convention, Israel as an occupying power must allow and facilitate humanitarian aid by impartial organizations. Canada's own international assistance accountability act requires that all Canadian foreign aid uphold human rights and international legal standards, and Israel's policy and actions violate all of these obligations.

The petitioners demand the full restoration of access to UN agencies and established humanitarian NGOs, including UNRWA and the World Food Programme. They call on Canada to support them and insist on safe and immediate entry for Canadian health care workers and other international humanitarian personnel to Palestine; to withhold Canadian funding from any entity or model that does not comply with the principles of neutrality, impartiality, independence and humanity; and to ensure that all Canadian aid to Gaza is delivered through internationally recognized humanitarian channels.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the residents of Abbotsford—South Langley, who are deeply concerned about the increasing prevalence of organized crime, extortion, shootings and intimidation in our community. Recent daylight shootings, homicides and other violent incidents underscore a broader, systemic public safety crisis in our country.

The petitioners mourn the tragic death of Darshan Singh Sahsi.

These residents call upon the Government of Canada to reinforce the process of public reporting so Canadians can clearly see how the federal and provincial governments and local municipalities are working together to further prevent increases in violent and organized crime.

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a petition on behalf of residents of Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, who are frightened by the ever-increasing levels of organized violence, extortion, shootings and intimidation across the Fraser Valley and Lower Mainland. Daylight shootings, murders and violence underscore a broader public safety crisis.

These residents call upon the Government of Canada to reinforce the process of public reporting so Canadians can clearly see how federal, provincial and local authorities are working together to prevent further increases in violent and organized crime.

Petitioners also outline that their call to action is in memory of Mr. Darshan Sahsi.

SAFE CONSUMPTION SITE

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I would like to present today is on behalf of

angered parents who send their kids to Abbotsford Traditional School.

The parents are calling upon the Government of Canada to cease all funding to BC Housing until it comes to its senses and stops its plan to put a safe consumption site across the street from the school track. Parents are worried about their children's being exposed to drug paraphernalia and drugs writ large.

CHRISTIANS

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will present a number of petitions today.

The first petition is from a number of Canadians from across the country who want to call the attention of the government to the persecution of Christians around the world. Christians are the most persecuted group in the world.

The petitioners call on the Canadian government to prioritize the principles of universal human rights and religious freedoms in its foreign policy and right here at home.

FORCED ORGAN HARVESTING

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from Canadians from across the country. The folks who have signed this petition are concerned about the forced organ harvesting that is happening around the world.

The petitioners note that the organ trade is a growing concern across the globe. They want Canada to ensure that the legislation in place in Canada is properly enforced and to maybe re-examine some of the practices that are happening both here and abroad, to ensure that Canadians are not participating in forced organ harvesting and that it is not happening around the world.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition is from Canadians from across the country who are concerned about Canada's MAID regime. They say that choosing MAID in the absence of real services or treatment is not really a choice at all. They point out that a number of folks have been suggested MAID by government officials and that medical assistance in dying has been offered as a solution to folks with a chronic disability or chronic illness. This reduces incentives to improve treatment and care for people with these conditions.

The petitioning Canadians do not want an ableist society or an ableist health care system. Many disability advocates have expressed their opposition to MAID for people with disabilities. Therefore the petitioners call on the Government of Canada to protect all Canadians whose death is not reasonably foreseeable, by prohibiting medical assistance in dying to people whose death is not foreseeable within the next six months.

• (1215)

FREEDOM OF RELIGION IN INDIA

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition I am presenting today comes from Canadians from across the country who are concerned about the state of religious freedom in India.

Petitioners want to highlight the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, which recognizes the state of India's religious freedom. They point out that Christians in India are being targeted and that their churches are being attacked, their church workers are being attacked and their congregants are being threatened. They also point out that the Dalit groups are being persecuted, particularly Dalit women and girls, who are being registered as being victims of crime in India. As well, they point out that Indian Muslims are at risk of genocide and are being persecuted.

The petitioners are calling on the Canadian government to ensure that any trade deals signed between Canada and India have, as an underlying basis, human rights provisions, and to ensure that our human rights dialogue continues between Canada and India.

FALUN GONG

Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling two petitions today. Both relate to freedom of religion.

The first petition relates to Falun Gong practitioners. It is an issue I have been pursuing for a quarter of a century. The very first thing I said in the House of Commons 25 years ago was on the subject of the Communist persecution of Falun Gong, which still goes on after a campaign of more than a quarter of a century.

The petitioners point out that Falun Gong practitioners in China have suffered a number of very serious human rights abuses, ranging from detention to torture and forced organ harvesting, which of course involves the death of the person whose organ has been harvested. There is also transnational persecution that extends to Canada. There are attempts to influence the Canadian government to turn it against this peaceful religion. The petitioners ask that we take steps to make sure this does not happen.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition relates to a report from the finance committee some time ago that asked for religious charities to be stripped of their CRA tax-exempt status.

The petitioners point out that nearly half of all work done in the charitable sector is done by religious-based charities, and they note that it is inappropriate for the government to be assigning a values test and saying that unfashionable values, those held by religious groups, should exclude them from doing the great work they do for our communities.

Routine Proceedings

CYPRUS

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to present a number of petitions to the House today.

The first petition draws the attention of the House to the ongoing illegal occupation of Cyprus by the Turkish military.

Petitioners highlight that the Turkish military invasion in 1974 was illegal and brutal, resulting in the ongoing occupation of 37% of the island and 57% of its coastline; that the occupation led to significant human rights violations, including loss of life, mass displacement, the ongoing presence of military forces on the island and illegal settlements; and that the people of Cyprus, as well as the diaspora here and around the world, continue to be concerned about this issue. Cyprus's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity must be respected.

Further, petitioners note that the United Nations Security Council has passed multiple resolutions calling for the withdrawal of Turkish troops and settlers and the reunification of Cyprus based on respect for fundamental human rights and the freedom of all Cypriots. The occupation has impacted many other communities, and other communities that have been impacted by human rights violations committed by the Turkish state continue to be concerned about these issues as well.

The petitioners want the UN Security Council resolutions on Cyprus upheld. They want the government to condemn the illegal occupation, advocate for the immediate withdrawal of Turkish troops from Cyprus and ensure that no Canadian arms, military equipment or technology is sold to Turkey for use against Cyprus or other oppressed groups. They want the Government of Canada and parliamentarians to advocate for a free, united Cyprus based on relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the European Union's statements in this regard.

• (1220)

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I would like to table draws the attention of the House to a quite extreme proposal on euthanasia, or MAID, put forward by Mr. Louis Roy of the Quebec college of physicians. It recommended expanding euthanasia to “babies from birth to one year of age”. This is deeply troubling, but sadly he is not the only person; members of the government have advocated for so-called mature minors, people who are underage, to be eligible for euthanasia.

Petitioners want the government and the House to oppose and block any attempt to legalize the killing of children within our medical system. It is hard to believe that this needs to be said, but in the Canada of 2025, it does.

Government Orders

I am tabling another petition on the tragic situation around euthanasia in this country. It is from Canadians concerned about the impact on Canadians living with disabilities. They note how allowing euthanasia for people with disabilities or chronic illnesses has negatively impacted their experience when interacting with the health care system. It devalues their lives, tacitly endorsing the notion that life with disability is optional and, by extension, dispensable.

Petitioners say that offering medical assistance in dying as a solution for disability or chronic illness reduces incentives to improve treatment and care for people with these conditions. Canadians do not want a continuing degeneration of public services in an ableist direction, where Canadians seeking unrelated services or accessing health support are pushed toward considering death instead.

Many disability advocates in Canada have expressed opposition to allowing MAID for people with disabilities. Therefore the proposal of this particular group of petitioners is to protect all Canadians whose natural death is not reasonably foreseeable, by prohibiting MAID for those whose prognosis for natural death is more than six months.

PORNOGRAPHY

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling is in support of Bill S-209, although it says Bill S-210 because that was the number used in the last Parliament.

Petitioners support this bill to protect young people, children, from accessing explicit sexual material online. Showing sexually explicit material to children is a form of child abuse, yet it happens regularly online. Many children are accessing violent sexual material at an early age. Well-established methods for age verification that does not involve proof of identity could protect children from this scourge. Petitioners recognize the importance of this and want the House to support the adoption of the bill.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURN

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's response to Questions Nos. 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495 and 496 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled in an electronic format immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[For text of questions and responses, see *Written Questions website*]

Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to know whether we have quorum to continue the debate.

And the count having been taken:

● (1225)

The Deputy Speaker: We do have quorum.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET 2025 IMPLEMENTATION ACT, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-15, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the Liberal government's latest budget proposal, a budget that fails Canadians on affordability, jobs, housing and immigration.

I am going to start with the good news first, because there is not much. The Peavey Mart in Spruce Grove has now reopened, and folks are really excited.

Now we are into the bad news. After 10 years of deficits, Canada's finances are in a troubling shape. This budget adds \$321.7 billion to the federal debt over the next five years. That is more than twice what the Prime Minister previously projected. That works out to over \$10 million in new debt each and every hour. This huge deficit comes on top of a number of very important cuts that the government is also making. The Liberal government likes to talk about all its spending and generosity, but I think it should be pointed out that it is making some significant cuts to areas of importance.

The Liberals are removing statutory protections for free postage for blind people who are accessing literature products that weigh more than regular literature products. These statutory protections are being removed. I wonder why the government would remove accessibility supports for blind people. My grandfather was blind. He utilized those services, and I think it is very concerning.

I received a very concerning letter from a constituent, Nicole Callihoo, who serves as the education director for the Paul First Nation. I just want to read a few excerpts from her letter to me. She said she was writing with a heavy heart and a deep sense of urgency. Despite submitting full Jordan's principle applications and following every step as required, her school has not received the necessary funding to continue services for its students. They are now in the fourth month of the school year, and these delays contradict both the spirit and the purpose of Jordan's principle.

Government Orders

For those who do not know, Jordan's principle is a principle that requires the federal government to provide funding for at-risk indigenous students.

She said that in the true way of their ancestors, they did not wait for approvals before taking care of the children. They honoured their needs and began services immediately so that they would not experience further hardship or delay. These supports have brought powerful changes. Students who were once quiet and unsure have begun to speak for the first time. Those who carried worry and heaviness have started to open their hearts. They look forward to their sessions. Families have shared that they notice a new calmness, confidence and connection in their children. These are not small steps, she says. They are the beginnings of healing.

However, because the funding from the federal government remains outstanding, they now face the painful reality of stopping those services. Ending supports after children have finally begun to trust and feel safe goes against their cultural teachings and against everything that Jordan's principle stands for. Interrupting care will undo progress, break relationships and cause harm that could have been prevented. This type of disruption echoes the very history that Jordan's principle was created to stop.

Jordan's principle exists so that no first nations child is caught in delay, conflict or confusion. It is rooted in a teaching that the child comes first, before government processes, before jurisdictional disagreements and before paperwork, yet the current delays and the refusals to fund are causing harm to their students, harm that carries emotional, educational and cultural consequences.

