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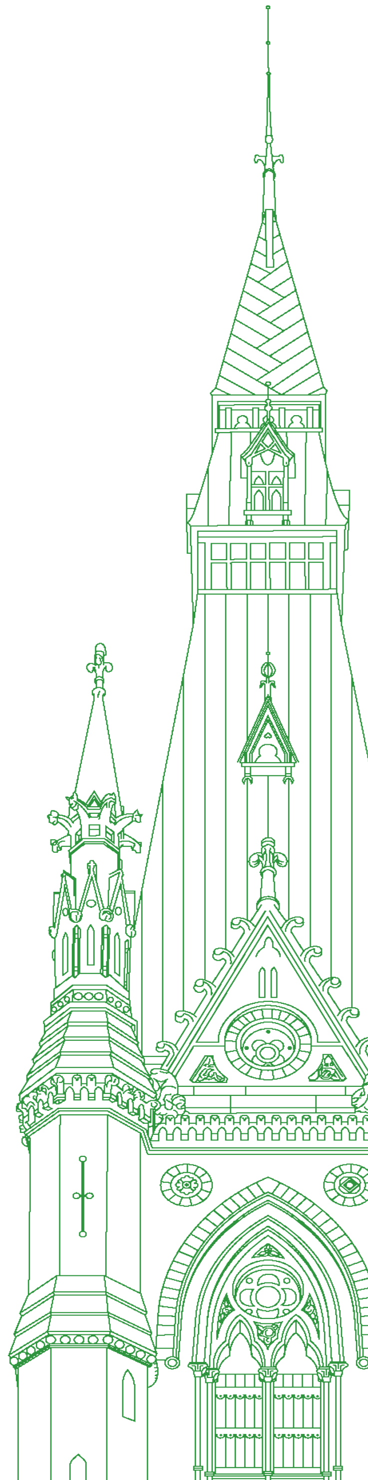

Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, September 22, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 32nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, regarding the membership of committees of the House.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence on the 32nd report later this day.

FINANCE

Hon. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Finance, entitled "Recommendations of the Standing Committee on Finance for the 2026 budget".

I would like to take a moment to thank all the Canadians and organizations that contributed to this report. We received over 1,350 submissions and saw over 90 witnesses. I would like to extend my gratitude to all committee members for the very hard work they did in putting this report together.

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

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it being later this day, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 32nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

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

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

BOTTOM TRAWLING

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour today to present a petition with collected signatories from beyond my riding, but including my riding.

The petitioners are very concerned about what we know about bottom trawling, in other words, pulling enormously heavy draggers along the ocean floor, removing everything in their path. It is a non-selective fishing method and the term "nets" hardly describes it. They are heavy implements that actually do enormous destruction.

The United Nations and various international agencies have called for an end to bottom trawling. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has provided data on specific ground fish species, but has not yet acted to protect the entire ecosystem.

Therefore, the petitioners are asking the House of Commons to implement the 2011 United Nations convention that calls for a moratorium on bottom trawling, otherwise known as clear-cutting the ocean floor.

RIGHT TO DEFEND

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to present a petition signed by the law-abiding property owners of Carleton, Kanata, Nepean, Nipissing, Timiskaming and my great riding of Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke.

The petitioners are raising awareness over the lack of legal protections for homeowners and landowners when they try to protect themselves, their property and families. Violent criminals have been emboldened by a decade of Liberal soft-on-crime policies. That is why Conservatives have introduced Bill C-270, the stand on guard act, which will clarify the legal standards around self-defence on one's property. That targets crime where they would not be punished for fighting back to protect what they cherish.

• (1005)

FLOOD SECURITY

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from the communities of Abbotsford, Chilliwack—Hope, Merritt and Princeton calling for stronger, more resilient infrastructure along Canada's critical trade corridors in British Columbia. The devastating floods of 2021 showed how important these routes are to our communities and to our national economy. They are essential for public safety, food security and emergency response.

The petitioners are calling on the government to recognize the West Coast Corridor Resiliency Partnership as a strategic partner and to support long-term investments in transportation, flood mitigation and critical infrastructure necessary to move goods in our country. They are asking for a commitment for long-term investments that strengthen our infrastructure to allow Canada to trade.

HEALTH CARE

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a huge honour today to rise to table petition E-7298, signed by more than 22,000 Canadians, recognizing the essential role nurses play in our public health care system and the serious recruitment and retention challenges facing the profession. The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to amend the Income Tax Act to create a refundable federal tax credit for registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, registered psychiatric nurses and nurse practitioners, modelled on the tax credit for personal support workers that was introduced in the 2025 federal budget.

I want to thank Linda Silas, who is a nurse, a trade unionist and president of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, for sponsoring this petition. I would like to highlight again that Canada is facing a persistent nursing shortage, driven in part by recruitment and retention challenges, heavy workloads and rising cost of living pressures. I hope that the government will act on this petition.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN FUEL AFFORDABILITY ACT

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.) moved that Bill C-38, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (extension of the federal fuel excise tax relief), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be back here this morning.

[*English*]

It is a pleasure to see all my colleagues. I see a lot of smiles in the House on both sides of the aisle. It is great to be back and it is great to be surrounded by so many familiar faces. It is great to see some new faces on this side of the aisle, and I want to welcome them to Parliament. Yes, they have been elected and now they are representing their constituents with distinction and a lot of energy.

Like all members, I spent the summer meeting with Canadians, as we should all do, in Charlottetown, Edmonton, Toronto and obviously in my own riding of Saint-Maurice—Champlain, all of whom, like us, are trying to navigate a rapidly changing world. For those Canadians, I have good news, which is why it is an honour for me to participate in today's debate on the very important bill, Bill C-38, the Canadian fuel affordability act.

[*Translation*]

The measures set out in this bill will give Canadians the support they need right now.

[*English*]

We are faced with a world that is increasingly complex, increasingly volatile and, for many, more costly and unpredictable. The United States is imposing new tariffs on Canada. Global conflict and ongoing supply disruptions in the Middle East have been driving up fuel prices around the world, adding pressure to household budgets here and in many jurisdictions. In response, Canada's government remains focused on what we can control: building a stronger, more independent and more affordable country.

• (1010)

[*Translation*]

Economic uncertainty and the rising cost of living mean that affordability is a major concern for families and businesses across Canada. One of our government's priorities is to help Canadians keep more of their hard-earned money. While we are working tirelessly to make Canada stronger in the long term, we are giving Canadians a hand today to help them bridge the gap to this better and more certain future.

[*English*]

Our government is diversifying our trade partners abroad, attracting historic levels of foreign direct investment, and I am sure everyone took notice of the great investment summit we had; delivering responsible fiscal management as every Canadian expects from this government; and supporting Canadians while under pressure from everyday expenses. There is no doubt that Bill C-38 is a key part of this effort.

Bill C-38 is just the latest initiative by our government designed to help Canadians cope with elevated fuel costs. Members will recall that in April of this year, we introduced a temporary suspension of the federal fuel excise tax on gasoline, aviation gasoline, diesel fuel and aviation fuel. This measure reduced federal fuel excise tax rates to zero cents per litre. The positive effects were felt right away.

[*Translation*]

When the suspension took effect, gas prices dropped by 11¢ per litre on day one. Again, that was 11¢ per litre on day one. Clearly, the savings were passed on to consumers right away. The suspension was set to end earlier this month, after September 7, but before that date, our government announced that it would be extending the suspension of the federal excise tax on fuel until January 31, 2027, and then reducing the regular rates by 50% through March 31, 2027.

[*English*]

The passage of Bill C-38 would ensure that Canadians get this much-needed relief at the pump right now. This would be immediate, targeted and felt across our nation. This measure has already brought down everyday costs for Canadians, including those in trucking, in the food industry, in agriculture, in housing, in construction and in the delivery sectors.

[*Translation*]

This provides Canadians with immediate, substantial support. The additional fiscal impact of extending the federal fuel excise tax suspension is estimated at approximately $2.9 billion. All told, Canadians are expected to receive an estimated $5.3 billion in tax relief in 2026 and 2027.

We know that this measure will continue to make a difference for Canadians, and we also know that extending the fuel tax suspension is one of the measures helping families, workers and businesses cope with global economic uncertainty.

[*English*]

Let me put this measure in context and talk about fiscal responsibility and economic strength, because Canada is entering this period of a new world economic order in a position of strength. Canada's economy has remained resilient, despite global challenges. I want to take this opportunity in my first address to Parliament in this session as we come back to thank all the workers around this country. They have proven extremely resilient. I want to thank all the business owners. I think they deserve a big round of applause, because they are the ones who make this country work every day. I want to thank the countless small and medium-sized businesses across our country, which have proven resilient.

The world has seen that Canada is far more resilient than people expected. Despite the winds bringing tariffs and other uncertainty in the world, Canada has shown a degree of resiliency that is an inspiration to all of us and to the world. In fact, Canada's economy is so resilient that our country is projected by the International Monetary Fund to have the second-fastest economic growth in the G7 this year and next. This is a testament to the resilience of our people, our workers and our businesses across the country.

This performance has put us in a solid fiscal position. As highlighted in the spring economic update, we have reduced Canada's projected deficit for 2025-26 by more than $11 billion relative to budget 2025. That fiscal firepower is allowing us to build a Canada that is both strong and fair. As government revenues have increased, we have redirected some of that growth toward measures to improve affordability and support Canadians at a time of need.

● (1015)

[*Translation*]

These measures are having a real impact on the lives of Canadians across the country. As Canada continues to build a stronger, more resilient and more independent economy, our government is taking concrete steps to bring down costs now while investing in long-term prosperity. For example, we are going to double the capacity of Canada's electricity grid to ensure a supply of clean, reliable, affordable energy produced right here at home.

[*English*]

Our government has already accomplished much in helping bring down costs for Canadians. We have cut income taxes for 22 million Canadians by lowering the first marginal personal income tax rate from 15% to 14% as of July 1, 2025. In fact, it was the very first measure of this new government. This is providing tax relief of up to $420 a year per person or up to $840 a year for two-income families. We have eliminated the goods and services tax for first-time homebuyers on new homes worth up to $1 million and reduced the GST for first-time homebuyers on new homes between $1 million and $1.5 million.

[*Translation*]

This relief has allowed more Canadians, particularly young families, to achieve their dream of home ownership. We eliminated the federal consumer carbon price as of April 1, 2025, directly saving Canadians money at the pump. On that same day, our government also removed the requirement for the provinces and territories to have a consumer-facing carbon price.

[*English*]

To deliver additional support for more than 12 million Canadians, we also launched the new Canada groceries and essential benefit, a flagship measure that is immediate, targeted and meaningful for families across our country. It provides a family up to $1,890 this year and about $1,400 a year for the next four years and provides a single person up to $950 this year and about $700 a year for the next four years. This is meaningful, and it is going to help Canadians across our nation, but there is much more.

We made the national school food program permanent, which is something every member of the House should be proud of. This is a game-changer for so many kids in our country and so many families. We just have to talk school teachers to know how much this is appreciated and is making a meaningful difference. It is going to provide school meals for up to 400,000 children per year. These are the kinds of things we were elected to do: to be there for children, to be there for families and to be there for Canadians. This is going to save participating families with two children in school an estimated $800 annually on groceries. This is really meaningful for many people.

We also introduced automatic federal benefits, starting in the 2026 tax year, to ensure that up to five million low-income Canadians automatically receive the benefits they qualify for in the 2028 tax year. This is something that is very meaningful. It is the right thing to do to support Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Canada is well positioned to respond to external pressures from the increasingly fragmented and uncertain world beyond our borders. We cannot control the global forces driving up prices, but we can control how we react to them.

● (1020)

[*English*]

Our government is cutting taxes and boosting affordability to help Canadians manage everyday expenses, while building a more robust, more independent economy. Canadians see it, and they are behind this project to make Canada strong.

It is not a coincidence that our government made this bill one of our first priorities of the new fall session. Canadians are expecting swift and concrete action from all of us, and when I say all of us, it is not not just those members sitting on this side of the aisle, but I am looking at my colleagues who are here this morning. They expect all of us to address the cost of living challenges, and today we are offering an opportunity for every member of the House not only to speak but also to take a step to support Canadian families.

Canadians across the nation will be watching what people will do today, because it is sending a message that we stand with them. We are there for them, and that is the kind of message Canadians expect from the House. We are delivering for Canadians and expect all members of the House to do the same. The passage of this legislation would advance our government's important work to bring down costs for Canadians today while building a stronger economy for generations to come.

I urge all hon. members to pass Bill C-38 without delay. Let us seize the moment. Let us be ambitious. Let us be there for Canadians together.

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have been here long enough, coming up to 11 years now, to remember the Liberals' talking about the Conservative proposal of removing the excise tax on fuel. They accused Conservatives of spreading disinformation and said that it in fact would have a limited effect on affordability, yet here we are with the finance minister's doing this today.

The minister talked about swift and concrete action. Well, in April 2024, the Leader of the Opposition put forward an opposition motion to save families $670 by removing the tax on gas. Again, on April 15, 2026, the hon. member for Calgary East proposed another motion. Then, on May 27, 2026, the member for Richmond—Arthabaska—des-Sources proposed another motion to remove the tax on gas. In each and every case of those opposition motions, because Conservatives were ahead of the curve and saw the affordability crisis impacting Canadians at that time, it would have provided real relief, but instead the Liberals accused us of disinformation.

In every case, the Liberals voted against it, including the Minister of Finance. Why has there been the change?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, I have a lot of respect for my colleague. He is an esteemed and very experienced member of the House. I am trying to understand what he is saying to Canadians at home. I think what he is saying is that he is going to vote for the bill. I think that is good news, because it is something we should all support because it is meaningful, it is targeted and it is immediate. It is going to have an impact across our nation. It is going to reduce the pressure on the price of gas and the price of food.

I take it that my hon. colleague will convince all his colleagues, because I know he is a man who has a lot of influence in his caucus. He will convince all those members to stand in unity with the government and do what is right for Canadians.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance will already know, because of the earlier negotiations between parties for unanimous consent on various aspects of the bill, that I will support it. I do have some misgivings, and I am glad for the opportunity to debate it later today.

However, since the minister mentioned the investment summit, I will say that there is a piece of legislation I desperately want from the finance minister, which is to amend the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act. He will know that the investment board was set up in 1997 with only one rule: Invest Canadians' pension money where it gets the greatest rate of return on investment, which means we are invested more outside Canada than in it, more in the United States than in Canada.

I would like my pension dollars to go to the school down the road, to the hospital in my community, and to help for small business, not for Petco in the United States, not for Grok to build deepfake—

• (1025)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I want to remind the hon. member to ask a question.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her support. She has always been there to rise to the moment and support the government in a meaningful way. I want to thank her, not only on behalf of the government but also on behalf of Canadians, for the work she does and the position she has been taking in the House. I have had the privilege for almost 12 years now to see her in action, and she has always been there to support the government in a meaningful way.

My hon. colleague's point about the investment summit should reassure her. She will have seen that our pension funds in Canada have been recommitting very large investments into the Canadian economy. This is very much welcome. I am always glad to work with her.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I reflect on my constituents and what they want. We have a Prime Minister who has been leading a government that talks a great deal about building a stronger, healthier Canada, but that does not leave out the important issue of affordability. I think about one of the very first actions the new government took, which was to get rid of the carbon tax and then to provide a tax break to over 20 million Canadians.

Today, the Minister of Finance has provided a true reflection of what every Liberal member of Parliament has been asking for: to provide additional tax relief in the form of the gas tax to address the issue of affordability, something I know he and my colleagues are very passionate about.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, I just want to compliment my colleague. He is a true voice for our government in the House. He is right. This is one of the measures. We understand that affordability is front and centre, and we have been acting on all fronts. Canadians are concerned about the end of the week and the end of the month, with the price of food, the price of rent and the price of gas. He is right that we have a suite of measures to help Canadians. We introduced the Canada groceries and essentials benefit. We cut income taxes for 22 million Canadians. We cancelled the consumer carbon tax, and we provided GST relief for first-time homebuyers.

At every step of the way, we have been there to support Canadians. The message is very loud and clear that we are going to be there for them. We are going to build Canada strong. We are going to do that together. We should all be proud of what we can achieve in this country. We support each other. We build for the future. We are going to make Canada strong.

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for agreeing to bring forward Bill C-38. Thanks to relentless pressure from the Conservatives, we have some taxation relief today. The finance minister outlined a series of other measures related to affordability.

We should note in the House of Commons today that the government is doing better on its finances because of the high price of oil. Much of that oil actually flows through my riding; 37% of all oil from the Trans Mountain pipeline goes right through the Sumas Prairie where we had the big flood in 2021. That area is very vulnerable. In the MOU signed between the federal government and the Province of B.C. this summer, they committed to providing $20 million for funding the study, but there was no final commitment to put in the pump station to protect the most agriculturally significant lands in the province, the Trans Mountain pipeline and where they wanted to build a new pipeline.

Would the finance minister be able to outline to the House whether the government will fund a new pump station to protect future investments in the Trans Mountain pipeline corridor, British Columbia's most significant agricultural lands and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, that is a very important question that my hon. colleague posed, and I thank him for raising the issue. It is great to hear an MP from British Columbia supporting the ambitious agenda we have set for ourselves.

I will state the words of the executive director of the International Energy Agency, who recently said that the world energy architecture is being redesigned, and Canada is going to be at the centre. This is a project for all Canadians. With great attention to the comment he made, we want to make sure that we develop our resources in a sustainable and responsible way. The member can trust the government to always do that with all the partners, the Province of British Columbia and indigenous nations. We are going to do what is right for this country, and I welcome his question.

• (1030)

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, New Democrats support relief for people right now. They are struggling to make ends meet. This bill alone would cost over $5 billion. I will remind the House that oil and gas companies are posting record profits. We have never had more profits than right now in the oil and gas sector. Conservatives in Britain have even brought in an excess profit tax, but we cannot get Liberals here in Canada to even consider it.

I would ask the Minister of Finance the following. Is there a number? Is there a threshold? Is there an amount of profits? Is it $200 billion? Is it $300 billion? What is the number before the Liberals bring in an excess profit tax? This amounts to corporate welfare. That is exactly what is happening here. This bill should not be on the backs of everyday people.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, first of all, the support from the New Democrats is welcome. I think they understand that the measure is a much-needed support for Canadians. This is about Canadians. This is about families, truckers and farmers. This is about the people who provide the logistics and feed this country. This is a measure that is very much needed. It is going to be impactful.

I welcome the support, and I am sure the member is going to help us at committee to do that as quickly as possible to show that the NDP can stand up for Canadians.

Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I seek unanimous consent to split my time with my colleague from Barrie South—Innisfil.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Does the hon. member have have unanimous consent to split her time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Tamara Jansen: Madam Speaker, I want to tell members about a man I will call David. David owns a little coffee shop on a main street that could be in almost any town in Canada. It is not fancy. There are a dozen small tables, a chalkboard menu behind the counter and a bell above the door that has probably rung a million times. He turns on the lights, ties on his apron and starts getting ready for the morning rush. He has been doing this for 20 years now, and he knows his customers well. He knows who wants an extra shot of espresso and which construction crew will go through that door just after six.

David loves his business, but lately he has begun to dread opening the envelopes that arrive in the mail. The price of everything he buys has gone up under the Liberal government. The coffee beans cost more. The milk costs more. The cardboard cups cost more, and so does his insurance, his electricity and his rent. David cannot simply pass every increase along to his customer because he knows they are struggling too. He sees it in his customer who used to order breakfast and now just gets coffee, or the young mom who used to stop in three mornings a week and now comes once, so David absorbs what he can.

Then there is the espresso machine. It has been sitting behind the counter for nearly 15 years. Every morning, David listens to it wheeze and rattle and hopes it makes it through another day. A new one would make the shop more efficient, use less power and let him serve customers faster. Maybe he could even expand his business a little. However, by the time David has paid his employees, his landlord, his suppliers and the government, the money he thought he might put toward a new machine is gone, so he calls the repairman again, replaces another part and tells himself, "Maybe next year."

Do members remember that young mom David used to see three mornings a week? Let us follow her home. She and her husband live only a few streets away. They are not poor. They both work. They have a modest house, two kids and two incomes, and 10 years ago they thought they were doing pretty well. They were the kind of family we used to call comfortably middle class, but lately, comfortable is not the word they would use. Their family car is 15 years old now. There is a warning light on the dashboard. The mechanic has told them that there is another big repair bill coming, and they know they really should replace it. Ten years ago, they probably would have. Today, they look at the price of a new car, look at the payment and decide the old car will have to last another winter.

Let us now leave the family's kitchen, and come with me to a very different room. Imagine a glass boardroom high above a city. Around the table are not mom and dad wondering whether the roof can survive another winter. There are executives, accountants, lawyers and investment advisers deciding where a multinational corporation should put its next billion dollars. Now Ottawa has put something new on that boardroom table: the mega deduction, a major new tax break designed to convince companies with capital, like, let us say, Brookfield, to invest here.

Put those three rooms side by side. At the kitchen table, mom and dad have already gone through the bills twice. They need a new car and the roof needs work, but none of these qualify for this new Liberal mega deduction. What Ottawa offers them is Bill C-38, a few pennies per litre when they fill their gas tank.

A few streets away, David may be able to use the mega deduction if he buys that new espresso machine, but first he has to find the money to buy it. After paying his employees, his suppliers, his rent and his taxes, there is not enough left. Let us face it. A deduction on something someone cannot afford is not too much help. His tax break is much the same as the family's: a few pennies of relief when he gases up.

Then there is the third room, where the numbers have a lot more zeros. Here is a corporation headquartered in New York with the capital to make enormous investments and a team of accountants who can calculate exactly how much a new tax deduction changes the return. Lucky for them, their former board member is now the Prime Minister of Canada. For that room, Ottawa is proposing a massive tax advantage, and this is where I think something has gone badly wrong.

● (1035)

Do not get me wrong. Lower taxes have always been a Conservative principle. I want businesses investing in Canada, expanding here and creating good jobs, but lower taxes should not be a privilege reserved for the people with enough money and the right high-powered friends to be able to take advantage of them. If lower taxes help a multinational invest and grow, why would we not want that same breathing room for David? Why would we not want it for the families sitting around the kitchen table? They have spent years watching more of their paycheques disappear into taxes, while the cost of housing, food and fuel has climbed. Small businesses have faced the same rising costs, along with layer after layer of taxes, paperwork and government rules.

Now, after making it harder and harder for them to get ahead, governments arrive with a few pennies of temporary relief on their gas and expect them to be grateful. Canadians deserve better than that. David does not need Ottawa to run his coffee shop or a government program to tell him that a new espresso machine would make his business more productive. He already knows that. He needs enough money left at the end of the month to buy it. That family does not need Ottawa deciding where its money would be most productive either. Mom and dad already know exactly where their next $100 needs to go. That is their decision because it is their money.

Yes, let us give them the fuel tax relief in Bill C-38, but let us not call a few months of relief a solution. Conservatives have been pushing for relief at the pumps for a long time, years in fact, so we are glad the Liberals have finally discovered that lower taxes can actually help people. However, this is what happens when a Liberal government tries to borrow a Conservative idea without understanding the principle behind it. Canadians do not need a temporary break from high prices. They need policies that actually bring prices down. Gas prices have skyrocketed, and while Canada sits on some of the largest energy resources in the world, years of taxes, regulations and barriers to developing those resources have left us more vulnerable when global energy prices rise. This is a trap the Liberals created themselves.

Relief means lower taxes, affordable energy and developing the resources Canadians already own. Let us stop piling costs onto the people who produce, work, hire and raise families in this country. Let us stop piling costs onto the people who are working to raise their families in this country. Let us stop treating small business like an endless source of tax revenue and paperwork. Let us stop taking from Canadians only to decide in Ottawa which multinational will get it back. Instead, let us remove the barriers that have been squeezing the middle class and small business, and then give Canadians room to do what they have always done.

Here is what Ottawa seems to be missing: We would not have to wait 10 years for some foreign company's investment to trickle down to the rest of us. Small and medium-sized businesses employ nearly two-thirds of Canada's private sector workers. If thousands of businesses like David's had a little more room to breathe, the effect would begin on main street across this country almost immediately. David does not need 10 years to decide what to do with another few thousand dollars left in his business. He already knows. He fixes the machine, buys equipment, gives an employee another shift or finally hires a person he has needed for months.

Maybe mom starts stopping at David's coffee shop three mornings a week again. Her five dollars goes into David's till. David pays his employee. His employee buys lunch down the street. A roofer gets the family's business. The mechanic gets paid. People begin making plans again instead of putting them off for another year. Nobody in Ottawa had to decide where those dollars should go. Ordinary Canadians did that themselves.

That is what prosperity looks like: Canadians keeping more of what they earn, making their own choices, building their businesses, looking after their families and creating a better life for the people they love. That is what a real Conservative government would fight for.

● (1040)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Bill C-38 is all about giving a break on the issue of affordability to Canadians. This is something the government has recognized as very important. One of the aspects the government brought forward last year to help children was the national food program within our schools, helping 400,000 young people. I am glad the Conservative Party today is going to be supporting Bill C-38.

I am wondering if the member could provide her thoughts on whether she believes the Conservative Party should reverse its position and support Canada's national food program, which supports 400,000 children from coast to coast to coast.

Tamara Jansen: Madam Speaker, we support giving Canadians relief from federal fuel taxes. The question is whether the government is even going far enough. Bill C-38 would keep the excise tax at zero only until January 31. It would then bring back half the tax in February and March, before the regular rates return in April.

Canadians' affordability challenges do not suddenly disappear in February. Families will still need to drive to work. Businesses will still need to move goods. Farmers and producers will still face fuel costs. That is why Conservatives have called for fuel tax relief to continue through Canada Day as part of a broader action to lower costs.

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think it is really important that in the House, we tell the stories of Canadians who are struggling. While I was sitting here, I actually got a message from a local farmer in my riding who said to me that they are paying $2.43 a litre for farm diesel. They wonder how much higher these costs can go before they can no longer afford to produce anymore.

I am wondering if the member is hearing similar types of stories. Does she believe that this meaningfully addresses the concern that we often get from farmers of increased input costs that are making their businesses completely unsustainable?

Tamara Jansen: Madam Speaker, I cannot begin to tell members how many times in the last couple of weeks I have heard about the cost of diesel. Fuel costs affect much more than what a family pays when they fill up their vehicle. Fuel is an input into producing and transporting goods across the country, which we hear everywhere. Farmers need it to operate equipment. Truckers need it to move products. Businesses need it throughout their supply chains. When those costs increase, they do not simply disappear. They place additional pressures on producers, businesses and ultimately consumers. Extending relief means continuing to lower one of those costs during a period when Canadians and Canadian businesses are already dealing with significant economic uncertainty. The objective should be to keep costs down rather than to begin putting them back up again.

● (1045)

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Madam Speaker, I especially appreciate the focus that my colleague provided on small businesses. One of the things we have seen with the tariff relief is that for most of the programs, almost nothing is available to businesses under $1 million, like the coffee shop that she was discussing. I am wondering if my colleague could elaborate on that and talk about how that is playing out in her community.

Tamara Jansen: Madam Speaker, I am hearing that everywhere I go. We had a large picnic on the weekend before we came back, and everybody was talking about the fact that this is making it very difficult for businesses to continue.

Fuel tax relief is only one part of a broader economic approach. The Conservatives' economic action plan has called for gas tax relief to continue through Canada Day, faster approval of projects awaiting federal permits, removing the GST from Canadian-made automobiles, eliminating the capital gains tax on reinvestment in Canada and reducing other barriers facing Canadian investment.

The principle connecting these measures is straightforward: lower the costs facing families and employers and create better conditions for investment, employment and growth.

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am thrilled to be standing here today to talk about this bill, which would continue the lowering of the excise tax on fuel until January. Over the summer, I listened to my constituents and many of the business owners who have had to deal with the unjustified tariff war that is going on right now, which was started by the American administration. This type of relief and the continuation of this type of relief are welcomed.

It was Ann Landers, the famous columnist, who once said, “People of integrity expect to be believed,” and when they are not, “time [will] prove them right.” The finance minister's introduction of this bill has proven that Conservatives have acted with integrity on this issue and have worked hard for many years to save people money. We see this as a welcome temporary relief that perhaps does not go far enough, but who can argue against saving people money? Certainly, the Conservatives have been arguing this for years.

Much of what Canada is facing, our citizens are facing and our businesses are facing, if we are honest about it, has been a self-inflicted wound of failed economic policies, policies that have not improved the lives of Canadians and have not saved them money. In fact, it has cost them a tremendous amount of money over the years, especially over the last 11 years, and we are seeing that continue. A lot of these failed policies were implemented long before Donald Trump became the President of the United States. It is Canadian businesses, Canadian families and Canadian workers in all sectors, like the energy sector and the interprovincial sectors, who are paying the price.

What we have seen over these years is Canadians walk into the grocery store, especially seniors and single moms, who are those who can least afford it, look at the prices and, sadly, have to put many items back on the shelf. We are seeing a nutrition problem, and a food security problem, that is rampant in this country. I know that because many of the calls that I take in my constituency office are literally about walking people back from the ledge because they cannot afford their rent, their groceries and the necessities of life.

For many years, Conservatives have been arguing for the removal of the excise fuel tax, the carbon tax and other taxes, because there is a cascading effect across the supply chain that impacts the prices in stores. When the producers, the wholesalers and the transporters have to pay this type of tax, it has an impact on people. It is only now, after 11 years, that the Liberal government is starting to understand what we understood years ago, which is that many of these failed economic policies, including these policies of increased taxation, are having that kind of effect on people.

I stand here today in support of this legislation, but I also remind the House, and I remind you, Madam Speaker, as I know you are aware of this, that there have been several occasions when Conservatives have proposed reducing the tax on fuel, whether it is the excise fuel tax, the industrial fuel tax or other taxes. Each time we proposed those through opposition day motions, every single member of the Liberal government voted against it. Every member on that side voted against. There have been three occasions.

This started in 2024 when the Leader of the Opposition proposed that we remove fuel taxes to save people money. At that time, the Conservatives were well ahead of the curve. We were not listening to polls. We were listening to our constituents about the impact that gas taxes were having on them, not just on the price they were paying at the pumps, but also on the price they were paying at the grocery stores and the price they were paying on all goods across the economy.At that time, in 2024, we proposed removing the tax on gas. The Leader of the Opposition did that. What did the Liberals do? They voted against it.

● (1050)

Then, when Parliament resumed on April 15, 2026, the member for Calgary East proposed a motion, which states:

> That...
>
> (i) gas prices have soared upwards,
>
> (ii) Canadians now pay almost 20 per cent more at the pumps than Americans due to high Liberal taxes,
>
> the House call on the government to adopt the Conservative plan to save Canadians 25 cents-a-litre by removing federal taxes on gas and diesel—

Diesel is in a whole other stratosphere with respect to pricing and how it is impacting producers, especially our farming communities.

I will continue with the motion from back then in April:

> (a) removing the Fuel Excise Tax for the remainder of 2026, which costs Canadians 10 cents-a-litre;

Every single Liberal voted against that motion. In fact, if I recall the debate back then, the Liberals who were standing up that day were accusing the Conservatives of spreading misinformation, of lying to Canadians about the savings they would have on removing the excise fuel tax, yet here we are today with government legislation that is proposing exactly what we proposed years ago, which could have started saving Canadians money.

Then, on May 27, 2026, the member for Richmond—Arthabaska—des-Sources in Quebec talked about 13% higher gas prices in Canada than the United States, which equates to 22¢ more on average per litre. Again, every single Liberal member voted against that. People of integrity expect to be believed. When they are not, time will prove them right, and time is proving the Conservatives right on this and many issues, including the carbon tax and any other pieces of legislation that were Conservative ideas that the government is now implementing.

I subscribe to the politics that, if it is a good idea, it does not matter whether it is a Liberal idea, a Conservative idea, an NDP idea or a Green idea. If it is a good idea that benefits Canadians, Canadian families and Canadian businesses, then it should be supported. Every single one of those opposition motions that we put forward was a good idea to save Canadian families and Canadian businesses money, but in every circumstance, the Liberals voted against it. All of a sudden, here we are today, and it is a good idea.

We have a constitutional obligation as an opposition to question the government. Our constitutional obligation is to hold the government to account. It is to call into question decisions that are being made, legislation, regulatory reform or any other thing that it proposes. That is our constitutional obligation, and we uphold that obligation with great respect and great integrity.

It is also our obligation to propose solutions to the government when things are not working, when things are failing with respect to legislation, regulation or other policies. That is precisely what we did. I know the government House leader, yesterday, stood up and accused Conservatives of proposing things that were un-Canadian. The government would rather have an audience than an opposition. These were good ideas that were being proposed years ago, and we will continue to propose ideas that are going to help Canadians.

Let me end with something I received from a constituent. As the House knows, we have the ability to communicate all the time through various means, including sending out mailers. I got this one over the summer.

Chris from Innisfil said, “The gas tax needs to be much lower”, which would improve affordability and automatically lower prices. Today, as I stand here, I say to Chris that I am sorry that we could not have done this earlier. We tried, as an opposition, to make life more affordable and to save him money. On this day, we will do that.

We are going to support the government on this. It does not go far enough. We believe that it should extend at least to Canada Day in 2027, because the economic crisis, the food insecurity crisis and the affordability crisis that families are facing are real and are going to continue under the Liberal government.

● (1055)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I indicated earlier, I am glad to see that the Conservative Party is recognizing the value of supporting this particular piece of legislation. Hopefully, through collaboration, we will see this type of support for other types of legislation as we try to build that stronger and healthier Canada.

My question to my friend across the way is one that I posed earlier to one of his colleagues: Is the Conservative Party prepared to revisit its position in regard to the school nutrition program, which supports and feeds 400,000 children in Canada?

John Brassard: Madam Speaker, there is nothing to revisit. The government passed it. It is implemented. I have not heard much in my riding about children actually benefiting from it. Nobody is reaching out to me to say that it is the greatest program in the world.

We will support things that benefit Canadians, Canadian families, Canadian workers and Canadian businesses, and we will support the things that save them money during the great economic crisis that is going on right now. Again, this is a self-inflicted wound that started long before Donald Trump became the President of the United States. We will vigorously oppose, upholding our constitutional obligation, things that do not help Canadian workers, Canadian families and Canadian businesses, and the history of the Liberal government is that there are not many things that have worked properly except for well-connected insiders.

Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals said for months and months that their gas tax was not creating an affordability crisis. We brought forward motion after motion, and every Liberal member voted against getting rid of the gas tax. Can my colleague explain what he thinks of the change of heart the Liberals had. Why are they now admitting that they were wrong after all these months, when Canadians could have had a tax decrease on groceries for months? Now they are bringing it in a little bit late. Why has there been a change of heart from our Liberals colleagues?

[*Translation*]

John Brassard: Madam Speaker, first, I want to say that I am sorry that I did not get any questions from my colleague from Mirabel.

[*English*]

However, I will respond to the hon. member's question. I think I spoke about it. I do not think the Liberals, in their ideology, subscribe to the concept that it does not matter who proposes an idea, but if it is good for Canadian workers and Canadian businesses, then maybe they should adopt it. This could have been saving people money, not just all summer, but back in 2024, when we first proposed the removal of the excise fuel tax. We saw, as Conservatives, and we were hearing it from our constituents back then, that the tax was having a profound impact, not just on them personally, but as a cascading effect across the economy.

The only thing that I can say to the hon. member is that, if it is not a Liberal idea, then it is a bad idea, and that is what we have been dealing with in this place. It is time that we stopped this and started thinking about Canadians, rather than our political fortunes in this place.

● (1100)

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, not to be too pointed about it, but does it ever occur to the Conservatives that they should sue the Liberals for plagiarism? The Conservative platform is now being implemented point by point by the current government.

I would add another one, and I do not agree with these changes. I know the Conservative caucus would have reason to cheer, but why would the Conservatives promise to cut overseas development assistance? The Liberals promised they would not, and then they did by $2.7 billion. There have been many promises. Certainly the Liberals promised to meet our Paris agreement targets. They are clearly not meeting them.

I ask my hon. colleague from Barry South—Innisfil if the Conservatives have considered getting a lawyer.

John Brassard: Madam Speaker, that is a great question. The Prime Minister has proven himself to plagiarize. It is a well-documented fact that he has plagiarized many things, so it is no surprise to me, as a Conservative, that he is plagiarizing our platform, because our platform is what Canadians needed. Unfortunately, they did not vote for it, but we will continue to propose solutions that make lives better.

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, that was not the first time I have stood up thinking it was my turn to speak. Sometimes we get a bit rusty after going on vacation or being away for a while.

As members may know, there are no surprises with me. I always like to start a parliamentary session by telling the Speaker that I am happy to see her. Our Speaker is glowing today, and it is great to see her here in such good health. I am delighted to see her in the chair, especially since we are kicking off the parliamentary session with a pretty important bill.