I just wanted to share that from Nicole Callihoo, the education director of Paul First Nation. We stand up and listen in this House every day as the Liberals talk about reconciliation and talk about their big new programs to support children, yet indigenous children, first nations children, in my region are suffering because of the government's failures to support them. The failures violate treaties and violate court rulings, and it is a shame.

Despite the government's cold-hearted cuts, our national debt now stands at \$1.3 trillion and taxpayers are now paying \$55 billion just in interest payments every year. That is more than the Canada health transfer, and it is more than all the GST collected. It is over \$3,000 per household.

Meanwhile, GDP growth is stuck, and unemployment is expected to average over 6% over the next five years. The recent job numbers we received are painting a troubling picture. We are seeing part-time jobs replacing high-paying, family-supporting, full-time jobs. We cannot run an economy and we cannot support families based on part-time employment. The gig economy is not a strategy for success, yet the Liberals seem to stand up here and celebrate it every day.

• (1230)

The Prime Minister promised to balance the operating budget within three years to ensure that there was a declining deficit-to-GDP ratio and a declining debt-to-GDP ratio. However, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that there is very little chance of meeting this.

Fitch Ratings is warning that this budget weakens Canada's credit profile. What happens when our credit profile goes down? Our interest rates to borrow go up, which means that more and more of our tax dollars go to servicing our debt instead of going to essential programs, like supporting Jordan's principle, literature for the blind, and all the other programs that people depend on the government for.

It is not just Conservatives who are saying this. Dan Kelly, president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, called the budget "a missed opportunity to provide meaningful tax relief to Canada's employers." Conservatives are proposing amendments to scrap hidden taxes on food, work, homebuilding, investment and energy, and to cap the deficits. The government rejected these ideas and instead has added new spending. This is not responsible budgeting; it is reckless, and it would hurt vulnerable people in Canada the most.

The results of the Liberals' poor economic management are higher inflation, higher interest rates and higher costs for Canadians. We just read a report that this coming year Canadians can expect that a family of four will pay \$1,000 more just for groceries. Statistics Canada confirms that the prices for food, gas and rent continue to rise. Some might call this a global phenomenon, but it is rising far faster than for our closest neighbour and trading partner, the United States. Food inflation is nearly double the Bank of Canada's target rate and rising 48% faster than in the United States. Between March and September alone, the price of strawberries rose by 25%, beef by 20%, ground coffee by 20%, and chicken drumsticks by 17%.

A decade ago, when Conservatives were in government, individuals with full-time jobs were not relying on food banks to feed themselves and their families. Now, the high cost of groceries is exacerbating the issue of food insecurity, and we have many families who are working full-time who still have to go to the food bank. Poverty has risen by over 40% in the last two years alone. Food Banks Canada has given the government an F for poverty and food insecurity, noting that hunger is becoming normalized in Canada. More working people, seniors and young families are relying on food banks than ever before.

Government Orders

With respect to housing, the Prime Minister has promised 500,000 new homes, yet that number has been significantly downgraded. BILD, which is an advocacy group for home builders, projects that the Liberal government's homebuilding program could actually cost the sector over 100,000 jobs. We have seen pre-construction sales collapse; in the GTA alone, they are down 82%. Developmental charges, which make up 25% of the cost of homes these days, have risen by 700% in 20 years. It is pricing many families out of the market.

We have seen population growth under the current Liberal government outpace housing supply, health care services and education services because of the government's failed immigration policies. Instead of aligning our immigration system with housing and service capacity, the Liberals would make these high levels permanent, keeping over two million temporary residents by 2027. That is a 300% increase since 2015. They have no plan for 500,000 undocumented individuals or three million temporary workers whose visas are now expiring. This inaction is directly straining wages, it is hurting health care, hurting housing availability and hurting child care. Canadians deserve an immigration system that takes into account the needs of Canadians first. That means a system aligned to the realities of our infrastructure capabilities, health care, education and job market.

Despite the Prime Minister's comments, young Canadians have already sacrificed enough. He said they needed to sacrifice more. Well, they have already sacrificed enough. Youth unemployment has climbed to over 13%, the highest since 2010. Students who are trying to balance school and work face unemployment rates of over 17%. It follows a difficult summer, where many returning students faced the worst job market since the great recession. Recent graduates are facing an extremely difficult job market and are unable to find jobs in their field. Now, the Prime Minister said to them that they have to sacrifice more. Well, we are seeing too many young people who should be buying their first home, starting a family and being at the peak of their career, pursuing something that they love, yet many are still having to live in their parents' basements because they cannot afford to get a home. Many people have sacrificed the dream of home ownership. They have paid the price as food costs have exploded. They have paid exorbitant taxes, delaying their ability to start a family. They have sacrificed enough.

The Liberal government's spending-driven deficit takes money out of the pockets of every Canadian. It is making everything more expensive. Young Canadians should not have to suffer. Conservatives have a vision for a future Canada where all Canadians could thrive, a country where hard work is rewarded and where people can start a business, build a home, develop a—

• (1235)

The Acting Speaker (Pat Kelly): I am afraid the member has run out of time.

Questions and comments, the member for Winnipeg North.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that going out of the election, we made a commitment to Canadians on a number of different fronts. I want to highlight some very good news that came out today. We

have now had three months in a row where we have had substantial job growth. In September, 60,000 jobs were created; 28,000 of those were in the manufacturing industry. We had 67,000 jobs in October. The vast majority of those were actually in the province of Ontario. There were also 60,000 this month, or I should say in November. That is significant growth.

Does the member not agree that jobs matter and are a great indicator in terms of how—

The Acting Speaker (Pat Kelly): The member for Parkland.

Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, jobs are important. I want to remind the member of a few names he might not know about: In Crofton, 1,000 jobs were lost; in Brampton, 3,000; at Algoma Steel, over 400. In sawmill towns across western Canada, particularly in British Columbia, there have been thousands of jobs lost. These communities have been gutted, and the government has absolutely failed.

What I would remind the member is that when we look at the job numbers, we are talking about part-time jobs. The government is creating a gig economy. A gig economy is not a strategy for families to buy homes, to support a growing family, or to support—

The Acting Speaker (Pat Kelly): Questions and comments, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government over the last 10 years has arguably the worst economic record since 1945. Here is just one set of data points: Overall labour productivity has declined in each and every one of the last four years. I cannot think of any four-year period since 1945 where this has happened. It is in CANSIM table 383-0033. Productivity was \$65 per hour in 2021, \$64.60 in 2022, \$63.50 in 2023 and \$63.20 in 2024, last year. It has dropped in each and every one of the last four years since 2020. That is why the Bank of Canada has called it an emergency.

The budget does little to address this productivity emergency. Would the member comment?

Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for providing this great data for the House of Commons to review. I think, for many Canadians, these numbers might seem abstract, but let me talk about how important it is to understand what it means that Canada has had the worst productivity growth in the last four years. It means we are not creating jobs in this country. It means we are not raising wages in this country. It means we are not creating the economic growth in this country that can sustain our health care system and our social safety net.

Government Orders

Under the last four years of this failed Liberal government, our productivity has been in the gutter. The Bank of Canada is sounding the alarm, and this Liberal budget does very little to address our productivity crisis.

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is critical that we plug economic leakages right now.

In 2010, the Conservatives scrapped the 25% tariff on foreign-built ferries, claiming Canadian shipyards could not compete. The Liberals made that mistake permanent in 2016. Since then, ferry contracts and good jobs have gone overseas while communities like Port Alberni on Vancouver Island lack the dry dock capacity for shipbuilding, maintenance, repair and recycling. Reinstating this tariff would level the playing field and generate revenue to build that capacity here at home.

Does my colleague agree that the government should reverse this mistake and reinstate the tariff to support Canadian workers and Canadian shipyards?

Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting when I hear a member like my hon. colleague from the NDP calling for a return to tariffs. I can say that, in my personal opinion, I do not want to see tariffs. I want to see a country where businesses want to come here and thrive because we have good regulations, a responsible tax rate that drives investment into our country, and a strong, educated and skilled workforce that is able to provide the productivity gains needed to bring that investment and those jobs into our country.

I think that when we are talking about bringing things like tariffs in, we are providing a crutch for the economy, which makes it more difficult to get those needed investments and reforms to ensure that we can have the strong jobs that we need for the future economy.

• (1240)

Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Clarke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour and privilege to rise in the House.

Today, we are discussing the budget implementation act. I want to talk, just in generalities, about the importance of the private sector and of the individual workers, entrepreneurs and job creators across this great country. Ultimately, they will drive our productivity and our economy forward. Unfortunately, the Liberal government has been working at cross-purposes to empowering them and getting them to do the work that they do great, which is to create jobs and wealth.

In our country, as nearly any metric by nearly any international or domestic organization will show, we have extremely high rates of taxation and regulation. This regulation has the undeniable impact of limiting our potential and our ability to fully exploit our economy as we go forward. This is across different sectors, including manufacturing in my great province of Ontario, where we have some of the best manufacturers in the entire world.

When I meet with them, and I have met with many of them in my own riding in towns like Cobourg and Port Hope, they all talk about their inability to fully exploit their potential because of the amount of red tape and regulation surrounding them, particularly at the federal level. The ones who ultimately benefit from a corporation or a company being successful are the workers, because when

a company is successful, it is the workers that will receive much of the compensation that comes from that. However, when we look at this, we see this regulation, and we see things slowing down.

If Canadians do not believe politicians, it may be because there have been politicians, even in this very House, who have been disingenuous and who have not been entirely believable. I would like to direct attention to a scholarly book written on business by one of the bright lights in terms of academic discussion of businesses and how businesses succeed. Jim Collins wrote *Good to Great*. For those with no knowledge of this, I highly recommend it. His books have been highly influential, not just in the business sector but in the non-governmental, non-profit and charitable sectors as well. He had a number of different rules based on an incredibly large study that he did of many companies over a long period of time. The empirical data in there is really undeniable.

One of his conclusions talked about the level of control, bureaucracy and rules in a corporation. He said that, ultimately, governments, or actually in this case, companies, often put copious numbers of rules in place in order to fence in, or box in, a couple of bad actors. What happened with all these rules was that those folks who were entrepreneurs, who were inventive and who were driving the productivity of those companies forward were snuffed out.

Once again, the book is called *Good to Great*. I highly recommend that everyone check it out. In his research, he compiled the empirical data. Those companies with too much regulation almost always failed. They were unable to compete with those businesses that, instead of hemming individuals in with these oppressive regulations, established a culture of responsibility. In other words, they trusted individuals to do what was in their best interests and also in the company's best interests, going forward.

By putting in place that culture of personal responsibility, not only did it have the effect of making people more entrepreneurial and more innovative, but it brought people into the organization and, quite frankly, brought people together. No longer did they look at other people as the enemy or as their competitors in the corporation, they saw their colleagues as people who could potentially help them up the ladder. The empirical evidence is clear.

The next subject I would like to talk about is what I have deemed to be the fiscal or financial imbalance in our country. In any modern society, there is a calculus that has to be made: How many resources are dedicated to the public sector, and how many resources are dedicated to the private sector?

Government Orders

• (1245)

I want to start by saying that the public sector has many great purposes: our police, fire and armed forces. Even the equity ability of the government should not be understated, but the challenge is, if too many of the resources are put on the public side of the ledger, the private sector of the economy ends up being starved. This creates what has been seen in many countries, from the Soviet Union to Venezuela, Cuba and many others, which is a socialist death spiral of the economy.

What happens is that as the private sector gets starved of oxygen or resources or capital, this starts to have a compounding impact. As businesses do not have the ability to go forward, to move, to grow and to invest, it multiplies throughout the economy. If one business fails, what happens is that those companies that supply the company may also fail, which cascades across the entire economy. What then happens is that more individuals require the assistance of the state going forward, which requires the government to pay more money. This cycle just continues.

As more money is taken out of the private sector, the private sector shrinks even more, which shrinks the tax base and puts greater needs on the state. This creates a socialist death spiral, where the private sector just gets smaller and smaller and the state gets bigger and bigger. The reality is that the innovators, the job creators, are snuffed out one by one. We have seen the impact of the socialist death spiral. Most notable in the not-too-distant past was the Soviet Union, which centralized everything and snuffed out the private sector and innovation from going forward. We have seen this in Venezuela, Cuba and in other states around the world as well. That is all well and good, but what do we do for a solution?

I will tell the House where we are in Canada before getting into solving this issue. Canada is headed toward that path. There is just no denying that with a \$1.35-trillion debt, a \$78-billion deficit and \$55 billion being paid in interest. Unfortunately, we will hear individuals on the other side, if not purposely then unintentionally, misleading Canadians by stating that Canada's debt is not that high. As our leader has said, if you torture the data long enough, it will confess to anything.

The reality is that you must take a picture of the total debt calculation, which includes provincial and federal debt as well as the debt required for the CPP. We cannot use CPP money to apply to debt, which is what the Liberals do when they try to say they do not have a debt issue. That money is already spent, or at least I hope it is. Otherwise, they are going to rob CPP. The reality is that when we take that calculation, we are the second-worst, with a total debt ratio of well over 100% of our GDP. We are second only to Japan, which had its own lost decade. We have experienced ours and, quite frankly, we continue to experience that.

What do we need to get back on track as a country? We need to move away from seeing government as the answer. The government is, in most cases, not the answer. In fact, it is the culprit. It is responsible for driving down our economy. It is the reason we have had the worst economic growth since the Great Depression.

We need to, once again, not trust in the Canadian government but trust in the Canadian people. We need to correct the fiscal financial imbalance that has given way too much money to the federal gov-

ernment and not enough money to Canadian citizens, entrepreneurs and job creators.

• (1250)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to amplify the fact that the Canadian economy is doing relatively well, with a new Prime Minister and a government focused on building Canada strong through bringing down barriers so there is more trade within Canada. We have seen significant commitments going into the billions of dollars toward major projects. We have seen expanded trading opportunities.

Today we heard the jobs announcement. In the last three months alone, over 150,000 jobs have been created. However, through this entire process, we see the Conservative Party doing what it can to prevent legislation from passing. Whether it is the budget, good legislative reform or changes in bail, the Conservative Party seems to be in the way of Canadians being able to realize even greater benefits.

Would the member not agree that it is time for the Conservative Party to get out of the way?

Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, there is so much I disagree with in that, but I will focus on my shadow cabinet area, which is inter-provincial trade. The member should consult with his own bureaucrats, whom I wrote to and asked exactly how much the reduction in interprovincial trade barriers, the federal interprovincial trade barriers, and the progress they have made on that has contributed to the economy. They said that it was zero, which is how much sense this member makes.

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to see the Liberals get up time and time again to try to trick Canadians with fake good news. They talk about an increase in jobs, but they fail to mention we are talking about part-time jobs versus full-time jobs, and to add on to that, people who are working in full-time jobs right now are still lining up at food banks. This unaffordable budget is going to make things so much worse. I welcome the member to comment on that.

I am so thankful for his speech. He lives and represents a similar region to mine, down in the Durham region. I would love to hear his comments.

Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, one of the greatest challenges to democracy, certainly in the 20th century and likely before then, is demagogues. That is what we hear from that side. We call it modern-day gaslighting.

Government Orders

The reality is that Canada's economy is not as strong as it should be. Our oil and gas sector, which drove productivity historically for Canada, has been kneecapped by the government. We had the worst GDP per capita growth since the Great Depression over the last 10 years. The government will seize on the smallest bit of good information and try to exploit it to make it look like something that is not true.

If members want to see the issues in the Canadian economy, they can come down to Cobourg's Fare Share Food Bank and they will see the reality.

[*Translation*]

Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to our colleague's speech. I would like to know his position on the fact that, thanks to the plans we have put in place, 60,000 jobs were created in October and November. Does my colleague intend to support the budget implementation bill?

[*English*]

Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we actually lost full-time jobs, and most of the jobs created were part-time, which shows that Canadians are struggling. We need the great full-time jobs that should have been at Stellantis, Algoma Steel and Weetabix in my riding. It is the government driving out the economic wealth creators, the job creators, that is causing our Canadian economy to lose great, union jobs.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech by my colleague. I am fortunate enough to sit with him on the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, and that is actually what I would like to ask him a few questions about.

Essentially, his speech was a plea for deregulation. I understand his logic: Too much regulation ends up smothering businesses and hurting productivity. On the other hand, too little regulation or insufficient enforcement can also pose a problem, as shown by the Driver Inc. file that the committee is currently studying.

The Liberal government seems to have let things slide for 15 years before being jarred awake by our committee's work. I would like to know whether my colleague thinks a case like this calls for less regulation or, alternatively, stricter enforcement.

• (1255)

[*English*]

Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals want lots of regulations that they do not enforce. Conservatives want less regulation that we do enforce. That, I think, would go a long way to solving the Driver Inc. problem.

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-15, the budget implementation act. Sadly, this is not the right budget for Canada. It spends too much in the wrong areas, taxes families that are struggling to get by and, ultimately, leaves an enormous debt to our generation and, most likely, the next. Ultimately, that is why I voted against the Liberals' budget. It was not because I opposed every line in a budget that spans hundreds of pages and thousands of

programs, but because it prioritized a heavy tax-and-spend agenda today for historic levels of debt tomorrow.

How much debt would it be? There would be \$1.28 trillion, with \$109 million added every single day. It is hard to even conceptualize. In fact, in the time it takes to complete this 10-minute speech in the House today, the national debt would increase by more than \$7 million. That is the average cost of a small to mid-sized private yacht every 10 minutes, but the Liberals have good news for those looking to buy a yacht because this budget has cut the tax on luxury boats. For my constituents, meanwhile, there is little relief offered as they see their grocery bills at Safeway only grow.

Too often, our national debt and budget deficit are framed by the Liberals as purely irrelevant economics to Canada's priorities, but nothing could be further from the truth. There is a reason that one year ago, the previous finance minister under Justin Trudeau resigned when she was asked to run a deficit of more than \$43 billion. It is now almost twice that.

Setting aside the global pandemic, this is now the highest deficit on record, but in this budget, we will find an even more concerning number. As deficits run higher and higher, so too do the costs to borrow and the interest payments that the Liberal government is forced to pay on our national debt. Public debt charges for this year amount to \$53.4 billion in taxpayer dollars going to debt holders, not health care, not roads, not defence and not support for industries hit by tariffs. There is nothing that benefits Canadians. In fact, the \$53.4 billion spent on public debt charges is nearly identical to the amount the federal government spends on health care through Canada health transfers and the amount it collects in GST revenue. However, by the end of the decade, it will surpass all health care and defence costs as a burden on taxpayers, growing to \$76.1 billion. Canadians do not want to pay taxes to pay off government debt.

What is this budget doing for residents in my communities? Economists will always say that infrastructure investments are a good way to improve an economy, but this budget fails to make the investments needed in this area. The budget would give the failed infrastructure bank an additional \$10 billion, bringing the total to \$45 billion of taxpayer dollars. After almost a decade of spending billions in taxpayers' money to attract private investment, the Liberals' infrastructure bank has only completed seven projects, less than one per year, out of the more than 100 it has funded.

Government Orders

Meanwhile, good ideas, like the one the member for Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna and I had, are brought forward to the Liberal government and ignored. Together, we called on the federal government to assist with the cleanup of the landslide on Highway 97, the extremely important and only highway to Kelowna from the South Okanagan. This highway was invested in under the Harper government.

The plan that the member and I had was to allow the provincial government to allocate maintenance funds to upgrade 201 Forest Service Road. This would ensure a reliable year-round alternative when Highway 97 is closed, whether by fire, landslide, flood or accident. It is an extremely important artery. In other words, people in Okanagan-Similkameen could make it safely and in a timely way to the hospital in Kelowna, which they are dependent upon.

● (1300)

A fully functional north-south connection for the Okanagan Valley would boost economic productivity and community safety, but the Liberals choose to continue pouring public funding into the same failed Trudeau infrastructure policies that do not get things built.

This is also true of the Liberals' continued failure on clean drinking water. The Liberals promised to end boil water advisories for indigenous first nations by 2019. Not only has this promise not been kept, with dozens remaining, but even more communities across Canada have brought in boil water advisories since that promise. Look at my riding, for example. Many residents in my communities live under boil water advisories due to aging water infrastructure. It has come to a crisis level.

For example, the communities of Olalla, Osoyoos, Hedley, Vintage Views, Heritage Hills, Warfield, Okanagan Falls and Sage Mesa have been failed by a provincial government that did not exercise its proper oversight role, and by a federal government that has been slow to ensure that all Canadians have access to clean drinking water. It is a right. The Liberals should be looking at how they can mobilize their resources to ensure the reliability of roads, power grids and water sources, but I do not see that prioritized in the budget.

Similarly, the government's efforts to combat the deadly drug crisis in my home province prioritize continued addiction instead of a road to recovery. Not only did the health minister ignore my request to her directly in our committee to end the decriminalization experiment, a pilot project, that is operating only in British Columbia, but in the budget, the Liberal government also continues to push access to dangerous drug paraphernalia.

Recently obtained information from the member for Riding Mountain confirms that the government's own emergency treatment fund is being used to purchase smoking kits. In other words, these are taxpayer-funded crack pipes. The budget does not put forward meaningful measures that we so need to tackle the addiction crisis, which leaves the streets of my communities unsafe; creates dangerous tent cities that were not there just 10 years ago, five years ago or two years ago; and takes many lives and leaves families suffering.

Last, given the importance of the forest industry, especially at mills in Castlegar, Princeton and Grand Forks, I wish to address the government's promised fund for our mills as they come under attack from the unjustified U.S. tariffs. All members of the House want to protect our lumber jobs, but we will only protect them in the long term with a softwood lumber agreement with Washington, D.C., not through the extension of government loans. Many of the mills already carry enormous debt. Adding to that burden puts their long-term viability at risk.

I do not pretend that a softwood agreement will be easy to obtain, but as members of the lumber industry said in October, the Prime Minister cannot be silent on this industry. I know that the Prime Minister is currently in Washington, D.C., and I suggest that he speak more about the mills than about the FIFA World Cup with President Trump.

The Prime Minister promised a \$62-billion deficit, yet the deficit is \$78 billion. He promised to spend less, yet this budget spends more. He promised to lower the debt-to-GDP ratio, yet it is increasing. He promised to increase investment, yet this budget shows that investment has actually declined. If the Liberal government does not intend to keep the promises it made to Canadians, then Canadians will ultimately hold it to account.