This bill is very short, and we are familiar with it because we already passed a previous version in April. The government simply wants to extend the fuel excise tax suspension for a few more months.

I want the government to know that I believe the work we do as parliamentarians is important. I think it is important for us to examine this measure in committee and to hear from witnesses. It is important for us to question how effective this measure is. It is important to consider alternatives to this measure. This is not the only measure with the potential to help lower costs for consumers, farmers and people along the distribution chains. That is why it is important for us to do this parliamentary work.

I was a little worried that the government might try to fast-track this bill by imposing closure and saying that the bill made sense, that it was not controversial, that we did not need to do our duty as parliamentarians and that we had already passed it in April.

It is vital to remember the importance of the opposition's role. This is especially true in a Parliament with a growing majority. It is also vital to remember the role of civil society and the importance of hearing from witnesses. There are people in civil society, people in the private sector, academics and researchers who, in many ways, are much more knowledgeable about this tax mechanism than the Minister of Finance himself is. The government should have the decency to invite those people to talk to us about the tax.

What is really going on with gas prices and the gas tax? I talked about that during the debates we had before the summer recess and the by-elections. Speaking of the by-elections, I would like to welcome my new colleague, who happens to come from my home region. He should know that there is a Garon Street in Chicoutimi that was named in honour of my grandfather. I never knew him, because he passed away a long time ago, but I am confident he would be a sovereignist today. Anyway, that is a whole other debate.

When I spoke about gas prices in April, I decided to concentrate on a fairly stable indicator, namely the price of a litre of unleaded gas—which was a major issue at one time—at a self-service station over the past 25 years. To account for inflation, I adjusted it using the consumer price index. I found that, over a 25-year period, the price of gas, on average, has not gone up, which is quite surprising. In real terms, the price at the pump has gone up, but everything else in the economy has gone up as well. When we factor in inflation, the price remains fairly stable at about $1.60. Even though the long-term trend is flat, the price of gas fluctuates significantly. It can go from $1.60 to $2 to $1.40.

Over the past 25 years or so, the price of gas, in real terms, has fluctuated significantly but has remained fairly stable. For 80% of Quebeckers and Canadians, there has been a significant real increase in purchasing power. What that means is that people's wages and incomes, even after adjusting for inflation, have increased faster than the cost of living. What happens when the wealthiest 80% of Canadians experience a significant increase in their purchasing power and see, in real terms, gas prices remain stable but fluctuate slightly? We get an increase in the number of kilometres driven per person, an increase in household fuel consumption, an increase in average vehicle size and an increase in the number of vehicles per household. In the Montreal area, during that period, the number of motor vehicles grew faster than the population.

● (1105)

I am not sure whether the 80% of people with bigger, gas-guzzling vehicles are the ones who should be given priority and given immediate relief through a gas tax measure, especially since it is unclear whether this measure would also support the energy transition. This is something we should discuss with witnesses in committee. We know that this is a government that has abdicated its climate responsibilities and abandoned its greenhouse gas reduction targets, so I am not sure whether the people in that 80% are the ones who should be receiving the most immediate assistance.

The other 20% of people are struggling to make ends meet, are living paycheque to paycheque and may be dealing with unforeseen circumstances, such as a breakup or a move. Often those people have to have a car because they can no longer afford to live in major cities and urban centres, where housing has become very expensive. Even though the price of gas has remained relatively stable over time, when adjusted for inflation, these people are very vulnerable to fluctuations in gas prices. For a household that is struggling to make ends meet, it is a big deal when gas goes from $1.68 a litre to $1.75. It might mean skipping meals, making the kids do without, not buying as many clothes or cutting back spending on vacations, education or school supplies. That is the issue.

That once again brings us back to the question of whether this measure is helping those who really need it. This measure benefits 100% of people who use gasoline, including the Conservative members who pull into the parking lot in trucks 10 times bigger than my car. The government is spending money on everyone to help the 20% of people who really need it. We need to rethink this approach. Would a targeted transfer not be more appropriate?

I know that the Minister of Finance increased the GST credit, which was good. Nobody took issue with that last winter or last spring. He changed the name. I do not remember what he called it, but the words “Canada Strong” must be in there somewhere because that is what they call everything. He bumped up the benefit that goes to these people, the folks who need it most. This transfer payment, this GST credit—the Canada groceries and essentials benefit, I believe it is called—is income-tested and adjusted based on family size according to the same criteria as those used to calculate family benefits, making it possible to direct support to the people who need it.

What does that mean? It means that with $1 of public money, we can help someone in need five times over. I think this is a conversation we need to have. When someone goes to a gas station, they take money out of their pocket and pay for a litre of gas. There are two ways to help: either increase the amount of money in their pocket, or bring down the price of gas—or at least keep the increase in check. I do not know what kind of reasoning led the government to conclude that the only way to help the poorest people was simply to manipulate the rising price of a litre of gas.

If the government believes that people need more help, I think that the grocery benefit might be a good option. It is worth discussing, especially since there is this myth floating around that a one-cent reduction in the excise tax translates to a one-cent reduction in gas prices. That is not true. When the excise tax is reduced, people along the distribution chain, like the distributor, the refiner or the gas stations themselves, pocket the difference. There is definitely no guarantee that it will end up in consumers' pockets.

Why is that? It is because consumer demand for this is often fixed. People have to get around, especially the 20% who are struggling the most and need help the most. These people have to get from point A to point B. They have to go to work. They have to go grocery shopping. These people need to fill up their tanks, and they will do it. They will fill up at $1.68, $1.72, $1.80 or $1.85 per litre. They will do it even if it means going without something else. Retailers know this, and the oil industry knows it. In economics, this is called inelastic demand.

● (1110)

That means the retailer knows they can pocket the excise tax reduction because people are going to fill up anyway. That is what we are seeing. Gas stations have public relations teams. Of course, they lower prices for a day or two. Then people forget. After that, they blame Iran and raise the price.

We are beginning to see studies on other countries that have used the current government's method to put money in people's pockets. David Byrne is a world-renowned researcher in industrial economics and, more specifically, in competition issues related to gas prices. That is his specialty. I do not know what led him to focus on that, but he has devoted his whole life to it. He started studying Australia's data and realized that the mechanism that Canada is using was not actually benefiting the poorest people. The benefit was spread out through the entire chain.

Does the government think retailers need help? Perhaps. Does it think gas stations need help? Perhaps. It obviously thinks oil companies need help. It spends its time giving them public money and subsidies. That is about the only thing it is interested in, other than travelling.

The idea that debating the bill today means we are going to debate assistance that will end up in the pockets of the people who need it most has yet to be proven. We need empirical evidence and data. We need proof that that is the case.

The Bloc Québécois has been calling for an increase in old age security for years. Seniors are often on fixed incomes. They too are dealing with inflation. They too have to travel. They too have problems, because taking public transit often becomes challenging with age. They need to go out to receive health care services.

We were told that seniors 75 and over would receive an OAS increase, but not seniors aged 65 to 74. They are somehow a less important, second class of seniors. At the time, the Minister of Finance and his predecessor told us that there was no money for that; it was too expensive. As I recall, the cost was between $3.8 billion and $4 billion a year. There was no money to help out seniors.

How much does today's proposed measure cost? I looked at the assessment. It adds up to $5.3 billion. Today, we are talking about $5.3 billion that will probably fall seriously short of helping the people who need it the most. Furthermore, if the excise tax reduction does affect the cost of gas, it will also go to fill up people's Hummers.

Does this mean that the whole thing is bad? No, it means that it may not be targeted enough, that it may not be the only mechanism available, and that it is very expensive. It also means that the government has the money to do this. It also means that there is another way to use these funds. The issue is not whether we can afford $5.3 billion. We probably can. The question is, what are we forgoing?

There are seniors tuning in today. They have been asked to tighten their belts ever since the Liberals took office. I mean when they really took office, back in 2015, because that is when it started. That is what seniors are being told. There are seniors in all our ridings. Madam Speaker, I know seniors in your riding who are telling me the same thing. In short, the government will be telling them that it actually can come up with $5.3 billion.

It is important for us to do our jobs as parliamentarians. I am not making some grand speech today to say that everything is wonderful or terrible; rather, this is a call for cooler heads to prevail, a call to study this measure. It is a call to say that this does not actually need to be rushed through, that the government does not always have to forge full speed ahead, that it does not have to circumvent committees and that we do not need to cut corners on the parliamentary work we are being paid to do.

We heard from witnesses when we first studied the bill. Many people said their piece. There is no unanimity in Quebec. I am not saying that everyone is against it, and I am not saying that everyone is in favour of it, but there is clearly a conversation in Quebec about the usefulness of this measure. There obviously is one.

There were pre-budget consultations. The budgets come out in the fall. That was done in June. There was work done in August, with our colleagues on the Standing Committee on Finance. Some witnesses appeared. They were diligent people such as Luc Godbout, who holds the research chair in taxation and public finance at the Université de Sherbrooke.

● (1115)

It has long been recognized that these folks see it as their duty to keep the public informed, and they take that duty very seriously. Luc Godbout said:

> ...in our opinion, the federal fuel excise tax exemption seems ill-advised from a public finance standpoint. It would be better not to extend this tax holiday and to maximize the chances of restoring the tax as it was and eventually indexing it.

The other issue is that the gas tax, when adjusted for inflation, goes down if it is not indexed. Its impact on our wallets has been shrinking over the years. That is what has happened over time.

Luc Godbout went on to say:

> I would remind you that a tax holiday of this nature benefits higher-income households more than low-income households. So in order to facilitate the reintroduction of the tax, consideration should probably be given to putting it into a community development fund or some other fund dedicated to that.

I think it is important that these folks appear before the committee. It would be worth asking them what their analysis is based on. It would be worthwhile to hear from other parties who hold opposite views.

If we question the measure, we are accused of being against Canada and against families and not wanting to help Canadians. I should hope that we are better than that in this Parliament.

There are other people who appeared before the committee. In its pre-budget submission, Alliance Transit stated:

> Following the recent abolition of the carbon tax, this new tax break does nothing for families who do not own a vehicle or for those who have purchased electric vehicles, and there are many such families in Quebec and major cities across the country. This tax break is also costing Canada a significant amount of money, when those funds could be put to better use fighting poverty and maintaining our infrastructure, which is in a sorry state. This measure is unfair and short-sighted.

Who are the members of Alliance Transit? I have a whole page of organizations that endorse its message, including Accès transports viables; Équiterre; the Réseau des centres d'expertise de mobilité, formerly known as the ACGDQ; the Regroupement national des conseils régionaux de l'environnement du Québec; Trajectoire Québec; Vivre en ville; Ville en vert; Vélo Québec; Nature Québec; and Les oubliés de l'autobus. That is a lot of people. What these people are saying is not based on ideology. It is based on facts. We know that. Young people learn this at university in their undergraduate studies. They are taught that just because consumers are theoretically getting a tax break does not mean that the person running the business and managing the tax break, which is the gas station in the case of the excise tax, is not going to pocket some of the money.

What needs to happen? First, we need to have a broader conversation. The Liberals are here, and they are listening. Never again will the Liberals be able to say that increasing OAS for seniors is too expensive. Never again will they be able to tell us that this is a poorly targeted way to help because OAS decreases as income rises. It is more targeted.

The Liberals need to tell us whether this increase is going to become permanent. Economist Milton Friedman once said that nothing is so permanent as a temporary policy. They did it once. Now they are doing it again. Will it still be temporary in a few months' time if there is another war? Will it still be temporary if the situation in Iran keeps dragging on? How does this fit into the budget? How will the government inform taxpayers? It made an announcement in the middle of summer, tabled a notice of ways and means and is trying to rush it through.

At what point will they renew the measure next time, and based on what criteria? Does the Minister of Finance simply lick his finger, hold it up to the wind and decide to renew it? Are there any criteria? What are they? Has anyone measured the impact? Do we know if there are any consequences? Has the government hired researchers to figure that out? What studies has the Department of Finance carried out since April to demonstrate that this measure will actually put money in the pockets of those who need it?

I think this Parliament needs to consider legislation like this, especially since it is already in effect and is already subject to a notice of ways and means. We are not blocking it. This Parliament just needs to determine whether, under the current circumstances, this is the right way to invest taxpayers' money.

● (1120)

Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague with great interest, and I congratulate him. I would like to warmly welcome my hon. colleague back to the House.

He talked about what is worth discussing. I have two very clear questions to ask him, and I hope he can answer them very clearly and unequivocally.

First, I believe that the Parti Québécois supports or is calling for the suspension of the excise tax on gasoline. Will the Bloc Québécois support the Parti Québécois on this issue?

I also have a second very quick question. He spoke at great length and in great detail, but I would just like to know how he is going to vote.

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, first of all, we are certainly going to vote to send it to committee. We do not want to see the bill defeated; we want to send it to committee. That is our job. Considering that the member was Speaker of the House himself for a brief moment, he is well aware that this needs to go to committee so that we can perform our parliamentary work with diligence.

Members will recall that we voted in support of this measure last April. What I am saying is that here, unlike Quebec City, we implemented and applied it. That is why we need to know where it stands.

Now, I may be mistaken. The member may be monitoring things even more closely than I am. All parties in the Quebec National Assembly have a plan to balance the budget, yet here we are talking about $5.3 billion while the government keeps digging itself into a deeper fiscal hole year after year. Trump is not the only cause. My colleague opposite saw that. The hole is getting deeper by the year.

If the federal government had a plan to return to a balanced budget, if public finances were healthier, if things had been managed differently in all the years since 2015, this would be an entirely different conversation. I think that the parties in Quebec City that are proposing this or other measures have included it in a comprehensive framework to fight poverty and help people with the cost of living. That is exactly what we are asking for. What we are saying is that it must be part of a whole. I think all the parties in Quebec City that are proposing this or other measures have made the effort.

[*English*]

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned folks who drive Hummers, and I would just point out to him that the new Hummer is actually an EV, so he might actually be in favour of people who drive Hummers.

I want to congratulate the Liberal government on implementing the Conservative agenda, albeit maybe at half speed or a dollar late and a day short. Nonetheless, this has been something that we as Conservatives have been calling for, and this is just part of a growing trend of the Liberal government adopting our agenda and promoting it.

Would the member not agree that the Liberal government is, although it may be at half speed, definitely implementing the Conservative agenda?

● (1125)

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I am going to set the petty politics aside and focus on the first part of the question.

I made a joke about Hummers, but it is important to understand the purpose of this measure. The goal is not necessarily to help everyone who drives. The goal is to use the excise tax—to lower it and potentially lower the price of something that people buy, namely gas—to leave more money in the pockets of those who need it most. That is my understanding of the purpose of this measure.

From that perspective, the question is not whether people are free to buy whatever vehicle they want, or whether people who own Hummers are bad people. I just wanted to point out that when we lower the price of gas for everyone, if it actually goes down, that also benefits people who would not otherwise benefit from a more targeted measure. I am merely calling on everyone to keep an open mind, to consider alternative policies or at least a range of policies that this could be part of. I think this definitely needs to be considered. As for who is implementing whose policy, I can barely keep track of who is in which party in this Parliament. The floor crossings are never ending. Things get tossed to the Senate, then they get tossed back. I cannot keep track anymore. I do not even know which party's platform is which. I do know that the Bloc Québécois's position has not changed.

[*English*]

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, a report from the Centre for Future Work is predicting that we are going to see an additional $50 billion in consumer costs, or a 4.2% increase in inflation. That is if the Strait of Hormuz closed today. We have not seen an increase of even one cent on the production of oil and gas, yet oil and gas profits are skyrocketing. At the same time, the Centre for Future Work is predicting that we are going to see a $65-billion-plus increase in excess profits. What this bill would do is actually increase the debt. Canadian taxpayers pick up the tab anyway. We want them to get relief right now.

Does my colleague agree that an excess profit tax would help alleviate the pressure on the Canadian taxpayer and that oil and gas, when they are winning big like this, should contribute more? We heard the Conservatives even say that the Liberals have taken their agenda and are implementing their agenda. We know that Conservatives in Britain implemented an excess profit tax on oil and gas, but these Liberals will never do it. We are seeing record profits. There is no threshold of profits before they implement an excess profit tax.

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, that is certainly an interesting question that deserves careful consideration. I believe we would be remiss if we did not examine such policies. However, at the core of what my colleague is saying is the fact that these problems are chronic. What is happening geopolitically is becoming more and more entrenched. Lack of competition in the gasoline market, in retail gasoline sales, is a chronic problem. Refining margins are a chronic issue. These things are chronic.

Now we find ourselves with just two weeks' notice that we are going from one temporary measure to another. Consumers do not know what will happen with this measure a few months from now. Will it be permanent? Will it be temporary? What other supports are there? Which measures can be made permanent? Will it be gone for good, and so on? The takeaway from our colleague's remarks is that we need to have a thoughtful conversation about structural, long-term measures if the problem becomes permanent. That is the one debate we are not having at the moment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Madam Speaker, that is the first time that the Chair has said the new name of my riding.

I would like to thank my colleague. Every time I listen to him, I feel as though I am getting a lesson in economics. I myself did not study economics, so I am always learning. It is no small thing to have someone with a Ph.D. in economics in the House. When he speaks, his facts are supported by his knowledge and research. I will give him the last word because the questions and comments period is drawing to a close.

What message does he want parliamentarians here in the House to take away from his speech?

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, my message is that I am calling on parliamentarians to do their job and to slow down a bit.

As I said, this bill is an example. There is a ways and means motion. The measure has been applied. We know that it will be applied. We know it because it is pretty obvious. We know how people will vote. We know that it will be applied. What we are saying is that, despite that, we cannot cut corners in carrying out intelligent parliamentary work. It is not just for us as members of Parliament. It is for civil society, as I said. There are people who understand these issues and who are doing research on it. Universities and research centres are full of people who are just waiting for politicians to listen to them so they can help us come up with better policies if a geopolitical situation like the one we are facing today arises again. We owe it to them.

When debate is cut short, when things are rushed or when the work of committees is bypassed, it is not so much parliamentarians who are affected. We are made of strong stuff, we have thick skin. They are the ones we are undermining, and I think they deserve better.

● (1130)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is encouraging to see that we are getting wide-spectrum support, working in collaboration with the Conservatives, the Bloc and the New Democrats. It would appear as if the legislation will, in fact, be passing. The biggest benefactors will be Canadians from coast to coast to coast. They will benefit because of collaboration within the House on a good initiative.

Would the member opposite not agree that one thing we could do would be to look to our provincial counterparts and suggest that they too provide some excise tax relief on gas?

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I certainly think that the federal government should mind its own business, and I certainly think the policy is worth examining. I believe it is going to pass. That goes without saying. My colleague says that this money will go into the pockets of all Canadians. I spent 20 minutes explaining that this might not be entirely true and that it should be quantified.

My colleague wants us to work together, but it is that type of rhetoric, that type of line recited from memory for the media, and that sort of triviality that undermines our parliamentary work.

It is going to pass. The Conservatives will vote in favour of this policy. Most people here will vote for the bill; we know that.

Now, we need to look further ahead. What will we do next time? What will we do if the situation in Iran is not resolved in six months' time?

That is the real question, and that is why we have parliamentary committees.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and address a very important aspect of the government's agenda. What we have seen over the last year and a half is a Prime Minister and a government that have been focused on how we are going to build a stronger and healthier economy, an economy that works for all Canadians. I am going to go into some detail with respect to that, but it is really important that we recognize that as much as that is a priority, whether for the Prime Minister or any member of the Liberal caucus, the issue of affordability is right in our faces and needs to be addressed. We continue to work on that particular file.

The Conservatives will talk about plagiarism. When Canadians elected this Prime Minister just over a year ago, along with 70-plus new Liberal members of Parliament, we saw a commitment to affordability on a multitude of different fronts. In fact, the very first action the Prime Minister took was to get rid of the carbon tax on fuel. That put money directly into the pockets of Canadians in a very real and tangible way. That was not an initiative driven by the Conservative Party. That was an initiative driven by Canadians, because prior to making that commitment, our Prime Minister was talking with thousands of Canadians. That is what drove that policy. Not all political parties in the chamber supported it at the time, but as a government, we got behind our Prime Minister in recognizing the priority of affordability.

It did not stop there. We can look at one of the first pieces of legislation introduced under Canada's new Prime Minister a matter of weeks after the election. It was a middle class-plus tax break, and 22 million Canadians benefited by that break. That is a significant way to deal with the issue of affordability. Again, money was put back into the pockets of Canadians because we recognize the impact of affordability.

Then if we advance a little further in the term, all within the last year, we see one of my favourite programs, the groceries and essentials benefit program, which is a conversion of the GST rebate. Substantial dollars were added, again targeted to helping millions of Canadians in dealing with groceries and essentials. That is a payment Canadians are receiving on a regular basis. Those are the types of initiatives the Prime Minister and this government have taken, all in the last year.

● (1135)

It does not end there. If we take a look at the spring economic plan or the budget, however we might want to frame it, one of the highlights in there was to give an gas excise tax break to Canadians in support of the issue of affordability. It was a substantial commitment by the government, a break of 10¢ a litre for those who are driving, whether they are a business or an individual driving a child to school, whatever it might be. It is a significant amount of money. That was a suspension that took us to Labour Day, but as Canadians are aware, we have the United States to the south of us, and there was an issuance of new tariffs. That does not help our economy.

The concern from the government caucus and the Prime Minister was how we can provide support. One of the things we looked at was extending the break on the tax on gas through Bill C-38, the legislation we have before us, which was just introduced. Background work was done in order to recognize that there would be great benefit to seeing this legislation pass. This is why, in one of the questions, I commented in regard to the issue of collaboration. This legislation, Bill C-38, is going to pass today not only as a direct result of the Prime Minister's desire to see it put into place, which is important, but because we have collaboration on the floor of the House of Commons.

I am grateful to and thank all members of the House for recognizing how important Bill C-38 is on the issue of affordability, because by us passing it, what we are really doing is saying to our constituents that they are going to continue to get that 10¢ a litre gas break until the end of January. What we also know because of this legislation is that the gas break is going to continue at half the amount, in other words five cents a litre, all the way to the end of March. To me, what we are seeing is a House of Commons that has been inspired, at least in part, by a policy initiative that the Prime Minister has been talking about since becoming the Prime Minister of Canada on an issue that is so important to all Canadians: the issue of affordability.

Because of that, we are going to get it passed. It will pass tonight at second reading, and it is nice to see that the legislation has been programmed. I would appeal to the Senate, because the bill will go to the Senate, and ask that the Senate take a look at how the House of Commons is dealing with the legislation so we can hopefully see its quick passage and it can ultimately receive royal assent. Those are direct ways in which the government has been supporting Canadians on the issue of affordability.

There are many different other examples over the last year of actions that the government has taken in order to support Canadians, and I would like to give a couple of examples of that. I could talk about the expansion of the child benefit program, which helps our families in a time of need. The one I like to talk about is the dental program. The dental program helps millions of Canadians. I am thinking in particular of seniors who are on fixed incomes. There are others, but I would focus my attention on the seniors all of us represent. Every one of us as parliamentarians has constituents who have benefited directly from that program.

● (1140)

That is a program for which I am still waiting to see unanimous support from the House of Commons. I would like, for example, to see the Conservatives change their position on the dental program. It would send a very clear message, not about collaboration but about the idea of it as a public policy. A national dental care program would be there into the future.

Another program that we provide a great deal of support towards is the national school food program, which feeds 400,000 children across Canada in a very real and tangible way. Again, I would look to my Conservative colleagues across the way, who have opposed that particular program. Unfortunately, we have had members say, “Well, it does not exist.” We have had members across the way say that it is a garbage program. It is a tangible program. It is feeding children in need, and it helps in terms of their education.

Back in the day when I was inside the Manitoba legislature in 1988, there were individuals like Sharon Carstairs, the leader of the Liberal Party, who said that we cannot educate a child on an empty stomach. This has been a generational problem. Children were unable to be fed in schools, and that was causing a problem. It was not for all children, but there was definitely a large percentage of children who needed this back in the 1980s.

We have a Prime Minister who, a few months after being elected, came out saying that not only does he support the program, but we are going to make it a permanent program, while some in the chamber call it a garbage program. At the end of the day, this is a program that I hope the Conservative Party will recognize and see the value of. Again, if not directly then indirectly it helps with regard to the issue of affordability.

I can talk about the reinforcement of and support for the pharmacare program, which is relatively new. We have the federal government supporting certain aspects. Hopefully, into the future it will grow, but at the very least we must try to do our best to maintain it. I would love to see it take on the issue of shingles in Canada, for example. At the very least, there is a pharmacare program helping tens of thousands of Canadians deal with issues like dialysis. If the program is not there, the disposable income for individuals receiving dialysis is that much smaller.

Those are only some of the programs that are meant, through this government and the leadership of the Prime Minister, to support Canadians with respect to the issue of affordability, but there are a lot more. I suspect that because we will probably end up sitting until midnight, throughout this debate we will hear about more of those different types of programs.

I know that my time to speak is limited, but I want to highlight that what helps Canadians is a stronger and healthier economy. Again, I am going to go back to the last election and what the government, through the leadership of our Prime Minister, has been able to accomplish on the world scene, because appealing to the world is making a difference.

● (1145)

We need to recognize that the U.S. tariffs are designed, in part, to hurt and divide Canadians. We need to look at ways we can conduct trade and commerce that go beyond the United States. We need to focus attention on Canadian sovereignty. Once again, members will find that we are aggressively pursuing that agenda.

I would argue that we have the right person sitting in the prime minister's chair at the right time in Canadian history. I believe that is going to show years from now. With the connections and the ability to communicate along with the relationships that have been established by, in particular, our Prime Minister, but by others too, doors around the world have opened.

We have been talking a great deal about the investment summit that took place in Toronto. In the lead-up to that investment summit, a sense of excitement was building. I talked about this last year, and I would argue that the Prime Minister is a fantastic ambassador for trade, opportunities and investment to be brought into Canada, which is why it is important that we have the Prime Minister or the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Trade, the Minister of International Trade or the Minister of Foreign Affairs out and about, talking about how Canada has what the world needs. By doing that, we are building that stronger economy.

If members want to get a good sense of just how effective it has been, they can take a look at what happened in Toronto earlier this month. Never before in the history of Canada has there been a half a trillion dollars of investment-type commitments. We are talking about billions in different projects. We had investment bankers, companies, pension funds, all involved and engaged. Toronto welcomed the world as our Prime Minister and government hosted what I would classify as one of the most successful economic summits that Canada has ever witnessed. As a direct result, there is close to half a trillion dollars of commitments. Every region of our country will benefit by that. A stronger and healthier Canadian economy through these investments and expanded trade opportunities is going to help on the issue of affordability as it will generate the types of middle-class jobs that Canadians want to see.

Yes, there are going to be some difficult times. Some months will be difficult because we will see a drop in employment. However, even at a time when we have pressures coming from the United States, the tariff issue and the trade uncertainty, through the actions, in good part, that this government has taken in working collaboratively with many different stakeholders, including provinces, we have been able to accomplish a net gain of tens of thousands of jobs since this Prime Minister has taken office. I believe it is a net gain of over 150,000 jobs.

● (1150)

We cannot control Donald Trump, nor would I want to per se. Having said that, there are things we can do, and we are doing them.

Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is great to stand on behalf of the people of Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame and speak for the first time as the member for the riding that has its former name back.

I just heard Prime Minister Trudeau's and his successor's special spokesman brag about the success of the dental program and how it brings down the cost of living. Our constituency assistants have a group chat with other assistants right across Canada. The number one common issue that they are dealing with is seniors who have fallen through the cracks of this super-duper dental program. They are finding that after they have had their treatment or received their dentures or whatever procedure they had, they get a $100 bill, a $500 bill or a $900 bill. Last evening my constituency assistant from Gander told me that a senior citizen had gotten a $10,000 bill, and they do not know how to pay it. They are shocked.

My question is for the spokesman for the Prime Minister. Will he stop bragging about this failed program, or will the government simply fix it?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I did not name the member opposite, but I will now, as the member who actually said the national school food program is garbage and he does not believe in it. He called it garbage. Am I surprised that he does not like the dental program that serves millions of Canadians? The answer is no. He does not surprise me.

What I would suggest to the member is that he talk to the thousands of children and seniors combined in his constituency who have benefited directly from the dental program and the school program, and maybe revisit his position, because his position seems to carry a great deal of weight within the Conservative Party.

It is time that the Conservative Party, if it wants to deal with the issue of affordability, joins us and works collaboratively on this issue because it is important. It supports Canadians.

● (1155)

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague seems to have lost his way in the last answer, but I am grateful for the fact that he acknowledged the collaboration that has been taking place among the parties in order to provide relief to Canadians.

My colleague from Mirabel noted that the price pressures here are not short-term and yet the relief is short-term. I wonder if the member can explain why this relief is short-term and why we are not taking the longer-term actions that would bring stability to things like food costs by extending this indefinitely.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that question because she is quite right. There has been a great deal of collaboration with respect to this particular bill. That is one of the reasons it will ultimately pass through the House in a very timely fashion. As I indicated earlier, hopefully we will get a sense from the Senate that it will pass in an equally timely fashion because of the will of the House of Commons.

It is also important to recognize that the government, in particular with the Prime Minister's leadership, has recognized the issue of affordability and how important it is to Canadians. We will continue to follow that file very closely.

It is important to note that this legislation will extend the temporary suspension of the federal fuel excise tax until January 31, 2027, at the full 10¢ a litre and then reduce it. I am talking about the consumer gas that most of our constituents use. Then it will be extended for another couple of months at 50%, or five cents a litre.

Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke about seniors. I have seniors in my community who disagree with the government's position. A lot of them are living below the poverty line.

When we take single seniors and look at the amount of taxes they are paying versus a couple earning the same amount of money, it is higher. If we look at a couple earning $50,000, they are paying $600 in taxes, but if we look at an individual, they are paying $5,800.

How is this going to benefit someone who cannot currently live within their current fixed income? Seventy-two per cent of seniors disagree with the government's position.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I think it is important to recognize that there is not just one area in which the government is giving support to Canadians but a multitude of different areas. For example, when we think of seniors, we can think of the benefits. I highlighted, for example, the dental program. I can highlight dialysis. Many seniors receive dialysis. We can talk about the seniors over age 75 who received a substantial increase over and above what would have been the guaranteed annual increase.

Many seniors continue to drive. A senior over the age of 90 can still be driving, and they too will get breaks. There are individuals using buses. Everyone benefits from that 10¢-a-litre drop, which has an impact on fares. Directly and indirectly, there are tangible supports for seniors in many different ways.

Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, just listening to the member, I think vividly of my riding. As people go to the gas pump, for the average resident and consumer in Mississauga East—Cooksville, that means a reduction in the price of gas they are paying. They need gas to get to work. They need it to take their kids to sports. They need it for everything they do. It is so important to have these affordability measures. The member has mentioned many other measures. He has talked about the school nutrition program, about how we are also helping with senior supports and about the dental program.

When it comes to gas, this is something that affects everybody every single day. Can the member elaborate on that?

● (1200)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I think the member has hit it right on. We are talking about a 10¢-a-litre break. That is a significant amount of money. Many of his constituents are going to have a direct benefit from it. We would, through this legislation, take that break all the way to the end of January, and then from February to the end of March, there would be a five-cent-a-litre break. I look at the legislation as a very important legislative measure on the issue of affordability, but there are many others that I talked about during my comments, some of which the member made reference to.

This is all an attempt to say that the government caucus and the Prime Minister want Canadians to know that we are very sensitive to the issue, we are proactively working on the affordability issue by taking many budgetary matters seriously, and we are acting.

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite went on and on about socialized dentistry and Maoist food programs, but it used to be that Canadians could afford to pay for their own dentistry, and they could afford to buy groceries and feed their children what they wanted. The Liberals have not paid down any debt since 2015, when they were first elected, and that interest keeps on accumulating. It results in taxes, more taxes and unaffordability for Canadians.

Why does the member opposite want Canadians to be dependent upon government for everything?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear about the national food program, which the member was critical of by saying Canadians used to be able to afford to feed their children. It is a bit misleading, and let me explain why.

Back in 1988, I was first elected to the Manitoba legislature. The leader of the Liberal Party at that time was a wonderful lady by the name of Sharon Carstairs. Sharon Carstairs often talked about children who were going to school in Manitoba on empty stomachs and said that we needed to ensure they were being fed in schools.

It gives a false impression to say that this program is something that is only necessary today because of the issue of affordability. This is not necessarily true. It has been necessary for a long time. The Prime Minister has recognized that, and that is why we made the program permanent.

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, welcome to the chair.

It is an honour for me to get up to talk about affordability on behalf of the constituents of Skeena—Bulkley Valley, specifically with respect to Bill C-38, the Canadian fuel affordability act.

By the way, I am sharing my time with a member forFort McMurray—Cold Lake.

The government has framed Bill C-38 as a collaboration among the parties and members within the House, which is not entirely accurate, because long before I came here, the leader of the Conservative Party, and the Conservatives as well, were talking about affordability and the pressures Canadians were under. In fact, the leader of the Conservative Party was actually pushing for this tax break at the pumps long before I came along, specifically through the campaign.

It has just dawned on the Liberals this past year that, yes, maybe Canadians are having a tough time and that maybe they should save them some money at the gas pumps. Then they had the revelation that affordability has not gotten better in Canada but has gotten worse, and that they should extend the tax break to help Canadians. That was a Conservative idea, among many other Conservative ideas that the Liberals took.

We applauded the idea of getting rid of the carbon tax, because that was a Conservative idea. Then the Liberals said they were taking away only the consumer carbon tax and keeping the industrial carbon tax, but that we should not worry as it is not going to affect affordability. Anybody will tell us that any kind of business that gets additional expenses, including taxes, will not absorb it. They eventually pass it on to the consumer.

I agree there are a lot of different components that add to inflation and the cost of living. This is just one small component. Therefore, if anything, while I do applaud this measure because it is a Conservative measure, I will be asking the government to take more of our Conservative ideas to save Canadians money, not just at the pump but also to deliver the promise of actually making groceries affordable so we have something, as the Prime Minister requested, to judge him on: the prices at the grocery store. Overall, this one measure is not going to fix affordability, but it would help. It is assistance for families and especially for our young people when fuelling up at the gas pumps.

I also agree with the members of the Liberal government who said that feeding children in schools is not a new initiative. My own band, for instance, started doing that not only for children in schools but also for seniors, because we had own-source revenue by engaging the economy. It is not new, but having to feed children in schools is at record levels in Canada, a first world country.

Record levels of people are visiting food banks in Canada in a single month, over two million, of which approximately 30% are children. Given where I come from, I can understand that. I understand the hardship and heartbreak of a middle-class family. One in five of the people who are visiting a food bank has a job. This is what I noticed as an MLA in Victoria, when I used to walk to work. I walked past the food bank. Once a week it would have a food distribution. Slowly I started seeing minivans parking outside and people eating the food they had taken from the food bank. It was hard to ignore.

This affordability issue is not what it was 20 years ago. The middle class is now affected. They are now struggling to the point where even our young, educated professionals are looking to leave Canada because of the cost of living.

● (1205)

There is a lack of opportunity. There are no projects getting approved. Nothing is moving in Canada. In terms of our young people and our future, I do not know about the rest of the people here, but where I come from, we always looked to see what the future of our country is going to be, what our province is going to be, what our region is going to be and what our community is going to be, for the benefit of ourselves and, more importantly, for the benefit of our kids and our grandkids, especially in a place like Canada.

What was the Liberal proposal at a convention? It was for those young people to try to find a better life elsewhere, abroad, maybe in the United States. The proposal was to think about a $500,000 exit tax. If they cannot afford life as it is in Canada, how are they going to afford $500,000 to leave Canada? That is cruel. It is not investing in the future. How can we invest in the future when we are not looking at how Canadians are struggling?

The Liberals are praising their dental plan and are asking how come the Conservatives keep criticizing it. When I go back to my riding, seniors approach me and tell me how they do not qualify. They make too much money under their pension. I actually stopped a senior citizen in Kitimat, who was shopping. She had one item in her cart. It was bread at 50% off because it was old bread. She did not even go to the store for bread. She goes there regularly for the opportunity to find something on sale. She had one item.

There are a lot more measures the Conservatives have proposed that the Liberal government should entertain and that should pass. The four or five proposals that the Liberals borrowed from the Conservatives and implemented in the last campaign were a good sign that the Liberals are finally waking up to how Canadians are struggling. The suspension of the fuel tax is one small measure that can help, but it is not going to be enough.

We agree that there are global situations that are making this situation worse, things that we cannot control, but there are things in Canada that we can control, including what we are talking about here today: extending the fuel tax break. The government could stop the inflationary borrowing and budgets that are being proposed. It could stop some of the projects that will increase inflation, such as the $90-billion Alto high-speed rail project. That is $90 billion that we do not have.

This is a great announcement, but it is certainly not enough. Will it affect affordability, especially for people who do not even have cars? This just keeps piling up. As we go through the debate, and I am sure a lot of members can see this, costs are continuing to go up, based on the Liberal government's own debates and based on global pressures. Can the government focus on affordability for Canadians? Within our own circle of what is Canada, can we focus on things we can do here now to help, such as what the Conservatives have been talking about since long before I got here?

We will continue to fight for affordability for Canadians, fight for young people and fight for a better Canada, but the Liberal government has to take more of the direction that is coming from this side, not just the four or five ideas it has taken from the Conservatives over the last year.

● (1210)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, as I expressed at the beginning of the discussions and debates, there are a number of ideas out there. We are very happy and grateful that the Conservatives are supporting Bill C-38. It will make a difference for Canadians. However, to address the member's comments, I will say that this is only one initiative that the government has brought in to support Canadians on the issue of affordability.

I want to follow up with a very specific question. The member made reference to a senior who did not qualify for the dental program, and that was part of the problem. Does the member support universal free access to dental care? Is that what he is advocating, because that is not—

The Deputy Speaker: I have to give a chance to the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley to respond.

Ellis Ross: Mr. Speaker, I would love to ask that senior why they do not qualify and why the government keeps getting up and trumpeting, as if this program were the best thing in the world, when a lot of the seniors, especially in my riding, do not even qualify in the first place. Why are there two signals, two messages? When we are really talking affordability, why is the senior so confused that they cannot get the dental plan that the Liberals are championing as the best thing in the world since sliced bread? Just be honest with Canadians.

Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member from Skeena—Bulkley Valley made a number of great points this morning. I was talking with a staffer. They had a five-year mortgage term ending at 1.92%, but unfortunately, five years later, now it is over 4%, so we are talking affordability. The Liberals continue to borrow at record rates. There has been a doubling of the interest rate, and a staffer was discussing, in her conversation, the affordability issue.

The legislation would help. There is no question that Bill C-38 would help with the affordability of gas. I hear it in my province, because farmers are dealing with diesel and its record prices.

However, I just want to talk about the hon. member's experience with young people and the affordability issue.

● (1215)

Ellis Ross: Mr. Speaker, it is as if every young person across Canada does not see a future here, not only in terms of the affordability of a house and the cost of living but also where their future is in a profession. We are talking around the issue of Canada's becoming an energy superpower, but there is no action. We have so many different issues with Canada, but the economy and affordability are probably number one in terms of how we move forward as a strong, independent country, because the last 10 years have actually put us in a situation where Canadians are struggling, and we are trying to figure out how we move into the new global geopolitical world we are moving into when we really do not have the strength to do it.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I find when I talk to constituents, and I do hold a lot of community meetings, that, yes, there is a huge amount of concern with affordability. As the hon. member will know, I will vote for the bill as well. However, I also hear a lot of concern from my constituents in British Columbia about how this summer we had a province-wide state of emergency over wildfires. I know that certainly there is deep concern within Skeena—Bulkley Valley about the changes in the lower water levels and impacts on salmon. I wonder if he has any comments on this other aspect of a crisis we are seeing. We cannot really deal with one at a time. We have to deal, with urgency, with both.

Ellis Ross: Mr. Speaker, that question is actually very relevant. In terms of what the governments are doing, not only federally but provincially as well, we are not adapting. We have all these measures that propose to lessen the risk, but they are not doing anything about adapting to what happening in our regions. There is no measure of activity for the provincial government of B.C., for instance, to talk about forestry management in terms of forest fire risk, but Canada should be setting an example. Canada has federal lands it is responsible for, and the Indian Act lands as well. We should be setting an example, and hopefully the Conservatives will be coming up with exactly that idea.

Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is no surprise that people are struggling with the cost of living, and it is incumbent on us as legislators not only to listen but to act. Any tax on fuel, whether it be gas or diesel, is ultimately a tax on food. Whether the government wants to admit it or not is another question for another day, but Canadians are out of money and do not have time to wait for us to agree.

I will start off by saying that while I do not think this goes far enough, it is a step in the right direction. Conservatives have been calling for the Liberals to remove taxes on fuel for months. It is nice to see that at least some of the Liberals on the other side do in fact take lessons from Conservatives. I do not believe we would be here today debating this bill had it not been for the relentless pressure from Conservatives and our Conservative caucus over the last number of years on this very topic.

Conservatives like me are fighting for Canadians, who are working hard but find themselves unable to get ahead. Some 35% of Canadians say they are anxious about money, and 28% lack emergency savings to cover basic needs. Canadian families are paying 7.8% more for transportation, while the cost of groceries rose 3.1%. Well over half, or 56% of parents, said they could not fit the cost of back-to-school supplies into their normal budgets.

To some, this might just seem like numbers, but do not be fooled. Behind every number and statistic is a story from a Canadian struggling to get by: someone who is pulling their groceries off the conveyor as the till ticks up faster than they expected, a family who was not quite able to complete the back-to-school shopping list because they just did not have the funds or the children who are no longer in organized sports because there is not enough money in the family budget to drive them there and back. These are the real stories of the real Canadians I heard from this summer, and I know that many of my colleagues heard very similar stories from their constituents.

These are Canadians who are hard-working and have done everything right, but they find themselves in a spot where inflation is going up faster than their paycheque, and they are navigating countless challenges. This summer specifically, I heard from a number of people who are navigating challenging consumer proposals, bankruptcies and foreclosures and who are facing financial ruin because they simply could not keep up for too many months in a row. In far too many of these cases, there are children involved. The kids might not fully understand what this means, but they do know that their parents are stressed out and do not quite understand why.

According to the Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy, insolvencies have climbed to levels not seen since the aftermath of the great recession. Let that sink in. We are seeing insolvencies at a rate we have not seen since the great recession, while consumer insolvencies rose another 6.9% year over year. At the same time, mortgage delinquencies have reached their highest level since 2021. Again, behind every single one of these stats is a story of a real Canadian struggling. These are heartbreaking stories, and they are becoming far too common.

Canadians already owe an average of $1.76 for every dollar of disposable household income they earn, and MNP reports that more than 40% are within $200 of insolvency at month-end. It means that 40% of Canadians are within $200 of not being able to pay their bills every single month. Many families have exhausted all of their savings, refinanced their debt and begged and borrowed simply to afford rent, mortgages and everyday necessities like groceries and school supplies. These are real-life consequences of more than a decade of Liberal mismanagement of our economy.

● (1220)

While this bill would in fact offer some relief, it is not the cure for the out-of-control inflation Canadians are still facing. If the Liberals were serious about helping Canadian families make ends meet, they would not stop at a 10¢-per-litre break and pat themselves on the back. They would adopt our plan to remove all federal taxes on gas and diesel until at least Canada Day 2027. That means giving Canadians a break from the excise tax and the GST on gas and diesel, and permanently scrapping the seven-cents-per-litre clean fuel standard and the industrial carbon tax. This could provide 25¢ of savings per litre of gas and diesel and would bring as much as $1,000 of savings to the average Canadian family.

A recent poll found that 63% of Canadians oppose the Liberal government bringing back the fuel excise tax, including 43% who strongly oppose it. There is no surprise to that because all families see are their gas prices continuing to go up month over month, or day to day, it seems. This opposition is not just concentrated in one part of the country. It crosses every region of the country: 71% in the member opposite's riding in Manitoba and Saskatchewan; 64% in British Columbia, Alberta and Atlantic Canada; 62% in Ontario; and 60% in Quebec. It is clear that Canadians are asking for it. They need relief from the cost of living crisis.

I live in rural Alberta. I represent rural Albertans. Many of my colleagues have no idea of the lengths we routinely need to travel just to live life, whether it is to go to work, take our children to school or day care, go to a medical appointment or visit family and friends. It is a 300-kilometre trip for me just to get out of town. I do not think most people in this chamber, whether they are a Conservative, Liberal or Bloc member, understand the lengths that many of us rural MPs go to to serve our constituents.

Every single penny saved at the pump gives people a choice. It gives them the choice of what food they are going to put on the table for dinner that night, which events they can attend, which bills they can pay and how they can plan for their future. It gives them agency. It makes it so they are not dependent on government for every single decision in their life.

For some across the country, the monthly gas or diesel bill is relatively small, but for many of the amazing people I represent, it is not small. It is a significant part of their monthly budget, and it seems to only ever go up. It is also not an optional line in their budget. Most people I represent cannot take transit most of the time because it either does not work for their schedule or simply does not exist at all. Most people cannot walk, as the distances are simply too far, and in the winter, the brutal prairie cold is not for the faint of heart. They often do not have a choice; they must drive, and every time fuel prices go up, they feel it.

They understand a concept that somehow seems to elude many Liberals: When fuel prices go up, grocery prices follow, because food does not just magically appear on the table like my kids sometimes think it does, or teleport to a grocery store. It gets transported on a truck. Those trucks use diesel, and the operators of those companies cannot simply absorb those costs. Freight costs then get passed on to consumers. It is really basic economics.

Conservatives are fighting to restore affordability by lowering taxes, unleashing investment, removing barriers to growth and advancing a real economic action plan that helps Canadians get ahead. The Conservative economic action plan would green-light the 500 projects that are sitting somewhere here in Ottawa on someone's desk and were supposed to move at unimaginable speeds. Conservatives supported the Liberals in trying to move those forward. We just did not imagine that those unimaginable speeds would amount to nothing.

My call to the Liberals is to get to work. Canadians are not asking for more promises. They are asking for real relief that they can actually feel in their wallets. They are working hard. They are making sacrifices and doing everything they can to provide for their families, yet too many are still falling further behind. A 10¢-per-litre reduction may provide some temporary relief, but Canadians deserve a government willing to address the broader affordability crisis and give families the certainty they need to get ahead.

Conservatives will continue to fight to lower taxes, lower costs, more investment and an economy that works—

● (1225)

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, affordability is something the Prime Minister and this government have taken very seriously from day one. I understand that the Conservatives want to focus on one aspect that deals with affordability.

I will talk about the price of gas at the pump. Prior to the Prime Minister taking office, we were paying a 17¢-a-litre carbon tax. The Prime Minister got rid of that 17¢ a litre and made it permanent. Then we put in a temporary suspension of 10¢ a litre, and that is what Bill C-38 would do.

The Prime Minister understands affordability, and we are moving in the right direction with a holistic approach.

Laila Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, Conservatives have long called for the abolition of the carbon tax on fuel. That is nothing new. We are happy that the Prime Minister finally listened. In the last Parliament with the last Liberal government, which had a lot of the same faces around the cabinet table, the health minister actually said that Canadians were going to burn to death if they go on a summer road trip. He was quite animated in his feelings on this.

This is a small, temporary measure that is a small step in the right direction. What Conservatives are saying is that it does not go far enough and to listen to us. We are trying to work with the government and do what is best for Canadians. All that is stopping the Liberals from doing it is to open their ears and listen.

● (1230)

Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think what is being lost on the Liberal side is the compounding taxes that happen and how they translate to the consumer when they either go to the grocery store or buy everyday products. I would like my colleague to expand on that, because explaining it another time might help the Liberals understand.

Laila Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, who has been a fearless leader for the Canadian Armed Forces and Canadian Armed Forces families and a relentless champion of Canada's Snowbirds.

This is just it. It is not about the fact that the Liberals are removing 10¢ a litre. It is that Conservatives do not believe that 10¢ a litre is going to be enough to create the type of pressure relief that Canadian families need. I do not know if members opposite were in their ridings talking to people struggling over the summer. I was and I know my colleague was, and what we heard is that 10¢ a litre, which would equate to somewhere in the range of $250 for the average Canadian family for a year, is not going to make a difference, but 25¢ a litre, which is approximately $1,000 for an average family, would. It is simple.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member can review her own math. I question the math she just provided.

Let us take a more holistic approach.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: No, her numbers are wrong.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, let us take a holistic approach in dealing with this issue. Does the member believe that the Conservatives should support other programs that provide support on affordability, like the dental care program and the nutritional school food program? Are those not programs that help with affordability?

Laila Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, what I heard loud and clear when I was touring my riding and meeting with Canadians from coast to coast to coast this summer is that they want agency. They want to make decisions as to how they spend their own money. They think they can spend their money a lot better than Ottawa can spend their money. They might have different priorities. Some of the programs mentioned by the Liberals are well and good for the people who can access them, but far too many Canadians are stuck on waiting lists or are waiting in line trying to access those services, so they do not do anything for affordability for the thousands and thousands of Canadians who are stuck waiting in line trying to get access or stuck waiting for the schools that have not done anything.

One of the biggest frustrations, whether it be with the school food program or the day care program, which are provincial responsibilities, is that the Liberals have not worked as well with the provinces as I think they could have or should have to deliver these services. What they have done is create layers of bureaucracy, which means that right now over 30% of food bank users in Canada are children. That is a shame, and that is a shame on the Liberals.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this place for the first time to give a speech since our summer recess. I spent much of the time since I last saw members in this place, as we all have been doing, travelling through my riding. It may look like a small dot on a postage stamp to people who are looking at it quickly, but actually, given that it is five separate small islands, Saturna, Salt Spring, Mayne, Pender and Galiano, ferry transit between them makes it difficult to get to all parts of the community. Certainly, it takes a lot of time to travel with B.C. ferries. I am certainly supporting the motion from my colleague just down the way here, from Courtenay—Alberni, to find ways in the next budget to provide some funding to assist and have some equity between the way Atlantic Canada ferries are subsidized and B.C. ferries.

I am detracting from my main point, which is that on the Saanich Peninsula, as the name of my riding, Saanich—Gulf Islands, suggests, I represent quite disparate areas geographically. Getting to nine different communities, as I do twice a year, to make sure I hold community meetings as conveniently as possible for all my constituents, means that I have just been on a very inspiring and constantly humbling experience of listening to my constituents in each of the five small southern Gulf Islands and throughout the Saanich Peninsula, from the very tip of it at the very northern part of the peninsula, near Swartz Bay and the airport, all the way down into areas that are covered by the MP for Victoria. We share some territories there.

The concerns from constituents in Saanich—Gulf Islands are not unlike concerns from constituents I imagine my colleagues have heard across the country. There is a lot of concern about the cost of living, particularly around housing. There is a lot of concern about access to medical care, access to a family doctor and provision of health care services. In my communities, everywhere I went, there was the concern of the climate crisis. This summer, British Columbia had a state of emergency declared for the whole province as fires burned out of control. It was terrifying to see the sights out of Peachland and the areas around the Okanagan. We also had extreme weather events throughout British Columbia this summer. As a former Cape Bretoner, my heart broke to see the roads washed out and the floods and the loss of life in Cape Breton from the floods there.

In other words, whenever I am travelling through my community of Saanich—Gulf Islands, I know that what I am hearing resonates with Canadians across the country. There is no question that Canadians are concerned about the cost of living, and I will be supporting Bill C-38, which we debate now, but I do so with some misgivings, because it, once again, piles on the notion that we are heavily taxed, which some Canadians are and some Canadians are not, and that a temporary relief measure like this will make a real difference.

I also have a long memory, and I remember that back in 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper made the fuel excise tax permanent in the 2008 budget, which was one of the better things he did in terms of public policy. Again, in the 2013 budget, he confirmed and committed that the municipal order of government would be able to access those funds as a predictable, reliable source for public transit. This has changed over time in terms of where that funding comes from.

For municipal orders of government across Canada, one of the concerns I have is, as we temporarily suspend the excise fuel tax, not only does it have impacts on our overall debt and deficit, because that is just money not coming in to the general federal revenue at a time when we have unprecedented levels of deficit already, but it also creates confusion for municipal orders of government. I have spoken to mayors who say that yes, they are told by the federal government that there are other infrastructure funds and they can apply through those, but they are not as transparent, not as predictable and not seen to be as reliable for helping people who are looking for public transit.

I do have a number of points to make about this, but while we look at fuel taxes in today's bill, let us just for a moment focus on public transit. This country, for a wealthy industrialized country, a member of the G7, has an embarrassingly poor public transit system, particularly in rural and remote areas of Canada, particularly if we are looking for an affordable form of transportation like a bus or a train.

● (1235)

If a person owns their own vehicle, yes they can mostly get from A to B, but if they do not, they can be in some peril, recalling that the findings of the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls included a strong recommendation that Canada commit to a ground transportation system that was affordable and reliable in rural and remote areas, because it is the vulnerability of the poor that places indigenous women and girls hitchhiking on the Highway of Tears.

For people trying to get from Prince George to Vancouver, are within rural interior B.C., or for that matter, are in Saskatchewan or Alberta, we used to have a bus service that was quite reliable in most provinces, but it retreated everywhere and all at once. We used to have many more routes on Via Rail, and they used to be more affordable.

I have heard Alto mentioned a few times in this place. However, the Green Party thinks that Alto needs major overhauls to become what it could be, but in the meantime, it does absolutely nothing for Canadians who do not live in the Windsor-Quebec corridor. It does nothing for people in rural parts of New Brunswick where medical care can be a five-, six- or eight-hour drive from a hospital. If it is winter and the roads are icy, or for a senior, there are no alternatives to get there except to get in a car and drive.

Again, while we are talking about this fuel excise tax, because of its historical connection to transit, I wanted to use this occasion to make a few points on that. I am hoping that the federal government brings it forward in its next budget. I had begged the Prime Minister before the 2026-27 budget. When I met with the Prime Minister in early October 2025, I made this very point that we need affordable ground transportation in this country. We do not have it particularly for rural and remote Canadians, but we are also looking at a lot less predictability around the funds for urban public transit.

Going to this piece of legislation and the focus on a temporary suspension of fuel excise taxes, there will be some ways in which that assists some Canadians: those who are buying gas. Again, if a person cannot afford to own their own car, they are not buying gas for a car.

According to Statistics Canada, one out of 10 Canadians right now is living below the poverty line. That should command our attention. There is a growing gap in this country between the wealthiest and the poorest. I remember when I used to feel sort of complacent or self-satisfied as a Canadian thinking, “Well, that gap between the rich and the poorest is in the United States. It is not so much here.”

We actually are going through a very significant shift. The middle class is feeling the crunch. When we talk about the affordability crisis, we are largely talking about the fact that, as some of my colleagues from other parties have already mentioned, we have families with two incomes who still cannot make ends meet. There is that crunch in the middle class, and affordability has become increasingly difficult. What has happened to the income distribution in this country? We may be in a class war where the upper class or the billionaire class has already won, and we did not even know there was a war.

Again, one in 10 Canadians lives below the poverty line, but what is happening to the wealthiest? According to Forbes, in 2000, it could track 15 billionaires in Canada. I am not against billionaires. Well, actually, I kind of am. I think that billionaires should be taxed so that we can reduce them to mere millionaires so that they have to count their pennies like the rest of us mere millionaires. I am kidding, obviously. I am not in that group, but it does strike me as something that should command our attention that, right now, there are 76 to 82 billionaires in Canada. Again, 26 years ago, there were 15. Now, there are somewhere between 76 and 82 billionaires. Some Canadians are doing quite well. Some Canadians do not worry about the fuel excise tax. In fact, they do not worry about their income tax either.

● (1240)

We are not taxing their wealth, which we really need to look at. We need to look at taxing assets. For what it is worth, in the last election campaign, thanks to the Parliamentary Budget Office and the act that oversees it, political parties had the right to ask for the Parliamentary Budget Office to give all political parties access to an analyst to look at budgetary planks that the party was looking at to see what the PBO thought of budget proposals.

It happens that the Green Party platform, of all the party platforms in the 2025 election campaign, was the one that brought us closest to balanced budgets. I do not think anyone saw that in the news because, despite our efforts, we did not get any news coverage of the fact that we had the platform that brought us closest to balanced budgets. We did that through a combination of measures.

One that was very successful was a tax on financial transactions. It used to be called the Tobin tax. In the late 1990s, the House of Commons passed a motion in support of Canada pursuing the Tobin tax. We applied it domestically and looked at what would happen if we put a 20¢ tax on every $100 of transactions in the stock market or currency transactions. Now that is not going to affect those people who are struggling in the middle class, nor does it have any impact at all on the one in 10 Canadians who are below the poverty line. However, applied to stock market transactions and currency transactions, it could bring in $55 billion to Canada's general revenues. That could really make an impact for Canadians who are struggling. That could provide the transit that people need to get from A to B when they are in the group of people who either cannot afford to own a car or find it much more convenient not to have to operate one, particularly in urban areas. Again, rural and remote Canada also needs ground transit.

When we look at the current situation and the price of gas being one of the main drivers of inflation right now due to the decision in February of this year by the United States and Israel to launch attacks on Iran. These violate the United Nations charter. I suppose I could be charitable and say the Prime Minister misspoke when he initially said that Canada was supportive of what the U.S. was doing in bombing Iran. Regime change has never actually occurred through foreign countries violating international laws to bomb them. In any case, ever since that occurred, the price of gas has been spiking, especially since the Strait of Hormuz started being blocked, which was entirely predictable, although somehow Trump and his advisers did not predict it.

The effect of higher gas prices has been devastating on inflation and the cost of food. It has had a real impact, certainly for North Americans, and globally it has created a lot of instability in markets. It has created a lot of concern. One thing it has also created is a windfall level of profits for the oil and gas industry.

Here we are debating a minor change that will affect the Treasury of Canada by increasing debt and deficit, but why are we not talking about the need for an excess profit tax on the industry that right now is essentially war profiteering? The oil and gas sector has, in the last year or so, had an extraordinary increase in profits, and some of it has certainly been to the benefit of Canada's economy. Our government books and the Alberta provincial government books are better off for high fuel prices, but it certainly has not helped the average Canadian or for that matter the average American or people around the world who are struggling.

They are also struggling, as I mentioned earlier, because of the climate crisis and the impact of having to become climate refugees, sometimes several times in the same year. I think of people in northern Ontario, near Wabakimi Provincial Park, in first nations communities that burned to the ground and had inadequate preparations for such events because the November 2025 budget gave scandalously scant attention to the need to protect communities and to build up a national firefighting force to buy water bombers.

● (1245)

What we had was a commitment to lease water bombers and that was it. We were going to lease three water bombers over four years. There was nothing for what we need to do for flood protection and for building up. By the way, firefighters in this country are not even classed under occupational health and safety rules as first responders. They are at the back of the bus in terms of the protection for their own lives, their own salaries and their own pensions.

I will go back to the issue of windfall profit taxes. According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, if we applied windfall profit taxes on the oil and gas industry, that could bring into the coffers of the Government of Canada between $18 billion and $48 billion. Again, that could assist us quite a lot in paying down the debt. With respect to the $34 billion, for some reason, I like to convert billions back to millions so we can think about what it really means to be a billionaire and what it really means for the Canadian government to spend the money it takes in through taxes. One billion dollars being 1,000 million dollars, we spent $34,000 million, without a single vote in this place, to build the Trans Mountain pipeline through a Crown corporation that we are now proposing would build a second pipeline. This is an outrageous waste of money, where the public purse is paying for something that the private sector does not think is worth investing in because there is no business case. However, if we brought in a windfall profit tax on the oil and gas sector and brought in $18 billion to $48 billion there and if we brought in, as we are advocating, a financial transaction tax to bring in $55 billion there, yes, we could start paying down debt and deficit.

I meant to mention one thing about the pipelines that I forgot. The hon. Minister of Energy and Natural Resources was in British Columbia earlier this summer, and he actually said that the Trans Mountain pipeline was making “oodles” of money. To correct the record while I have a chance, in fact while the Trans Mountain pipeline in its year-to-year operations is more than breaking even and making some money, the revenues returned to the Government of Canada by the Trans Mountain pipeline have yet to be sufficient to pay the interest on the debt Canadians incurred to build it. If someone is making money in a normal business context, if they have spent $34 billion to build their business, personally I do not think they are making any money until they pay that off. They have a $34-billion debt and not one penny has been paid down but are under the assumption that pipelines are like something the tooth fairy leaves under one's pillow and there is no actual cost to them. However, it is $34 billion and now the government is proposing to spend $40 billion for a project that has no private sector proponent.

Regarding this bill, if we are going to provide real relief to Canadians and real measures for affordability, we do need to look at excess profit taxes on the very monopolistic small group of grocery store chains that we have in this country. We need to help farmers. Desperately, we need to help farmers so they can get food from their farms to the tables of Canadians, healthy local Canadian food. I applaud the measures the government has brought in for making greenhouses more accessible, but we need to make land accessible to young farmers and we need to do everything we can to ensure that the grocery store chains buy local and promote local so that our farmers can continue to provide healthy food to Canadians.

We would not do much in Bill C-38 to actually deal with the affordability crisis. Yes, the Liberals have taken a page out of a position advocated by the Conservatives last year. Yes, I will vote for it, but I am concerned. Where is the government in really helping Canadians with affordability? Where is the help for remote and rural Canadians to get transit that is affordable? Where is the help to ensure that the poorest of the poor are not bearing a larger tax burden than the richest of the rich? It is time to actually consider tax fairness in this country, taxing wealth and excess profits of transnational corporations.

● (1250)

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always like working with my hon. colleague, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. We always have great conversations.

What I am hearing in my riding when I go door to door is that people have confidence in what our Prime Minister is doing, what measures we are putting in place and how they help people in my riding. I live north of Montreal. A lot of people work in Montreal but live in my riding, so they spend a lot of time sitting in traffic on Autoroute 15, which is one of the most congested places in Quebec. This measure would give them a certain amount of relief.

I find this measure very balanced. We would be giving relief to people at the gas pumps now but maintaining revenue in the future to make sure we can invest in public transit because public transit is definitely a problem. I would like to know from my hon. colleague how she finds this balanced approach a good measure.

[*Translation*]

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Les Pays-d'en-Haut.

I know him well; he was once my neighbour in the House. Before the Liberal majority, I sat sit with them on the other side of the House.

[*English*]

I know that his riding depends a lot on the ski industry. We had better do something about reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Otherwise there will be no ski industry in the country because we will not have enough snow to sustain it.

Meanwhile, I am voting for this. I take his point that we want to be sure that we are reducing stresses for people today who are spending too much on gas, no question, but if we really want to invest in a future for Canada, it is time to act on the climate crisis and reduce excess profits to the big oil and gas industries that are making out like bandits at both ends.

● (1255)

Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that this is not only questions, it is also comments. I would like to make a comment regarding my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands. I thank her for her intervention. I know she is not a millionaire. I know she is not a billionaire, but she does have a heart of gold. I thank her for the words that she brought forward.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I just have to say that this side of the House is not bad for good neighbours.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that was a really nice comment, I must say.

I would look to the leader of the Green Party. I can appreciate some sensitivity on the issue that is up for debate today from the Green Party's perspective. I am wondering if the member could provide some of her thoughts on how indirectly government can support people on the issue.

I have talked a great deal about, for example, the dental program, the pharmacare program and the grocery benefit program. Does she have any further thoughts on the issue of affordability and ways, whether direct or indirect, that the government can look at them?

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I think we have to really be bold. We need a guaranteed livable income to eradicate poverty in the country. Poverty costs our whole society. It is not a matter of charity. A wealthy, industrialized country like Canada should not have one in 10 Canadians living below the poverty line. We should not have people setting up tent cities. We should be able to ensure that every Canadian has what it takes to live, and that allows people to not fear clawbacks if they start making money somewhere else. If we are really serious about it, end the class warfare and declare that Canada wins by bringing in a guaranteed livable income.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, just as a follow-up on that particular wish that the leader would like to see, could she cite another country, in the G7 or G20, that has what it is that she would like to see here in Canada?

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, we have a very active anti-poverty caucus that is all-party. It includes members of Parliament and senators. We have had lots of expert witnesses. We would be the first.

Honestly, there is tons of research that shows that it would save our health care system. Poverty is the number one social determinant of health. It would save our criminal justice system and make our society fair. It would reduce costs everywhere. With the advent of AI coming for people's jobs, putting in place a guaranteed livable income is the best way we can protect ourselves for the future. We would be the first.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives want to do something about gas and diesel taxes. We want to see all of those taxes scrapped until Canada Day 2027 because Canadians are struggling. That is what I am going to talk about today. I am also splitting my time with the member for Edmonton Griesbach who is going to continue the argument.

Why do we want to scrap all gas and diesel taxes? They are costing Canadians money that they do not have right now. Anyone who has gone to the grocery store recently can see it is grim. I was looking to buy some chicken thighs and a small pack of chicken thighs at a not-so-fancy grocery chain was $43. When I was looking at it, somebody said, “I think that's a deal.” That is insane.

We want to see the gas tax scrapped until Canada Day next year because when that tax is in place, not only does it affect consumers at the pump who are spending money they do not have, but it also affects the cost of everything. It affects the producers who are harvesting, who need diesel for their combines. That cost is then passed along to the consumer. It takes gas and diesel to transport the goods that consumers need to buy. When those taxes are on top of that fuel, who pays for it? It is the people who are listening to this speech today. That is why the Conservatives' core focus for the fall is to save Canadians money. This is why we are calling for the government to scrap all gas and diesel taxes until Canada Day 2027.

The bill that we are debating today that the Liberals put forward does not do that. They had an opportunity to work collaboratively in the House with the opposition, which is fiscally responsible, and take our recommendations, but they are not doing that. To me, this underscores the fact that the Liberals and the Prime Minister go out and talk to people using a lot of buzzwords and a lot of aggrandizing on the international stage. However, I am not seeing a lot of results when it comes to saving Canadians money.

Make no mistake; what I am hearing about in the good riding of Calgary Nose Hill, and I am always pleased to stand up and fight on behalf of my constituents, is that they need to have money saved. They cannot afford to live. They are worried about their jobs, particularly with trade uncertainty. They want to be safe and they want to see immigration fixed. All of these points can come together in some of the policies that Conservatives have been pushing, but we are just not seeing them come forward in this particular bill.

I want to show members how imperative the Conservative proposal is to have the gas and diesel tax scrapped well into next year, which is not in this bill. Money Mentors reported that 49% of working Canadians feel less financially secure than they did a year ago. That is half of Canadians. This is not some esoteric guessing game. Half of Canadians are saying they do not feel as secure as they used to feel. This is particularly true for young Canadians. I know there are a lot of Canadians of secondary school age who cannot find jobs, and they are also asking what their future holds. It is imperative that we fight on behalf of those people.

People are paying more for goods because of a decade of Liberal inflationary deficits. Those deficits have actually ballooned under the Prime Minister. I thought the Prime Minister was supposed to get our fiscal house in order. In fact, he has done the opposite.

People ask me why they should care about deficits. Deficits matter because they add to our debt. When we add to the nation's debt, we have to pay debt servicing costs. It is like the interest on one's credit card. When we are paying for that, we cannot invest in other things. I heard that the Government of Canada is now paying more for the interest on its credit card than it is on health care. That is not great. We need to ensure that, if the government is spending money on things, it is spending money on things or making fiscal decisions that are going to save Canadians money.

● (1300)

That is why Conservatives are calling for the gas and diesel tax to be scrapped well into next year, which this bill would not do. It does not go far enough. That is a key objective.

The other thing is that we have to talk about how we save Canadian jobs. Eliminating the gas and diesel tax well into next year would also provide some investment certainty for certain types of businesses that are trying to figure out their operating costs in an environment where there is a lot of uncertainty, which is what is happening in the country right now. This is why we as Conservatives are so dead set on putting forward measures that would save Canadians money, and their jobs as well.

I serve as the Conservative Party's immigration shadow minister. I also serve as the vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. The reality is that the Liberals brought too many people in too fast for housing, health care and jobs to keep up. That is not fair to anyone. It is not fair to the immigrants who came to Canada to build a better life. It is not fair to the Canadians who are here. In fact, that tension of bringing in too many people too fast has eroded Canada's consensus on immigration. Now we have a lot of people competing for jobs that are rapidly disappearing.

That is why Conservatives, including me and our broader team, are arguing for far lower immigration levels. We are arguing for the government to take measures to deal with this.

CBC reported that there will be two million people in Canada by the end of this year who are on expired or expiring visas. We know that there are 500,000 undocumented persons and people who do not have a legal reason to be in the country. They need to leave. The government needs to have a plan to deport these people. It is not something that is comfortable for Canadians to talk about, but if people do not have a legal reason to be in the country, particularly because the Liberal government brought too many people in too fast, that problem has to be addressed. We are also going to continue to push those issues.

When I hear the Liberals come forward and make all these announcements, they never seem to reach the people in my community. I think about the multitude of announcements they have made, and all I hear in my community is that people are waking up feeling like they can buy less groceries. They are less convinced that they can make their rent payments. Many of the people in my community would love to be making a mortgage payment, but they cannot afford to buy a house.

Again, we are talking about saving Canadians money. That is why Conservatives are putting forward proposals like scrapping the GST on new home builds up to $1.3 million. That would save Canadians who are buying homes up to $65,000 on a new house. Those are common-sense measures that we do not see reflected in this bill that would directly impact the Canadians who are struggling to get ahead and pay their bills. This affects all Canadians. It is not just young Canadian, but seniors on fixed incomes. Inflation is in a lot of ways unique to Canada because of the policies and procedures the Liberals have put in place over the last several years. People cannot afford that.

What I would like to see, and what I know everybody in the Conservative Party would like to see, is for the government, instead of bringing in this bill or even amending it, to take our suggestion to scrap the tax on gas and diesel well into next year. We propose Canada Day. The bill would not do that. I would like to see from the government not just announcements to spend government money, but announcements that would directly impact affordability, directly drive down grocery costs and directly make the lives of the constituents in my riding more affordable and more stable. This is so important. It is why we are here.

We are in an economic crisis. The government put us in a weak position before this happened, but now we have to deal with it. Having bills that are just half measures is not going to cut it for the people in Calgary Nose Hill or across Canada. I implore the government to take the Conservative proposal to change this bill so that the gas tax is cut on diesel and gas up to Canada Day 2027.

● (1305)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on what I see as a bit of irony coming from the member opposite. She was part of the Stephen Harper government when it made the decision to increase the number of temporary students coming to Canada. It was hoping to achieve over 300,000. That is a well-documented policy approach by the Conservative Party at the time. The combination of achieving that particular goal and the pandemic played a huge role in where we were a year ago.

The Prime Minister made a commitment to stabilize immigration and is doing just that. Does the member see any issue with a newly elected Prime Minister, along with 70-plus newly elected Liberal members of Parliament, doing what he committed to doing in the last election?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite vigorously defended Justin Trudeau opening the border at Roxham Road. He vigorously defended bringing in hundreds and hundreds of thousands of temporary students in about three years. I think it was close to a million.

The member is one of the most vigorous defenders of Justin Trudeau in Canadian history for his constituents. Their MP defended Justin Trudeau. That is what he did for a living. Instead of being in his community, he defended Justin Trudeau. He also defended the changes Justin Trudeau made under our previous government, which were to lower the number of temporary foreign workers. We are now calling for the elimination of that and a special program for agriculture workers. However, mark my words: The member defends Justin Trudeau. He is a rabid Justin Trudeau defender, and his record in Hansard shows that.

● (1310)

Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague gave a compelling speech with regard to Canada's economic state, the inflationary measures the government has put in place and how they are a net detriment to the Canadian people. One of the statements she made is that the level of inflation we are experiencing in Canada is in fact unique; it is problematic to us.

The current Liberal government would like Canadians to believe that it is being experienced globally. However, that is not the case. Canada is in fact a stand-alone nation in the way that inflation is impacting its people and driving up the cost of everything. I wonder if my colleague would care to expand on that further.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, that is such a great point, and I agree with everything my colleague just said.

I want to emphasize something. I just ragged on Justin Trudeau. He is actually more fiscally responsible than the current Prime Minister is. Can members believe that? Justin Trudeau developed a more fiscally responsible budget than the current Prime Minister did. How is that possible? I thought the Prime Minister was supposed to be super awesome on the economy, yet, to my colleague's point, the Prime Minister is raising the deficit to historic banana levels.

Anybody who is watching this is not going to say that they see the results of that. They do see the results of that. They see increased costs. They see their rents increasing. They see less housing. They see less groceries and less protein in their baskets at the grocery store. This is because of what my colleague said. When the government puts forward inflationary deficits, which Canada has done and is unique in doing in the G7 right now, costs go up for average Canadians. Conservatives are going to save Canadians money.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I like it when I can agree with my friend from Calgary Nose Hill. It does not happen all the time, but I always like it when we agree.

One of the things I found maddening was when I discovered that the target for immigration of half a million people a year adopted by the previous government was a recommendation that came out of the blue from McKinsey. We are hiring management consultants. We never had a debate in this place about it. Canadians might think that if a target was set of half a million people a year, we must have had a committee study and it must have been in Parliament.