● (1305)

Dominique O'Rourke (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is from a beautiful part of the country that I had the pleasure to visit recently.

We agree on the need for infrastructure, and the budget includes the build communities strong fund. It has \$51 billion over 10 years, and it actually says that it will provide funding to provincial and territorial governments for a diverse array of projects. Investments will prioritize housing-enabling infrastructure to fight housing costs, including water and waste water systems and roads.

I am curious to know if the member will work with provincial counterparts to put up a request, potentially, for some funding. Would the member accept the funding, or would she vote against the budget? I am really perplexed. In addition, there are major projects all over this country that are infrastructure projects. The member mentioned the east-west energy grid. Interties were announced in the MOU last week—

The Deputy Speaker: I have to give the hon. member for Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay a chance to respond.

Helena Konanz: Mr. Speaker, that is a really good question. If she has visited my riding and the area where I live, that is wonderful. I wonder how she got there. If she flew into Kelowna, she would have had trouble getting down to the South Okanagan, to Similkameen, because of the roads and the landslides, fires and floods.

Infrastructure has not been kept up by the government. We have had an infrastructure bank for the last 10 years. It is a system that has not worked. How are Canadians supposed to believe that throwing more money at it will somehow work after 10 years?

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciated my colleague's speech. The two of us had the opportunity to sit together on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. I know that a shooting range in her riding, in the city of Penticton, is threatening to close because the government may be making a decision that clashes with this community's needs.

Perhaps my colleague would have liked to see some encouragement in the budget for keeping that shooting range open. Could she tell us about that?

[*English*]

Helena Konanz: Mr. Speaker, the Penticton shooting range was going to lose its lease in the next couple of months, and I brought this to the safety committee. The committee unanimously agreed that the Penticton shooting range should not lose its lease. I have spoken to Minister MacDonald about this, and he will—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member cannot use the last name or the first name of a cabinet minister in the House and can only refer to him by his title.

The hon. member for Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Helena Konanz: Mr. Speaker, I have talked to the Minister of Agriculture about the issue. He is reconsidering the lease.

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have bad news. West Fraser has just announced that they will be shuttering its OSB plant in northern Alberta. This is a softwood lumber mill, so to speak, and this comes after the news of many other mills that have been shuttered or shut down over the last number of weeks. I know that the member is from British Columbia, where this has been hard-hitting as well.

Today, the job numbers came out, and we heard about the fact that full-time work is being reduced while part-time work is coming up. I am wondering if the hon. member could talk about that.

Helena Konanz: Mr. Speaker, it just makes me so sad when we hear of another mill closing or another business closing. This has a domino effect. In these communities, when these mills close, when these businesses close or go down to one shift, for example, it leads to widespread issues throughout the community, with grocery stores closing and garages closing.

It is just devastating communities, and we do not have anybody who is negotiating for us right now in the United States. We do not have anybody down there negotiating. We have someone talking to

Government Orders

the President of the United States about an upcoming soccer tournament, which is extremely important, but, my goodness, we need to talk. There are people who are not going to be able to put food on their table for Christmas.

• (1310)

Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to try to address two general subject areas, if time permits.

For the first of these, I will make some observations about how this budget and the general direction the government has taken over the 10 years it has been in power have caused us to drift away from the goal of Canada being a financially egalitarian society, in which all people have a fair shot at doing well and those who are less well off are taken care of through our welfare state.

As the second part, I will talk specifically about issues relating to the cost of housing, especially as it affects younger people, which obviously is one of the key areas in which issues of affordability and equity are problematic.

The stated goal of Canada's welfare state has always been to redistribute wealth from wealthier Canadians to Canadians who have less. From its very start in the 1920s and 1930s, the goal of wealth redistribution from rich to poor has been supported by a broad national consensus, and all parties. Over the years, Canadians have sometimes complained that taxes were too high or that too much of the redistributed wealth was being used up in bureaucratic churn, but no major political actor has ever suggested a return to the old days when tax rates were very low and the poor received no public assistance whatsoever. However, recent public policy shifts of the last 10 years, and particularly this budget, have caused the welfare state to drift away from this widely supported redistribution from rich to poor and toward something entirely different.

Increasingly, the policy choices of the Canadian government and to some degree of governments at all levels, but particularly of this government, have had the practical impact of transferring wealth not to the poorest, but rather to parts of the population that are already well off. I could give a very long list of both federal and provincial policy, and municipal policy as well, quite frankly. However, let me just give one example that is held up by the Liberal government as being a touchstone of how much they want to help those in need.

This is their publicly funded child care program, introduced last year, which promises to offer significantly more affordable child care to everyone, in principle, but in practice, the program is available, for the most part, only to people who live in larger population centres that are closer to where the regulated day care spaces are located. This creates the following problem: State-subsidized child care spaces are available to urbanites, who are on average wealthier, but not to rural Canadians, who are on average less wealthy.

Government Orders

Similarly, subsidized child care is unavailable for children of shift workers, who are almost always less wealthy, so on the whole, this is a transfer that misses those who need it the most and provides it to those who need it the least. That is not to say that it is not an important policy goal. It is to say that this is a very poor mechanism by which to help those who are parents and who are not wealthy.

Likewise, the programs to give incentives to individuals to purchase zero-emission vehicles are great for those who are in a position to purchase a vehicle at all and who are in a position, because they are urbanites, to be close to where they can recharge their vehicle with ease before the battery runs out. It is of no use at all to someone in a rural area. It is of no use at all to someone who is less well off, but it transfers taxes that were collected from everybody to a certain segment of the population that, in practice, does not need it, rather than to those who need it the most.

Let me turn to the issue of housing. Everybody knows the cost of housing has soared over the past few years, but it seems to me that something should be said to the generally well-off people in this room, those of us who are wealthier, those of us who are older, someone who is a boomer or a generation Xer like me. If that person bought a house a decade ago, two decades ago or three decades ago, the price of housing can be looked at dispassionately. In fact, it is a question that, on the whole, has made us better off.

Prices are high and that is tough for some other people, but for us homeowners, things are actually pretty good. The house that each one of us bought, which seemed expensive at the time, is now worth twice as much or more, and that is when I take into account inflation. If I look at the nominal price, the growth is even greater. For many people of my generation, the resale value of that mortgage-paid house is the foundation of what promises to be a very comfortable retirement.

● (1315)

However, if someone does not own a house, as is the case for most young people, things look and feel entirely different. When I was 25, in 1990, it was possible for me to rent a small, fully detached three-bedroom house in a pleasant neighbourhood in Ottawa for \$850 a month, which is \$1,840 in 2025 dollars.

Recently, out of curiosity, I took a look online to see how much it would cost to do this now. A comparable home in a comparable location would be about 50% more to rent than it was then. As a result, for 49% of Canadians under the age of 25, just paying the cost of rent consumes half their income, according to a survey conducted earlier this year.

We could just shrug at that and say that maybe it is a bit much for a 25-year-old to expect to live in a three-bedroom house, although nobody thought that in 1990, when I was 25. However, the fact is that most people that age are now living in shared rooms or in apartments far smaller than what I once enjoyed, and the survey shows that the average rent for people in this age range is about \$1,400 and that they are living in very small spaces.

It is not just the very young who have this problem. Thirty-four per cent of renters of all ages are paying more than half their income in rent. It is also a problem not just in the big cities; a sub-

stantial percentage of residents in Lanark County, in the riding I represent, also pay more for rent than for all other expenditures combined.

Given these facts, it seems hard to deny that in order for most young people to become financially secure, they have to escape the high cost of renting, which means buying a home. However, to state the obvious, it is nearly impossible for them to save up for a down payment for a house, the price of which has skyrocketed, when the high cost of rent is soaking up so much of their income.

This inevitably leads inevitably to some depressing news. StatsCan reports that after 10 years of Liberal government, the percentage of people under the age of 30 who own their own home has fallen by a third. The statistics are for 2011 and 2021; nothing more recent is available, but they make the point that by now, home ownership numbers among the young are falling and appear to be falling with increasing speed.

This produces an even more alarming statistic: While the average income in Canada for people in the bottom half of wage earners has gone up by 250% since 1982, mostly due to inflation, the cost of housing of all sorts has gone up more than three times as much. Housing prices are rising much faster than wages. That means that there is now a divide. It is generational in nature, and it is divided between urban and rural. It is divided in a way where we see the dream of social equity and the dream of prosperity disappearing for a substantial part of the population.

That is why we had the results we did in the last election. Poll-by-poll results are available, so we can look at them. We can see very clearly that, in my own riding, the people who are the least well off were voting for the Conservative Party and against the government. That appears to be a pattern that was true across the country. The people who are the most well off, who enjoy home ownership, who enjoy high-paying wages and who enjoy the benefits of a system that transfers, essentially, to the wealthy, voted Liberal.

I think we have to step back and think about what we can do as a country to make sure the divide ends. The Liberals should have a partisan interest in this. They should, for their own sake, be worrying about and trying to stop the enormous and growing social divide. This is a crisis that is transforming the nature of our society. I think, if it is not dealt with, the Canada our children will have when they are my age will be far worse, quite frankly, than the one we inherited from our parents. That is a great shame.

The budget could have dealt with the issue. Instead, more spending has been piled on and more debt is being accumulated, which will be paid for by the next generation. When the Liberals use the term “generational budget”, I can only think they are talking about a concept known as generational debt, which is what they are imposing on our children, who will pay more taxes into a system that transfers money away from them and structures policy to make sure they cannot move ahead. It is a great shame.

All I can do is hope that, on this basis, the House will reject the budget implementation act when it comes to a vote.

Dominique O'Rourke (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am just curious. Absolutely, the cost of rent is challenging in this country. There was some good news, but it is mixed across the country, and I think we should acknowledge that. The member mentioned that he is from Lanark County.

What effect does he think the Conservative provincial government's elimination of rent control on units built after or occupied after 2018 has had? If we look at the charts in terms of rents, we can see that the "get out of the way" approach has actually driven up the cost of rents in this province.

• (1320)

Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, that is of course a question about provincial policy, but I did invite it by saying that federal and provincial policies have been in combination.

I suppose the answer there is that the goal the provincial government had in mind was to encourage more construction for rental purposes. The Ford government's belief was that there is no investment case to be made for building a new rental unit if landlords expect that controls would have the effect of capping their income from that unit. I think that was the purpose of doing that; whether it has been successful, I do not know for sure.

However, there is a basic problem here with rent control, which is this: It is available for those who have been renting for a long time, who typically are older people who in some cases, not in all cases, have more money, and it is not available at all for younger people, which means that they are facing paying full price for rent in a province that has rent control for some and not for others.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lestiguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my concerns lie with the poorest members of our society as well as social equity. My colleague addressed those issues. I would like to hear his perspective on a problem that is very important to us, one that we have been calling for a solution to for a very long time. I am talking about a comprehensive and major reform of EI to ensure that the seasonal sectors of our economy can function and that seasonal workers can be available when needed, without falling into financial insecurity and poverty between work periods.