Does my friend from Calgary Nose Hill have any updates on how we are doing in getting rid of consultants?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to report to my colleague that those consultants have now been further embedded in the government. I am thinking specifically about Dominic Barton and Mark Wiseman. They were advocates for allowing 100 million people into Canada in a very short period of time. This was called the Century Initiative. Those policies were embedded within the Trudeau government, which the government's deputy House leader just defended vigorously. Of course, that is fair to nobody. Too many people too fast is the Liberal legacy, and it eroded Canada's consensus on immigration.

Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to this act to amend the Excise Tax Act and extend the federal fuel excise tax relief. At its core, the legislation would do something very simple. It would extend the suspension of the federal excise tax on gasoline, diesel and aviation fuel until January 31, 2027. Then the tax would come back. On February 1, the government would bring it back at half the regular rate, and on April 1, the regular excise tax rates would return.

Canadians need relief at the pumps, and Conservatives have been pushing for exactly that. The Liberals originally planned to bring this tax back after Labour Day, and Conservatives pushed for the relief to continue. Canadians made clear that they are struggling with the cost of living, and the government changed its timeline. Now we are asking the Prime Minister to listen again. Conservatives are proposing to extend broader federal fuel tax relief until at least Canada Day 2027, because families in Edmonton Griesbach and right across the country are still struggling to afford their lives. They need to fill their cars, buy groceries, heat their homes and get to work without wondering what new cost is coming next.

Under the bill, the current suspension would continue through January, and beginning February 1 the federal excise tax on gasoline would come back at five cents per litre. Diesel and aviation fuel would come back at two cents per litre. By April, the regular rates would be back. Conservatives believe that Canadians should get that relief for longer.

If the Prime Minister recognizes that lowering fuel taxes helps Canadians today, why not extend that relief until at least Canada Day, and why stop with the excise tax? Why not look at other federal costs on fuel? Why not look at the GST? Conservatives under Prime Minister Harper cut the GST from 7% to 5%, and that relief stayed.

Conservatives are calling for all federal taxes on gas and diesel to be removed until at least Canada Day 2027. That includes the GST and the cost associated with the clean fuel regulations, because every dollar matters to a family trying to make its budget work.

Take a family filling up a 60-litre tank. At 10¢ a litre, that is six dollars in federal excise tax relief every time they fill up. That six dollars becomes $12, then $18 and then $24. For a family with two vehicles, it adds up even faster. That matters when they are buying groceries, when the mortgage payment is due, when the kids need new shoes or when the hydro bill comes in.

The impact goes well beyond the family filling up at the local gas station. I think about the farmer, the trucker, the contractor or the small business owner. Fuel is not optional for these Canadians. It is the cost of doing business. A trucker cannot deliver food without diesel. A farmer cannot operate equipment without fuel. A contractor cannot carry lumber and tools to a job site on the bus. For millions of Canadians, driving is not a luxury; it is how they earn a living, and fuel is built into the cost of almost everything. Somebody grew the food, somebody processed it, somebody put it on a truck and somebody drove that truck to the store. Every step costs money, and fuel is part of that cost. When we lower the cost of moving goods, we help lower the cost of doing business right across this country.

The same goes for construction. Liberals keep talking in the House about building more homes, but talk is cheap. It does not build homes. Canadians do not need another list of projects sitting on paper. They need shovels in the ground. They need homes built. They need mines opened. They need roads, pipelines and infrastructure moving. They need Canadian resources getting to market, and most importantly they need the jobs that come with all of it.

A project does not employ a worker because Ottawa announced it. It creates opportunity when somebody actually builds it. That is how we grow this economy. That is how we raise paycheques, and that is ultimately what affordability is all about.

● (1315)

It is not just what Canadians pay; it is also what Canadians earn. Canadians need jobs. They need investment. They need businesses expanding and hiring. They need projects moving from an announcement to a construction site. That is how Canadians get ahead. People should keep more of what they earn. Small businesses should have room to grow. Workers should receive bigger paycheques.

That brings me to another major economic challenge facing Canadian workers and businesses, the trade war with the United States. Tariffs raise costs. There is no question about that. Trading tariffs back and forth does not make groceries cheaper or businesses more competitive.

The Prime Minister has spent considerable time pursuing new economic relationships in Europe, but Europe is not going to simply replace the United States. Look at our auto sector. Statistics Canada reported that more than 93% of our motor vehicle exports go south of the border. That is the reality that Canadian auto workers are facing. We can pursue opportunities in Europe. We can diversify our trade somewhat. We can sell more Canadian products around the world, but European customers are not going to replace the 1.5 million Canadian vehicles sold annually to the U.S.A. Our auto industry was built around an integrated North American market. Right now, that market is being disrupted by tariffs.

The Prime Minister has to get to work. He has to get the trade war resolved. He has to get the tariffs off Canadian workers and Canadian businesses. Canadian auto workers cannot afford to wait while their largest export market becomes more expensive to access. Canadian manufacturers cannot plan investments when they do not know what the rules will be six months from now, and Canadian businesses cannot simply be told to find another market and move on.

The United States is our largest trading partner. That relationship matters. The Prime Minister needs to get back to work here at home, get back to the table with the United States and get this trade war resolved. That is what he promised in the last election. Canadian workers need results.

The government claims it is serious about affordability, so it should be looking at every opportunity to lower costs and strengthen the Canadian economy. Lower the cost of fuel. Get our products to market. Remove the barriers to building homes. Cut unnecessary red tape. Create the conditions for businesses to invest, expand and hire. Protect Canada's access to its largest trading partner.

The Liberal government cannot tax Canadians into prosperity, try as it might, and it cannot replace economic results with announcements. International meetings have their place, and new trade relationships have their place, but Canadians should be able to look at what their government is doing and see those efforts producing results here at home: more jobs, more investment, more homes, more projects getting built and paycheques that actually go further.

Canadians are doing their part: the single mother driving to work every morning, the tradesman loading his truck before sunrise, the farmer putting fuel in his equipment, the trucker moving Canadian goods across this enormous country, and the small business owner trying to make payroll. Those are the people we should be thinking about when we debate the bill. They benefit from paying less tax on fuel.

The question is straightforward. If extending the relief through January helps Canadians, why not give them a few more months? Why not extend broader fuel tax relief until at least Canada Day 2027? Give Canadian families more time with lower fuel costs. Give farmers and truckers more breathing room. Give small businesses more time with lower operating costs.

● (1320)

Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about the automotive sector in Canada being built on the concept of integration between Canada and the United States. I do not think there is anybody in the House who would disagree with that, but what I want to hear from the member is what his proposed solution is to this. Integration depends on both countries being interested in trade. What we have seen since the new administration has come along is that the United States is moving away from that. It is no longer interested in the integration the member talks about.

He can stand here and say until he is blue in the face that the Prime Minister needs to get back to work, but the reality of the situation is that if one side is no longer interested in that integration, there is really not much one can do other than to provide supports for workers and look for new opportunities. Can the member explain what he means by “get back to work”, when the objective is clear?

● (1325)

Kerry Diotte: Mr. Speaker, clearly the United States is our biggest trading partner. The Prime Minister ran a whole campaign saying he was the person who would get a deal with the United States. Where is it? Why not get back to the table with our largest trading partner?

Tariffs upon tariffs do not benefit Canadians. We have to get back to the table. We have to get a tariff-free deal with the United States of America, our biggest trading partner. We just cannot sit back and say we are going to replace that market with the European market. It does not work that way.

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I found it interesting yesterday during question period that the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources accused me, and Conservatives generally, of scaring Canadians. I would argue, and did yesterday, that the truth is what we are actually doing is hearing Canadians.

I would like to ask my colleague to give us a couple of examples of where he has heard from Canadians about the struggles they are going through and what extending a full relief of gas tax until next Canada Day could mean for them.

Kerry Diotte: Mr. Speaker, I hear that question all the time, just going into a grocery store. Every penny counts these days. People are so hard pressed.

As my other colleague was talking about, the wild spending by the Liberal government fuels inflation. It drives all the costs up. This little bit of a break is good, but it should go further. We should get it until Canada Day.

Vince Gasparro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's remarks quite intently. At one point he mentioned that tariffs upon tariffs are not helpful. The fact of the matter is that countertariffs that we are placing on American goods are about protecting Canadian businesses and Canadian workers.

If the hon. member does not believe in our government's defending Canadian workers and businesses, what does he agree with?

Kerry Diotte: Mr. Speaker, we have already seen the result of the tit-for-tat tariffs, because Canadian businesses are being hurt. That is the great irony. The government goes after the U.S. and slaps on a tariff, but Canadian businesses are actually going out of business because of it.

We have to get back to the table and negotiate tariff-free access to the United States of America, our biggest trading partner. We are not going to replace it with Europe, despite the fact that the Prime Minister spends more time in Europe than he does here in the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

Tatiana Auguste (Terrebonne, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with the member for Bourassa.

The global economy is going through a period of considerable uncertainty. New unwarranted tariffs imposed by the United States are creating uncertainty for Canadian workers, families and businesses. At the same time, ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and Europe continue to put pressure on global markets and drive up prices. Although we have no control over decisions made elsewhere in the world, we can control how we respond to them.

As Canadians continue to face economic uncertainty and a rising cost of living, affordability remains a priority for families and businesses across the country. That is why our government continues to take action. I am therefore pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-38, the Canadian fuel affordability act, which seeks to extend federal fuel excise tax relief with respect to gasoline, diesel fuel and aviation fuel.

Earlier this year, the Government of Canada temporarily suspended this tax to help Canadians cope with the rising cost of living and fuel prices. The day the pause took effect, gas prices dropped 11¢ a litre, proving that the savings were quickly passed on to consumers. This measure actually benefits all Canadians, even those who do not drive. When global energy prices go up, the consequences go far beyond the cost of a tank of gas. Transportation costs go up, delivery costs go up, operating costs go up and, ultimately, consumers end up paying more for the goods and services they need every day.

In light of this reality, our government decided to take action. The result is savings for millions of Canadians who drive to work, drive their kids to sports or otherwise have to get around on a daily basis. Another benefit is reducing transportation and operating costs for Canadian businesses. Extending this measure in the current context is a no-brainer. That is why we believe it is important to maintain that support.

Bill C-38 therefore proposes to extend the suspension of the federal excise tax on fuel until January 31, 2027. Then, in the months of February and March, rates will be restored to only half of their usual level before a full return to the regular rate on April 1, 2027. Thanks to Bill C-38, Canadians will continue to benefit until January 31, 2027, from tax relief of up to 10¢ a litre on gas and four cents a litre on diesel. During February and March, the relief will continue at a rate of five cents a litre on gas and two cents a litre on diesel. This is a balanced, gradual and responsible approach. It provides greater predictability for families and businesses, while facilitating a gradual return to the usual rates.

This bill is about affordability. Across the country, families are trying to make every dollar count. They have to pay their mortgage or rent, buy groceries, and cover the cost of daily commuting. In many parts of Canada, a car remains a necessity. For many Canadians, especially in rural areas and even in regions surrounding major urban centres, a car is not a luxury. It is a necessity. It is an essential tool for getting to work, accessing services and participating in the economy. Bill C-38 recognizes this reality and aims to provide additional relief to households that continue to feel the effects of the rising cost of living.

However, as I explained earlier, its importance extends far beyond motorists. Think of the truck drivers who transport goods from one end of the country to the other. Think of the farmers who supply Canadians with food. Think of the entrepreneurs in the construction industry. Think of the school buses that take our children to school. When fuel costs rise, it has a ripple effect throughout the economy. It has an impact on the cost of food, building materials and consumer goods. Bill C-38 helps alleviate these pressures and supports the sectors that drive the Canadian economy.

The government estimates that this extension will deliver approximately $2.9 billion in additional tax relief to Canadians, bringing the total relief to approximately $5.3 billion in the 2026-27 fiscal year. That is a significant investment, an investment in families, workers, Canadian businesses and the resilience of our economy.

In a global climate of uncertainty, Canadians expect their government to act, they expect us to take concrete action to cut costs where it is warranted and they expect us to support the workers, families and businesses that drive our economy. That is exactly what Bill C-38 does. It offers genuine relief for families, supports workers, supports businesses and helps make life more affordable in what remains a challenging situation.

● (1330)

I know that this extension will give families in Terrebonne a bit of breathing room. For all these reasons, I encourage all members of the House to support Bill C-38 and vote in favour of it.

Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague did a very good job of explaining the context that gave rise to this bill. Can she tell us more about what this bill will do for the people of Terrebonne?

Tatiana Auguste: Mr. Speaker, this kind of measure will help families, especially in Terrebonne. The riding I represent is outside the urban core, but it has ties to major centres. There is a lot of room for improvement in public transit, which is why every household has at least one car. Bringing gas prices down for those struggling with the cost of living will help a lot of families in my riding. That is relief they need right now.

● (1335)

[*English*]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate hearing the comments the member was able to share. Today I have been listening to the debate in this place, and it has been interesting to hear the different perspectives on what this legislation does.

I would just like to hear, in simple terms for Canadians who are watching, what the value of this legislation is. What does it do? How will it benefit Canadians?

[*Translation*]

Tatiana Auguste: Mr. Speaker, in practical terms, this is about reducing costs not only for households, but also for businesses. There are seven industrial parks in my riding, Terrebonne. Businesses move their goods in and out every day. I recently read an article about school buses, which are struggling because of the price of diesel. The point is that this measure to bring costs down will help all sectors of the economy.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important that we reflect on exactly what this bill does. It provides a 10¢-a-litre break, extending it until the end of January, and then, once we get to the end of January, it becomes a five-cent-a-litre break until the end of March. It is one of many initiatives the government has taken to support Canadians on the issue of affordability.

I wonder if the member could provide her thoughts on why it is important that this is just one of the initiatives, because we could also talk about the Canada grocery benefit program. We could talk about the tax break for 22 million Canadians. Can she just give her perspective on that?

[*Translation*]

Tatiana Auguste: Mr. Speaker, we have indeed done a great deal to address the cost of living. We cut taxes for 22 million Canadians. We invested in the national school food program and made it permanent, which is very important. In concrete terms, our approach is providing Canadians with stability. A gradual return to a normal rate also helps Canadians plan their spending during difficult times. Stability is what they need right now.

* * *

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions amongst the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

> That the membership of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be amended as follows: Ms. Mingarelli (Prescott—Russell—Cumberland) for Ms. Fancy (South Shore—St. Margarets), Mr. Caley (North Vancouver—Capilano, British Columbia) for Mr. Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga), Mr. Moore (Fundy Royal) for Mr. Jackson (Brandon—Souris), Mrs. Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek) for Mr. Van Popta (Langley Township—Fraser Heights).

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

● (1340)

CANADIAN FUEL AFFORDABILITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-38, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (extension of the federal fuel excise tax relief), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I noticed that the Liberals have been implementing the Conservative agenda, maybe at half speed, but this particular bill was definitely our idea. We are glad to see that maybe a year later after the fact, they are actually doing it.

I am just wondering what other great ideas the Conservatives have had that the Liberals will be implementing soon.

[*Translation*]

Tatiana Auguste (Terrebonne, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think our colleague needs to start voting with us on the good ideas we are coming up with on this side of the House. That would be a good place to start.

Abdelhaq Sari (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, allow me to welcome everyone back to the House. It is a privilege for me to serve in this place and represent the people of my riding, Bourassa.

As I said earlier, it is an honour for me to rise on behalf of the people of Bourassa to speak to Bill C-38, the Canadian fuel affordability act.

I want to describe a scene that we see every morning. Before work, a mother stops at a gas station, looks up at the posted gas price, does a quick mental calculation and decides to spend $20. She does not spend a penny more because the rest of the money has to go toward feeding her children that week. No one sees it or hears about it, but this is something that happens thousands of times a day across the country. I see this scene playing out in my riding, whether it be with a personal support worker who leaves work at dawn after their night shift, a delivery person who crisscrosses the city from morning until night, a taxi driver who is calculating how many litres they will need that day or a small business owner whose pickup truck is their livelihood. For them, the price of gas is not an economic indicator, a statistic or a quantitative indicator. It is much more than that. It is a concern that they have from the time they get into their car every morning until the end of the day.

We are living in a time of global instability. Supply disruptions in the Middle East are sending shockwaves to energy markets around the world, and it is our families who are paying the price at the pump. We cannot put an end to global conflicts, but we can choose not to let Canadians deal with the consequences of those conflicts alone. That is the choice that our government is making today.

Bill C-38, introduced by the Minister of Finance and National Revenue, temporarily extends the federal fuel excise tax until January 31, 2027. Then from Februrary 1 to March 31, 2027, a half-rate will apply.

This tax is 10¢ per litre of gasoline and 4¢ per litre of diesel. Suspending it will save up to about $5.75 on a 50-litre fill-up of regular gasoline and up to $2.30 on a fill-up of diesel. Some members across the way might say that is not much. However, we must consider what a few extra dollars each week mean to a mother, a delivery driver who fills up three times or more a week, or a small business that relies on several vehicles for its livelihood. For these people, it is not a small amount. It is a breath of fresh air. For someone who is out of breath, a bit of breathing room makes all the difference.

The gradual return to the mid-range rate also offers something valuable: predictability. Families and businesses deserve to be able to plan ahead rather than face a sudden shock overnight. I am focusing on diesel because, when diesel is cheaper, it means the trucks that deliver food, fruits and vegetables cost less to operate. It means construction sites make progress faster. It means the agricultural sector can breathe a sigh of relief. Whether we are talking about trucking, food, agriculture, housing, construction, or delivery, this measure affects what we eat, where we live, and what we receive day after day. It is one of many steps we are taking. This is not the only step the government has taken to help Canadians.

Bill C-38 does not stand alone, because affordability is not something can simply be declared; it must be built, one step at a time.

Since July 1, 2025, nearly 22 million Canadians have been paying less tax thanks to the reduction of the first marginal rate from 15% to 14%. That means up to $420 per person, and up to $840 for a two-income family.

● (1345)

We have eliminated the GST for first-time homebuyers purchasing a newly built home valued at up to $1 million and reduced it for new homes between $1 million and $1.5 million, because the dream of home ownership should not disappear within a single generation.

We created the Canada groceries and essentials benefit. In the spring, a one-time top-up of $3.1 billion was paid to 12 million Canadians. Since July 2026, the benefit has been increased by 25% for five years and is paid quarterly so that the benefit arrives when the bills do. A family of four will receive up to $1,890 this year. It will receive $1,890 this year. I am repeating that because it is very important for the Canadians listening to us today. We want them to see this as some breathing room that can help them manage under the current circumstances. A single person, meanwhile, may receive up to $950.

Upon taking office, the Prime Minister eliminated consumer carbon pricing in the provinces and territories where it applied, lowering the cost of gas by about 18¢ a litre in those regions and helping to curb inflation.

We have made the national school food program permanent, feeding nearly 400,000 children every year and saving a family with two children about $800 a year. Children with full bellies in the morning are freed up to learn, stay in school and have the peace of mind they need to get the most out of their school day. There is no better investment for the country's future than to invest in our young people and children, especially when it comes to helping them go to school with full bellies.

With automatic benefit payments, up to 5.5 million low-income Canadians will finally receive what they are entitled to. In a neighbourhood like mine, Bourassa, so many families are losing out on their rights because of a lack of information or missing paperwork. This is not an administrative measure; it is a matter of dignity.

Finally, we are strengthening competition in telecommunications and financial services so that Canadians can switch providers more easily.

In conclusion, our vision is clear: We are building a stronger economy, diversifying our trade partnerships around the world, capitalizing on our strengths and creating better jobs and higher wages. However, building for tomorrow must never make us forget the challenges we face today. No one should be left behind. It is very important to include all Canadians in our strategy and to truly keep them in mind at all times when we develop measures like the one before us today.

Let us come back to the mother gassing up at the pump. Thanks to Bill C-38, maybe she will no longer have to stop at $20. Maybe she can fill the tank. Maybe she can keep a few dollars for a pair of winter boots for her children or for a family outing she has been putting off for months.

This bill will not fix everything. We know that. No one here is saying that. However, it is telling millions of Canadians something essential: We see them, we hear them and we are here for them.

Relief only works if it is timely, so I invite all my colleagues from all parties to quickly support this bill.

● (1350)

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate and thank my colleague for his speech, and I would like to remind the House that it will soon be two years since he was elected. He has been here for a year and a half. I was pleasantly surprised to hear him praise the elimination of carbon pricing on gas, saying that it had a direct impact on buying food, which has to be transported.

I know that he has been here for a year and a half, but his current colleagues spent 10 years saying that it was appalling to attack carbon pricing and that we, the Conservatives, had zero respect for the environment. The opposite is true.

Since he got off to a good start, since he applauded the fact that his government has done what we have been demanding for years, does he agree with our proposal to immediately abolish all federal taxes that affect transportation?

Abdelhaq Sari: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for keeping track of how long I have been here; I learn something new every day. I will circle back to my colleague's question before I wrap up.

What I have learned over the past year and a half is that our government has introduced quite a few measures to help families and young people. These are targeted, temporary, one-off measures. They are designed to address the concerns that citizens have raised with us.

There is a question I would like to put to my colleague on the other side. We have been implementing measures to help families for a year and a half. However, as the new MP for Bourassa, I was very surprised to see MPs on the other side of the House voting against them.

That said, I would like to thank the member once again for his work.

Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed the speech by my colleague from Bourassa. As he pointed out, this bill is targeted and aims to address a very specific situation in today's global context.

Could he explain how this measure is in keeping with the government's wider range of efforts, including those he himself had in mind to improve affordability and the cost of living?

Abdelhaq Sari: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question. It gives me another opportunity today to reiterate a number of measures introduced by our government. As I said earlier, a family of four can receive up to $1,890, and a single person, up to $950. This assistance is geared to families.

As I mentioned earlier, something I hold very dear deserves reiterating. I am referring to the roughly 400,000 children a year who truly benefit from Canada's national school food program. This is the kind of practical action I am talking about. There are others, but time prevents me from listing them all.

What bothers me the most, however, is seeing people on the other side of the House vote against family-oriented measures aimed at helping Canadians. That disappoints me a lot.

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as usual, my hon. colleague gave a very eloquent speech.

As I was saying earlier when I asked the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands a question, many of my constituents who have to sit in traffic will be able to benefit from Bill C-38 by saving money on gas. Many of my constituents work in my colleague's riding.

Can my colleague expand on how these people will be able to benefit from Bill C-38 by saving money on gas?

Abdelhaq Sari: Mr. Speaker, this gives me an opportunity to go back to the scenario I described at the beginning of my speech. Imagine a woman in my riding who is a personal support worker and who has just finished her shift at dawn. This woman decides to only pump 20 dollars' worth of gas because she cannot afford to fill up her tank. Alternatively, imagine someone who makes a lot of deliveries and whose vehicle is their livelihood. There are people like that in my riding and in my colleague's riding. We are trying to fix these issues so we can help these people day after day with concrete measures.

[*English*]

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

It is good to be back in the House doing the work that Canadians sent us here to do. I think everyone agrees that it has been a long summer for the Canadian economy, for our trade relationships and for families, especially for families watching their bills climb faster than their paycheques. For three months, the doors of this Parliament stayed closed while government members were unable to answer for any of it, some because they truly did not know what was going on and some because they simply do not see their role as being accountable in this place.

Let me say it plainly. This sitting is overdue, this debate is overdue, this policy prescription is overdue and the people we represent right across the country who are being locked out of accountability deserve much better than this. Our approach to this session is very simple. When the government does something that helps Canadians, we will support it, and when it makes things worse, we will oppose it, as we always have, strongly and without apology.

Today's bill falls into that first category. This legislation would finally remove the federal excise tax on gasoline until January 31 and cut it in half until the end of March. That is real, although temporary, relief, and Conservatives will support it.

However, I would ask the government to be honest about something: where the idea came from. We have been calling on exactly this since the spring. This is once again the government adopting a Conservative solution after insisting for months it was not at all necessary and after looking families in the face and saying no. We are pleased that the Liberals have come around, but we simply ask why on earth it too so long and, more importantly, why it stops here.

It is worth remembering what the Prime Minister said before he had this job. In February 2025, he built his entire leadership pitch around fiscal discipline. He said, “spend less, invest more”, warning that Ottawa could not keep borrowing from the future to pay for today. Let me be clear. We are not opposed to this relief, as we have been asking for it since the spring, but relief and recklessness are not the same thing, and the difference is simple: find the money.

Conservatives have identified $150 billion in savings from wasteful spending precisely so that Canadians can get relief without adding another dollar to the tab that their own kids will pay for. The government has not done the work. It simply added this tax measure onto a deficit it has already doubled, a deficit that has strangled families at home and that has made it less affordable to buy food, groceries and gas.

The question is not whether to give Canadians relief. It is whether the Prime Minister still believes what he told Canadians before he had the job and whether “spend less, invest more” is just something one says to win an election, not something one does after it has already been won.

Here is the other answer. This is the part we see very clearly and that I think Canadians ought to see very clearly, and it is where some in the House may be confused. It is what this bill tells us about the government's real position. The government cut the excise tax, but it left the clean fuel standard in place. It left it completely untouched. That is not actually an oversight. It is a regulation that exists specifically to keep fuel expensive in this country, and it is by design. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, not just some newspaper article, it is already adding seven cents a litre and is set to climb to 17¢ by 2030. That is not real relief. It is not even temporary relief. It is policy by design to keep gas expensive in this country.

I am sure I can continue when we resume after question period, but I want to end with this. The government wants Canadians to believe that it is fighting for cheaper gas. That simply is not true. It is protecting the one policy that guarantees gas gets more expensive in this country every single year, more expensive than the last. It cannot claim relief at the pump on one hand while holding the other hand on the tax that keeps prices high. If people take one thing from this debate, it should be this, because it is not a change in policy. It is a temporary relief measure for Canadians that we will absolutely support, of course.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1355)

[*English*]

RAIL SAFETY WEEK

Mike Kelloway (Sydney—Glace Bay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, September 21 to 27 marks Rail Safety Week across Canada. Our railways connect communities, move Canadian goods to market and support jobs and growth, but as we strengthen these connections, safety must always come first.

Through the railway improvement program, our government works with communities and railway companies to make crossings and rail corridors safer through investments in infrastructure, technology and education, but rail safety is a shared responsibility, so I encourage all Canadians to stay clear of tracks, use designated crossings and remain alert to the signals, the signs and the trains.

I thank Operation Lifesaver Canada, the railway workers, the first responders and everyone helping to keep our communities safe. When we look out for one another, we help ensure every Canadian gets home safely.

* * *

● (1400)

IMPACT OF TARIFFS

Matt Strauss (Kitchener South—Hespeler, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bruce Kennedy was born and raised in the Waterloo region. He founded Stance Healthcare, based in south Kitchener, where they manufacture furniture for hospitals. They employ 125 of my friends and neighbours. They are a homegrown success story, but now they are suffering from tariffs. Since the new round last month, they have already lost $2 million in tariff costs. This cannot go on.

I contacted the Liberal Secretary of State for Small Business on Bruce's behalf. What she sent back was a list of announcements that the Prime Minister has made about support for tariff-affected businesses. That is all. It was a list of announcements. It is all talk and no results. Stance Healthcare has not received a penny in actual support. Bruce and his workers face an impossible decision. They cannot keep losing hundreds of thousands a month. They either have to move jobs across the border or lay off 125 hard-working Canadians.

The Prime Minister promised to win this trade war. He promised to support struggling businesses. It is five minutes to midnight for Stance. I call upon the Prime Minister to keep his promises.

HARVEST MUSIC FESTIVAL

David Myles (Fredericton—Oromocto, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Harvest Music Festival on another incredibly successful year. For 36 years, the festival has been bringing downtown Fredericton to life every September, with huge crowds filling the streets for six full days to celebrate the power of live music.

[*Translation*]

Harvest draws tens of thousands of people to downtown Fredericton. With 400 musicians and 700 volunteers, it is one of Fredericton's biggest events of the year.

[*English*]

This year, tickets to the Barenaked Ladies and Graham Nash sold out in one minute. The Beaches were there, as well as Sloan and a ton of local acts like the Hypochondriacs and Chillteens. I remember as a teenager watching from outside the tents dreaming of what it might be like to play on a stage like that, and I know the festival continues to grow and inspire the next generation of musicians.

Harvest is a testament to Fredericton's love of culture, community and having a good time.

[*Translation*]

Congratulations on another successful year.

[*English*]

Happy harvest, everyone.

* * *

WORLDSKILLS COMPETITOR

Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize an extraordinary young tradesperson from Fort McMurray who is making history on the world stage. Keegan Sturge is a Keyano College apprentice electrician, and he is currently in Shanghai, China, representing team Canada in the electrical installation category at the prestigious WorldSkills competition. He is facing off against the best young tradespeople from more than 70 countries.

Keegan's journey started when he entered a registered apprenticeship program in high school. Guided by his instructor and mentor Dawn Ohama, he has spent countless hours in specialized training, national competitions and international camps. I have had the opportunity to see his work up close and learn first hand about the challenges he has faced along the way. His passion for his trade is truly inspiring, and I hope his journey sends a message to all young people out there to look at the trades.

I would ask all members of the House to join me in wishing Keegan all the best as he starts his competition at WorldSkills. Keegan's community and his country are extremely proud of him.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SUMMER IN BEAUPORT—LIMOILOU

Steeve Lavoie (Beauport—Limoilou, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be back in Ottawa after a busy summer in my riding of Beauport—Limoilou.

I spent the past few months visiting businesses, attending events and meeting with organizations. Most importantly, I took time to listen to everyone's concerns, needs and ideas. Whether in the beautiful parks of Beauport or on the bustling streets of Limoilou, each of these encounters reminded me how privileged I am to represent my community. What can I say about summer in Beauport—Limoilou? From the Cigale festival on the beach at Beauport Bay to the Limoilou market on 3rd Avenue, our community once again showcased its energy and vitality.

I am very pleased to see you again, Mr. Speaker, and to be reunited with all my colleagues in the House.

I thank the people of Beauport—Limoilou for a great summer.

* * *

● (1405)

[*English*]

BALD RANGE WILDFIRE RESPONSE

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the evening of August 7, when the Bald Range wildfire ignited and spread with frightening speed, brave firefighters and first responders put their lives on the line to keep us safe and to protect our lives, our homes and our communities.

Within hours, the entire community of Summerland was evacuated. Thousands of evacuees poured into Penticton, many with little more than the shirts on their backs. Citizens opened up their homes, served meals and handed out water. Comfort centres opened for families who had lost everything, but in that darkness, we saw courage and compassion.

we thank the firefighters, first responders, volunteers and every neighbour who stepped forward for showing us, in the face of disaster, how much we all mean to each other.

WILDLAND FIREFIGHTERS

Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as summer comes to an end, I want to recognize the wildland firefighters who spent another season on the front lines protecting our communities. Unfortunately, this year, we saw devastation across the country, including in Summerland, where hundreds of homes and properties were lost, and near Thunder Bay, which became the largest wildfire ever recorded in Ontario's history. Closer to home, the Signal Hill wildfire was barely a kilometre away from the community of Pemberton and reminded us just how quickly a fire can grow and put lives, homes and entire communities at risk.

For most of us, when we see a wildfire approaching a community, we watch in horror at the devastation it can leave behind. Wildland firefighters do the opposite. They run toward it. They work through extreme heat, smoke and dangerous terrain, often spending weeks away from their families, and the risks that they take can follow them long after they leave the fire line through the lasting health impacts of repeated exposure to smoke and other hazards.

Today, I want to recognize every wildland firefighter who stepped forward this summer, and every summer, when communities needed them the most. I thank them for their courage and their sacrifice in protecting communities across our great country.

* * *

ANTI-SEMITISM

Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as members of the Jewish community gathered at the Sons of Jacob Synagogue to observe Yom Kippur, the holiest and most solemn day in Judaism, gunfire erupted outside their place of worship. Constable Jeff Smith of the Belleville Police Service was seriously wounded while defending the synagogue and members of the Jewish community gathered inside.

Every Canadian has the right to worship, gather with their community and practise their faith in peace and without fear. Anti-Semitism, hatred and violence have no place in Belleville or anywhere in this country, and significant action is urgently needed to end this hateful ideology.

I know the collective support of the House is with Constable Smith and his family, colleagues at the Belleville Police Service, members of the Sons of the Jacob congregation and the broader Jewish community, which has been shaken by this cowardly attack. I would also like to acknowledge my neighbour and colleague, the member for Bay of Quinte. In moments such as these, politics must give way to our shared responsibility to the people we represent.

[*Translation*]

CSUR CO-OPERATIVE

Claude DeBellefeuille (Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Csur co-op, a social economy enterprise that embodies the best of community-based entrepreneurship and regional innovation in Vaudreuil-Soulanges.

For the past two decades, Csur has been harnessing local resources to carry out ambitious projects that benefit our community. Thanks to its members' determination, the co-op has helped improve access to high-speed Internet in several rural parts of our region that were neglected by the major providers. With nearly 200 kilometres of fibre optic infrastructure, Csur's network now serves 10 municipalities.

Another Csur initiative is the Marché Écolocal, a market that supports our local producers while strengthening our regional economy. There, now everyone knows my favourite place to buy groceries.

I salute the founders, employees, volunteers, board members and partners who have contributed to this remarkable success.

On behalf of the people of Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, I congratulate the Csur co-op on 20 years of success.

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● (1410)

[*English*]

BRAMPTON SOUTH

Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this summer I joined residents across Brampton South at Carabram, Flavours of Nigeria, the Nepal Festival, Vibrant Brampton, Ahmadiyya Jama'at Jalsa Salana, and the Malayalee boat race to celebrate Brampton's diversity through the unveiling of the monument at Azores Park.

There was a $5.2-million investment in BHive Technologies, and the launch of Canada's first strategic exports office at MDA Space is helping drive innovation. I also want to highlight Celiac Canada's day of smiles at the Davis Family Farm, and Hockey Night in Brampton with the Honey Badgers and NHL players Morgan Rielly and Mark Messier to support the Brampton Civic Hospital.

Representing Canada at international forums in Manila and South Africa made me realize the respect Canadians have earned on the world stage through democratic leadership. The seventh HKL global movement conference was a powerful reminder that kindness, humility and service remain the foundation of stronger communities and a strong Canada.

* * *

AFFORDABILITY

Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, working Canadians are doing their best in a K-shaped economy, where those with assets are doing relatively well, while those striving to buy their first home are seeing that dream move out of reach. The government has created a financial reality where Canadians are asked to take on more debt, pay more interest and accept a lower standard of living than the generation before them. Work harder and expect less is not the legacy we were supposed to leave our children, yet the Liberal government continues to manage expectations downward because its policies have led to a less prosperous country. That means lower results for everyone, including less food security, less shelter and lower expectations for health outcomes. A generation's future is being pulled back because that is the price of the government's choices.

Where we are is clear. How we got here is evident. What Canadians need now is a government prepared to change course, restore opportunity and build a future where the next generation can contribute more and expect more.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians and Canadian businesses are navigating the challenges created by this era of global volatility, economic uncertainty and unjust trade tensions. Our government has a plan to harness this moment to bolster the Canadian economy by driving growth, attracting investment and increasing our economic competitiveness, all while supporting our Canadian businesses.

Our Prime Minister's plan is working. Canada's economy is showing strong momentum, with real GDP rising by 3.3%. Canada experienced the strongest growth in the G7 in Q2, double the growth of the next closest peer and more than double the annualized growth of the United States. We are diversifying our trade away from the U.S. Business investment is rising, with strong gains in building and construction, machinery, and equipment.

We are working hard to build Canada strong, and we will continue to do this for Canadians.

* * *

AFFORDABILITY

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I may remind the House that, unlike the member prior, only my tie is red today.

It is very important for us to stand up in the House for affordability for Canadians. A new Royal Bank of Canada survey found that more than half of parents with adult children aged 18 to 40 provided financial support over the past year, contributing an average of $6,151.

It is not just that generation. I met with a group of seniors in St. Thomas a couple of weeks ago. One of them said that she does not eat lunch because of the price of groceries. More shocking was when almost every other senior at the table said that they did not either. This is a fact of life in Canada, the same Canada of which the Prime Minister says affordability is the best it has been in a decade.

Would the Prime Minister like me to tell these seniors that, or will he do it himself?

* * *

[*Translation*]

BACK TO SCHOOL IN TROIS-RIVIÈRES

Caroline Desrochers (Trois-Rivières, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the new school year is well under way in Trois-Rivières, and I want to wish all of our students, teachers and staff a wonderful school year.

Again this summer, the Canada summer jobs program provided about 250 young people in Trois-Rivières with their first work experience and the opportunity to get involved in organizations that make a real difference in our community, including day camps and Carpe Diem, an organization that works with people with Alzheimer's.

These experiences help our young people gain confidence and develop skills that will serve them well for years to come. Our government continues to invest in the future of young people by investing in job opportunities and the team Canada strong program, by supporting families in their daily lives and by building more affordable housing in our community of Trois-Rivières.

I want to wish all of the students in Trois-Rivières and their families a great year filled with new discoveries, exciting projects and success.

* * *

● (1415)

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I recently received a handwritten letter that I would like to share with the Canadians. It reads, “Hello, I'm 11. Yes, I'm young, but my mom said I can voice my future economy concerns to you.” This young girl's letter shared some of her family's experiences in struggling with rent and food. Her family is spending $2,000 a month to rent a one-bedroom apartment. She ends by writing that all she want is for prices to go down so t-shirts and sweaters are $5 combined and pants and socks are $6. She just wants to go to school without repeating her outfits the same week.

It is important to hear directly from Canadians on the front lines of the Liberals' war on affordability, but it is heartbreaking to know that all the government has to offer this young girl is more debt to fuel inflationary spending. Renaming the GST does nothing to put clothes on her back.

HAMILTON MOUNTAIN

Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, small businesses are the lifeblood of our economy, so I spent much of the summer checking in on businesses on Hamilton Mountain to see how they are managing the unfair U.S. tariffs that have upended their business models.

One particular highlight was my visit to Niko Apparel Systems with owner Joe Camillo. The factory floor has 66 advanced machines for designing and sewing niche market sports jerseys. One employee, Olga, proudly described how she juggles six different threads at a time while sewing jerseys for local hockey, cycling or lacrosse teams, or referee jerseys for Ron Foxcroft. These are jerseys designed and made on Hamilton Mountain with Canadian materials.

Hamilton businesses are fiercely proud to be Canadian. The U.S. tariffs are a threat, but thanks to the regional tariff response initiative, our government is helping businesses such as Niko expand and adapt despite these trying economic times. Niko has been on the mountain for 30 years. We want to see it continue for decades to come.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Liberals are spending billions of dollars on consultations, corporate subsidies and costly projects, we Conservatives have identified over $150 billion in savings. That is nearly $10,000 per family to help shrink the debt, reduce taxes and save Canadians money.

Will the government cut spending on consultants and corporate subsidies, eliminate the industrial carbon tax and adopt the Conservative economic action plan?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know it's Tuesday and my colleague needs some good news.

Let us talk about economic growth: 1.6%, 1.5%, 1.4%, 1.2%, 0.8%. Those are the the other G7 countries' second-quarter growth rates. Canada's was 3.3%, the highest in the G7.

Together, we are going to build Canada strong. Together, we will build the strongest economy in the G7.

I hope the Conservatives will get on board with our plan to build Canada strong together.

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I hear the Minister of Finance rhyme off numbers like that, I see how completely disconnected they are from reality. The everyday reality for Canadians is that, after years of Liberal spending, they are paying more for housing, food and transportation.

The Conservative plan will save them money on housing, gas, groceries and Canadian-made cars.

Why do the Liberals insist on defending their taxes and spending instead of helping Canadians save money?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the right answer for the Conservatives, and it is called "C-38".

Today, they have a chance to show Canadians they know that the number one issue is affordability, the cost of gas, the cost of food and the cost of housing.

The good news is that we have taken action on all three. Today, I had the pleasure of introducing Bill C-38, which extends the temporary suspension of the federal excise tax on gasoline.

People at home are watching. Will the Conservatives do the right thing to help Canadians?

● (1420)

[*English*]

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a day into the session, and there is nothing from the government to fix the affordability crisis on rent, on mortgages and on groceries. This is at a time when Canadians pay more in taxes than they do for bare essentials: Canadians such Olesya, who told me that she is going into credit card debt just to cover rent and food for her family, or Ariella, a student who wonders if she will ever be able to live independently and own a home.

Will the government commit today to adopting our Conservative economic plan to save Olesya and Ariella money by lowering debt, taxes and the cost of living for both of them?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will take no lessons from the Conservatives. There is no way we will take lessons from them.

Canadians know better. They know that we have been acting on the price of rent, on the price of food, and on the price of fuel. The question that people are asking today is whether, instead of using talking points, the Conservatives will do the right thing and support us to suspend the fuel tax. That is what they want to see. On this side of the House, Canadians know we have their back today and every day.

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, we get all talk and no results. The minister does not need to take lessons from us, but he should take lessons from or at least listen to Olesya and Ariella.

We believe that money belongs in the hands of the people who earned it instead of in the hands of the government that continues to tax it. We have identified $150 billion in irresponsible spending here in Ottawa on things such as consultants, foreign aid and bureaucracy. That is nearly $10,000 for families such as theirs.

If the minister does not take lessons from them, will he at least listen to Canadians who are struggling out there?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing Canadians, and those who are watching, know, it is that we are always going to be there for them.

One question is this: Why, when it was time to vote, did the Conservatives vote against the Canada groceries and essentials benefit? Why did they vote against cutting taxes for 22 million Canadians? Why did they vote against cancelling the consumer carbon tax? Why did they vote against providing GST relief for first-time homebuyers?

At every step of the way, Conservatives voted against supporting Canadians. On this side, we know what to do, which is always to be there for Canadians.

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, lower food costs and lower rent so their children do not have to live with their 80-year-old grandmother, says S from Innisfil. This is just one of thousands of responses I received over the summer about how these past 11 years of failed economic policies have impacted average Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet. However, if we ask the finance minister or one of the Prime Minister's well-connected business buddies, times have never been better, while Canadian families and businesses are struggling just to make ends meet.

Conservatives are proposing to eliminate the industrial carbon tax to help Canadians and businesses save money. Will the Liberals adopt our plan?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives keep flagging affordability concerns with respect to housing. We have great news to share on that. Average rents have come down for 23 straight months across Canada. That is a sign of success. Talk to developers across Canada right now. The apartment construction loan program is financing tens of thousands of rental homes. This is the biggest rental housing boom we have had in generations, and that is delivering affordable rents. We are making progress. We expect support from the other side of the House to get this done.

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing but talk and little action. Michelle from Barrie wrote to me and said that she is a single person, making barely $60,000 a year, having to put a roof over her head and needing a car to drive to work, but, more importantly, she needs to eat. She said she has just received her groceries benefit: $16.75. She asks how that is supposed to support paying for more groceries. According to the finance minister, Michelle has never had it so good, but the truth is that the only ones doing well are the well-connected club of Liberal insiders and business buddies of the Prime Minister.

Can the Prime Minister tell Michelle when she can expect to do as well as his corporate buddies or to at least pay for the necessities of life?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's highlighting the fact that the Canada groceries and essentials benefit is providing up to $1,900 to a family of four, which is very significant. Just as we are seeing rents come down, we are providing the opportunity for young Canadians to not pay GST on first-time home purchases. Whether it is housing, whether it is groceries or whether it is the price of gas, we are taking action. We hear nothing but complaining from the other side.

* * *

● (1425)

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to taxation, labour rights and the labour code, and the environment, Bill C-39 is a brutal step backward. Tucked into this bill are provisions saying that oil and nuclear projects will be automatically approved and, even worse, that this will be done in advance.

Does the government realize that the framework protecting the people of Quebec and Canada, which took so many years to build, will be destroyed in just 24 hours?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the King’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs, Internal Trade, and One Canadian Economy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Bloc Québécois leader likes to exaggerate, but he is really outdoing himself today. He knows full well that the government was elected by Canadians, including many members from Quebec, specifically to build a more resilient economy, to diversify trade in response to an unreliable trading partner, and to build in a responsible way, which is exactly what we are doing. I think he should stick to the facts and not just repeat things that he knows are untrue.

Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first they privatized airports, now they are privatizing ports. What is more, the government is entrusting the oil companies with a sham environmental assessment process, basically handing over control of Quebec's and Canada's resources to an international financial oligarchy. Things were already bad enough under Justin Trudeau. They are no better under the new Prime Minister.

How can anyone who was happy as a Liberal MP under Justin Trudeau be in complete agreement with the new Prime Minister?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will have the opportunity to debate this bill, which is designed to boost Quebec's development and create employment and investment opportunities all across Quebec. Let me give a few examples. There are our investments in the Port of Saguenay and the Port of Montreal, which the member seems keen to discuss. There is also Nouveau Monde Graphite. He needs to understand the scale on which we are developing major projects. We are providing opportunities and job prospects for all Quebeckers.

Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are making progress. He named one. The Prime Minister says he is building a stronger Canada to stand up to the United States. Suddenly, sovereignty has become a virtue. However, the Prime Minister is destroying any attempt to rein in climate change, and he is handing the keys to oil companies. The majority of shareholders in western Canadian oil companies are American, 90% of Canada's oil is sold to the United States, and there are no tariffs on Canadian oil entering the United States.

Are the trust and concern of Quebeckers and Canadians being blatantly abused?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the King’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs, Internal Trade, and One Canadian Economy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite the opposite. We are working with Quebeckers. We are working with businesses and workers' representatives in Quebec to build a stronger economy, protect their jobs from the unjustified American tariffs and help Quebeckers and all Canadians diversify their trade. We are doing it at the Port of Montreal and at Contrecoeur, we are doing it on the west coast of Canada, we are doing it with renewable energy projects, and we will stay the course.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had a call from a dad in Claresholm. He is a small business owner. He was hoping to spend time with his kids this summer, but instead he was working 90 hours a week just to keep food on the table. He is mentally and physically exhausted. He is exhausted because instead of camping with his family in the Foothills, he was at his shop working just to pay the bills.

How can the Prime Minister try to tell Canadians that affordability has never been better when a hard-working father is working 90 hours a week and still cannot afford the basics in Canada?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone in this House understands that affordability is top of mind for Canadians. That is why we have acted on three levers.

The first thing is that we are there to make sure that we build more affordable homes, because we understand that the first pillar of affordability is for people to find a safe and affordable place to live. The second thing is that we understand the price of food. That is why, with the Prime Minister, we introduced the Canada groceries and essentials benefit to help families across the country. Today, I introduced legislation to prolong the fuel tax suspension. I hope the Conservatives will do the right thing and support it.

● (1430)

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if they understand the problems, why are they not doing anything to solve them? It is all talk and no results for real Canadians, including farmers.

Ian, a farmer in Newfoundland, told me that he is paying more than $2.40 a litre in diesel. He said that if it gets higher, we all starve. Kate said that her family farm in Saskatchewan will not be profitable if she has to spend another $91,000 just in fuel this harvest. Melanie, a farmer in Alberta, said that fuel prices this harvest are hurting.

Why is the Prime Minister not taking up our Conservative plan and eliminating all taxes on gas and diesel so that farmers can afford to feed Canadians?

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are a number of geopolitical issues causing most of the fuel increases around the world, particularly in Canada. There is a war in the Middle East and one in Europe, and broader supply chain disruptions.

We are doing everything we can. We are reducing the excise tax. We are doing more with the groceries and essentials benefit. We will continue to advance Canadian agriculture and agri-food and make investments. I met with the Canadian Cattle Association this morning, and things are moving in the right direction for agriculture.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise with a heavy heart. The announced idling of the AV Nackawic mill is putting hundreds of hard-working Canadians out of a job heading into Christmas. This is not the first time my hometown has experienced this. My father worked at the same mill for over 50 years and experienced a closure in 2005. I am receiving calls from families wondering how they will make their house payments, keep their kids in sports or put food on the table.

Will the government commit to working with me to do everything necessary to secure the livelihoods of my home community?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his leadership on this file. Our thoughts are with the workers and their families at this difficult time.

As the member knows, we had a productive meeting last week. We are working with the province and with industry on the matter. He and I will continue to meet, and we will try to find a solution. We will meet with all relevant people. We are going to keep fighting for the workers affected by this closure.

Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a young lady who contacted me was wondering how her family was going to make ends meet, let alone provide a Christmas for her children with her husband now facing unemployment. We know that forestry mills are facing huge competitive disadvantages here in Canada, namely because of tariffs, over-regulation and the industrial carbon tax, which costs the mill in Nackawic over $2 million a year.

Will the government commit to removing the barriers for our businesses so that this young lady and many others like her can have some hope for a brighter future?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I applaud the member's leadership on this issue.

Our thoughts are certainly with the workers and their families who are affected by the closure of AV Nackawic. We are going to work with the province. We are working with leadership in the community to find a solution. We are going to keep fighting for the workers affected by this terrible closure.

* * *

HOUSING

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liane, a grandmother from Pefferlaw, wrote me and said, “our grandkids can't imagine ever owning a home.” That is the story of a generation: no hope.

The Prime Minister promised to build 500,000 new homes a year, but his own housing agency says he will be hundreds of thousands short, and fewer homes will be built this year than last year. Our Conservative plan will save Canadians money on housing by tying federal funding to permits and cutting taxes.

How can the minister claim housing affordability is improving with fewer houses and the next generation shut out?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that we have challenges with housing across Canada. That has been the case for about 40 years.

We have to build more affordable housing. That is what Build Canada Homes is focused on. It crossed the threshold of 19,000 homes under way in less than a year.

We have seen really good success on the ground, with agreements right across the provinces and territories, agreements that are going to deliver affordable housing. In particular, they are going to deliver for young Canadians, with student housing, affordable rental housing for young people and attainable housing to get people into the market for the first time.

● (1435)

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 19,000 homes out of a promised 500,000 is a failure, and affordability has not improved. In fact, Statistics Canada reported yesterday that one in four Canadians lives in unaffordable housing. That is an increase of 22%. Things are getting worse; they are not getting better.

What is worse is that StatsCan says rising housing costs squeeze family budgets. More rent payments and more mortgage payments mean more difficult decisions at the grocery store. We have offered a positive solution: save Canadians money on housing by speeding up permits, tying that to federal dollars. Why will the minister not do that?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what the housing accelerator fund has been doing. It has been accelerating permitting and licensing, working in partnership with 241 cities and towns across Canada. We are seeing success with that accelerator program. Housing is getting built.

Canada has averaged 250,000 homes a year, and that is not enough housing. We know it needs to grow. We need to do that in partnership with local governments and provinces. That is the work we are doing right now. We have an affordable housing agency in Build Canada Homes that is focused on making homes more affordable.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nearly 18 months of the Liberal government, Canadians have witnessed a lot of talk and no results when it comes to affordability. Kayleigh from Westman wrote to me and said she spends $160 a week just driving to work and over $2,000 a month on groceries to feed her kids. Despite working full-time, Kayleigh writes, “it feels like we are falling further behind every month.” Her friends and neighbours, like all young parents in my community, are questioning why they work so hard and never get ahead.

Will the Liberals adopt our economic action plan to save families like Kayleigh's nearly $10,000 this year and provide real relief?

Hon. Evan Solomon (Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the middle of this very difficult trade war, we are supporting Canadians and we are fighting for affordability. That is why we cut taxes for 22 million Canadians. That is why we have the groceries and essentials benefit: to make sure that families in my riding and in the member's riding have an affordable way to feed their families. That is why we are building affordable homes.

What we are doing is making sure that Canadians have an affordable way to live in a difficult time. We will always support Canadians.

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[*Translation*]

CANADIAN IDENTITY AND CULTURE

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claims he broke off negotiations with Washington to protect our culture. However, yesterday, when he was asked to reconsider his policies on American streaming platforms' contributions, he categorically refused. We will say it again and again, as many times as it takes: The future of francophone culture in Quebec and Canada depends on contributions from the web giants. Without them, there is no solution. The government will need to decide whether it truly wants to protect francophone culture.

Will it ask the CRTC to impose these levies?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, francophone culture and the French language are our identity, and we will never back down.

When it comes to discoverability, the same applies to the web giants. They have a responsibility to help promote our local artists, without exception.

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to see how people dodge the issue. Discoverability is one thing. Contributing financially is another.

The Prime Minister wants to build closer ties with Europe and distance himself from the Americans. When it comes to culture, the European Union requires American streaming platforms to pay a levy. It imposed a levy without any significant price hikes for users. In contrast to the 27 European countries, Canada is going it alone and bowing to American pressure in the fight for cultural diversity.

Since it wants to draw closer to Europe, will the government reinstate the levies that it should never have scrapped?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, only the Bloc Québécois could stand up in the House and exhibit such intellectual laziness by claiming that we are not investing in culture.

Over the past two budget cycles, we have invested more than $2 billion in culture.

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[*English*]

HOUSING

Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Romeo, a man in Aurora, has worked at a window manufacturer for over 30 years. He used to work overtime, in fact. Now he is down to two days a week. Homes are just not being built. He called me worried about his mortgage, his groceries and how he is going to provide for his family. He has heard all the announcements, but he cannot pay his mortgage with the announcements. He is tired of talk with no results. He needs work.

When will the Liberal government finally keep its promise and get homes built so parents like him can get back to a full week's work?

● (1440)

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 exactly Canadians like Romeo and Romeo's family who are top of mind for us in our agenda and in the work that we are doing to support Canadians at this time. I hope Romeo has access to some of the initiatives we have brought forward, like the groceries and essentials benefit. Perhaps his family has access to affordable child care or to a Canada dental plan, or perhaps Romeo's kids have access to the national school food program, which helps bring down the cost of groceries for families to the tune of about $800 a year. These are supports we have put in place that we ae going to continue to support, and I would ask the member opposite to help us in that.

Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is how out of touch the Liberals are. Romeo is looking for a full-time job, not to line up for programs.

In May 2025, the government announced a GST rebate, but for nearly 10 months, it failed to pass the legislation. In the meantime, builders and buyers were left in limbo. The Canadian Home Builders' Association says construction suffered. This has become a pattern. The Liberals make a grand announcement and maybe deliver later, and in the meantime, families are left without work.

Canadians are tired of all the talk with no results. When will the Liberals stop governing by announcements and start delivering—

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

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 would hope my colleague across the way would know, we have actually done some work to try to build houses in Ontario. We have reduced development fees to encourage homebuilding in Ontario, saving families up to $200,000 on the cost of a home. We are doing that while investing unprecedented amounts in building Canadian homes, because we know we need to increase the supply of homes, and that is exactly what we are doing.

For my colleague and for Romeo, I hope he knows that we are a government that has his back, and whether it is his home, his family or the job that he is looking for—

The Speaker: The hon. member for York—South Simcoe.

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THE ECONOMY

Scot Davidson (York—South Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Margaret Haddon from Bradford wrote me to say she raised her children believing that if they worked hard, stayed focused and pursued an education, they would be able to build stable and independent lives, but today she is watching that promise slip further out of reach for them. An entire generation is in this position because of the Liberals' failure to get housing built and rein in the cost of living.

How can the Prime Minister still think affordability is the best it has been in a decade when Canadians like Margaret are watching their children do everything right and still fall behind?

Hon. Kody Blois (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our message to Margaret and to individuals across this country would be that we have a concrete plan to build housing in this country. The Minister of Housing, through this government, has been working to build affordable units from the east coast of Canada all the way through to British Columbia.

What I hope the member has the time to explain to Margaret is why, at every single turn, he and his party have voted against the affordability measures that matter for Margaret and the people she cares about in this country. He has voted against national child care. He has voted against the food and essentials rebate that we put out to 12 million Canadians. The member has voted against those measures at every single turn.

[*Translation*]

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at a charity event in L'Ancienne-Lorette this past weekend, I met a senior couple named Pierre and Nicole, who told me about the day-to-day reality they and their adult children are facing. Food prices are going up; rent is going up; transportation costs are going up. That is the reality facing seniors and their adult children as they try to build a prosperous life for their families in Canada. Clearly, the Liberal policies are failing.

Will this government face the fact that it should adopt the Conservative economic plan?

Hon. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we introduced a number of programs to support Canadians. For some unknown reason, the Conservatives decided to vote against these measures.

Now my colleague is talking about the Liberal government's policies, the very policies that have led to the strongest economic growth in the G7 over the last quarter. Canada has also attracted the most foreign investment.

● (1445)

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Liberals' policies were as good as they claim, we would know it, but they are not working. There is a lot of talk, but no real results.

Just ask Marie-Pierre, a young woman in her thirties who lives in Lebourgneuf, in my riding. She has a good education, has worked very hard and earns a good living, but she is unable to save enough money to buy a house. The Canadian dream of home ownership has evaporated under this Liberal government.

We have a concrete plan to help families and help people buy homes: axe the tax on construction, incentivize municipalities to speed up permits and free up land.

When will the Liberal government implement the Conservatives' policies?

Hon. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is once again asking me about the concrete measures we have put in place.

We have a plan to double housing construction here in Canada, and we are starting to see concrete results. We are creating jobs nearly three times faster than the United States. Just last week, investors from around the world came to Toronto, and that is $500 billion of investment that we are going to bring back into this country.

[*English*]

Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have heard a clear message from investors. They are ready to invest in Canada. Last week's investment summit generated nearly $500 billion in investment commitments. Now we need to turn those commitments into projects, jobs and economic growth.

Could the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources tell the House how the government is working to reduce regulatory duplication, cut red tape and get shovels in the ground?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was speaking with my sister Sharon and my brother-in-law Jim, and I explained to them that when we passed Bill C-5, we would apply everything we learned from major projects to all projects in Canada. We would learn from the shovels in the ground at the Darlington nuclear project, from the shovels in the ground at the Montreal port and from the shovels in the ground at the north coast transmission line, and we would apply that to all projects in Canada. That is what Bill C-39 does.

We really hope the members opposite will join with us and help us build Canada strong.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Lisa, a victim from Oxford, told me that she feels like she is the one on house arrest while the criminal, the attacker, is walking free on the street. Thanks to Liberal catch-and-release laws, it is jail by day and bail by night. The same repeat offenders keep terrorizing our communities over and over again. It is victims like Lisa who are suffering. It is victims like her who are paying the price for failed Liberal policies.

Will the Liberals finally stand up for victims and protect Canadians?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since taking office last year, we have undertaken unprecedented amounts of legislative change to ensure the safety and security of Canadians. Let me just enumerate some of them: Bill C-14 strengthens bail as well as sentencing. Bill C-16 ensures that victims' rights are protected. Bill C-9 ensures the safety and security of communities. In addition, we are investing in law enforcement as well as the Canada Border Services Agency. We will do everything we can to ensure the safety and security of all Canadians.

Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what planet does the minister live on? It is all talk, no results. Last year, we had one violent crime every 50 seconds in our country. This summer, multiple police officers were shot and killed. The U.S. consulate was shot at again. Synagogues are being shot at. Festivals are being shot at. A senior, Lillian, 73 years old, standing in her driveway in London, was stabbed to death randomly and unprovoked.

That is what is happening in this country, thanks to failed Liberal policies, and this out-of-touch minister expects and wants Canadians to believe that everything is fine.

When will the Liberals get serious, lock up the criminals and bring back—

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have outlined some of the changes that we made to the criminal justice system, but let me also take this opportunity to share some statistics for the member opposite's information: Extortion is down 10%. Firearm offences are down 14%. Homicides are down 15%. Child sexual abuse and exploitation is down 21%. Auto theft is down 19%.

We have more work to do, but I can assure members that the changes we have put in place will ensure the continued safety and security of all Canadians.

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● (1450)

JUSTICE

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal catch-and-release laws are resulting in a surge in auto thefts. In Peel region, auto theft is up 52% in the first seven months of this year over last year. Why? It is because these Liberals are all talk and no results on crime. At my community barbecue this summer, I had residents tell me they go to sleep at night hoping their car will be there the next morning. Why? It is because the Liberals' talk of law reform is all talk, no results.

When will the Liberals pass laws that keep repeat car thieves denied bail and in mandatory jail?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague asked a direct question: When are we going to adopt laws to get tough on car thefts? The answer is June of this past year.

We developed these laws not in isolation behind closed doors but by meeting with police. They have garnered the support of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the Police Association of Ontario. Even the cops in his own community are supporting the bail measures that we put in place. After we put these laws in place, we are starting to see statistics of crime coming down, specifically including auto thefts and home invasions in his province.

He tries to block progress every step of the way. With or without his help, we will build a stronger and safer Canada.

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is like when someone hires a roofer to fix the leak in their roof, and the roof still leaks. They go back to the roofer and he says, “Yeah, but I did some stuff over there.” It actually did not fix the problem.

That is why car thefts are up in the region of Peel by 52% over the first seven months of this year. It is because what the Liberals do is all talk. There are actually no results. If there were results, car theft would be down.

Why do the Liberals not adopt Conservative laws that would keep those repeat car thieves denied bail and in mandatory jail?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the interesting experiences I had when we were putting together the measures that were included in the Bail and Sentencing Reform Act was meeting with police leadership in Peel. They set out a list of items that we could implement that would have the predictable result of bringing the crime rate down.

We listened to the police in Peel. We listened to the police in Ontario. We listened to the police in every part of this country. We adopted the most comprehensive suite of reforms that this country has seen in criminal justice over the course of a generation. If the member wants to take a look at the numbers nationally, he will see that since 2023, the numbers came down 16% with respect to car thefts in 2024 and another 16% in 2025. He should at least know—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake.

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THE ECONOMY

Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are paying more for everything. Glen has shared with me that he is working three jobs just to stay afloat, and Leonard is struggling to afford to travel to see his grandchildren. These are real Canadians who are being forced to make difficult decisions just to get by. While families are cutting back, these Liberals keep spending billions on wasteful bureaucracy, consultants and corporate welfare.

Our Conservative economic plan has identified over $150 billion in wasteful spending and nearly $10,000 in savings per family. Will the Liberals adopt our plan?

Hon. Buckley Belanger (Secretary of State (Rural Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I viewed the new seating arrangement of the Conservatives' opposite, I kind of lost my Saskatchewan MPs. Then I looked farther back in the backbenches to where they have been relegated. There is where they ended up. They got demoted by their own party. Why? It is because the Conservatives do not believe in Saskatchewan. They do not believe that there is a new government in Ottawa. They do not believe in hard work. For 10 years, and now 11 years, they have not delivered anything.

Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just because the out-of-touch Prime Minister says affordability is the best it has been in a decade does not make it true. It does not fill Leonard's fuel tank to visit his grandkids, and it does not afford Glen a day off. Canadians are still facing high costs every single day, and the Liberal industrial gas tax makes it more expensive to produce and move the goods Canadians rely on.

Canadians need action on affordability right now. Will the Liberals scrap the industrial gas tax, lower fuel costs and adopt our Conservative economic action plan instead of sitting there and making personal attacks?

● (1455)

Hon. Buckley Belanger (Secretary of State (Rural Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us see what the Conservatives from Saskatchewan voted against. The Canada child benefit they voted against. The national school food program they voted against. The Canada disability benefit they voted against. The Canada groceries and essentials benefit they voted against. The Canada workers benefit they voted against. The Canadian dental care plan they voted against. The old age security program they voted against. Canada student loans and grants they voted against. Record starts in housing in Saskatchewan they voted against.

You guys have to learn how to do your job better.

The Speaker: Should I take that personally? The member knows he must speak through the Chair.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the summer, I spent time at local food banks, and I can tell everyone that it is getting harder and harder to make ends meet for laid-off workers, full-time employees, working families, people with disabilities, single parents, seniors and kids. I saw real poverty lining up alongside people on the cusp of it. These people know that the Liberal government is all talk and no results for them. The volunteers doing the work that government has walked away from know it too.

I want to know: When is the government going to listen to Conservatives, stop spending our money on consultants and Liberal insiders, and really take care of Canadians?

Hon. Jill McKnight (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canadians are facing hard times right now. We know that affordability is top of mind for them. That is why our government is taking steps to support Canadians. That is why we are investing in making the national school nutrition program permanent. That is why we have introduced the groceries and essentials benefit to help families with up to $1,900 per year, and that is why we are building more housing and getting housing starts going so we can make affordable housing available.

We are standing with Canadians.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that out-of-touch thoughts and prayers answer is not going to help the man who sent me his résumé and asked if I could help him find a job, or the couple who came into my office with their bank account statements and their household budget and asked me how they are going to keep a roof over their heads. It is not going to help the woman who shouted at me from a place of extreme fear that she had eight to 10 months before she has to consider medical assistance in dying because she cannot afford to live.

I join them in wanting to know when the Liberal government will truly see the people who are struggling and adopt the policies Conservatives have proposed to restore the promise of Canada.

Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have spent time over the summer and the spring talking to constituents in the member's riding. What did I hear from them? I heard back from them that we, as a government, invested $5 million in the Loaves & Fishes Community Food Bank in Nanaimo. This is a new food distribution facility on Vancouver Island. It improves year-round access to nutritious food.

I wish the member would tell her constituents about the things available in her riding that are being funded and that they can count on, instead of just collecting stories for the House of Commons.

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JUSTICE

Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, Surrey families received two disturbing police warnings. High-risk offender Skylar Pelletier, with a history of violent and sexual offences, was released into our community. The very next day Jonathon Muzychka, another high-risk offender with a history of violence, was released into Surrey. We grandmothers are terrified watching our grandchildren walk to the park or to school. We should not have to worry about dangerous offenders being let out into our city.

I am begging on their behalf. When will the Liberals end their dangerous catch-and-release policies and put families first, before repeat offenders?

Hon. Randeep Sarai (Secretary of State (International Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition and the member well know that these matters are decided by parole officers and judicial officers. To light fires, to fearmonger, is not the strategy. This government modified and brought back great legislation to put people behind bars who belong there and to have the proper judicial processes when they need to be released.

* * *

● (1500)

[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Sudbury, we know that our natural resources are the core of our economy. They support thousands of jobs and keep our local businesses alive. In order for these benefits to materialize, projects need to move forward efficiently.

Could the Minister responsible for One Canadian Economy explain why it is so important to create a regulatory environment that makes it possible to carry out these projects, which are essential for communities like Sudbury and for Canada's economic future?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs, Internal Trade, and One Canadian Economy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank our colleague from Sudbury for her question.

Yesterday, we introduced a bill to build Canada strong, the most ambitious reform in a generation, to strengthen and accelerate our capacity to get projects done right, strengthen our transportation networks and diversify our trade partners. Our colleague from Sudbury knows full well that we have a well-trained workforce. Her region has the critical minerals that the world needs. We are going to develop them responsibly and put Canadians to work.

* * *

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a non-citizen was recently convicted of dealing major amounts of fentanyl in Hamilton. People who deal fentanyl are merchants of death, but this is what the judge said when issuing the sentence: "I am concerned about the immigration consequences that may result from the sentence". He should have been more concerned about the lives ruined by the crimes committed by this non-citizen. Instead, he gave the fentanyl dealer a lenient sentence so they would not be deported.

Why did the Liberals vote against our bill to stop this, and why is this practice continuing?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me first condemn the behaviour of anyone who takes part in the trade or trafficking of fentanyl or other dangerous drugs that have the potential to take the lives of Canadians.

For our part, we have advanced a series of major legal reforms to ensure that criminals who commit serious crimes that pose a danger to the public find themselves behind bars. We also believe that the judicial system in Canada should retain its independence to be able to consider a multitude of factors to ensure that the punishment fits the crime in a given set of circumstances. We are happy to continue to look for ways in which we can strengthen the criminal justice system to protect Canadians and ensure justice for those who commit serious offences.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not working. Just this week, a non-citizen was recently convicted of viciously attacking a woman outside of a Laval, Quebec, bar, leaving her victim with bite marks all over her face. The facial wounds were several centimetres long. They necessitated repeated treatments and left a prominent scar. Her scars were so bad that people ask her what kind of animal did it to her, and yet the judge gave her attacker a lenient sentence so that she would not be deported.

She deserves to be deported. It is what the law says. Why is she still here?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, when a person with a temporary or non-permanent immigration status commits a serious crime, they should face the full range of the consequences permissible under the law. Oftentimes, that includes deportation, but the Supreme Court of Canada actually rendered judgment on this issue in 2013, indicating that courts retained the jurisdiction to hear a range of different factors to ensure that there is a fit sentence.

What is fascinating is that, at the time, the member who posed the question was actually sitting at the federal cabinet table, was aware of the decision and chose to do absolutely nothing about it.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's immigration system is a mess. Fake refugees and criminals are slipping through the cracks and receiving preferential treatment from the Liberal government. Asylum claims should not be a shortcut to immigration. The Liberals must ensure that abuse is detected quickly and that the resources allocated to immigration serve Canadians appropriately.

What is the Liberal government going to do to prevent criminals from immigrating to Canada and crowding out the skilled workers we actually need?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this side of the House is working to protect our immigration system from fraud. We are working very closely with our security partners. We are working closely with all the provinces and territories, as well as businesses. People who come to Canada need to meet our criteria. We will continue to work to build a strong and resilient Canada.

* * *

● (1505)

[*English*]

TAXATION

Jessica Fancy (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the face of rising fuel prices driven by global instability, Canadians deserve real relief. I heard this from the families and businesses in my riding of South Shore—St. Margarets throughout the summer. They benefited from our government's decision to suspend the fuel excise tax last spring, and they are hoping to see it extended.

I have a question for the finance minister that I am hearing from my constituents. How are we helping Canadians pay less at the pump so they can keep more money in their pockets?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment my colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets. I have good news for her constituents. In fact, it is good news for all Canadians. The message we are sending to Canadians is that we are there for them. We are going to support them at a time of need with a measure that is immediate, broad-based, and tangible and meaningful for families.

I have the pleasure to announce in this House that we are going to extend the suspension of the excise fuel tax until January 2027. This is meaningful. This is going to help families. I hope every member of this House will stand up and vote in favour of it to support Canadians.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister asked our young people to make sacrifices while he and his government continue to spend recklessly. The Conservatives have identified $150 billion in potential savings, which amounts to $10,000 per family. How can we do that? We can do it by cutting the $20 billion per year that goes to consultants and scrapping the monster Alto high-speed rail project. It would also help if we could stamp out tax avoidance, a practice the Prime Minister is very good at.

When will the Liberals match their rhetoric with results and start saving Quebec and Canadian families money?

Hon. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are going to work on tax avoidance. That is a very important issue that the Prime Minister cares a lot about.

My colleague is asking for real results. Canada has the strongest economic growth in the G7. We have created jobs three times faster than the United States, and we are leading the G7 when it comes to foreign investment. Thanks to our summit, we have $500 billion on the table from investors.

* * *

[*English*]

LABOUR

Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, twice this summer the Canada Industrial Relations Board found that the Bank of Canada broke the law by using scabs against striking security officers represented by PSAC. Twice. The Liberal government has done absolutely nothing to fix this, which is hardly surprising coming from a government that introduced legislation yesterday to undermine workers' right to strike.

When will the government stop siding with employers and start standing up for workers, or does the government believe that labour law is something that only workers have to obey?

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, let me be crystal clear. We will always protect the rights of workers, and we will always support workers' constitutional right to strike.

As the member opposite knows, when we are talking about section 107, we always believe that this should only be used in exceptional circumstances. The legislation that we have brought forward establishes clear guardrails and new transparency for its use, and it helps us make sure that bargaining is actually more successful. We cannot build the Canada we need without workers. They are at the core of our agenda, and we support them wholeheartedly.

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, who is the government listening to?

Canada's biggest corporations are making record profits, yet yesterday the Liberals introduced legislation trying to take away workers' right to strike. Withholding labour is the workers' bargaining power. It is how families fight back against corporate greed so people can feed their kids.

We are asking, precisely who asked the Liberal government for these changes, and can the Liberals explain how they think weakening bargaining power helps Canadian families?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the building Canada strong act does precisely the contrary. It assists parties in disputes to get to agreements. We all know that the best agreements are those that are reached at the bargaining table, and the federal government has put in place a series of proposals in this bill that not only will respond to many of the comments raised by the labour movement during the consultations but will also underpin a system of deep support for parties as they navigate through collective bargaining and, hopefully always, in all cases, reach a collective agreement.

● (1510)

Scot Davidson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Today during question period, I referenced a letter from Margaret Haddon, a resident of Bradford West Gwillimbury. I am seeking unanimous consent to table this document. The Prime Minister and MPs across the way have—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: It is pretty obvious there is no unanimous consent.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is rising on a point of order, I believe.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, during members' statements, the S.O. 31 section, the hon. member for Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay was valiantly trying to make an important statement about what had happened in her community this summer. I could barely hear her for the noise from the general hubbub. It was not malicious noise; it was just noise.

I know you try Mr. Speaker, but really I felt so badly for the member for Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay. I do not know if she wants to try again, probably not, but please, when someone is talking about a heart-wrenching situation where people are running for their lives from wildfire, people should show respect.

The Speaker: That is a very good statement. I should point out that sometimes the noise is ambient noise coming from outside the chamber, but I do try to stress that it is important to keep the noise down during statements. I thank the hon. member for emphasizing that issue.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CANADIAN FUEL AFFORDABILITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-38, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (extension of the federal fuel excise tax relief), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will start off where I ended just before question period, just to say that one tax cut on one product does not undo an affordability crisis 11 years in the making.

Let us just be clear about where Canadians actually stand today. Nearly one in four families cannot afford the housing they live in. One in 10 people in Toronto relies on a food bank. Gas still sits over $1.80 a litre in Toronto today, and over $2.06 a litre in Vancouver, the highest gas price in the country. Inflation sits at 3%, the top edge of what the Bank of Canada considers tolerable, and we lost 42,000 jobs in August alone before the latest round of tariffs even hit.