What is my colleague's perspective on our request for a comprehensive reform of EI?

Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question, but I do not have any expertise on that subject. The issue of seasonal work affects some of my constituents, but it is a real problem for a large part of the population of the Magdalen Islands, which may be one of the most beautiful regions in our country. It is a region where the fishing industry plays a vital role.

I do not believe I am the best person to answer my colleague's question.

Government Orders

[*English*]

Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Clarke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for one of the best speeches I have heard in this place, and I mean that without hyperbole.

I am wondering if the member could expand upon what he believes a Conservative, or any, government could do to help youth get out of the current quagmire the government has put them in.

Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, it could stop spending more than it is bringing in. At some point, we have to return to a budget balance. There is no way one can continue spending with deficits of this size forever. It is fiscally unsustainable. As we do, it is going to lead to more and more debt on which we have to pay interest. It is going to crowd out lending in the private sector, which will drive up interest rates for those who are paying mortgages or have other forms of indebtedness. Everybody who does have debt suffers in a high interest rate environment.

Every individual who is a creditor or who owns shares in a company or has a pension fund that owns bonds is wealthier, and they do better in a higher interest rate environment. In the Parliamentary Budget Officer's paper on the relative amount of spending power for different quintiles in the population, he points out that the result of higher interest rates has been that the wealthier in Canada are getting wealthier and the poorest are getting poorer.

[*Translation*]

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak about a budget that, unfortunately, misses the mark on every front.

It is a budget that fails to meet the needs of our regions, our businesses, our agriculture and Canadian families. It is a budget that, instead of building for the future, simply kicks the can down the road. It will burden our children with generations of debt by piling deficit upon deficit, debt upon debt and accounting falsehood upon accounting falsehood. It is a magical thing.

If there is one sector that deserves real and ambitious support, it is agriculture. Farmers are under unprecedented pressure: rising input costs, industrial carbon tax, inflation on equipment, labour shortages, tariffs, additional energy costs and rising transportation costs. However, there is not one word of serious discussion about that in the budget. There are no strong measures to support farmers. The government talks about food security, but it refuses to make a real investment in local production.

The current programs are too slow and too complicated. The bureaucracy involved makes them impossible for most family farms to use. As my brother-in-law know all too well, the paperwork never ends. While the cost of fertilizer keeps rising, machinery is 30% more expensive and profit margins keep shrinking every year.

The government tells us that everything is fine. Its head is stuck in the sand. While our farmers are struggling to survive, Ottawa talks about innovation, but without making any investment. Without real support, our lands, our independence and our communities are at risk.

Private Members' Business

Let us talk about rural areas. I come from a magnificent rural area. The labour shortage in my riding is real, ongoing, permanent and suffocating. I speak with farmers, processors, restaurant operators, manufacturers and business owners every day. They all tell me the same thing, "We need workers." They cannot function without temporary foreign workers. We have full employment back home.

We, the Conservatives, know that the reality is different in Canada's big cities. We are able to acknowledge that. However, can the government acknowledge that things are different in the regions? Our position as Conservatives is very clear. We want the government to renew the work permits for all temporary foreign workers in regions where the unemployment rate is below 5.5%. On page 96 of the budget, the government recognizes the important role temporary foreign workers play in our regions and says that it will adjust according to those regions' needs. My question is simple: When will the government respond to these businesses' needs? They are waiting. It is urgent.

I have good news. Yesterday in committee, I asked the Minister of Industry about this. She told me that the Prime Minister was well aware of how important this matter is. My question is simple: Will the Prime Minister respond to our businesses before Christmas or not?

Rather than reducing delays, renewing permits more quickly and helping employers, the government is making the program more complicated, slowing things down and jeopardizing entire sectors of the rural economy. The Conservatives' position is clear. We have said it. We want to the government to renew permits in regions where the unemployment rate is less than 5.5%. We need workers.

I will ask the question one last time today. Will the Prime Minister deal with this matter before Christmas?

• (1325)

If businesses have workers, they can stay open, produce, be competitive, invest and, most importantly, create wealth.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1330)

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC) moved that Bill C-218, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I want members to imagine someone's son. He is in his forties and life has worn him down. He lives with a painful illness that leaves him sick, exhausted and often unable to leave the house. On top of that, he struggles with addictions, depression and anxiety, which have taken more from him than anyone can see from the outside. Some days, he can barely hold it together. He relies on his family for a place to live, food and help getting through the week. They are doing their best, and he is doing his best, but the weight of it is crushing.

One day, he finally meets a psychiatrist. He goes, hoping that this might finally be the start of real help. His addictions still have not been treated, and his mental health care has not truly begun. He is vulnerable, scared and hanging on by a thread.

At that appointment, instead of being offered a plan to get him stable, MAID is raised as an option. The assessment moves ahead, and before he ever receives proper support for his mental health or addictions, he is approved. His MAID provider is the one who drives him to the place where his life is ended. This is someone's son who needed help, not a final exit.

Believe it or not, this actually happened here in Canada, and this is where we are headed if we do not act. Unless this Parliament chooses a different path, Canada will allow MAID for people whose only condition is mental illness. That means men and women struggling with depression, trauma or overwhelming psychological pain could be steered toward death by a system that too often cannot offer timely treatment, consistent follow-up or even basic support. This is why I brought forward Bill C-218, the right to recover act. It is simple. It asks Parliament to stop, consider what we have learned and act responsibly before people are irretrievably harmed.

I often think of my grandparents, who immigrated here after World War II with very little. They chose Canada because it was a place where people had endless opportunities to better themselves, where neighbours watched out for each other and communities worked in unison to make a better life for all. They built a Canada where the vulnerable were cared for and the less privileged in society were valued and treated with equal care. Those fundamental values attracted millions of immigrants over the years.

Today, many Canadians fear we are losing those values. Canadians themselves remain some of the most compassionate people anyone will ever meet, but our system is overwhelmed, stretched thin and unable to meet the needs of people who are suffering.

When people fall through the cracks, the easy temptation is to accept that failure is inevitable. When that happens, people facing mental illness can end up alone, waiting months, or sometimes years, for specialized treatment, and when help does not come, they lose hope. That moment of hopelessness should never be treated as an opportunity for the state to end their lives through MAID.

When the House last debated MAID, mental illness was not a part of the core discussion. It was added in a last-minute Senate amendment to Bill C-7. The implications were not fully considered or understood by the House.

Since then, we have learned a lot more. Psychiatrists across Canada, including the chairs of psychiatry at all 17 medical schools, have told us plainly that there is no reliable way to predict when a mental illness is irremediable, which is a requirement in the MAID law. People get worse, but they also get better, and most do. There is no test, scan or clinical tool that can reliably tell us that someone will never recover. All people deserve the opportunity to get better. No one should be encouraged to give up on themselves.

As legislators, we need to listen to what so many medical professionals are telling us, which is how hard it is to distinguish between suicidal ideation and MAID. The feelings behind them, such as hopelessness, loneliness, fear and the belief that one is a burden, are the same. For decades, clinicians have understood that, when someone feels hopeless or sees themselves in a very negative way, it can look like they are thinking clearly, that they are rational, even when their judgment is clouded by despair.

• (1335)

In 2021, most of us did not have the evidence we now have about how MAID assessment functions in the real world or the specific dangers of expanding MAID to mental illness. We now know there is no reliable way to determine when a mental illness is truly irremediable. Suicide prevention experts, including the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention, warn that how we talk about these issues shapes the choices people make. Suggesting that death is a solution to suffering undermines hope. It puts people at real risk.

The expansion of MAID to mental illness forces Canada into a huge contradiction. On one hand, we invest in suicide prevention. We train professionals to intervene, listen and pull back people from the edge. On the other hand, with the expansion of MAID, we would invite those same vulnerable people to consider state-facilitated death.

We must ask, who receives suicide prevention and who is guided toward MAID? If a person suffering from depression calls a crisis line tonight, do we encourage them to hold on or do we quietly redirect them to an assessor? What principle decides the answer? What medical test? What ethical standard? There is none. That is because the very feelings that drive someone to seek MAID, hopelessness, despair or the belief that they are a burden, are the same signals that every suicide prevention worker is trained to treat as a cry for help.

We would never tell a struggling teenager that their wish to die is rational. We would not tell a grieving spouse that their darkest moment is a reasonable exit point. We would reach out. We would support them. We would insist that their lives still matter. Why should that change simply because despair is given a different label? When someone feels worthless, our duty is not to agree with them. It is to stand with them until the light returns. Canada must decide: Are suicidal citizens people in need of protection or candidates for state-sanctioned death? We cannot pretend that they are both. Besides all this is the fact that we already know the current safeguards are failing.

Let us be absolutely clear about what an expansion of MAID to mental illness would mean. If Canada cannot protect vulnerable people under the current rules, then expanding eligibility to those whose very illness clouds judgment, hope and decision-making will

Private Members' Business

lead directly to preventable deaths. We are already witnessing cases where safeguards fail, where capacity is misjudged and where people are assessed in moments of confusion, exhaustion or pressure. If the system cannot uphold basic protections now, it will not and cannot protect those suffering from severe psychological distress. An expansion would be reckless.

The evidence is already in front of us. A recent article about Ontario's MAID death review committee's findings lays out, in plain and troubling terms, cases that would worry every Canadian. They describe a man who had cancer. I will call him Bill. Earlier in his illness, he had briefly mentioned MAID, as frightened patients tend to do. By the time he was assessed, he was delirious, confused and heavily sedated. His own medical team made it clear that he no longer had the capacity to make major decisions, yet a MAID assessor shook him awake, took the faint motion of lips as consent, withheld sedation, obtained a rushed virtual second opinion and ended his life that same day. Bill was not stable. Bill was not capable. He did not understand what was happening.

In another case, a woman, whom we will call Margaret, wanted palliative care. She said so the day before her death, but she did not qualify for hospice. Her husband, worn down by caregiver exhaustion, arranged for an urgent MAID assessment instead. The day before she had told him she wanted to die with proper palliative support, but the next day two assessments were rushed through. Her final wishes were overshadowed by the strain of a caregiver who could no longer cope.

Another woman, whom we will call Alice, was living with advanced dementia and unable to communicate her wishes in any meaningful way. Her family brought MAID forward twice with minimal documentation, little clarity and no clear expression of consent, yet she was approved.

Private Members' Business

● (1340)

All of these examples were drawn from the auditor's report. These are stories about real people, who are family members, friends, neighbours and fellow citizens, the people to whom we owe a duty of care. They demonstrate that vulnerable Canadians are already at risk under the current MAID regime. People who are confused, pressured, exhausted or unable to communicate are slipping through the safeguards that were supposed to protect them. If safeguards fail for patients with physical illness, where assessing capacity is clear and verifiable, what will happen when the only condition is a mental illness which, by definition, clouds judgment and hope? To offer death at that moment will place some of the most vulnerable people in this country directly in harm's way.

Today, a person deemed unable to manage their finances must undergo rigorous capacity assessments, interviews, documentation, expert review, collateral information and verification because we recognize the risk of exploitation, yet for MAID, a situation of life or death, a brief conversation can suffice, with no thorough evaluation, and when the safeguards fail, there seem to be few consequences. We now live in a country where we protect bank accounts better than we protect a human life.

We also know of families across Canada that were deeply shaken by how MAID was carried out for a loved one. They describe decisions that felt rushed and were influenced by poverty, loneliness or a lack of access to proper treatment, not by a calm and informed choice. These experiences are warnings from the very people who lived through the consequences.

Canadians are uneasy. Polls show a clear majority do not support MAID for mental illness alone. Provinces are asking Ottawa to reconsider. They are calling for a stop. Quebec, one of the most permissive MAID jurisdictions in the world, has banned it by law.

International human rights experts have raised the alarm, including the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which has urged Canada to step back. It warns that our trajectory risks discriminating against people with disabilities and mental illness and recommends repealing this expansion entirely. This is what Bill C-218 would do.

We must remember a crucial truth, which is that recovery from mental illness is not rare, but common. Time and again, people who once felt utterly hopeless have rebuilt their lives once they received proper care and stable support. Every one of us knows someone, whether it was a neighbour, a colleague or a family member, who walked through a very dark season and is now grateful to be alive.

These stories matter because they show us what is at stake. Sadly, that is not true in every case, but there is no reliable way to know in advance who will recover and who will not. There is no test, no scan, no certainty. I respectfully suggest that, when someone's judgment is clouded by psychological distress, our duty is to offer treatment, protection and time, not an irreversible decision based on guesswork.

If MAID is expanded, we will be forced into an impossible paradox. A suicidal person calling a crisis line is urged to hold on, yet if they request MAID, that same despair may be treated as justification for death. This is why Bill C-218 is necessary. It would stop

the 2027 expansion to mental illness because the evidence cannot support it and the safeguards cannot sustain it. Vulnerable Canadians are already at risk. Expanding eligibility now is reckless. A strong country does not turn its back on those who suffer, but believes in their future and gives them time and care to heal.

I urge every member in the House to support Bill C-218 so Canada would remain a nation that protects the vulnerable, offers treatment before despair and gives every person the chance to recover. Let us take this responsibility seriously. Let us listen to the warnings of those who are assessing the failures in the system. Let us listen to the families who have lived through the consequences of MAID and to those who survived mental illness and rebuilt their lives. Let us remember the kind of country we claim to be, one that protects the vulnerable and gives people the time, care and dignity they need to heal.

● (1345)

Alana Hirtle (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my father suffered from four different types of cancer over five years and, indeed, opted for medical assistance in dying, which took place in August 2024. Although sitting with him that day was one of the hardest times of my life, I fully supported his choice to participate in MAID. I also supported the process as it took place and was there throughout it.

I wonder if the member across would share how she voted for the initial legislation on medical assistance in dying.

Tamara Jansen: Mr. Speaker, I was not in the House when the original vote happened.

[Translation]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am stunned by what I just heard. I agree with the member that there needs to be more mental health services. Obviously it falls under the jurisdiction of the provinces and Quebec to provide the whole range of services needed to support people experiencing mental health issues. However, in her speech, my colleague misled the public somewhat by claiming that the law allows for medical assistance in dying when major mental illness is the sole underlying disorder.

The member knows that in 2027, a joint committee of members and senators will make a decision based on the recommendations of the Department of Health. This comes as no surprise. Everyone knows that the medical community is not ready and will probably not be ready in 2027 to decide on this thorny issue. I think the member has simply found a way to assert her opposition to medical assistance in dying.

[English]

Tamara Jansen: Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that Bill C-218 is only about MAID for people with mental health issues solely. I would like to say that no member of the House denies that some Canadians suffer profoundly from mental illness. Their pain is real, and it deserves our deepest compassion, but compassion must be joined with clarity, and the evidence is unmistakable: Even after years of struggle, long-term recovery is possible. That is precisely why the experts tell us that irremediability in mental illness cannot be predicted.

We simply do not have the medical grounds to declare that a life is beyond hope. We have already seen cases where people were approved for MAID not because their condition was truly irremediable but because they lacked housing, treatment or basic support. That is not medicine; that is a system misreading desperation as destiny.

We know individuals who once begged for death, only to recover and to contribute greatly, including my colleague from Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, who openly speaks of a suicide attempt, a long journey back and a life now filled with purpose. When a person is standing on the edge, the role of a responsible nation is to pull them back.

Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I so appreciate the direction in which my colleague has gone today to protect people with a mental illness only. I can say personally, having served this whole decade on the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, that the issue is being abused within our own government and with our veterans, who come for help but are literally receiving suggestions that they consider MAID.

This is outside the scope of what should be happening. People have even been offered funds for their family if they were to choose that. This is inappropriate, and I would ask the member for her perspective on how the government is responding to the needs of people with mental illness.

Tamara Jansen: Mr. Speaker, as I clearly stated in my speech, the government is not doing what it needs to do for the people who are most in need. I do want to also add that one of the most encouraging parts of this journey has been seeing how broad and diverse

Private Members' Business

the support for the bill has really been. Tens of thousands of Canadians have written to us, called, and signed petitions at our office to say very clearly that they do not want mental illness alone to be a basis for MAID but that they want a real right to recover instead. That spans cultures, faiths, professions and backgrounds.

The bill unites people from many backgrounds, right across the country. That is the coalition standing behind Bill C-218.

• (1350)

Juanita Nathan (Pickering—Brooklin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak to Bill C-218, which proposes further amendments to Canada's federal legal framework for medical assistance in dying. Specifically, this bill aims to indefinitely exclude those patients whose only health condition is a mental disorder from being eligible for MAID.

This is an issue which is unquestionably complex and can be deeply personal. It continues to challenge parliamentarians, health care providers, experts and people in Canada alike. It is important for us to recognize that medical assistance in dying has been allowed in Canada for close to 10 years now. It is also important to remember that it is the provinces and territories that must put in place the tools and supports that clinicians need to deliver MAID safely and appropriately. Whenever we make changes to the federal legal framework for MAID, we must be cognizant of the impact that those changes have on our partners in the provinces and territories.

As the Supreme Court of Canada recognized in *Carter*, striking the right balance in this complex area of social policy, where competing social values are at play, is not an easy task. As legislators, we must balance respect for personal autonomy and dignity with our responsibility to those who may be vulnerable.

Today, I will speak to three key elements: first, the objectives of Bill C-218; second, the findings of major expert studies on MAID where mental illness is the sole underlying condition; and third, the federal government's support for provincial and territorial work to improve access to mental health services.

Bill C-218 seeks to make changes restricting eligibility for MAID indefinitely in cases where a mental disorder is the only medical condition involved. There have been concerns expressed by some stakeholders about whether there are sufficient safeguards in place, and whether health care providers have the tools and resources they need to provide MAID safely and appropriately when it comes to mental illness. These concerns are not new, nor are they trivial, and their desire for caution is laudable.

Private Members' Business

At the same time, we must also recognize that Parliament has debated this question repeatedly over several years. Our legislative framework has evolved in response to court decisions, expert analysis and extensive public engagement. A special joint parliamentary committee has carefully considered the issue at length and provided advice and recommendations on whether to proceed. That committee also reinforced the importance of provincial and territorial health system readiness.

Bill C-218 invites us to consider whether the appropriate balance has been struck with the upcoming lifting of the mental illness exclusion in 2027, or whether another legislative change is necessary at this time. To answer that, it is essential that we understand what the experts have already told us. Significant studies have been completed on the specific question of MAID eligibility where mental illness is the sole underlying condition, including by the Council of Canadian Academies and the expert panel on MAID and mental illness, among others. Taken together, they provide a rich body of evidence.

The Council of Canadian Academies, the CCA, examined Canada's legal and clinical landscape, along with international approaches. The CCA's work highlighted the core clinical challenge: Mental illnesses can be unpredictable in their course and determining irremediability is far more complex than in many physical illnesses. The CCA was not tasked with providing recommendations for or against eligibility, and the members of the working group that dealt with mental illness had a spectrum of views on the matter.

• (1355)

The expert panel on MAID and mental illness, which was mandated by the former Bill C-7, took this analysis further. Its mandate was not to recommend whether eligibility for MAID should be expanded to permit the provision of MAID based on mental illness alone, but rather to recommend protocols, guidance and safeguards for such cases. The panel concluded that the existing Criminal Code safeguards, when supported by the development of MAID practices standards and the implementation of other recommendations, are adequate to allow for safe provision of MAID to people whose sole underlying medical condition is a mental illness.

Both these expert reviews, along with the testimony received through parliamentary committee work, reinforce the same overarching message: MAID in cases involving mental illness requires exceptional caution, but it is not impossible to implement safely. At the same time, clinical readiness, clear standards and comprehensive training are essential.

Following these studies in 2023, a model MAID practice standard was published, and a Canadian-made curriculum was developed. In addition, the federal government is currently supporting the Canadian Psychiatric Association to develop clinical practice guidelines for assessing suicidality and irremediability. Through a federal, provincial and territorial assistant deputy minister-level committee, policy leaders are also considering a range of issues related to MAID, particularly with respect to complex cases, including mental illness.

We have heard from these expert reviews and from a broad range of stakeholders on the importance of provincial and territorial health systems' being ready for the lifting of the exclusion. This in-

cludes provincial and territorial efforts to improve access to mental health services and supports across Canada. No one should ever feel that MAID is the only option available to them.

The federal government remains committed to supporting provinces and territories to improve access to health care for Canadians, which includes strengthening mental health services. In 2023 the Government of Canada announced the working together to improve health care in Canada plan, a historic investment of close to \$200 billion over 10 years to support provincial and territorial health systems to deliver health care to Canadians. This includes an investment of \$25 billion through bilateral health agreements with the provinces and territories to support shared priority areas, including improving access to mental health and substance use services.

The federal government has also expanded support for youth mental health initiatives, recognizing that early access to therapy, counselling and culturally safe care can alter the trajectory of a person's entire life. We have also funded indigenous-led mental wellness programs, which acknowledge the need for approaches that are culturally relevant, trauma-informed and community-based, rather than one-size-fits-all solutions. Provinces and territories have taken significant steps to improve access to mental health services in Canada with federal supports over the past 10 years.

Questions related to MAID in the context of mental illness are among the most sensitive we confront as parliamentarians. Our decisions affect people in Canada at their most vulnerable moment, and our work must reflect both humility and resolve. Bill C-218 asks us to confront difficult but deeply important questions.

Deciding whether medical assistance in dying should be available when a mental illness is the sole underlying condition is not a choice that lends itself to simple answers. Reasonable people may come to different conclusions. The Supreme Court of Canada has recognized this complexity, affirming that Parliament is owed a broad margin of deference when navigating challenging social policy issues such as this.

We will have the opportunity to consider next steps further and to study the state of progress during the parliamentary review that will be held in 2026. I look forward to hearing from colleagues as well as from experts, stakeholders and regular people, including those with lived experience with mental illness, as we continue this important debate.

Private Members' Business

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, you will not be surprised to learn that the Bloc Québécois will not be supporting Bill C-218. Although we do not support this bill, it is not because we are unconcerned with the issue of medical assistance in dying for people with mental disorders. It is because it is not up to a political party to decide whether to implement a medical assistance in dying procedure for people with mental health issues. This is a societal issue, a societal debate, but also a clinical debate.