Behind every one of those numbers is somebody like Hamid, a constituent who wrote me this month. Despite doing everything right, searching for work, trying to keep up, he told me that he is now in debt and struggling to afford basic necessities, including a pair of glasses that he needs to see clearly.

We are in Canada. That is not a policy footnote. That is not just some random example. These are real people with real stories. That is the real cost of 11 years of decisions made in this building. That is the story that the government needs to hear, because the promise of this country has always been simple: If a person works hard and follows the rules, the country works for them too. Right now, for too many Canadians, it simply is not working.

If the government is serious about affordability and not just borrowing language along with our policies, here is how the Liberals could finish the job they started today.

Go further on gas. Do not just cut the excise tax, but scrap the clean fuel standard and the GST on fuel too. That is another 15¢ a litre for every fill-up, and 15¢ a litre on every fill-up for a guy like Hamid means something. In fact, it means something for a lot of Canadians right across the country who are struggling. Do not stop at March. Hold it for a full year or longer if Canadians are not seeing the benefit by then. That is roughly $1,000 back in the pockets of every average family, not a few hundred, but $1,000, and that is a meaningful difference.

Scrap the GST on new homes. That alone can save a family $65,000 on a new build. It is the difference between renting forever and actually owning a place they can call their own for their families, to have kids and for their kids to have.

Get the spending under control. We have said this before. The government has doubled the deficit it inherited. In fact, it was the front members on the Liberals' bench who added to that deficit. They have actually inherited something they have done themselves. We have identified $150 billion in savings, which is roughly $10,000 for a Canadian family. That is the cost of three and a half average Canadian mortgage payments. That is real relief for real families everywhere across the country.

The Liberals can find this savings by cutting consultants. They can find it by cutting corporate welfare, boondoggles like the Alto rail project or a gravel pit launch pad that went nowhere. That money can go back to Canadians, or at minimum it could stop being borrowed against their children's future. None of this is complicated.

A tank of gas should not cost a day's wages. A home should not cost a lifetime savings for a down payment. Everyone in this place knows that this is not an ideological position. This is how this country is supposed to work. This is the deal that this country has on offer for every single Canadian, no matter where they came from and how they got there.

I will close with this. It is day two after three months of silence from the other side, and we have already passed something real, or we are about to. Imagine what could have been done for Canadians if this House had sat all summer, instead of shielding the government from questions it did not want to answer. Imagine if it was not all summits and MOUs, and it was real relief for real people who are undoubtedly scratching their heads today and wondering if this year is going to be any different than last year or the year before.

What is before us today is a step. It is a small one in the right direction, and we think it should go further. We will keep saying this every single day. We will keep saying it for the millions of Canadians who have entrusted us with the responsibility to fight for a more affordable future in this country, to fight to save them money, to fight for every single Canadian no matter where they live, where they came from and how they got here. We will support the bill and we will push until the government actually finishes the work that we started for it.

● (1515)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to pick up on the member's comments in regard to the summit. It is truly amazing the degree to which the government has been so successful through the leadership of our Prime Minister at opening the world to Canada. All one needed to do is go to Toronto, where they would have seen economic powerhouses from around the world looking and having control over literally hundreds of billions of dollars. For the first time in Canadian history, we hit close to half a trillion dollars in terms of commitments. The Conservatives can say what they want, but to try to deny the reality that we have a Prime Minister or a government that is working hard to deliver on jobs, investments, trade opportunities is completely off base.

I am wondering if she would reflect on her comments with respect to the summit.

Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, it is still all talk and no results, and we will continue to see no results. What we cannot do with commitments on projects that cannot get built in this country is fill a car full of gas. We cannot put food on the table. We cannot pay our mortgage. Every single Canadian who is scratching their head wondering what these summits and MOUs mean for affordability in this country is going to continue to keep scratching, while the member all the way from Winnipeg looks to Toronto and looks at a bunch of commitments that are not real.

Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North just talked about commitments. Well, we cannot eat commitments. Let us ask the people in Ingersoll about Stellantis and those commitments, which all left our country because of the Liberals' failed policies. Every Conservative here is here to save money for Canadians.

How much money would Canadians have saved if the Liberals had actually taken our policy months and months and years ago to take the tax off gas so they would be able to drive to their work and actually take their kids to school and put food on the table?

● (1520)

Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, the answer is simple: It is a whole lot more. What I want to say is, on this side of the House, for the last 11 years, we had members turning themselves in circles, screaming about burning the earth down because we would lower the price of gas in this country. Let us make no mistake about it, they can go a lot further. They can scrap the clean fuel standard and make sure to take 15¢ a litre off the price of gas for eternity, but they are not doing that. That is a policy choice.

The member brings up a good point on the summit. We cannot put a commitment in our gas tank. We cannot put a commitment on our table. For so long, this deal book has been full of deals that Canadian private capital said no to long ago. They said no because of the job-killing, energy-killing policies of the last 11 years that are continuing from the government.

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is rare when New Democrats and Conservatives agree on something, and we certainly agree that it is critical that we provide relief to people who are struggling right now. However, we believe that big corporations and big oil and gas should be paying for it, not creating more debt to taxpayers. One more thing we agree on is, as my colleague talked about, the lack of debate on the greatest threat to the Canadian economy with the tariffs and the countertariffs that are happening right now. I think about small businesses in my riding that have sales less than $1 million. There is no relief for them right now from the government. There is no debate happening to talk about those issues taking place right now, and it did not happen this summer, like my colleague talked about.

Could the member talk about how this is impacting small businesses in her community, which are not getting any help during the greatest threat to our Canadian economy right now in our history?

Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, it is rare when I agree with my NDP colleague, but a clock is right twice a day. He is right about one thing. This place was shut down for three months, and nobody from the government, including a whole bunch of backbench Liberal MPs who probably do not know the answer because they are not in the know either, along with a number of ministers, would answer to the Canadian people on the biggest crisis we face. That biggest crisis is affordability. It is an affordability crisis for every single Canadian, an affordability crisis that has people scratching their heads as to why these guys do not come to work and why these guys do not answer to the public.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, allow me to quote Robin, a widowed mother who wrote to me on Canada Day. She said that people talk about affordability in numbers but that she measures it differently. She measures it by the moments her kids ask, “Mom, can I have a three-dollar snack?”, and she says, “No, it's rent week.”

I also heard from Jennifer LaFramboise, a mother of four, who said that she owns a home and is working three jobs, one full-time and two part-time, trying to make ends meet. There are days when she has to invent new meals for her family to eat because she has four dollars left in her bank account until her next paycheque. She gets food only on apps such as Flashfood now, because that is all she can afford: discounted meals. She lives less than pay to pay, because her pay is never enough to meet anything on her bills.

Mike, a firefighter, business owner and father of three who lives in metro Vancouver, said that he and his wife work full-time. His wife is an educational assistant in the public school system, supporting teachers and children with diverse needs every day. Mike serves his community as a firefighter while also operating a small landscaping business. Between them, they are effectively working the equivalent of three jobs while raising three kids.

Mike said that, despite all their efforts, it was only recently that they managed to purchase their first home, a modest 1,200-square-foot townhouse that cost $879,000. He says that they are doing everything society asks of them: They work hard, pay their taxes and raise their children. They contribute to their community. However, they are barely keeping their heads above water. Mike says that he is burning the candle at both ends and is running out of candle.

Another single mother says that she has worked hard her entire life. She does not receive child support, and she does not expect handouts. She wants hard work to mean something again.

The Prime Minister tells Robin, Jennifer, Mike and the single mother that "Affordability is the best it has been in over a decade." He said those words in March on the floor of the House of Commons. On behalf of them and all the hard-working Canadians who are scraping and scratching to survive in this terrible inflationary economy, let me say that the Prime Minister is out of touch and Canadians are out of money. If he thinks these are just selective anecdotes, I have hundreds, probably thousands, more in my correspondence. All the members of the Conservative caucus could share stories just like these ones.

These are the people we bump into on Main Street. They are the people who show up at food banks. They are the people who are still courageously and heroically volunteering for local charities while they can barely afford to feed themselves. These are the people we will not meet on the summit floor, nor will we see them at a salon in Davos nor on the Prime Minister's private jet, where he spends thousands of other people's tax dollars on meals. No, these are the people on the ground, and they are the people for whom we as Conservatives will fight every day and every way on the floor of the House of Commons.

If the Prime Minister does not like stories, then let us go with some statistics. Rising prices at the grocery store have doubled food insecurity from 5.1% in 2017 to 10.5% last year, according to the Agri-Food Analytics Lab. A Royal Bank study found that more than half of parents with adult children aged 18 to 40 provide financial support, contributing, on average, $6,100 a year. Nearly one in five elderly people is forced to give $10,000 to support their adult children. According to the Telus mental health index, cost of living is the top financial stressor for two-thirds of workers.

The federal government's largest national count found that homelessness was 59% higher in 2022, with unsheltered homelessness up 89%. Consumer insolvencies in the second quarter of this year, the most recently reported one, were 37,523. That is the number of people who are selling everything so they do not have to declare bankruptcy. In fact, insolvencies are now at their highest level since the great global recession. The Prime Minister dares tell these people who are losing their homes and everything they worked so hard to acquire that they have never had it so good, and that affordability is the best it has been in a decade.

● (1525)

These are the stories the government would love to silence, that it would like to gaslight out of existence by telling us affordability is great. These are the stories we do not hear from the mainstream media, which would have covered it all up in order to protect the Liberal government.

We will not be silenced. We as Conservatives will be telling these stories on the floor of the House of Commons and offering real solutions to save Canadians money on gas, groceries, rent and mortgage payments. That includes tackling the inflationary taxes and deficits of the Prime Minister, which have worsened under his leadership. In fact, the deficit has doubled since he took office. The Liberals inherited a large deficit from themselves, and they managed to double it in a very short period of time.

We are relieved to see that our efforts to fight gas taxes have led to a temporary pause on part of those taxes. The Liberals we know would not have cut one penny off the gas tax for one minute had it not been for the relentless fighting and advocacy of the Conservatives on this side of the House, and we will keep fighting. We are only getting started.

The reality is that there are three taxes on gas. There is the excise tax, which we have forced the government to pause. There is the GST, which the government continues to collect and from which it continues to profit on higher gas prices because it is a percentage-based tax. Then, of course, there is the fuel standard tax. The Prime Minister said on the floor of the House of Commons yesterday that this tax adds zero to gas prices. His own Environment Canada website says that it is seven cents per litre right now and that within three and a half years it will be 17¢ per litre, the same rate as the previous Liberal consumer carbon tax. The only difference is that this carbon tax does not have a rebate, which makes it even worse.

Our message is to get rid of the fuel standard tax and the industrial carbon tax forever, and to get rid of the other gas taxes until at least Canada Day. This would save Canadians 25¢ a litre, 20 bucks a fill-up, and about $1,000 total, money that real people who are fighting every day just to raise their families could definitely use in order to build their lives.

The Prime Minister said yesterday as well that the industrial carbon tax has zero impact on food prices. I am not surprised that he is confused on this, because he famously said that Canadians do not use steel anymore. Let me tell the House that not only do Canadians use steel, but farmers use steel. Their equipment is made out of steel. When we tax the steel that goes into farm equipment and then tax the fertilizer that goes on the crops, which the Prime Minister has done, we tax all the food that comes from those crops.

That is why, while there are some global factors, the reality is that Canada has had the worst food price inflation for most of the Prime Minister's tenure in office, worse than the U.S., worse than the U.K., and worse than Italy, Japan, Germany and France. It is worse because his policies are worse. By reversing all of these taxes, we could bring down the cost of food and everything else.

Furthermore, do members know what else lowers the price when we purchase something? It is having a stronger dollar. We have a weak dollar right now because of the decade-long policy of the Liberal government to try to keep our most valuable export, oil and gas, in the ground. The Prime Minister was the global champion of net zero, saying that we needed to keep half of oil and gas in the ground. He promised that he would reverse himself on these policies, but since the last election, what have we seen? Yesterday he introduced a bill that he promised is going to speed up projects. That is what he promised 18 months ago. He introduced a bill called the Building Canada Act. What did it do? In 18 months, it has not approved a single, solitary project across this country.

● (1530)

We do not need another announcement. We do not need another press conference or summit. We need a real bill that would scrap all the antidevelopment laws, approve the 500 projects that are waiting for permits, and unlock and unblock our resources so we can bring them to the surface and bring strength to our dollar and purchasing power to the Canadian people so the hard-working people whose stories I told at the beginning will be rewarded, and so the promise of Canada will mean they can have a beautiful house, food on the table, a safe street and a mortgage they can pay down.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think it is important that the leader of the Conservative Party get a bit of a reality check. Under 18 months ago, when the Prime Minister was elected, one of the very first actions he did was to reduce middle-class taxes. Twenty-two million Canadians benefited from it. We can talk about the excise gas tax relief today, of 10¢ a litre. We can talk about how the Prime Minister got rid of the carbon tax. We can also talk about the Canadian grocery benefit.

These are some of the direct benefits, not to mention benefits such as the national school food program or the child care enhancements, the dental program and the pharmacare enhancement.

Why will the leader not support the entire package we brought forward to deal with the issue of affordability?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, it is because the entire package the Liberal government has brought forward is bankrupting Canadians. They cannot afford to pay the cost of the Liberal government. If any of those programs actually worked, we would not have double the number of people lined up at food banks, a number that has gone up by 100% since 2019 and continues to go up under the Prime Minister. If his whole basket of programs were actually working, we would not be getting letters from people such as Robin, Mike and Jennifer, who say they cannot pay their bills. We would not have the devastating statistics showing how many people are going hungry and homeless.

What we want is more results and less talk. We will fight every day and every way for Canada and for Canadians.

● (1535)

Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the leader of the official opposition talks a lot about affordability. For millions of Canadians, affordability is not about tax cuts or corporate profits. It is about whether they can actually pay their bills, of course. This is particularly challenging for seniors. I think about Bev, a senior in my constituency who is very worried about becoming unhoused. Seniors are the population fastest becoming unhoused in the country right now.

My question is simple. Will the Conservative Party commit to specific measures to help seniors afford groceries, such as increasing income supports, strengthening the guaranteed income supplement and indexing benefits to the real cost of living? Will the member commit to that now?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, absolutely, benefits should be indexed to the real cost of living. Absolutely, we will always support measures to make life affordable for our seniors, to save seniors money.

That is the opposite of what the Liberal government has done over the last decade by inflating the cost of living with record deficits. This year, the deficit is the biggest it has ever been outside COVID. Government spending as a share of GDP is the highest it has been since 1996. That inflation is destroying the savings and purchasing power of our hard-working seniors. They are getting less for the money they set aside. On top of that, their adult children have to come asking for help for a down payment or just to avoid rent eviction.

We are fighting for these seniors, for their kids, for all generations and for Canada's promise.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is a very difficult problem, for those of us who are committed to basing policies on science, to watch the Liberal Party squander what it had, which was basically a puffed-up, false reputation on climate in the first place, and then have the Conservative Party prop the Liberals up at the very moment when the Conservative Party should also say that not only is the Liberal Party driving up the fiscal deficit, but that it is also driving up the climate deficit. Canada now has a worse record on climate, and let this sink in, than the United States does, after one and a half terms of Donald Trump. It matters to Canadians, because affordability also includes running for one's life from wildfires.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, Canadians are running for their lives to try to pay their bills. I would note that we could fight wildfires if we had water bombers instead of spending half a trillion dollars fighting oil and gas and fighting against Canadians using gas at the pump, as the member suggests.

However, I can understand why she is heartbroken. For a decade, the Liberal Prime Minister said that he supported net-zero policies, that he wanted to keep more than half our oil and gas in the ground and that he wanted even higher and broader carbon taxes. He now claims to have changed his mind. He never believed it. It was all a money grab from the very start.

We on this side have been consistent. We are fighting for affordability, for low energy prices and for the massive production of our oil, gas and other resources.

Jennifer McKelvie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Surrey Newton.

I want to start by giving my thanks for the opportunity to contribute to today's debate on Bill C-38, the Canadian fuel affordability act.

The world is changing rapidly, but Canada is starting from a position of strength. Events like new tariffs, trade tensions and conflicts abroad continue to affect costs for households and businesses and create uncertainty for Canadians, but we all know that Canada is well positioned to manage these pressures thanks to our robust economy and our clear growth strategy, which is focused on driving investment, boosting productivity, strengthening domestic industries and expanding access to global markets.

In Canada, we have the good fortune of being a net energy exporter. Our resource wealth insulates us from the worst impacts of these disruptions. Canada is an energy superpower, and our government is capitalizing on this advantage by building new infrastructure projects that will increase our energy supply, with new nuclear, new hydro and new LNG facilities. However, we are not immune to systemic global shocks. That is why our government is taking action to help Canadians through these challenges.

In April, our government temporarily suspended the federal fuel excise tax following disruptions to crude oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz that drove up fuel prices. The measures have been saving Canadians and Canadian businesses up to 10¢ per litre on gasoline and unleaded aviation gasoline, up to 11¢ per litre on leaded aviation gasoline and up to four cents per litre on diesel and aviation fuel.

When the temporary suspension of the federal fuel excise tax was first introduced, gasoline prices declined by 11¢ per litre on the first day of implementation, delivering immediate relief to consumers. With today's legislation, we are continuing to provide relief at the pump by proposing to extend the temporary suspension of the federal fuel excise tax until January 31, 2027, and then applying 50% of the regular excise tax rate from February 1 through to May 31, 2027, inclusively. This will bring down costs for Canadians, including truckers and businesses in the food, agriculture, housing, construction and delivery sectors. This means we are delivering timely, meaningful and tangible relief for Canadians at a time when they need it the most. By reducing pressure on fuel costs at the pump for gasoline and diesel, we are taking concrete steps to lower costs for Canadians today while we continue to build a stronger, more resilient and more independent economy.

This action builds on one of the very first measures we took as a government, which also lowered costs at the pump in most provinces and territories. The House will recall that one of the first things the Prime Minister did upon assuming office was to cancel the consumer fuel charge, helping Canadians to save money at the pump in most provinces and territories. Our government also removed the requirement for provinces and territories to have a consumer-facing carbon price, as of April 1, 2025.

At the same time, our government also understands that Canadians do not just spend money on gasoline. That is why we have been taking action to reduce pressure on costs and make life more affordable for Canadians across the board. For example, our government introduced the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit. By building upon the former goods and services tax credit, we are increasing its amount by 25% for five years as of July. In addition to that, we provided a one-time payment in June, equivalent to a 50% increase in the 2025-26 annual value of the GST credit. Combined, this means a family of four will receive up to $1,890 this year and about $1,400 a year for the next four years, while a single person will receive up to $950 this year and about $700 a year for the next four years. That is literally making life more affordable for millions and millions of Canadians. In fact, the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit will provide additional significant support for up to 12 million Canadians.

Not only are we putting more money in the pockets of those who need it the most, but we are also leaving more money in their pockets with our middle-class tax cut, because we have lowered the first marginal personal income tax rate from 15% to 14% since July 1, 2025. Nearly 22 million Canadians are benefiting from this tax relief of up to $420 per person, saving a two-income family $840 this year.

● (1540)

This rate reduction applies to a taxable income of up to $58,523 in 2026, providing meaningful relief to Canadians during the current period of economic uncertainty. What is more, the bulk of tax relief will go to those with incomes in the two lowest tax brackets, including nearly half to those in the first bracket. This means the relief is effectively targeted to Canadians who need help the most.

In this regard, no one is more important to consider than our children. That is why we made the national school food program permanent. It provides meals to up to 400,000 kids annually. This program helps ensure that kids are fed healthy meals at school, and it saves families with two children up to $800 a year on groceries. By making it permanent, we will work with provinces, territories and indigenous partners to expand the program into more schools across Canada.

We are also aware that affordability pressures go beyond fuel and food and are affecting other essential expenses, including housing. That is why we introduced the first-time homebuyers' GST rebate. With this rebate, we will have effectively eliminated the GST for first-time homebuyers on new homes up to $1 million and reduced the GST for first-time homebuyers on new homes between $1 million and $1.5 million. This tax cut for first-time homebuyers will save Canadians up to $50,000, allowing more young people and families to enter the housing market and making the goal of home ownership a reality for more Canadians.

These are just a few of the examples of how we are bringing costs down for Canadians. By lowering costs, the government is creating an economy where every Canadian has more control over building their own future. Above all, our government will empower Canadians by helping them get ahead and reduce their cost of living. When Canadians keep more of the money they earn, they are better supporting their families, investing in their communities and building the future they want.

That is why I strongly encourage all members of this House to support Bill C-38, so that we can build a strong Canada for all.

● (1545)

Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member went through all the programs that Canadians have, including the new grocery rebate. Is that really an admission that their policies are failing? The fact that they have to give Canadians more money back in programs means they cannot afford food on their own.

The member has been in the House for a while. Why did she vote against our motion to take the tax off gas four or five times last spring?

Jennifer McKelvie: Madam Speaker, we have many measures that we have implemented to help Canadians with affordability, and the member opposite mentioned just one of them.

In addition to the groceries and essentials benefit, we have cut taxes for 22 million Canadians. We have eliminated the GST for first-time homebuyers. We are continuing to make investments in climate action by investing in communities from coast to coast to coast through the build communities strong fund and through the expansion of electricity in projects that we have been funding across the country.

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, first, I want to thank my colleague for talking about our children.

This bill would create a debt of $5.3 billion. As New Democrats, we support the relief to consumers from the gas tax savings. What we do not support is putting this on the backs of future generations. We believe that big oil and gas, which is making record profits, should be shouldering and sharing some of this. We are seeing excess profits like we have never seen, obscene profits in the tens of billions of dollars.

Does my colleague not agree and believe that the big oil and gas companies that are profiting from a war and showing record profits should cover the costs of what Liberals are putting in this bill, taking the pressure off everyday Canadians?

Jennifer McKelvie: Madam Speaker, we continue to invest in climate action. We continue to have industrial carbon pricing, which is essential for having responsible energy management in our country and for demonstrating to our partners overseas that we are serious about being clean, being green and being an energy superpower.

In addition, we continue to have the clean fuel regulations. These regulations do not set a price at the pump, but they do provide a flexible tool that supports good-paying jobs, drives billions of dollars of investment, strengthens certainty and reduces pollution, all while we continue to invest in clean energy and renewable energy across our country.

That is what we are doing for future generations. That is how we are showing climate action. That is how we are showing that we care about the environment.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if my colleague could provide her thoughts on the degree to which the government, and in particular the government caucus, is focused on the issue of affordability.

Today is one example. Through legislation, we would give a very serious extension of a tax break on the excise tax on gas, 10¢ a litre to the end of January and then five cents a litre to the end of March. It is real, tangible and money in Canadians' pockets, but it is part of a bigger affordability agenda. There are tax breaks for 22 million people, and there is support for child care, the dental program and the pharmacare program. There are different ways that we as a government, led by our Prime Minister, are pushing the issue of affordability for Canadians.

I would ask the member to provide further comment on that.

● (1550)

Jennifer McKelvie: Madam Speaker, we are definitely in difficult times, with pressures internationally that we have never seen before that are having an impact on affordability in our country. To grow our economy and get through the unjustified tariff war and the pressures we have from wars overseas, we are continuing to invest in ourselves and are taking different measures on affordability, including the ones my colleague mentioned.

To make it easier, we have cancelled the consumer fuel carbon tax, we have made the national school food program permanent and we are creating automatic federal benefits to make it easier for Canadians to access the affordability measures that help their bottom line. We are also continuing to expand and entrench the child care benefit so that women in particular can be their full selves in the workforce and have the care they need to reach their full potential in their careers.

These are just some of the measures we are working on, and we will continue to do that.

Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey Newton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-38, the Canadian fuel affordability act.

Across Canada, families, workers, farmers and businesses continue to face pressures from rising costs. Whether it is filling up a vehicle, transporting goods or managing the operating costs of a small business, affordability remains an important concern for Canadians.

During the summer, I attended hundreds of events and met thousands of my constituents. One thing I learned from them is that the Prime Minister and the government are doing their best, and they are very happy with the leadership of the Prime Minister. Most importantly, our government understands the challenges these Canadians are facing. That is why we are taking steps to help Canadians manage their expenses while continuing to build a stronger and more independent Canadian economy.

Bill C-38 is about providing immediate relief at the gas pump. Earlier this year, in April, we temporarily suspended the federal fuel excise tax on gas, diesel and aviation fuels. This measure provided savings of 10¢ per litre on gas and four cents per litre on diesel and aviation fuel.

Bill C-38 would extend this relief. This legislation would maintain the federal fuel excise tax at zero until January 31, 2027. From February 1 to March 31, 2027, the tax would be set to 50% of the regular rate, which would help Canadians manage the transition back to the regular excise tax rates. For gasoline, the extension is expected to provide savings of up to 10¢ per litre until February 2027, followed by a savings of five cents per litre through March 2027. For diesel, the savings are expected to be up to four cents per litre until February and up to two cents per litre through March.

These savings matter. When families are already managing the cost of groceries, housing, utilities and transportation, every dollar can make a difference. For a family that depends on a vehicle to get to work, take children to school or attend a doctor's appointment, fuel is not an optional expense. It is a necessary part of everyday life.

In Surrey, Newton, I hear from families and small business owners who are working hard to manage their expenses. Our community includes commuters, delivery workers, tradespeople and entrepreneurs who depend on transportation to earn a living. Reducing fuel costs can help these Canadians manage their daily expenses.

The benefits would also extend beyond the gas station. Truckers and businesses in the food, agriculture, housing, construction and delivery sectors depend on fuel to operate. Lower fuel costs can help reduce operating expenses and support the movement of goods across Canada. When a truck transports food to the grocery store, a construction company moves equipment to a workplace or a small business delivers products to its customers, fuel costs play an important part. This measure would provide temporary support to businesses facing economic uncertainty.

Canada is operating in a changing global environment. International conflicts and disruptions in global energy markets have placed pressures on fuel prices. At the same time, Canadian businesses and families are dealing with uncertainty related to international trade and tariffs. We cannot control every global event that affects the price of oil or gasoline. However, we can make decisions within our control to support Canadians.

● (1555)

Our government is also taking broader action to make life more affordable. We are lowering the personal income tax from 15% to 14%, providing tax relief of up to $420 per year per person or up to $840 for a two-income family. We have also cancelled the federal consumer carbon tax, provided GST relief for eligible first-time homebuyers and taken steps to strengthen competition in essential services. These measures address different areas of household expenses.

Affordability is not only about the price Canadians pay today. It is also about building an economy that creates good-paying jobs, attracts investment and supports long-term economic security. As we provide temporary relief from fuel costs, we must also continue working toward a competitive and sustainable Canadian economy.

Our industrial carbon pricing system is distinct from the consumer carbon pricing. It is designed to support Canada's position as a responsible energy supplier, encourage investment in emission-reducing technologies and strengthen access to international markets. Canada has the opportunity to grow its energy exports, create jobs and attract investment while continuing to address environmental challenges. We must approach these objectives together.

I recognize that members of the House may have different views about the duration and design of fuel tax relief. There can be legitimate discussions about the fiscal costs, the duration of temporary measures and how best to support Canadians facing financial challenges and pressures. However, Bill C-38 provides a specific and time-limited measure to reduce the federal fuel excise tax. It offers continued relief until the end of January, followed by a temporary reduction in the regular rate through March 2027.

Families and businesses need support today, and they also need an economy that is prepared for the future. As the MP for Surrey Newton, I will continue to support measures that address affordability concerns in our community and across Canada. Our government is focused on helping Canadians keep more of their hard-earned money while strengthening our economy.

I encourage all members to support Bill C-38 so that Canadians get the relief they deserve.

● (1600)

Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, they say that imitation is the finest form of flattery. We are flattered that the government is finally taking some of our policies to save Canadians money. That is why Conservatives came here: to make sure that Canadians have more money in their pockets.

This is my question, and the previous Liberal speaker did not answer it: I am wondering why the member voted against our motion to remove the tax on gas four or five times last session. Canadians could have been saving money for almost a year, rather than bringing this forward now.

Why did he vote against his constituents' having more money in their pockets when we brought this exact motion forward last session?

Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, in fact, here is the question that I should be asking the hon. member: Why did he and his leader vote time and time again against all those measures we brought to the House, whether it was cutting the gas tax, cutting the cost for 22 million Canadians with tax relief or providing food support to schools. I can go through the list, but I know I have only five minutes. The member and his leader voted against all those measures, but Canadians were helped and they feel helped. I can tell the member about the positive response that I get on the ground on those issues.

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know that Norway, where they created a sovereign wealth fund, has $2 trillion U.S. In fact, in royalties alone, the Norwegians generated over $300 billion last year because they took resources from a finite resource, from oil and gas, and they invested them. They have taken those royalties to do exactly the kinds of things that the government is talking about today, taking pressure off citizens when times are difficult.

Instead, what did the current government do? It created a sovereign wealth fund that took the big oil and gas companies and let them off the hook. Right now, we have record profits with big oil and gas. Does my colleague not agree that when big oil and gas are profiting with record profits because of a war, the generational wealth should be invested in a sovereign wealth fund that can be invested in programs that can help take the pressure off Canadians and pivot to investing in renewable energy? This is a generational opportunity that is being lost right now.

Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, one thing that I personally know and in fact all my constituents know is that the Prime Minister knows investments. When it comes to creating this sovereign fund, he knows exactly where he is going and he is going to invest for Canadians. Canadians are the ones who will make money, and that money will be invested into the programs that the NDP cares for and always asks for. We will continue to invest in those benefits.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have known the member for Surrey Newton for many years, and I have always found him to be a very strong and powerful advocate for issues such as tax breaks. This is one of those issues for which we are going to see a 10¢–a–litre drop ongoing until the end of January, and then five cents a litre until the end of March of next year. I know the member has also been a strong advocate for the tax break for all Canadians, some 20 million people.

I wonder if he can provide his thoughts in regard to why it is so important at a time of unaffordability that we be there for Canadians.

Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North has been a great friend and a great ally, and is always passionate when it comes to helping Canadians, including with 10¢ a litre on gasoline.

I am a small business person. My business has vehicles because it is a land surveying company, and they use gasoline. I know hundreds and hundreds of paid people in my riding who use vehicles. Because my community is a bedroom community, they commute to work. They drop off their kids at day care. They need this help. This help is badly needed. It is going to help people, whether a small business person, a plumber, an electrician, a roofer or generally a Canadian who is looking for an affordable price for gas.

On the other hand, there is the cutting of taxes for 22 million people. If we cut the tax by 1%, that is going to help them. They do appreciate and believe in the Prime Minister, and they believe in—

● (1605)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the great people of the riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Canadians are struggling with the cost of living, and every single dollar matters, whether it be the parent filling up the family car before taking the kids to school, the tradesperson driving from job site to job site or the truck driver delivering food that ends up in our grocery stores. It certainly matters to the families in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge who are trying to make their paycheques stretch a little further each month.

When I am at the east or west Woodbridge seniors clubs, the topic on everyone's mind is how expensive life has gotten. For seniors, OAS and CPP do not go far enough. As for their grandkids, they feel that life is unaffordable and they will never be able to get ahead.

It has been a year and a half since the Liberals were elected, and many are wondering how life has changed, how their lives have been made better. Yes, there are many global challenges that further complicate the problem, including the unjustified tariffs on our country, but many of the affordability concerns that Canadians are talking about predate this, and many of them are self-inflicted after almost 11 years now of bad government policy.

There have been many announcements from the government, but we have seen very little progress. We see a government that is great at marketing its announcements but very little action. I would submit that things have actually gotten worse. The Liberals in the last year and a half have doubled the deficit and added hundreds of billions of dollars of new spending above the reckless levels inherited from the previous disastrous Trudeau Liberal government. One need look no further than the fact that we are now at the highest levels of government spending as a share of the economy since 1996 and have the biggest deficit outside of COVID in Canadian history.

As a member of His Majesty's loyal opposition, it is my job to hold the government accountable, question its expenditures and, yes, agree where there is room to agree. Just yesterday, when I asked a question in the House on the cost of retaliatory tariffs for Canadians, the government House leader proceeded to act as if such a question was part of a "'blame Canada' pattern". I mean, how dare the Conservative opposition ask a simple question of basic economics to the Liberal government? We know transparency is not the Liberals' strong suit.

Following months of Conservative calls to extend gas tax relief for Canadians, the federal government decided to suspend the excise tax on gasoline and diesel in April, providing relief of 10¢ per litre on gasoline and four cents per litre on diesel. This suspension was originally scheduled to expire after Labour Day, but the government has now introduced legislation to extend it to January 2027. For Canadians who depend on their vehicles, and for businesses that depend on affordable transportation, the extension provides additional relief. It also raises an important question about what happens when that relief expires.

Conservatives have constantly called for greater relief, and we believe the government should go even further by removing all federal taxes on gasoline and diesel until at least Canada Day 2027, which would save Canadians 25¢ per litre and provide an annual savings of $1,200 per family. I will also note that when Conservatives proposed to remove the federal excise tax on fuel for a longer time, Liberals downplayed it as having little to no impact on affordability for Canadians.

I would also like to say that I will be splitting my time with the member for Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière.

How much could that wasted time and delay have saved Canadians? Let us think about it. We had a motion in this very House on this exact issue that the Liberals voted against several months prior. We have seen this before. The Liberals backtracked on their previous narrative regarding their tax policy. Exhibit A is the consumer carbon tax. As the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands suggested earlier today, the Liberals are plagiarizing parts of our platform for their own, and it is no surprise that they are because that is exactly what Canadians need to address issues of affordability and the cost of living.

Fuel taxes drive up costs for Canadians, and the impact extends well beyond the gas station. When fuel costs rise, the consequences are felt throughout the economy, and ultimately, those costs find their ways into the wallets of every single Canadian.

● (1610)

Let us consider what happens before a family even walks into a grocery store. A farmer needs fuel to operate equipment and produce food. A trucking company needs diesel to transport that food. A distributor needs to move it to a warehouse, and another truck delivers it to a grocery store. Every stage involves transportation, and every single stage has costs.

When fuel becomes more expensive, businesses face pressure to absorb these costs, reduce spending elsewhere or pass some of those expenditures along to the customers. That is why Conservatives have been calling for the government to go further. Lower fuel costs can help families at the pump while easing some of the pressures facing the businesses that produce and deliver the goods Canadians rely on.

As someone who spent 20 years in industry, I understand the importance of getting materials from a supplier to a factory and the finished product from a factory to a customer. The manufacturing transportation costs are part of the price of doing business. It is a top-three line item on most financial statements. A company might be doing everything it can to improve productivity, control expenses and remain competitive, but it still needs to purchase fuel to move its products. When those costs rise, it can put additional pressure on the company's margins and ability to compete.

This is particularly relevant today when Canadian manufacturers are already navigating significant uncertainty in their trade relationship with the largest market, the United States. For businesses in Vaughan—Woodbridge and across Ontario, transportation costs are one of several factors that determine whether they can offer competitive prices, attract orders and maintain employment. Fuel tax relief can help with one of those pressures.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has also reported significant financial pressure among small businesses. Among those who considered it a bad time to start a business, 88% cited high costs, 65% pointed at taxes and 53% identified government red tape. These are Canadians who invest their savings, take risks and employ people in our communities. When their costs rise, it can become harder to expand, invest in new equipment, hire workers or offer competitive pricing.

Conservatives also called for reforms to federal permitting, taxation and regulation to address Canada's broader competitive challenges. For example, we have learned that there are over 100,000 different regulations on the manufacturing sector alone. The decisions Parliament makes on fuel taxes are a part of that discussion.

I want to turn to the experience of younger Canadians. The finance minister claimed his government is fighting every day for young people and their generation, yet a recent RBC report highlights that more than half of Canadian parents are financially supporting their adult children, giving an average of $6,100 just last year. Young Canadians should not need the bank of mom and dad to afford groceries and rent.

A significant portion of Canada's brain drain is because of the cost of living for our young people. Conservatives have raised concerns about the scale of federal spending, the deficit and the long-term costs of servicing public debt. Those concerns deserve careful consideration when the government is asking Canadians to accept that further fuel tax relief cannot be sustained beyond next spring.

Bill C-38 also presents an opportunity to consider the broader fuel tax proposal. Conservatives have called for removing all federal taxes on gasoline and diesel until at least Canada Day 2027, including the GST on fuel, while also proposing changes to the clean fuel regulations and the permanent elimination of the industrial carbon tax.

The government has estimated that extending the existing tax suspension will provide an additional $2.9 billion in tax relief. That makes the scheduled return of the tax particularly important to examine. If the government recognizes that fuel tax relief can help Canadians and Canadian businesses manage rising costs, Parliament should understand why the relief is scheduled to end on April 1.