The reason it is not yet in effect is that there is no clinical and scientific consensus on how to regulate consent for MAID from a person whose only medical problem is a serious mental health disorder. There is no consensus and that is why Bill C-62, which was passed, excluded people with mental disorders from receiving MAID.

However, the bill provides that in 2027, the joint committee of senators and MPs will be reconvened to assess whether psychiatrists, psychologists and mental health professionals have made progress in their analysis of the future framework for MAID for people with mental health disorders. It is possible that, in 2027, government departments, scientists and psychiatrists will conclude that we are not ready, that it is too difficult to determine the “how” and the “when”, and that it is too difficult to analyze the clinical framework for authorizing or not authorizing medical assistance in dying.

We need to approach this bill with care. This is a societal debate that should not be politicized. We in Quebec have already taken a position on medical assistance in dying. Quebec is one province where this question has been debated at great length. A commission travelled everywhere across the province. A clinical and scientific consensus, as well as consensus in civil society, were reached on medical assistance in dying.

For people whose only illness is a major mental health disorder, medical assistance in dying was also rejected by Quebec for the same reasons it was rejected when Bill C-62 was passed, namely, the absence of a scientific and clinical consensus. We also need to give the experts time to reflect, consult, examine practices and evolve so they can make recommendations to the joint committee in 2027. Once the joint committee receives these recommendations, it will have to decide whether to move forward or put off the decision once again, which is not an easy thing to do. However, what is plain to see is the the seriousness and scientific rigour surrounding the decision to allow or withdraw permission for medical assistance in dying for people with mental health conditions.

I think it is worthwhile for me to read recommendation 1 of the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying, in which all parties and senators participated. They were quite wise, because they recommended the following:

That [medical assistance in dying where mental disorder is the sole underlying medical condition] should not be made available in Canada until the Minister of Health and the Minister of Justice are satisfied, based on recommendations from their respective departments and in consultation with their provincial and territorial counterparts and with Indigenous Peoples, that it can be safely and adequately provided; and

That one year prior to the date on which it is anticipated that the law will permit [medical assistance in dying where mental disorder is the sole underlying medical condition], pursuant to subparagraph (a), the House of Commons and the Senate re-establish the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying in order to verify the degree of preparedness attained for a safe and adequate application of [medical assistance in dying where mental disorder is the sole underlying medical condition].

• (1405)

My colleague gave several examples. I was surprised to hear her often say the words “depression” and “suicidal”. When I look at what the joint committee discussed and debated, I see that it talked about untreatable mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia. I do not know whether anyone here has ever met a person with schizophrenia who suffers from auditory or visual hallucinations with paranoid thoughts. Their reality may be that they are so medicated that they can no longer enjoy a social life or contact with others. They may be isolated from their family and live in difficult conditions. They likely have to see their psychiatrist regularly and may have tried several types of therapy with no success. This may have been their reality for the past 10 or 20 years. That person lives in a state and conditions that no one here in Parliament would ever want to experience.

We are talking about incurable illnesses that people have to learn to live with and for which they have to be medicated. A person with severe schizophrenia could get all the psychotherapy available, but they are still dealing with an extremely difficult illness. I do not want my words to be misinterpreted. I am not saying that everyone with schizophrenia would want to request medical assistance in dying. I am simply trying to provide some clarification in response to my colleague, who was talking about temporary depression, situational depression or maybe even serious depression. She is right in saying that a person can get through those things with help, psychotherapy, support from local health centres and loved ones. That is true. She is right. Those cases would never constitute a legitimate reason for obtaining medical assistance in dying.

I would also like to point out that there are some very important things in the preamble. Basically, what it calls for is justified, even legitimate: Anyone struggling with mental health issues should have the right to receive the services they need, whether that means consultations, emergency services, support, home care or assistance. In my riding, we have organizations that work in the area of mental health. One that comes to mind is Le Tournant, a transition resource that provides real-time service. A suicidal person can call, and someone can go directly to their home to support them and help them through this distressing time.

Private Members' Business

My colleague is right to point out that in Quebec, as in other provinces, there is still a lot of room for improvement in this area. Unfortunately, it is not for lack of interest that the provinces are not offering these services, but because they do not have the means to do so. Over the past few years, health services, and particularly social services, have gotten shortchanged because health problems are so significant that social problems have fallen by the wayside a bit. The provinces have to do more with less. A good solution to support people would be to give the provinces the financial resources they need to establish much more intensive services for people struggling with mental health problems. In my riding, there are all kinds of services, including intensive home care services. These services exist, but perhaps not at the same level as the needs require.

My colleague notes in the preamble that this issue falls largely within provincial jurisdiction. I strongly suggest that she join forces with her colleagues to demand that the government do more and provide the provinces with the resources they need to order to implement all the necessary services for people struggling with mental health issues. In the meantime, the Bloc Québécois trusts that the House of Commons will take the time to thoroughly examine the issue of MAID for mental health disorders.

● (1410)

[English]

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to rise and speak to Bill C-218.

In less than a week, it will be 15 years since I almost lost my life to suicide. I overdosed. I was in the hospital for seven weeks. For much of it, I was on life support and had to be resuscitated multiple times. Over Christmas, my parents did not know if they would have me as their son, moving forward. It was the culmination of a very dark time in my life that spanned many years, a time in which I felt at multiple times, although not as seriously as I did that horribly dark and sad December day in 2010, that I would be better off dead than alive.

There are many reasons I am so proud to be standing here in this chamber, but one of them is knowing where I have been and where I came from and the fact that there was a time in my life when I never in a million years would have believed that I could ever have the life I have now: a career that I am proud of, an amazing wife whom I love so dearly, these tremendous colleagues and friends I work with every day, and this trust that has been placed in me by the people I represent. None of that would have been possible had I been successful when I attempted to end my life.

I think of my own experience and the experience of many others like me when I reflect on the fact that in just 15 months' time, someone who was in the place I was in 15 years ago will be able to have not only the state's permission but the state's help to end their life by suicide. In March 2027, the criteria for medical assistance in dying are expanding, so someone with only a mental illness, with no physical ailment whatsoever, will be eligible for MAID.

This is a profound expansion and a fundamental inversion of the message that we have spent so much money and so much airtime and so much effort and energy telling Canadians for years, through countless campaigns aimed at ending the stigma surrounding sui-

cide; through more programming, funding and resources to support people with mental illness; and through campaigns telling people that they are better off alive, that they do have a future. They are efforts that we all extend in our own lives to those around us to give messages of hope to those who need it. To put a fine point on this, and to make it personal, because it is personal, if the laws that are coming into force in 15 months had been there 15 years ago, I would probably be dead right now. I say that with full gratitude that I am not.

I did not want to extend a cry for help. I actually had access to resources and treatment. I had a support system. I had a family who loved me. I had these privileges that so many others who struggle with mental illness did not have. Even with all of those available to me, I felt like there was no future. The proverbial light at the end of the tunnel did not exist. I did not want to get better. It was not that I had not tried; I had not tried enough, clearly. However, I felt like I had done my time. I felt like I had put in enough effort to try to get better and when I did not, I had made my decision that I was going to end it. It was not impulsive; it was quite rational, actually. I decided it weeks out. Believe it or not, as silly as it sounds, I had it on my calendar, and I scheduled the day because I had appointments and meetings before it that I did not want to miss, as though that makes any sense at all, as though it would matter if I missed a meeting, given that I was planning on not sticking around.

This is how, when a person is struggling with mental illness, as I was so very seriously, it plays tricks on them. By design, a mental illness is a distortion of the person's ability to see clearly and think clearly about what they are in the midst of. It clouds their judgment. If I had ever gone to a health care worker and said, "I am planning to end my life," they would have not just a moral but a legal obligation to stop me. They would have legal authority to detain me, because that is how sacrosanct it is that people have a right to recover, that they have a right to live and that medical practitioners must do no harm and protect them from harming themselves. We have a duty to help people.

● (1415)

I talk about my own story, and I have heard so many others like it. After my colleague from Cloverdale—Langley City introduced her bill, I launched the "I got better" campaign, in which I shared my testimony and invited Canadians to share their own. I would like to share some of those in the House today.

A lawyer from here in Ottawa said that they wondered if they would have used MAID if it had been available when they were in their darkest days, or if they would use it in the dark days yet to come.

A man reached out and said he struggles with personal family issues and mental illness. He has very bad days. He has tried attempting suicide before, and he is worried that he will not be stopped in the future if he has more of those dark days and MAID is available to him.

On a more positive note, a woman who was in an abusive relationship for 22 years and wanted to die said, “If MAID had been around then, I would not be here now, and I am damn happy it was not.” I will ask members to pardon the unparliamentary language. She continued, saying, “I am happy now. I have had a fantastic career caring for seniors. I have grandbabies and kids I love. I have a wonderful husband now who means the world to me.”

Another woman said she wanted to end her life many times, but looking back, she is so happy she has a life now where she is happier than she ever was before.

I will share one more about a woman who described two years of agony, with damage to her liver, hospitalizations, dozens of failed medications and a compilation of diagnoses without any real clarity, but she was given a second chance. She had been labelled as chronically unstable and told she had a poor prognosis, was unable to thrive independently and would likely revolve through the system for the rest of her life. She had attempted suicide several times.

There was one doctor who would not give up on her. As she said, “Recovery takes one person, not one pill. It takes one person who believes in you and forces uncomfortable treatment onto you for the sake of the future life that's awaiting you.” That woman went to university, became a social worker to help others, is happily married and, more importantly, is happy.

None of these stories could ever be guaranteed if we were to do what the government is doing in 15 months, which is to license giving up on people at their most vulnerable moments, at their darkest and lowest points.

Of those who die by suicide, 90% are people who have diagnosable mental illness. Physicians have testified before Parliament and its committees that suicide is often contemplated and planned over a long period of time by people who would very easily, as I am confident I would have, go to a doctor to make a rational, logical case that they have tried all of the treatments and they believe that they are better off dead than alive. There was a consensus among psychiatric experts who have testified and spoken about this elsewhere that there is no clear way to separate suicidal ideation as a symptom from a request for a health care practitioner to help in ending one's life.

Dr. John Maher testified before Parliament that 7% of those who attempt suicide die by suicide. That means that 93% of people who, at one or multiple points, want to end their life eventually get over that. The success rate of MAID is 100%. By design, this is a policy that will give up on people.

There are very few things in this chamber that we can say are genuinely life-and-death issues. This is one of them. A few weeks ago we saw that, in 2024, MAID accounted for 5.1% of the deaths in Canada. That is a 1,520% increase over 2016 when it became legal. We are seeing a massive expansion to people who, in the vast majority of cases, will get better. About 50% to 60% of people with

mental illness will actually recover with no treatment, and that number is even higher for people who do have treatment available.

I would not be here today had I been successful. I would not be here today had I not gotten over the darkest, worst feelings of my life, which anyone could encounter. That is something I believe needs to be understood by those who believe this is an abstract question of legal theory and legal rights. These are real people. There are faces to this. If Bill C-218 does not pass, people will die. We have a right and a duty to stand up for those who need it. I will be proudly supporting this bill, and I thank my colleague so much for introducing it.

• (1420)

Aslam Rana (Hamilton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, medical assistance in dying is a complex and deeply personal issue. It touches patients living with unbearable suffering, their family and friends, and the health care professionals who care for them.

Today, as we begin consideration of Bill C-218, I want to speak to how we got here, what the bill proposes and some of the questions I have concerning this bill.

Let me begin by briefly reviewing the path Parliament has taken over the last decade. Understanding the evolution of the law helps us understand the importance of moving carefully when changes are proposed.

First, in 2015, in the Carter decision, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the blanket prohibition on physician-assisted dying because it violated section 7 of the charter. The court suspended its ruling so Parliament could craft a new framework, one that balanced individual autonomy and dignity with the sanctity of life and the need to protect vulnerable people. It also recognized that Parliament is owed a high degree of deference given the complexity of the issue and the competing societal values involved.

Second, in December 2015, the Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying, which was made up of MPs and senators, was tasked with making recommendations on the legal framework to respond to the Carter decision. That committee heard from 61 witnesses, received 132 briefs and published its recommendations in February 2016.

Private Members' Business

Third, also in 2016, Parliament passed Bill C-14, which legalized the provision of MAID. It did so by creating a MAID framework in the Criminal Code made up of eligibility criteria to determine who can obtain MAID, procedural safeguards to ensure MAID is provided safely and exemptions to criminal offences such as murder for practitioners who provide MAID in accordance with these requirements. Eligibility for MAID was originally restricted to competent adults whose natural death was reasonably foreseeable.

Fourth, in 2021, Parliament adopted Bill C-7, which expanded eligibility for MAID to those whose natural death is not reasonably foreseeable. It also added additional safeguards to address the increased complexity of providing MAID in those situations. At the same time, Parliament temporarily excluded for two years the eligibility of MAID for individuals whose only health condition was mental illness. Importantly, this was not due to stigma or stereotyping about mental illness, but because experts made it clear that unique considerations, including how to assess whether a mental illness is irremediable, required further study and that further health care system preparation was needed.

Bill C-7 also required Parliament to establish the new Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying, which heard from more than 150 witnesses, received hundreds of written briefs and submitted three reports. In addition, the bill called for the ministers of justice and health to initiate an independent expert review to recommend protocols, guidance and safeguards for MAID for mental illness, which they did.

Fifth, in 2023, Parliament adopted Bill C-39, which extended the temporary exclusion of mental illness by one year to allow time for federal, provincial and territorial governments, in collaboration with professional bodies, to prepare standards and training and to consider any recommendations from the special joint committee.

Most recently, in early 2024, the special joint committee and several provincial and territorial ministers of health called for more time for provincial and territorial health systems to prepare for the lifting of the exclusion. Parliament passed Bill C-62, which extended the temporary exclusion to March 2027.

• (1425)

At the same time, Parliament also mandated that further review be undertaken by a special joint committee of Parliament, which is to begin by February 28, 2026. The committee is expected to provide a further assessment by Parliament on the readiness of provincial and territorial health systems for the expansion of MAID eligibility to those whose only underlying condition is mental illness. I look forward to its findings and recommendations.

We must also remember that when we speak of medical assistance in dying, we are speaking of a health service that doctors and nurse practitioners deliver as a part of end-of-life care. Changes to the legal framework for MAID would have significant repercussions for provincial and territorial health systems, and changes should be informed by the experience of the people responsible for health care in Canada.

This brings me to the private member's bill, Bill C-218. At its core, the bill proposes two notable changes: number one, to replace the term "mental illness" with "mental disorder"; and number two,

to change the structure of the exclusion provision. At first glance these may seem like technical adjustments, but the first change in particular could have significant consequences for eligibility for MAID and how the law is interpreted.

The term "mental disorder" is used in the clinical world, but it covers a far broader range of conditions than "mental illness" is intended to capture. "Mental illness" refers mainly to conditions that fall within the domain of psychiatry; the term does not include neurocognitive or neurodevelopmental disorders, such as Parkinson's disease, which is typically treated by other medical specialists. Under Bill C-218, however, this condition would now be captured by the exclusion, because it falls under the broader category of mental disorder.

Currently, individuals whose sole underlying medical condition is a neurocognitive disorder are eligible for MAID. This leads me to an important question: Why broaden the exclusion to include conditions like Parkinson's disease that are currently eligible for MAID? If this was not the intent of the bill, then further clarity is needed.

My second concern relates to the proposed change in Bill C-218 of the definition of "grievous and irremediable medical condition". The Criminal Code's definition of this term includes three components: "a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability", "an advanced state of irreversible decline in capability", and "enduring physical or psychological suffering" that is due to the person's medical situation.

Currently a mental illness is not considered to be an illness, disease or disability, for the purpose of MAID eligibility. This means that a mental illness cannot meet the first requirement of a grievous and irremediable condition. Bill C-218 proposes something different; it states, "a mental disorder is not a grievous and irremediable medical condition." The question is, why? What problem does it aim to solve that the current exclusion does not already address? Could this change be perceived as saying that a mental illness cannot result in enduring suffering?

When it comes to MAID, caution is essential; that is why the government has repeatedly committed to ensuring that provincial and territorial health systems are ready before any expansion would take effect. That includes training assessors and providers, developing and implementing clinical guidelines and supports, and strengthening oversight systems for MAID.

Bill C-218 raises important questions, but before we move forward, we must ensure that its effects are clearly understood and aligned with the careful work Parliament has been doing for nearly a decade. The way Canada approaches MAID speaks to some of our most deeply held values: respect for personal autonomy and dignity, compassion for those who suffer, and a firm commitment to protecting vulnerable people. We owe it to Canadians—

Private Members' Business

• (1430)

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

[*Translation*]

It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Friday, December 5, 2025

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Budget 2025 Implementation Act, No. 1

Bill C-15. Second reading	4687
Bonk	4687
Lamoureux	4688
Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan)	4688
Barrett	4689
May	4689
Chong	4689
Lamoureux	4690
DeBellefeuille	4691
Anderson	4691
Barsalou-Duval	4691
Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)	4693
Chong	4693
Deschênes	4693
Cooper	4693
Gerretsen	4694
DeBellefeuille	4695
Genuis	4695

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Santa Slices

Gerretsen	4696
-----------------	------

Lévis—Lotbinière

Gourde	4696
--------------	------

Vancouver Whitecaps

Grant	4696
-------------	------

House Fire in Brampton

Gill (Brampton West)	4696
----------------------------	------

Snowsuit Fund

Fortier	4696
---------------	------

Harvest Bowl

Lawton	4697
--------------	------

Whitby Fire Service Graduates

Turnbull	4697
----------------	------

Tatjana Stefanski

Anderson	4697
----------------	------

60th Edition of the Salon du livre de Rimouski

Blanchette-Joncas	4697
-------------------------	------

Food Drives

Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)	4697
---	------

Cost of Food

Holman	4698
--------------	------

Steel Industry

Rana	4698
------------	------

Prime Minister of Canada

Viersen	4698
---------------	------

Santa's Parade of Lights

Lalonde	4698
---------------	------

Cost of Food

Aboultaif	4698
-----------------	------

Gender-Based Violence

Lavack	4699
--------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Carbon Pricing

Lantsman	4699
----------------	------

Turnbull	4699
----------------	------

The Economy

Lantsman	4699
----------------	------

Turnbull	4699
----------------	------

Employment

Genuis	4699
--------------	------

Gainey	4700
--------------	------

Genuis	4700
--------------	------

Gainey	4700
--------------	------

The Economy

Gourde	4700
--------------	------

Gainey	4700
--------------	------

Gourde	4700
--------------	------

Gainey	4700
--------------	------

Forestry Industry

Deschênes	4700
-----------------	------

Anand	4700
-------------	------

Deschênes	4701
-----------------	------

Anand	4701
-------------	------

Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan)	4701
---	------

Hogan	4701
-------------	------

The Economy

Brassard	4701
----------------	------

Chatel	4701
--------------	------

Brassard	4701
----------------	------

Church	4701
--------------	------

Kirkland	4701
----------------	------

Church	4702
--------------	------

Kirkland	4702
----------------	------

Church	4702
--------------	------

Lawton	4702
--------------	------

Turnbull	4702
----------------	------

Lawton	4702
--------------	------

Turnbull	4702
----------------	------

Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)	4702
---------------------------------------	------

Turnbull	4703
The Environment	
Blanchette-Joncas	4703
Grant	4703
Blanchette-Joncas	4703
Grant	4703
The Economy	
Hardy	4703
Gainey	4703
Hardy	4703
Gainey	4703
Vis	4704
Church	4704
Small Business	
Vis	4704
Turnbull	4704
The Economy	
Stevenson	4704
Church	4704
Hirtle	4705
Turnbull	4705
Forestry Industry	
Doherty	4705
Hogan	4705
Doherty	4705
Hogan	4705
The Economy	
Kronis	4705
Lamoureux	4705
Kronis	4706
Lamoureux	4706
Melillo	4706
Turnbull	4706
Melillo	4706
Turnbull	4706
Agriculture and Agri-Food	
Wagantall	4706
Chatel	4706
Wagantall	4707
Chatel	4707
Reid	4707
Chatel	4707
Gender-Based Violence	
Fergus	4707
Ménard	4707
Committees of the House	
Groleau	4707
Albas	4707
Groleau	4707
Kelloway	4708
Lawrence	4708
Albas	4708

Foreign Affairs	
Fanjoy	4708
Anand	4708
Farm Credit Canada	
Kram	4708
Turnbull	4708
The Economy	
Gazan	4708
Church	4709
Fisheries and Oceans	
Johns	4709
Thompson	4709

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Government Response to Petitions	
Lamoureux	4709
Committees of the House	
Citizenship and Immigration	
Dzerowicz	4709
Petitions	
Firearms	
Mantle	4709
Medical Assistance in Dying	
Block	4709
Gaza	
Johns	4710
Public Safety	
Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)	4710
Vis	4710
Safe Consumption Site	
Vis	4710
Christians	
Viersen	4710
Forced Organ Harvesting	
Viersen	4710
Medical Assistance in Dying	
Viersen	4710
Freedom of Religion in India	
Viersen	4711
Falun Gong	
Reid	4711
Charitable Organizations	
Reid	4711
Cyprus	
Genuis	4711
Medical Assistance in Dying	
Genuis	4711

Pornography	
Genuis	4712
Questions Passed as Orders for Return	
Lamoureux	4712

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Budget 2025 Implementation Act, No. 1	
Bill C-15. Second reading	4712
Lloyd	4712
Lamoureux	4714
Chong	4714
Johns	4715
Lawrence	4715
Lamoureux	4716
Kirkland	4716
Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)	4717
Barsalou-Duval	4717
Konanz	4717
O'Rourke	4718

DeBellefeuille	4719
Viersen	4719
Reid	4719
O'Rourke	4721
Deschênes	4721
Lawrence	4721
Groleau	4721

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Criminal Code	
Jansen	4722
Bill C-218. Second reading	4722
Hirtle	4724
DeBellefeuille	4725
Wagantall	4725
Nathan	4725
DeBellefeuille	4727
Lawton	4728
Rana	4729

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