The families I represent in Vaughan—Woodbridge are looking for greater financial security. They want to know that their children have opportunities to purchase a home, that their businesses can remain competitive and that their paycheques will cover the costs of everyday life.

● (1615)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it has been a fairly good and healthy debate today on an important piece of legislation. The government recognizes the importance of collaboration. We have had collaboration to the degree that we are going to pass this bill today.

I want to recognize that in the hope that the Senate of Canada recognizes that the House of Commons has a desire to get this bill passed. Ultimately, it is all about Canadians and providing the type of support they need in dealing with the issue of affordability. I know it would make a huge difference for Canadians, and that is why I am glad to see the Conservative Party join with us in getting the legislation through today.

Can the member comment on why it is important that we see the bill ultimately pass, both here and in the Senate?

Michael Guglielmin: Madam Speaker, we are facing a major affordability crisis, and in that same spirit of collaboration, we would like to see the government extend this fuel tax break even further. We would also like to see it take some of our other ideas on affordability. We have a serious problem with regulations that have a stranglehold on the Canadian economy. We need serious tax reform.

I believe it was a Liberal prime minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who once said that if Canada wants to be competitive with the United States, the largest market, it is not going to be a market competition. We have to have a more competitive regulatory system and a much more competitive tax system. I would like to see the Liberals collaborate with us on those things to increase affordability for Canadians.

Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge is doing a fantastic job. I want to ask him how he would explain to the 22 seniors clubs in our jurisdiction that 8.3% of food bank clients are seniors and that number is growing. We hear those concerns every single time we attend seniors events. They are struggling with taxes, rent and buying groceries.

We know the affordability crisis is real in this country, and yet the Liberals claim they have solved the affordability crisis. How will the member explain to the seniors we represent in our community that the Liberals did not take them into consideration?

Michael Guglielmin: Madam Speaker, we see a theme here. The Liberal government spends 11 years recklessly destroying the Canadian economy and then wants to take credit for programs that it institutes to apparently help subsidize the people in the economy that it destroyed.

To answer the member's question, we need to see the spirit of collaboration on serious things like tax reform, on things that will help us build up our leverage in trade negotiations and that will help promote competitiveness. We would like to see the Liberals actually start building energy infrastructure so we can take advantage of this unique opportunity to capitalize on our natural resources, so we can lower business and personal tax for people and really target key industries and see them thrive. We have everything we need in this country. We just need the Liberals onside to promote these ideas.

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, again, we all agree in this House that we need to take pressure off everyday Canadians. People are struggling to make ends meet. This bill, in its intention, is a good idea, which is to remove taxes so people pay less at a time when they need help. Where I have a problem, and I am surprised the Conservatives do not join me, is that all we are doing is taking this debt of over $5 billion and punting it down the road for future generations to pick up the tab. They are the ones who are going to end up paying this, because this is going on our debt. Meanwhile, big oil and gas are posting obscene profits. We have never seen profits like this. This war is creating extreme wealth for big oil and gas and investors.

I would like to know if my colleague has talked to his constituents. He should ask them if they believe that big oil and gas companies should chip in a bit more while they have these winning profits. I know from my experience in talking to my constituents that every single one of them I talk to, every one of them, thinks that the big oil and gas companies should pay an excess profit tax.

● (1620)

Michael Guglielmin: Madam Speaker, the constituents from Vaughan—Woodbridge and, frankly, Canadians right across this entire country recognize the unique position that Canada is in with our large natural resources that we sit upon. What they would like to see the government do is move at speeds not seen before, like it promised in the last election, so we can develop the infrastructure, export our natural resources and build up this country for everybody.

[*Translation*]

Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague for his excellent speech. I want to address those watching this debate closely at home, because people all across Canada are feeling the strain of the cost of living. Families are working, paying their bills and doing what they have always done, but unfortunately, many of them are finding that they have less and less money left in their pockets at the end of the month. A recent study showed that people have less than $100 left in their pockets at the end of the month to make ends meet. One hundred dollars is not a lot. Quebeckers are also facing this challenge. They see it at the grocery store, in the cost of housing and insurance and even every time they have to stop at the gas station to fill up.

Behind the numbers we are discussing here in Ottawa, the statistics and examples from overseas, lies a very different challenge for families. Families have to make choices, put off purchases because they cannot afford them or cut back just to be able to pay for essentials, such as heating, groceries or school supplies. In short, they have to make tough choices. That is why it is time to get back to basics in Canada. It is time to save Canadians money by cutting the taxes and government spending that are making absolutely everything more expensive, as I mentioned earlier. It is time to protect Canadians' jobs and to keep Canadians safe. It is not right that people in Canada have to think twice before going out at night because they do not feel safe. Why is that? It is because, over the past few years, the government has implemented reforms that make it easier to put criminals back on the streets than in prison. What I just said is no joke. It is the truth. It is also time to fix our immigration system and put Canada first.

We, the Conservatives, have identified nearly $150 billion in potential savings in government spending. That is $10,000 in savings per family in taxes. When we talk about saving Canadians money, we need to look at the expenses they have to cover every week. Gas and fuel are part of that. For millions of Canadians, especially Quebeckers who live in rural areas, filling up is not an expense they can simply decide to put off until later.

In my riding of Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, a car is a necessity, not a luxury. People need a car to get to work, drive the kids to school and activities, go grocery shopping and get to medical appointments. In short, they need a car to get everywhere they need to go. There are no subway stops every block or buses that come by every 10 minutes in our municipalities. When we look at the Régie de l'énergie du Québec's data on the price of gas, that has a direct effect on our communities. If we use the published gas prices to calculate how much it will cost to fill up a 60-litre tank, it quickly adds up to over a hundred dollars per fill-up. That is a recurring weekly expense for many workers in Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière and all regions of Quebec.

Drivers in Estrie called into the radio station 107.7 to say that they are now cutting back on their trips to save on gas so they can get around when it is truly essential. When people start changing their travel habits just to save on gas they cannot afford, it shows just how much the price at the pump is eating into their budgets. As I said, this is not limited to the Estrie region. On September 17, the price of gas was $2.80 per litre at some gas stations in Montreal. The provincial average was $1.96 per litre. In some regions, the situation is even worse. In Radisson, in northern Quebec, the price of gas recently reached $2.37 per litre. This shows how much of a burden fuel costs can be for families who have no choice but to travel by car.

When we talk about affordability, we are talking about the ability of Quebec and Canadian families to pay for essential expenses. Right now, Canadians are benefiting from a pause on the federal fuel excise tax. Bill C-38, which we are discussing today, will extend the full suspension until January 31, 2027. A rate equal to 50% of the regular excise tax rate will be in effect during February and March, before the regular rate resumes in the spring. What does that mean in practical terms? It means that the federal tax on gas and diesel will be suspended, but that as of February 1, it will go back up to 50% of the regular rate.

● (1625)

Then, on April 1, according to today's announcement, the price of gas will not decrease but rather will go back up again. The regular rates will be reinstated. The relief that Canadians are receiving now is already supposed to decrease in February and March of next year. For a family that needs to gas up regularly, sometimes for two vehicles, these costs add up.

We must not forget that the extension was announced after months of Conservative calls for the government to keep the fuel tax relief going. We introduced two opposition motions in the House asking for all fuel taxes to be suspended, meaning the clean fuel tax, the GST and the excise tax, not just until Labour Day, but until July 1 next year. Both times, the Conservatives were the only ones to vote in favour of these motions. The Liberals voted no, the Bloc Québécois voted no and the NDP voted no.

Under pressure, the government came to realize that it would be foolish to kick off the parliamentary session by raising the price of gas by 10¢ per litre for everyone. People would associate the price hike with the Liberals, so the Liberals decided to pick a quieter time, over the winter, when people will not be paying much attention to what is going on.

However, winter is when people need their vehicles the most. Riding a bike is not an option; there are no other options. People need their vehicles even more. Today, the Liberals are saying that on February 1, when it will be -40°C out, gas prices are going to rise by five cents a litre.

That is the proposal before us today. In our opinion, we need to go further. If lowering fuel taxes lets families and workers keep more of their own money, that is the direction we should take. Families will still be paying their bills in February. They will still be going places. Workers in Thetford Mines will still be going to work. Families in Lac-Mégantic will still have to drive their kids to their activities. Farmers in Lotbinière will still have to keep farming. Truckers will still have to keep transporting goods. Expenses never take a holiday.

As the Conservatives see it, an extension of a few months is good, but not good enough. Bill C-38 offers some relief, but it is only a half measure. What we need is to pause all gas taxes until July 1, 2027, and then see how the economy is doing and whether enough time has passed for the market to normalize.

If the Liberals' projects were actually moving as quickly as they claim they are, we could be producing more oil here in Canada. That would help lower gas prices for everyone, but unfortunately, we hear a lot of talk from that side of the House, but we see very little action when it comes to actually delivering anything.

Our proposal would result in savings of 25¢ per litre, or more than $1,000 a year for a Canadian family. On a 60-litre fill-up, as I said earlier, that means $15 in savings. That is right, $15 on a single fill-up. Multiply that by the 52 weeks in a year, since drivers usually fill up at least once a week, and we get savings of over $1,000 a year, which could make a real difference in a family's budget.

As we know, Bill C-38 deals only with the federal government. When we say we need to go a little further, it is because we can take action on the things in our control. We do control the three taxes I mentioned, and if the Liberal government wanted to, it could provide relief to families for a little longer.

Rising gas prices also have a very negative impact. Every time the price of gas and diesel goes up, the price of our food goes up. Marc Cadieux, president of the Association du camionnage du Québec, was very clear on this, saying that fuel is the second-highest cost for carriers and that this increase is ultimately passed on to consumers.

There is a dual impact. The government is going to raise taxes for everyone, and then that tax increase will once again be passed on to everyone. At the end of the day, who pays? It is always the consumer who pays.

In closing, I want to add one more thing. We need to cut taxes even further to ease the pressure on Canadians' wallets. In Quebec's regions, filling up a gas tank is not optional, and neither is paying taxes. However, when we can control that and help people, we must do so. That is the decision that needs to be made.

I hope that the government will realize that some day.

● (1630)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on the idea of having the excise tax taken off gasoline, I find it interesting that a couple of years ago, when the NDP formed government with Wab Kinew, the first initiative was to take the excise tax off gas in the province of Manitoba. Yes, the Conservatives have also talked about it, but so has Canada's new Prime Minister, to the degree that his very first action in dealing with the issue of affordability was to get rid of the carbon tax. In Manitoba, that meant 17¢ a litre, permanently. In the economic spring budget, it was 10¢ a litre, and this legislation would extend that.

These are all positive initiatives. I like to think I also had something to do with that tax break by advocating within our caucus, but I think a lot of it had to do with the Prime Minister's determination to deal with the affordability issue. Would the member not agree that maybe we should be sharing the good idea?

[*Translation*]

Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, who never fails to surprise us when he takes the floor. He is trying to give the credit for our ideas, the ones that were proposed and brought forward here by the Conservatives, to the new Prime Minister, who is part of the same government as the former Liberal government.

We spent years saying that the federal carbon tax should be abolished. That very same MP criticized us for wanting that. He said we were going to destroy the planet. What has happened? Now there is a new leader who has suddenly become an advocate of abolishing the carbon tax. Unbelievable.

Now, that party is embracing the idea of reducing the excise tax on gasoline. Frankly, the Liberals are welcome to adopt plenty more ideas like that if they save Canadians money. I have no problem with them implementing our policies, but they should let us know every now and then when they are going to take ideas from our playbook.

Canadians know that there is only one party looking after their wallets, and that is the Conservative Party.

[*English*]

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, this summer we had another catastrophic wildfire season right across the country. Last year, it was in my riding. Three years ago, it was in my riding as well. We know the climate crisis is real. It is costing Canadians every day, not just when their communities get hit, but through their home insurance and business insurance. We are seeing costs skyrocketing. We know people need help. They need relief.

Where do we go for that relief? Big oil and gas is posting record profits. It is an opportunity for them to chip in and help give relief to Canadians. That could be at the pump right now through a bill like this, but it could also be through helping to take pressure off people when they are trying to access home and business insurance.

Does my colleague not agree that big oil and gas should be chipping in while it is winning, while it is posting record profits, so it can support Canadians, invest in clean energy and invest in supporting people?

● (1635)

Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I will not defend the big oil and gas companies. I come from a region that was a victim of the gas cartel. Companies have to reimburse a lot of people in my riding because they were fixing gas prices together. I am not here to make their court case, but I must say that, what we can control right now, immediately, is the tax on gas to provide some relief to Canadians.

I am asking the government again to please suspend all taxes on gas until July, 1 2027. Let us save money for Canadians.

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, Conservatives have been pointing out all day that the new Prime Minister has been implementing the Conservative agenda, at perhaps about half speed. I am just wondering if my hon. colleague has any comments about that.

Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, the first time we talked about cutting taxes on gas was in May 2022. After that, we repeated the ask in June 2024, and we tabled a motion here to cut all taxes on gas on April 2026, which was four days before the government put its own proposal on the table.

Yes, the government is taking a lot of ideas from the Conservatives.

Danielle Martin (University—Rosedale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for Edmonton West.

[*Translation*]

I am very pleased to take part in today's debate on this bill, which affects all Canadians, including the people of my riding, University—Rosedale, in downtown Toronto, where the issue of affordability is of great concern to us.

Like all members of the House, I spent my summer listening to my constituents. At the doorsteps, on the streets, and at festivals and fairs, I heard two things. First, Canadians understand very well that we are in an economic situation that is not entirely in our control. They know full well that the rapidly changing global landscape around us is creating uncertainty for our businesses, our workers and Canadian families, and that these are factors beyond our control. However, they also understand that there are factors we can control, and they expect our government to do everything in its power where it can.

In this situation, our government is focusing on what it can control. That is why we are focusing on building a stronger economy over the medium term while reducing costs and increasing our support measures for the public during this very difficult period. More specifically, our government is well aware of the pressures associated with rising gas prices. Across the country, we have recently seen gas prices skyrocket, and this is causing financial hardship for many Canadians, including those in my riding.

[*English*]

As this House knows well, in order to help Canadians and businesses manage these pressures, our government introduced a temporary suspension of the federal fuel excise tax on gasoline, diesel and aviation fuels. We will all recall that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance and National Revenue initially announced this important measure this spring. We suspended the full amount of tax with an initial sunset date of September 7 of this year, but our approach to this excise tax has always been flexible. Over the course of the summer, it became increasingly apparent that gas prices would remain volatile due to ongoing geopolitical pressures and supply chain disruptions, so we have acted accordingly.

Earlier this month, the government further extended the temporary suspension until January 31, 2027, with a 50% reduction in the regular excise tax from February 1 through March 31, 2027, which of course is what brings us to today's debate. Much as the initial suspension provided real, tangible and immediate relief to Canadians at the pump, that measure was part of a broader suite of measures to address rising everyday costs for Canadians and businesses in the transport, food, agriculture, housing, construction and delivery sectors. There is a reason this measure has support across the political spectrum. It is precisely because we all know that in the current climate, we must do all we responsibly can to reduce operating costs across the economy and reduce pressures on the food, agriculture, housing, construction and delivery sectors in particular.

When I think about the people in my riding who need this measure the most, I think about two groups in particular. The first are the individuals who work in the care economy in downtown Toronto, in hospitals, home care and long-term care homes, often commuting long distances to get to their jobs in the downtown core or traversing the city multiple times a day to serve different clients, clients who are our family members, to give them a shower, to bring them food and to attend to their health needs. For those people, a small break at the pump is significant in their weekly budgets, and we owe it to them to do what we can. The second group are the small businesses in my riding that fear seeing the cost of their inputs rise as the price of transporting them increases. Small and medium businesses, major targets of the current round of unjustified and illegal tariffs, need this protection in order to be able to plan and invest in their own success.

● (1640)

This relief is as important to the people of University—Rosedale as it is for everyone across the country, but we all know that alone it is not enough. That is why it is just one of several measures that we have put forth and have been debating actively in this House as part of our vibrant democracy. We put these measures forth to alleviate the pressure from the high cost of fuels on Canadian household budgets.

[*Translation*]

For far too many people in Canada, groceries and essentials have been too expensive for too long. We all know that the pandemic caused a global spike in inflation, which drove up the cost of groceries and essentials for all of us. Food prices have risen faster than overall inflation, because of shocks to global supply chains due to tariffs, weather events related to climate change and, of course, geopolitical disruptions.

To support those most affected by rising food prices, in January 2026, our government announced the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit to help more than 12 million Canadians afford the essentials they need.

Together, those measures will enable a family of four to get nearly $2,000 this year and around $1,400 per year for the next four years.

[*English*]

Our government is also delivering significant reforms to our tax system and other areas of public policy during this affordability crisis. In my riding, where the dream of home ownership in the core of Canada's largest city has been a dream for too many for too long, the movement we have made on housing has been very significant. Our government has eliminated the GST for first-time homebuyers on new homes up to $1 million and reduced the GST for first-time homebuyers on new homes between $1 million and $1.5 million. It is these kinds of actions that bring home ownership back into the realm of possibility for so many young people who live in my riding.

We have also made the national school food program permanent, providing school meals for up to 400,000 children each year and saving participating families up to $800 on groceries annually, which is significant for a lot of people.

We have also introduced automatic federal benefits starting with the 2026 tax year. I would like to spend just a moment to say a bit about why this step is so important to me personally.

During my 20 years as a practising family physician, I regularly saw patients who I knew should be accessing income supports of various kinds but were not accessing them. Application processes for federal and provincial programs are complex. At times, we know they can feel invasive and even humiliating. At other times, they are just simply confusing. For some people, the requirement to file taxes on a very low income does not make it to the top of the priority list. Those patients are now my constituents, and our commitment to automatic tax filing is a major improvement for them.

The Canada Revenue Agency will be able to help eligible Canadians who do not file their taxes by preparing and filing a return on their behalf. Before this happens, of course, they will have the opportunity to review the information and make necessary changes, but this means that people who may not have the time, resources or ability to navigate the tax system on their own will have another way to access the supports that are available to them and for which they are eligible, supports they deserve. Automatic filing and benefits will ensure that up to 5.5 million low-income Canadians automatically receive the benefits they qualify for.

This builds on other efforts to make it easier for Canadians to receive the benefits for which they are eligible. I am so proud to be part of a government that is beginning to break down those barriers.

Our plan is moving Canada's economy from reliance to resilience. Some of the biggest long-term payoffs of the transformation that we are undertaking will take time to be felt.

● (1645)

[*Translation*]

To ensure that Canadians have the support they need right now, the Government of Canada is acting quickly with measures that will serve as a springboard to the future.

[*English*]

To support Canadians through this global energy market disruption, we are delivering timely, meaningful and tangible relief for Canadians. It is my pleasure to support this bill.

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for splitting her time with me today.

I am glad she brought up the issue of automatic enrolment. We actually studied it at public accounts. The Auditor General was quite pointed in her comments about the government's lack of interest in supporting Canadians. One of the biggest issues we found, and I found this both anecdotally and in the studies, is the lack of automatic enrolment for the guaranteed income supplement. This is not covered in the government's current plans. When will the federal government be introducing automatic enrolment for seniors who could benefit from the GIS?

Danielle Martin: Madam Speaker, I think the member opposite's question is an important one. There are, of course, all kinds of federal benefits that over time might be appropriate to consider as part of the automatic tax filing and automatic benefits suite of services.

We are beginning this responsibly as a pilot to understand what it takes to undertake this work on behalf of low-income people in Canada. We are going to be learning and progressively improving the program as we go along. I look forward to joining the member in his advocacy for making as many programs automatic as we possibly can where it is realistic and possible.

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about the challenges people are facing. One thing I will give her credit for is that she has been an incredible champion for calling for universal pharmacare.

We know that in her home province, seniors are cutting pills in half because they cannot get the medicine they need when they need it. It was just last September that the Prime Minister assured the Canadian public that he was going to sign pharmacare agreements with all of the provinces and territories that had not gotten on board. Here we are, a year later, and not a single agreement has been signed in the last 12 months, including in her home province.

Is my colleague going to be the champion to get those deals done? Is she still committed to universal pharmacare to ensure that people are not cutting pills in the country and are using their health card, not their credit card, to access the medicines they need?

Danielle Martin: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister has spoken passionately about his commitment to ensuring that Canadians have access to the critical public services they need. In my home province of Ontario, luckily there are not seniors cutting pills in half, because all seniors are covered by the provincial public drug plan. However, it is true that there are people across the country who continue to struggle with the cost of their prescription medications. The work toward pharmacare is not complete, and I certainly continue to believe that no one in the country should be cutting pills in half because they cannot afford them.

● (1650)

[*Translation*]

Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was wondering what to ask my colleague, and she actually answered my question in her speech.

I recalled that before she became such an exceptional member of Parliament, she was an equally exceptional family doctor. She talked about all the programs we have put in place, including the Canada child benefit, the Canada groceries and essentials benefit, the Canadian dental care plan and a program that is particularly important to me, the national school food program. I am sure that when she looked after people in her previous life, they were grateful to receive assistance from various levels of government and from various organizations.

Can she tell us whether the people receiving these supports are actually seeing any improvement in their quality of life?

Danielle Martin: What we know, Madam Speaker, is that what we call the determinants of health involve more than just the care that Canadians receive at the doctor's office or at a hospital. Above all, the foundations of the determinants of health have to do with the underlying factors that shape health—whether it be economic well-being, nutrition, housing, or the environment. That is why I wanted to come here and contribute to the work of the House of Commons. In my opinion, investing in these programs is precisely what it means to invest in the health of my community.

[*English*]

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to such stupendous applause today. I thank both members for cheering me on.

I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-38, what I call a half-measure tax cut. Why is it a half-measure? Well, the Conservatives for a long time have been pushing for a more extensive gas tax cut.

Madam Speaker, are you interrupting me?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I apologize. I have a paper in my hand and I have to read it before 5 p.m.

[*Translation*]

It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Calgary Crowfoot, The Economy; the hon. member for Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, Employment; the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, The Economy.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Edmonton West may resume.

Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, the Conservatives are pushing for a more extensive gas tax cut to make life more affordable for Canadians. Last May, in fact, we put through an opposition day motion calling for the government to offer Canadians immediate relief by ending all federal taxes on gas and diesel for the rest of the year, including the GST; and permanently scrapping the clean fuel standard. We then called for it to be completely eliminated up until Canada Day next year. Of course, we saw that the Liberals had to be dragged, kicking and screaming, to offer a partial tax break to Canadians.

The price of gas is at probably an all-time high from what I have seen in my many years. It is $1.81 a litre in Edmonton, of all places, but I understand the provincial government is offering a 13¢ cut, coming on October 1. I just heard that today. More important, the price of diesel fuel has gone through the roof, at about $2.80 to $2.90 a litre. A lot of Canadians, when they think of diesel, just think of the crazy hippie down the road still driving the Volkswagen Rabbit on diesel or perhaps someone driving a big truck on diesel. They do not understand that diesel fuel is very much the lifeline of Canadian industry, farming and trucking. Where the price of diesel goes, so goes inflation.

People who want to geek out on something should take a look at something called the crack spread. Generally simplified, that is the spread between the price of refined products and the price of oil, and it is at an all-time high right now. If they want to look into it more I suggest they follow a chap named Richard Dias on Twitter. He talks about it a lot. It is a coming problem for Canadians because they see the price of oil being one thing, but the price of gas and diesel, the refined products, is decoupling in a lot of ways from the price of oil and going even higher. Again, as go diesel prices, so go food costs and many other costs.

I am glad that the government is at least offering some partial relief at the pumps. Again, it is unfortunate that it has had to be nagged into extending it, and only partially, but even a partial cut is better than no cut at all. It helps Canadians now. Keeping fuel taxes low should remain a priority going forward. For years, we have seen the current government claiming the carbon tax was not inflationary and fighting to keep the carbon tax. Like caving on the carbon tax, I am glad the Liberals caved a bit on extending the fuel tax rebate at least a bit longer. Currently, it is suspended only to January 2027, then resumes at 50% and then the full amount returns on April 1, 2027. Basically, the Liberal government is putting an expiry date on affordability.

I mentioned at the beginning of my speech that the Conservatives put through an opposition day motion to eliminate all taxes on gas and diesel, etc., back in May, and the current Liberal government voted the motion down.

I want to quote some of the Liberal members when they were arguing against a tax rebate for Canadians or a reduction of gas taxes. I will start with my friend and colleague from Winnipeg North. He said, “Why the hypocrisy from the Conservative Party of Canada when it comes to the issue of affordability?” This is the same member whose interventions I stopped counting at 40 times. He stood in this House at least 40 times during the last couple of years, defending the carbon tax as being a boon for Canadians for affordability. In May, he was arguing against further tax cuts on gas and now he is saying it is a panacea for everything. It is funny how, when the Conservatives proposed a gas tax cut, it was bad but now it is good. I am going to continue with the hypocrisy line a bit longer. As for the finance minister who introduced the bill, I counted over the last couple of years that he stood 25 times in this House defending the carbon tax. Every time the Conservatives put through a motion to eliminate the carbon tax, the finance minister, who is all about affordability now, stood and defended the carbon tax. The finance minister also stated that a gas tax is really not that important. Because 80% of the price of fuel was because of oil, therefore a tax change did not matter.

● (1655)

Continuing on, a Liberal member stated that what we need to do is reduce taxes in ways that are responsible and to continue to invest in critical social programs. In May, the Liberals were arguing against a tax cut, but now a tax cut is good. A tax cut was bad before, but a tax cut is good now. Again, it is hypocrisy.

Another member, a senior member, stated basically that tax cuts to gas are bad because they only help the rich: “This idea that the impact is going to be more substantial on low-income Canadians than on Canadians who are much more well off is just absolutely ludicrous... It does not make any sense”.

Guess who actually says gas taxes are progressive and disproportionately hurt low-income Canadians. It is a bunch of far-right-wing think tanks such as the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Canadian Labour Congress and the Smart Prosperity Institute. The government was actually stating in May that it did not want to cut taxes, because it would have only helped the super wealthy. Even though the PBO and others stated the carbon tax disproportionately hurt low-income Canadians, the government argued in May that tax cuts only help the wealthy. What are we doing today with Bill C-38? We are debating a tax cut. I guess super wealthy back then was different than super wealthy now.

He went on and said, “What the Conservatives are proposing is more of a benefit for the ultrawealthy”, so I have to ask the Liberals why a tax cut in May was for the ultra-wealthy and a tax cut now is not for the ultra-wealthy. Are they just completely misinformed or perhaps, as the member for Winnipeg North states, “hypocrites”?

The defence minister said, “[Conservatives know] that this handful of tax changes [that they had proposed in May] are not going to contend with the economic challenges we are facing in the United States. They are not going to contend with the Ukrainian war. They are not going to contend with the gulf war.”

The Minister of National Defence, in June, was attacking Conservative-proposed tax cuts. They were no good, because they were not going to do anything about the war in Ukraine nor the war in Iran, so I will invite any member of the Liberals to stand up in the questions period and tell me what has changed since the minister of defence said that tax cuts would not change what was going on in the States. Why now?

I am not arguing we should not do this tax cut. I am just saying we should do more, but I was calling out the hypocrisy of the Liberals who were fighting against Conservative proposals to cut taxes in May, and all of a sudden, under Bill C-38, the tax cuts not only are good and no longer help the “ultrawealthy”, as the Liberals say, but apparently, according to the minister of defence, they would fix the Ukrainian war, they would fix the war in Iran and the gulf and fix our issues with the U.S. It is wonderful.

Another member says it is “absolutely crazy” to make the claim that cutting gas taxes helps low-income people. Again, it was utterly crazy in May, but somehow good now. We know cutting taxes is good. Milton Friedman says he is in favour of any tax cut at any time. I would agree. I am glad the Liberals are doing this, but I just point out the hypocrisy of fighting a gas tax cut in May and all of a sudden saying it is a glorious thing to do now.

The member for Mount Royal complained that cutting gas taxes would hurt the environment. He also said that taxes have nothing to do with the price at the pump. Is that not amazing? A gas tax cut in May would have hurt the environment, and gas taxes had nothing to do with the price at the pump, but all of a sudden they do now. We also say fuel regulations do not add to the price Canadians pay at the pump, yet the PBO says it is going to be 17¢. Environment Canada says it will cost us at the pump.

I realize my time is up. I will end it here. I will open questions. I again thank the Liberals for finally listening to the Conservatives and bringing in a tax cut to help Canadians.

● (1700)

Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it seems we are in violent agreement in this House about the need to extend this excise tax, so I would like to use the member's speech as a launching-off point for a related conversation about affordability. He brought up the crack spread. Refining capacity globally is, of course, under severe stress. The Strait of Hormuz could open tomorrow, and I suspect because of refining challenges, that crack spread would grow, even, and so we must either increase refined supply or reduce demand to meaningfully address this in the long term.

Obviously, more refined capacity will take time. I was wondering if the member opposite had views or proposals on policies that could either increase supply or reduce demand for refined products.

Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, there is a much simpler answer to that, and that is to reduce the taxes on diesel. As the Conservatives have suggested, eliminate the GST on diesel, eliminate the clean fuel standard that is costing money, even according to the PBO and Environment Canada, and eliminate the industrial carbon tax. That would be the fastest thing to help reduce the price of diesel.

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed sitting on the government operations committee with the member for a long time. He does great work there.

We got to work together. We got to examine the government's outsourcing. When we looked at the outsourcing for professional services, the Liberal government's spending skyrocketed to over $23 billion for professional services alone. Meanwhile, people are struggling to get their pensions, to get their EI or to get support from CRA.

Our offices are being inundated at a time when people are struggling with a cost of living crisis. Now the government is cutting more jobs and this austerity is going to lead to more outsourcing, because the work still has to get done. However, it is going to get done by for-profit companies.

Could my colleague speak about what he has seen at his office? Could he connect the dots between the impact of austerity and how that impacts people on the cost of living crisis? Maybe the member could speak about the outsourcing that is out of control, which the government promised to rein in.

● (1705)

Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, I do miss my colleague on the OGGO committee. I look forward to the day when he does return to join the government operations committee.

The member has brought up a lot of valid facts. One of the issues he talked about was outside consultants. The Liberal-friendly McKinsey, one of the most vile, reprehensible companies in the entire world that helped supercharge the opioid crisis, continues to receive contracts from the Liberal government. In committee, we actually heard government employees testify that work they proposed to do and could cover within their own bureaucracy was pushed out to McKinsey for no reason. We heard this again and again, whether it was to Deloitte, McKinsey or others.

The government should look at finding ways to save money for Canadians, and it could probably start with its management friends at McKinsey, Deloitte and all the other outside consulting companies.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have an interesting point. The member no doubt remembers Erin O'Toole. During his time here, the Conservative Party changed and had a position of supporting a carbon tax.

Fast-forward to the election of Canada's new Prime Minister, who indicated before that election that he was going to get rid of the carbon tax. We can see the similarities there: Change in leader, change in policy, new direction. Does the member recognize that as a reality?

Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, it is always wonderful to see the member here. He reminds me a bit of that Seinfeld episode with George Costanza when he was actually living underneath his desk. The member is here so much, I wonder if perhaps he is like George Costanza, setting up under his desk.

I am glad the member brought up a bit about the carbon tax. We actually counted, and we found 83 different members who denied that the carbon tax had an effect on inflation. Then last year, the public accounts came out and actually stated the government expected inflation to drop because it has actually eliminated the carbon tax. We see the same thing now with the industrial carbon tax and the clean fuel regulations. Liberal after Liberal says it has no effect. The PBO and Environment Canada itself have said there is a cost to it.

[*Translation*]

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford.

[*English*]

Like most members, I spent the summer talking with folks in my riding. One of the issues that keep coming back to us as parliamentarians is the cost of living, the fact that everything is more expensive and the fact that businesses and families are indeed having trouble meeting their needs. At the same time, Canadians, at least in my riding, expressed their confidence in the government's action, in the government's plan and in the government's attempts to assist the Canadian economy.

What those folks in my riding told me, and I think it is quite right, is that difficulties and the impact on the cost of living, on the overall price levels, have come from a series of shocks that have hit our economy, shocks that have come from abroad. In fact, affordability and the cost of living are issues in Canada, in the United States, in France, in the U.K., in Germany, in Japan, in Brazil and all over the world. They come from the same source, and that source is the supply shocks we have had since 2022, ever since the invasion of Ukraine, followed by the very uneven recovery from the pandemic, which was happening at the same time. Later on, more recently, there are the very significant price shocks we have had as a result of the war in the Middle East.

These are global issues that have a real impact on pocketbooks and on Canadians' ability to face difficulties. We as a government have put in place a number of measures that help their bottom line and at the same time will contribute significantly to diversifying our economy, diversifying our markets, finding new markets and continuing to grow.

As an example, the World Bank, which I do not think can be confused with any sort of Liberal-friendly outfit, has stated:

> Attacks on energy infrastructure and shipping disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, which handles about 35% of global seaborne crude oil trade, have triggered the largest oil supply shock on record, with an initial reduction in global oil supply of about 10 million barrels per day. Even after moderating from their recent peak, Brent oil prices [remain very high, at around the $100 per barrel mark].

Energy prices will continue to remain high throughout the world, at least until the situation is addressed in the Middle East.

The chief economist of the World Bank added, “Governments must resist the temptation of broad, untargeted fiscal support measures that could distort markets and erode fiscal buffers. Instead, they should focus on rapid, temporary support targeted to the most vulnerable households.”

This is what we have been doing. This is what we are doing with Bill C-38, and this is what we will continue to do. We will be there to continue to support Canadian families with targeted and temporary support.

When we announced the fuel excise tax break back in the spring, it was to come to an end on September 7. Of course, by September 7, the situation was far from resolved in the Middle East. In fact, it is getting worse. Therefore, it is entirely appropriate that we extend this program for a few more months, until the end of January 2027. I think there is broad support in the House for us to do that.

● (1710)

On that, we have said that it will extend after January 31 for two extra months, so it will be a gradual withdrawal. The 10¢-a-litre excise tax relief would not be removed in one shot. It would be removed by 50% until March 31, and then the other 50% would be after March 31. There would be a gradual removal of this support, because as the World Bank and the IMF have pointed out, support for families has to be temporary and has to be targeted to the most vulnerable households.

This, in essence, is what we did with the groceries and essentials benefit. It is very targeted. In this case, it is support for five years, but it is very targeted to those most in need. As members will recall, the groceries and essentials benefit is modelled on the old GST rebate, which by definition is targeted to families at the lowest end of the scale.

Once again, it is important to resist the temptation to have broad, untargeted fiscal measures because we need to avoid distorting markets. We need to make sure that fiscal buffers remain. We do have the fiscal capacity now to do this, and that is why we are doing it, but it has to be temporary and it has to be targeted.

This support would reduce the pressure on prices at the pump. It may seem insignificant, but it is not. At 10¢ a litre, it is significant. The other issue we need to continue to monitor is that the industry itself does not adjust its margins and that this 10¢-a-litre reduction is fully passed on to the final consumer. We will continue to monitor markets very closely to make sure that there is no attempt to sidestep this measure.

Going back to the Canada groceries and essentials benefit, a family of four will receive $1,890 this year and about $1,400 a year for the next four years. Again, this is targeted to the families most in need. We are putting more money in the pockets of those who need it most, and we are also leaving more money in the pockets of the middle class with the middle-class tax cut that was implemented right off the bat when we came into power.

There are other measures we put in place with the last budget, and there is nothing to say that we will not be doing that again if need be. As long as support is targeted and temporary, I think we should do that. For the time being, in Canada anyway, we are not noticing any shortages of products. It is really a question of affordability that is caused by events completely beyond our control. These are global events that are affecting the same issue in all developed and developing nations.

The crucial point here is for the Canadian government to retain its fiscal buffers, its fiscal capacity to intervene, because we must continue to protect families. We will still have that fiscal capacity if we continue to be prudent.

● (1715)

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, in 2022, when we had a huge spike in oil prices with the global shock from oil and gas, we saw a huge windfall in profits. A study came out that said 50% of the profits through that spike went to the top 1%. That is insane. Right now, we are dealing with something very similar.

If we look back in our history, during World War II, we implemented a 75% excess profit tax on oil and gas. We could apply that today. That would generate over $46 billion. Even if we scaled that back to 20%, it would generate enough money to cover what the Liberals are proposing today, and we could do that fivefold to take the pressure off people.

Why is the government not bringing in an excess profit tax? Why is the government protecting the top 1%? In the United States, 50% of profits in 2022, for example, and it is here in Canada too, went to the top 1%.

Carlos Leitão: Madam Speaker, as I just alluded to at the end of my remarks, we will continue to monitor markets to make sure that markets continue to function properly, and that is the extent of it. We believe that when markets function, resources are allocated in the most efficient way.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the things the member said in his remarks was that the problem is not a short-term problem and that he could see the government having to extend this again depending on the circumstances. Given the value that stability has to food prices in particular, why is the government not considering our recommendation that it should be extended right now permanently for the foreseeable future?

● (1720)

Carlos Leitão: Madam Speaker, indeed, as I pointed out, which is recommended by independent agencies like the World Bank and the IMF, governments should resist the temptation to put in place permanent measures that may distort markets.

In a period of need, as is the case now, we should put in place temporary measures. I do not know what will be happening in January. We do not know if the war will still be going on in the Strait of Hormuz and if crude oil prices will remain above $100, but at some point, the oil market will return to a more stable level, and at that time, the temporary measures will be removed.

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. At the end, he told us that temporary, targeted measures should be adopted if necessary. Those were the two criteria he mentioned.

How does my colleague think that suspending the excise tax on all fuels, which applies to all Canadians, including the top 20% of income earners as well as the wealthiest 1%, qualifies as a targeted measure?

Carlos Leitão: Madam Speaker, it is, in fact, a temporary measure. It is not as targeted as the Canada groceries and essentials benefit, for example. However, what we lose by having a more targeted measure for fuel prices, we quickly gain back. This is something that can be implemented quickly. That is what we did last April, and that is what we are continuing to do now. It is quick and temporary.

[*English*]

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the hard-working small business owners in Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford and across Canada.

This is a group of Canadians that is facing more pressure than the average person. They are faced with the same stressors, such as food prices that are making it difficult to feed their families and skyrocketing rent that is consuming more of their earnings, while they are also trying to keep their businesses afloat. It is clear the government agrees with Conservatives that Canadians and small business owners cannot afford an increase in gas prices anytime soon. This is a good thing because we tried to do this a few months ago and it was rejected by the government at that time.

The Liberals' failure to deliver the economic certainty they promised has piled even more uncertainty onto small businesses, and Canadians across the board are paying the price right now. When businesses pay more to make, move and sell the things people need, these costs show up in the prices consumers pay. This is at a time when 49% of people, almost half of working Canadians, feel less financially secure than they did a year ago. Any relief for working people is good news, but a modest extension of the Liberals' current plan will not be enough for Canadians already squeezed by higher costs.

I have risen many times in this chamber since the last election, quoting studies and statistics reflecting the abysmal state of small businesses and the health of small businesses in our country. Let me give a few more examples.

In April, a record high of 74% of small business owners reported fuel as an input cost causing difficulties. Nationally, seven in 10 businesses impacted by fuel cost pressures report absorbing increases through lower profits, half have increased prices charged to customers, one-third have delayed planned investments and close to one in five has cancelled investments altogether. Six in 10 small businesses cite fuel costs as one of the biggest challenges, ahead of taxes, labour and economic uncertainty.

The concerns with this tax are not in isolation. They are spurred on by the affordability crisis and the trade war with the United States. Canadians have enough on their plate. A hastily reintroduced fuel tax before the end of the trade war will only harm already struggling small businesses and the people who buy from them. This is particularly true in rural communities, such as the one I represent.

For example, recent changes by the Canada Border Services Agency at the Abbotsford-Huntingdon crossing are creating serious challenges for local businesses. After 8 p.m., drivers must now commute to alternate crossings, one 20 kilometres away and the other almost 40 kilometres away. Companies facing this choice certainly cannot afford to pay a reinstated excise taxes on that extra 20 to 40 kilometres next year.

Why would the Liberals continue to entertain half measures when keeping fuel taxes low has proven to provide the relief Canadians need?

The Business Council of British Columbia is in Ottawa this week, meeting with MPs and reinforcing a simple message, which is that we need real regulatory reform, and right now, the government is not doing enough to get rid of red tape.

Under the leadership of the government, Canada, in many respects, has become hostile toward entrepreneurs. Statistics Canada documented the impacts of a 37% rise in federal regulatory restrictions between 2006 and 2021. This surge was directly associated with a 1.7 percentage point decline in GDP growth, alongside drops in business investment, productivity, employment, and the rate of new business formation. In 2000, self-employment in Canada accounted for roughly 16.1% of total employment. By 2025, that share had fallen to 12.9%, the lowest in decades.

A report from the Montreal Economic Institute notes, “The decline in entrepreneurship became more pronounced after 2018, coinciding with a series of federal tax changes that raised costs and showed hostility toward entrepreneurs.” As a result of this economic hostility created by the Liberals, Canada is losing talent and capital to the United States, with 40% of established businesses considering leaving Canada, and too many of our brightest graduates leaving even before they get started.

● (1725)

According to a TD Economics report, “graduates in mathematics, computer science, and engineering are less likely to remain in Canada than non STEM graduates, even among Canadian citizens. Doctoral [students] and graduates from highly ranked universities have the lowest retention rates, particularly in the first five years after graduation.”

University of Waterloo data shows “that the highest-performing students are the most likely to leave Canada after graduation.” Among Canadian-born students, exit rates at the top of the skill distribution are roughly double those at the bottom. It is fundamental that a new grad sees Canada as more advantageous from both a tax regulatory perspective and a competitiveness perspective to start a business here or to work for a Canadian business, but over decades of federal mismanagement, we have moved away from that.

At a time when Canadian businesses are already facing tariffs and uncertainty accessing U.S. markets, the last thing they need is higher domestic input costs. New estimates reveal that 53,112 businesses are directly impacted by either U.S. tariffs, Canadian countertariffs or, in some cases, both. Small businesses across Canada will bear the brunt of unjustified American tariffs, with 77% of affected exporters expecting revenue losses.

While the Government of Canada responds with countervailing tariffs, it must learn from the challenges that businesses faced during previous rounds of retaliatory action. Many small businesses did not receive the support needed under earlier measures due to complicated administrative processes. The regional tariff response initiative saw an extremely low uptake, with fewer than 1% of small businesses applying and four in five being unaware that the program existed. As a result, firms most affected by tariffs and countertariffs were left without access to support. According to the CFIB, the most recently announced federal tariff support programs continued “to exclude about half of the small business community”.

Earlier this month, on a call with members of Parliament—

● (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I am afraid that I do have to interrupt the hon. member to proceed to private members' hour.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

JURY DUTY APPRECIATION WEEK ACT

The House resumed from April 24 consideration of the motion that Bill S-226, An Act respecting Jury Duty Appreciation Week, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Aslam Rana (Hamilton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in support of Bill S-226, the jury duty appreciation week act. This is an important piece of legislation that would recognize the hard and difficult work of our jurors by designating the second week of May as jury duty appreciation week.

A previous iteration of this bill died on the Order Paper last session. As we approach the second week of May this year, I hope we can all agree to move this importantly symbolic legislation swiftly through the House so that jurors can officially receive the recognition and appreciation they deserve.

I would like to begin by acknowledging that the recognition of jurors is not a new concept. Across Canada, many individuals and organizations have worked for years to highlight the vital role jurors play in the administration of justice. The work of jurors has already been celebrated informally for the past four years during the second week of May, including by the Canadian Juries Commission, with support from previous ministers of justice. These efforts have been essential in reminding all of us that jury service can be demanding, time-consuming and, at times, emotionally difficult. They have also helped emphasize that the people who take on this responsibility deserve our respect, understanding and support.

These initiatives have laid important groundwork building awareness and momentum, helping to ensure that jurors are seen and heard. It is therefore fitting that we are now debating legislation that would formally recognize jury duty appreciation week. This legislation sends a clear message about our shared values. It signals that jury service is not simply a civic responsibility, but a fundamental contribution to our democracy and to the protection of rights and freedom. Formal recognition elevates public awareness and underscores the importance of those who participate directly in the administration of justice.

Juries are the cornerstone of our justice system. When jurors are selected, they represent the communities from which they are drawn. In criminal trials, they determine guilt or innocence. In civic trials, they determine liability. There are profound responsibilities. Jurors must carefully weigh evidence, assess credibility and apply legal instructions provided by the court. Their decisions can have life-altering consequences for the individuals involved, as well as broader implications for public confidence in the justice system.

The right to a trial by jury is guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Anyone charged with an offence punishable by five years imprisonment or more has a right to a trial by jury. This constitutional protection reflects the fundamental importance of juries in ensuring fair and impartial trials. It recognizes that justice is strengthened when ordinary citizens participate in decision-making and when verdicts reflect community standards.

Closely connected to this is the principle that the individuals are presumed innocent until proven guilty. This is a fundamental principle of our legal system. Jurors play a central role in upholding this principle by evaluating the evidence presented before them and determining whether the prosecution has met its burden of proof. Through their impartial deliberations, jurors help ensure that decisions are made fairly, thoughtfully and independently.

In passing the jury duty appreciation week act, Parliament would be thanking individuals who uphold these principles. We would be formally recognizing the thousands of Canadians whose lives are interrupted, and whose work and families are put on pause, so they can carry out this important civic responsibility. Jury service often requires individuals to rearrange professional obligations, family commitments and personal responsibilities. Despite these challenges, Canadians continue to step forward and fulfill this duty. Their contribution strengthens the legitimacy and integrity of the system.

● (1735)

Although the administration of justice falls primarily within provincial and territorial jurisdiction, the federal government has an important role to play in acknowledging jurors. Jurors represent a link between the federal government, which establishes criminal law; provincial and territorial governments; and administrative justice, including the courts. Jury service helps ensure that justice is both nationally coherent and locally administered. By recognizing jurors at the federal level, we would reinforce the collaborative nature of our justice system and the shared responsibility for maintaining public confidence.

Bill S-226 would build upon recent legislative efforts aimed at improving jury diversity and juror well-being at the federal level. It would also complement the initiatives in some jurisdictions that provide psychological supports for jurors following difficult trials. These developments reflect a growing recognition that jury service, while essential, can have significant personal impacts. Formal recognition through the bill would further encourage continued attention to these issues.

The jury duty appreciation week act would go beyond recognizing jurors for their civic duty. It would also promote awareness of their well-being. When citizens are called to serve, they may be exposed to traumatic testimony and graphic evidence, all while remaining impartial and setting aside personal views. This experience can be emotionally taxing. Jurors may also face financial hardship from missing work, particularly in lengthy trials. They must navigate the weight of difficult decisions and, at times, challenging group dynamics during deliberations. These realities demonstrate that jury service involves not only civic participation but also personal sacrifice.

By increasing public understanding and encouraging open conversation, we can begin to remove barriers that make it difficult for jurors to feel supported during and after their service. Valuing jurors means embracing their health, dignity and mental health. Jury duty provides individuals with the opportunity to serve their communities and contribute directly to the administration of justice. It is a responsibility that strengthens democratic participation and reinforces confidence in our institutions. Recognizing jurors formally would help ensure that their contributions are acknowledged and that their experiences are better understood.

It is time for Canada to formally acknowledge the people who perform jury duty, by designating the second week of May as jury duty appreciation week. We would educate Canadians, justice system participants and governments about the importance of jury service. We would raise awareness of what to expect, how individuals can prepare and how jurors can be supported throughout their service. The passage of the bill would demonstrate not only that we are thankful for jurors but also that we recognize the importance of supporting them. It would reinforce appreciation for those who uphold fairness, impartiality and justice in our courts.

I thank past, present and future jurors for their contributions to a fair and effective justice system, and I urge all members of the House to support the swift passage of Bill S-226.

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, and it is always a pleasure as well when it is a matter that is close to our hearts.

Before I begin, I want to recognize a very special person from my community. Ron Popoff has given so much to Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola. For about 25 years, he coordinated the Hot Nite in the City car show and shine. Ron has done so much work. This was a massive event that he led. In fact, we had a show and shine for A&W MS day, and he lent me his Ford Mustang, Bullitt edition. I told him I had not driven a stick shift in about 25 years, but he insisted I take his special edition Mustang on the highway and drive it all through Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola that day for multiple sclerosis awareness and fundraising. I want to give a very special shout-out to Ron because he has done incredible work.

Also doing incredible work in Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola is Kayla Hermiston. I worked with Kayla's dad, Mark Hermiston, when he protected me as a lawyer and prosecutor at the Kamloops courthouse when he was with the BC Sheriff Service. Here we are talking about jury appreciation week, and it is very appropriate that I recognize him.

More important, for the purposes of recognizing people who have contributed lately, is Mark's daughter, Kayla. Kayla started the Miles for Smiles project for fundraising for young children who have cancer. She is in her early twenties, and I am deeply inspired by Kayla's commitment to those who have cancer. She put on a bang-up fundraiser recently in Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, and I salute her for that.

I am not sure how many people in the House have run a jury trial. I have run a few, so it is my pleasure to speak about jury duty appreciation week and to endorse the passage of this bill. I still remember the first jury trial I ever ran. It was about the homicide of a young woman named Taylor Van Diest. Taylor was an 18-year-old who was walking home on Halloween. It was about 6:30 p.m. in a small community called Armstrong, which is in Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, about 15 minutes or 20 minutes out of Vernon.

Taylor was in a costume. She was 18 years old, but she loved Halloween. She was walking home when a sexual predator, someone who her mom said is the face of evil, approached Taylor. I cannot disagree with her mom, Marie Van Diest. We never did find out exactly what happened, but we do know that Taylor said no to this monster's advances and that he killed her.

That was my first introduction to the jury system, fighting for the truth in that matter as a junior prosecutor. In fact, I am still occasionally in touch with Marie Van Diest. To this day, I still remember her phone number because this case had such an impact on me. The police did such an amazing job in that case. In fact, I told my wife that if something ever happens to me, I want the police who caught Taylor's killer to investigate the case, because they were that good. They found a tiny bit of DNA under Taylor's fingernail, which they then connected to an unsolved sex assault, which they solved and thereby found Taylor's killer. I am very happy to say that he was recently denied parole. Taylor was killed in, I believe, 2011.

I remember the jury's receiving photos from the autopsy but not receiving certain photographs because, frankly, they were just too graphic. Juries, judges and police in our system do not get a choice about what they see, just as somebody who happens upon a scene does not get a choice in what they see. One distinction that I do not think always gets drawn is this: When somebody who is dealing with a case, such as in a jury room when juries have exhibits available, they can see those photographs or videos 20, 30 or 40 times. While somebody may see something in person one time, a juror, lawyer or police officer might see something 30, 40 or 50 times. From experience, I can say that seeing the photographs or a video repeatedly can really bring about vicarious trauma.

● (1740)

I spoke with someone I know from Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola who told me that after she sat on a jury, she went to the judge and said, “Well, what do we do? We have seen all this traumatic evidence. What do we do?” The judge was seemingly at a loss, because in Canada, up until my colleague from Alberta changed the law with his bill to allow jurors to speak about their experiences to health care professionals such as psychologists or counsellors, it could not be revealed what was said in the jury group. Even to this day, people cannot discuss it. When somebody sees something that is traumatic, it can be very difficult because there is nobody to talk to. Even to this day, jurors can talk only to their health care provider. They cannot talk to their spouse, partner or friends.

This is an area that is unheralded in lots of respects. People also do not know that jurors do not really get paid. They just get a small stipend. A small business owner, for instance, or somebody who has employment that does not have a union contract or an employer who is prepared to pay them, is serving the public. In the House, we always like to think of ourselves as entering public service when we run. I always thank people I meet who are running for office. I just heard that we have an election coming up in B.C. I will reserve comment on that for another time. We also have municipal elections happening in B.C. Thank goodness there is no federal election happening at this time.

People are actually giving a lot of themselves when they are prepared to sit on a jury. My experience is that most people do it and do it happily. My mom always wanted to sit on a jury. Then I became a prosecutor, and that kind of ended her dream of ever sitting on a jury, because Kamloops is a relatively small town. If someone has the same last name as a prosecutor, they are probably not going to sit on a jury. Instead, she just watched.

I will say this. I have seen juries that have sat for three or four days of deliberations, and when we see the jurors, they look like they just want to go to sleep and have a good day off, because they have done a ton of work. People have a right to a jury trial in a certain number of circumstances in Canada, and I am grateful that people selflessly give what they give.

I am happy to support the bill. I see my colleague across the way is here. I congratulated her outside the chamber, and I thank her for bringing the bill forward. It is always nice when we have legislation that all parties can get behind.

● (1745)

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Listuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see you again and to be back here in the House with all my colleagues. I hope that everyone had a good summer and that we will have productive debates in the pursuit of the common good.

A few years ago, I received a call from an acquaintance who was in a bit of a panic. This person was calling me because they knew I was a lawyer. They had been summoned for jury duty and wanted to know how to get out of it. They told me they did not have the time because they were working. It is true that being a juror is not an easy task.

Jurors have to stop working for the duration of the trial, and it is no vacation. They make decisions of critical importance not only for the accused, but also for the victim and their loved ones. In the Gaspé in 2015, for example, 12 members of a jury sat through a trial that lasted a month and a half. It was the first trial of Johanne Johnson, who was accused of murdering her partner, James Dubé. It involved a month and a half of trial proceedings, followed by three full days of deliberations before reaching a verdict, which was subsequently overturned on appeal, meaning the trial had to start all over again.

All this to say that being a juror takes time. Above all, it means accepting a heavy responsibility involving tragic events. Each juror must join with 11 other jurors in deciding another person's fate by finding him or her guilty or not guilty. They must weigh the evidence presented and judge the credibility of the testimony given. Usually, jurors are exposed to horrific accounts of crimes involving sordid facts. In our criminal system, this is the most solemn type of case and involves the most serious types of crime, like murder. Although they represent only about 1% of criminal cases, these are usually the most grave, complex and impactful cases, both for the victims and the accused. A heavy load and responsibility are therefore placed on the jurors' shoulders.

Of course, while serving on a jury may be a civic duty, it comes with no training. Members of the public are randomly selected from the Quebec voters' list. This is what prompted the call from my acquaintance seeking an exemption from jury duty. Their wish for an exemption is nothing unusual.

The Canadian Juries Commission conducted a national opinion poll in June 2020 that found that only 18% of Canadians expressed a willingness to participate in jury duty. There is some degree of civic disengagement in our justice system when it comes to jury duty. In fact, it is at a point where some judges are now used to issuing arrest warrants and summoning people who fail to appear in order to improve participation rates. In Quebec, the issue falls under the Jurors Act, and people are required to appear. The use of sanctions to ensure participation is a consequence of the lack of a positive culture around this obligation.

Civic disengagement is not the only issue. After speaking with some Crown prosecutors, I learned that most jurors complete their service with a feeling of accomplishment and of having served justice. However, other jurors come out of the experience traumatized.

The first to make this point was Mark Farrant, who was the jury foreman in an Ontario murder trial in 2014. He was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder after the trial. He sued the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada, alleging a failure in the duty of care. His public testimony sparked a collective reflection and a series of reforms that led to the founding of the Canadian Juries Commission.

As I understand it, it also motivated the work of Senator Lucie Moncion, which led to the introduction of the bill we are debating this afternoon, Bill S-226, an act respecting jury duty appreciation week. We in the Bloc Québécois support this initiative. Establishing a jury duty appreciation week would recognize and value the essential work done by ordinary citizens, without whom our criminal justice system could not function. It is also a way to address civic disengagement with positive action.

● (1750)

Jury duty is one of the few truly binding civic obligations under Canadian law. People have the right to vote, but they are not required to do so, and mandatory military service has been abolished. Jury duty, however, remains mandatory, and yet it is the only civic duty that has not been recognized with a national week of appreciation. Bill S-226 fills that gap.

Some people might argue that designating jury duty appreciation week is merely symbolic. That is true, but there is value in symbolism. Parliament regularly adopts national designations. Mental Health Week, Black History Month and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation are examples of this. The value of all these initiatives lies precisely in recognition.

That said, as members of the Bloc Québécois, we are firmly devoted to defending Quebec's jurisdiction when it comes to the administration of justice. The division of powers set forth in the Constitution Act, 1867, expressly gives the provinces jurisdiction over the administration of justice. This jurisdiction unambiguously encompasses everything related to jury duty, including jury selection, compensation, conditions of service and post-trial support.

Quebec exercises its jurisdiction with rigour and a consistency that deserves to be highlighted. As the only civil-law jurisdiction in North America, Quebec has developed robust judicial institutions over several centuries, rooted in the values and culture of its society—notably by increasing daily allowances for jurors to a rate that is much more generous than in most other Canadian provinces. Quebec also reimburses psychotherapy fees for jurors who are traumatized by a trial. We know full well that these advances are the result of thoughtful Quebec governance, not a federal directive.

It is in this spirit that we support Bill S-226, because it recognizes without constraining, commemorates without imposing and brings people together without requiring uniformity. Any concrete action arising from this initiative must be carried out through voluntary collaboration, with full respect for the autonomy of Quebec and the provinces. Jury duty appreciation week derives its value from its simplicity. Let it therefore remain what it is: a tribute to citizens who serve justice.

● (1755)

[*English*]

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House today on behalf of the people of Bow River.

I want to begin by being honest with the House about where I usually stand on bills of this kind because I think it matters as to what I am going to say. I have argued in rooms, both public and private, that this Parliament has developed a habit. We designate days, we designate weeks and we designate months, and we do it with good intentions. We do it constantly until the calendar is so crowded that a proclamation from this place carries less weight each time we issue one. If everything is special, then nothing is. Recognition is a currency, and like any currency, it can be devalued by printing too much of it, and, wow, does the government know how to print money.

With all seriousness, I do not come to this debate as someone easily moved by a proposal to name a week. I come to it as a skeptic. I want to explain to this House why. In this case, I think the exception is not only defensible but overdue. Here is the distinction I would draw. Most of what we recognize in this place is an interest, an industry, a cause, a community or a commodity. What Bill S-226 asks us to recognize is something different in kind. It is a duty. It is not chosen. It arrives in the mail, it is compulsory and it is very nearly the last one we have. We do not conscript. We do not compel Canadians to vote. We ask remarkably little of our citizens in the classical sense, not in the sense of what they pay, because they pay, but in the sense of what they are personally required to give.

Jury service stands almost alone as an obligation that citizenship still imposes on an individual. It is not simply another cause asking for a place on the calendar. It is one of the highest civic responsibilities that an ordinary Canadian can be asked to undertake. As my colleague, the former member for Brantford—Brant South, stated in this House earlier this year, “Jury service is not just a duty; it is a cornerstone of justice in a free and democratic society and, like many cornerstones, it is often overlooked until we pause to reflect on its importance.” That gets to the heart of the discussion, in addition to the words of my colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, who spoke earlier.

Our country depends on institutions that most of us rarely stop to think about. We depend on elections. We depend on Parliament. We depend on an independent judiciary. We depend on the rule of law, and when Canadians are accused of the most serious offences, our system depends on 12 ordinary people answering a summons, putting their normal lives aside and accepting the responsibility of sitting in judgment on another person. That is an extraordinary responsibility.

The right to a jury trial is not merely a tradition. As we know, section 11(f) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the benefit of a trial by jury, and Bill S-226 recognizes the citizens who make that guarantee work.

A jury brings something to a courtroom that nothing else in the building can supply. A judge who has presided over the same category of case for 20 years accumulates experience. Experience is valuable, but it can also accumulate to predisposition. A jury arrives without that. Its members have not heard the evidence before. They have not heard 100 cases like it and have formed no view of how such cases usually end. Because 12 people must arrive together at a single judgment, that judgment carries a weight that no individual verdict could. This is democracy in its most direct form. Justice is not handed down to the people from above; it is delivered by them.

We sometimes speak about civic duty in fairly abstract terms, but jury duty is anything but abstract. What do we ask of a juror? A person may receive a summons with little idea of what awaits them. They may have a job, a business to run, children to care for and more responsibilities at their home and in their community. Then for days or weeks, sometimes longer, those normal responsibilities are set aside. They enter a courtroom. They listen carefully to the evidence. They are required to set aside preconceptions. They apply the law to the evidence before them, and then they enter a room with their fellow jurors and deliberate.

● (1800)

In some cases, the question they must answer could hardly be more serious. Has the Crown proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the person sitting before them is guilty? Most Canadians will never be asked to make a decision carrying this kind of weight. Instead of placing every factual determination in the hands of a single individual, citizens deliberate collectively. They hear one another's perspectives, and they arrive at a verdict according to the evidence and the law. That collective judgment is an important part of the confidence that Canadians place in our justice system.

This seems a little dry, but we should not romanticize the responsibility. There is a real personal cost. Jurors in serious cases, as noted in some examples provided by my colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, can be required to examine photographs, videos and testimony dealing with violence, abuse, death and some of the most disturbing circumstances imaginable. Their duty requires them to pay attention because someone's liberty may depend upon their ability to understand the evidence and assess it fairly. True justice for the victim demands their attention.

When the trial concludes, these jurors return home, and some silently bear lifelong wounds. The proceedings may be over, but that does not necessarily mean their effects disappear. In 2022, Parliament amended section 649 of the Criminal Code. Former jurors can now talk with their health care professionals when receiving medical or psychiatric treatment, therapy or counselling related to health issues arising from their jury service. That change recognizes something very important. Our responsibility to jurors should not end when they announce a verdict. If our justice system asks ordinary Canadians to expose themselves to difficult evidence and shoulder the responsibility of determining guilt or innocence, we should at least recognize what we have asked them to do.

This is where recognition such as this can serve a purpose. It does not replace mental health services. It does not resolve every challenge with the jury service. We should be clear about that. However, the recognition can provide an opportunity to talk about those challenges. It gives Canadians an opportunity to better understand what jury service requires.

Just as importantly, it gives us an opportunity to talk about citizenship itself. We spend a great deal of time discussing the rights that accompany Canadian citizenship, and justly so. Rights matter, but a healthy democracy also depends on responsibilities. It depends on citizens who participate, who vote, who respect the law, who contribute to their communities and who, when summoned, are willing to walk into a courthouse and perform one of the oldest and most consequential civic duties in our democratic tradition. There is something valuable about reminding ourselves of that.

We live in a time when confidence in public institutions cannot simply be taken for granted. The jury, perhaps, is one of the clearest examples. A jury is not comprised of government officials or exclusively of judges or lawyers. It is composed of Canadians, such as a teacher, a farmer, a tradesperson, a small business owner, a parent or a retiree. People who may otherwise never enter a courtroom are entrusted with enormous responsibility within it for the duration of that trial to become indispensable participants in the administration of justice.

For obvious reasons, there is usually very little public recognition at all. They simply return to their families, their communities and their jobs, and they carry with them an experience few people around them may fully understand. This is why this proposal is different from simply adding one date to the calendar. It asks Canadians to reflect on an institution and recognize our civic duty. Democracy survives because people are willing to participate in it. Justice works because people are willing to shoulder responsibilities, even if it is inconvenient.

In an era where institutional trust is fragile and skepticism of government runs deep, we must preserve and celebrate the direct mechanisms of civic governance. Trial by jury is classical democracy in its purest form: justice administered not by a ruling class but by the people themselves.

I urge all members to support this, on both sides of the House, honouring our jurors and reaffirming our commitment to this essential civic institution.

● (1805)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle has five minutes for her right of reply.

Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the jury system balances out our justice system. Regardless of what a juror's socio-economic background is, everyone serves equally and in the best interests of our legal system. Without safeguards such as the jury system, our democracy would not have the strong foundation it needs to be successful. These are peers of an accused who balance the rights and obligations of all members of a functioning society. It is ordinary people from all walks of life who are the guardians of our system in that moment. They give a voice to us all.

The importance of jurors has often been overlooked. It is only in the recent past that the true nature of this duty has been emphasized. The jury system is an integral part of criminal justice. Without these members having to make sacrifices, everything would come to a standstill.

Most jurors come into this role unsure of what they are to experience and what will unfold during a criminal trial. What they do experience right at the onset is trepidation, uncertainty and the knowledge that they will be missing out on their personal lives.

After hearing all the evidence, a jury deliberates. These deliberations also carry a heavy weight because while deciding on the guilt or innocence of an accused, a juror must grapple with their own conscience and their sense of what is right and what is wrong. They must grapple with everything that makes us human: our thoughts, compassion and understanding of one another. There are questions a juror might ask of themselves. Am I making the right decision about this defendant? Am I condemning an innocent person to jail? Am I declaring the innocence of someone who might truly be guilty and deserves to not be set free?

It is not just in that moment that a juror thinks about what they must do. They live with these decisions for years to come. Maybe it is not every day, but once in a while they will have the thought cross their minds: Did I make the right decision? Did I do the right thing?

These are very meaningful moments in a juror's life, in the life of an accused and overall in the criminal justice system. Once this service is rendered, everyone comes away with the opinion that their counsel mattered.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

Serving on a jury is an extraordinary opportunity to have a profound impact on someone's life. It is a chance to stand up for the most vulnerable, to bring justice to a voiceless victim and to ensure that justice is truly served—for both the victim and the defendant.

In our legal system, protecting the most vulnerable is impossible without the help of jurors. That is why we strongly encourage every citizen to respond to their jury summons. Admittedly, this can involve its share of challenges, but the only way to preserve our justice system and protect every member of our society is to be able to count on informed, compassionate and dedicated individuals who are willing to give their own time.

The transformative power of jurors is invaluable, as is their contribution to our democratic institutions. Where else in the world are ordinary citizens given that trust? Where are they entrusted with such a weighty responsibility as deciding the fate of a person who appears before them? It is a truly remarkable role. Whether someone is a business owner or a retail worker, they have the same power in the courtroom. That is precisely how we keep equality and democracy alive every day. In a way, each juror embodies the law itself. Once a guilty verdict or acquittal has been rendered, it can only be overturned in exceptional circumstances. Where else in our society do people have the ability to change lives and uphold the integrity of our justice system?

[*English*]

The fundamental right to trial by jury could not be respected without jurors. Jury duty appreciation week would be an opportunity for Canadians to understand our own role in society and raise awareness of the importance of jury service while expressing appreciation to those who are called to serve.

I thank all who serve.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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

An hon member: On division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I declare the motion carried on division. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to call it 6:30 p.m. at this time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CANADIAN FUEL AFFORDABILITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-38, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (extension of the federal fuel excise tax relief), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last key point I would like to make with respect to the state of small business in Canada today comes from the president of PacifiCan, who, on a call with members of Parliament in British Columbia earlier this summer, stated that her department was not meeting the outlined time frame for delivering tariff rebates to the companies that had applied for those funds.

As the government consistently states, we are in an economic war with the United States. I would hope that a key measure announced to support Canadian businesses during this time would be treated with more severity than we have seen. I would encourage the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, who has responsibility for PacifiCan, to look closely at those programs and do better.

All of us in the House have to stand up for Canada. We need to stand up for Canada because our businesses are suffering. There is going to be a lot of new legislation put forward, and I implore the government to consider small businesses. The information coming from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business is not good. The loss of confidence and the departure of our brightest young Canadians who feel they have a better future in the United States is not the Canadian way.

I know that collectively, in the House, we do not want to see that happen, but it will take hard work and more collaboration by the government, and listening to Conservative ideas, to improve that competitiveness and to bring in those structural reforms that are needed so young people, when they graduate from university, say that their best opportunity in life is to start a business in Canada. I believe we can get there.

I will be focusing in this session, with the mandate that I have been given, on pointing out where the government is not doing enough to support our entrepreneurs. Let us work together. Let us build Canada up. Let us stand up for our entrepreneurs and do better for the people who pay our salaries, who pay taxes and who do not demand a lot and often give more.

● (1815)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is one of the reasons we have a Prime Minister and a government committed to looking at expanding export opportunities, with 20-plus trade and security deals over the last 18 months. We can talk about the huge investment summit, a half-trillion dollars of infrastructure and so much more coming Canada's way in terms of commitments. These are the types of things that are making a difference, like providing a Red Seal enhancement program that is going to see more Red Seals graduating.

These are the types of things that are there to support and grow small businesses. I wonder if we can count on the member opposite's support.

Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, just today, the B.C. business council and, I believe, the Manitoba business council and the Alberta and Saskatchewan business councils were in Ottawa. They spoke about the need to do more for our small businesses to reduce the regulatory burden.

With respect to the programs outlined by the member for Winnipeg North, the Red Seal trades program announced by the government, for some reason, excluded aviation. That is an area where we could work together, to ensure that those dollars from ESDC go to the aviation sector, which I know is very important in his riding, as it is in mine. There are common-sense things we are not doing today that we have to do for small businesses: regulatory reform and improving programs to meet the actual needs.

Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing I have noticed is that some of the policies the Liberals are bringing out now are obviously Conservative policies, but the difference is that when Conservatives were conceiving these policies, they were for a vision to insulate us from the issues and challenges that we are facing today.

Would my colleague agree that it is too little too late from the Liberals, whereas if a Conservative government had been voted in, we would have solved these problems before they were even on our plate?

Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I agree that many of the measures being put in by the Liberals right now are actually Conservative ideas, and I am glad to see some of those things being adopted, because they will make some improvements. What is happening right now is that the government is in a process of erasing the most socialist policies of Justin Trudeau, and I am glad to see that erasure take place, but we have seen a lot of damage.

I will conclude by noting that we need more emphasis by the government on maintaining market access in the United States. Those business councils, the ones from Manitoba, talked about the existing trade relationships with the United States that need to be upheld. We need to see more from the government on that. That is where small businesses do business. We have to support them.

Doly Begum (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the member's riding is going through difficulties similar to those across the country. Bill C-38 would make life more affordable for Canadians. Would the member support a measure that would make life more affordable for Canadians, something that people across this country are calling for?

● (1820)

Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely support Bill C-38, and I will be voting in favour of it. I will note that when we tried to do the same thing last spring, the government rejected our proposal. I am glad that its members have listened to their voters and to Canadians, understanding that what the Conservatives were proposing was a positive step forward to support our businesses. My only hope is that the government extends this in perpetuity.

I am going to repeat this. Small businesses right now need to maintain market access to the United States. That is where the majority of our exports go. I have worked at Global Affairs, and even though I agree with expanding global markets, we cannot forgo the existing economic relationships that underpin the entirety of the Canadian economy.

Doly Begum (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this House as I begin my journey as a member of Parliament for the wonderful riding of Scarborough Southwest. I am delighted to be back in the House after the summer break, when we had a chance to talk to our constituents, go to events and meet with a lot of constituents to find out the struggles they are facing. It is great to be back to speak to the issues we heard about from our constituents. My riding has people from all different backgrounds; it is a very diverse riding. People across my riding, just like those across Canada, are struggling right now, especially with affordability and making ends meet. Today, I am delighted to speak on behalf of my constituents about Bill C-38, the Canadian fuel affordability act.

We have heard from across the aisle and throughout this afternoon about the importance of this legislation. This government's effort has been to make life more affordable for Canadians across this country. Canadians are living through a period of economic uncertainty shaped by global instability and rising costs. The United States, as we know, has imposed new tariffs on Canada designed to hurt and divide us. At the same time, we know what is happening across Europe and the Middle East, which is also driving up prices around the world, especially here at home. In response, our government continues to focus on what we can control: building a strong Canadian economy, diversifying our trade partners abroad, delivering responsible fiscal management and supporting Canadians who are under pressure from everyday expenses.

Throughout the summer, I heard from my constituents about the increase in the cost of living. Many are worried about the increasing price of essential goods like fuel, food, housing and other daily necessities.

Before I forget, I would like to mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for Portage—Lisgar.

Our government understands these pressures, and we are taking concrete and responsible actions to ease the burdens that many Canadians are facing, all while safeguarding long-term economic stability. That includes immediate support for daily costs. We know we have to make long-term plans, but at the same time we have to help the people who are struggling this very day.

In April, we temporarily lifted the excise tax on gasoline and diesel through the summer months, initially planned until Labour Day. On the first day that took place, which is actually the same time I joined this House, back in April, gasoline prices declined by 11¢ per litre. That is real money back in the pockets of hard-working Canadians. This delivered immediate relief to consumers, including those in my riding of Scarborough Southwest.

Knowing that Canadians are still feeling pressure, earlier this month the Minister of Finance announced an extension of this measure until January 31, 2027, after which 50% of the regular excise tax rate would apply from February 1 through to March 31, 2027. This measure is expected to continue reducing Canadians' costs at the pump by up to 10¢ per litre for gasoline and four cents per litre for diesel until February 2027, and by up to five cents per litre for gasoline and two cents per litre for diesel until April 2027.

These are measures that we know work, and we are continuing them. All told, they are estimated to provide $5.3 billion in total tax relief for Canadians, of which $2.9 billion is from the September extension alone. The pause in the excise tax lowers prices at the pumps and helps reduce transportation and production costs across the economy. We heard in this House and from those across our ridings about the impact. It is supporting families, farmers, truck drivers and the businesses that rely on them to move goods. In fact, all Canadians will see benefits from this measure.

● (1825)

However, that is not the only thing we have done to make life more affordable for Canadians. Our government has also introduced the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit, which is providing additional significant support for more than 12 million Canadians. It is based on the goods and services tax credit, but it is more generous. As of July 2026, payment amounts have increased by 25% for five years, and in June, those 12 million Canadians received a one-time top-up payment. Again, that is real money back in the pockets of hard-working Canadians. Combined, this means that a family of four will receive up to $1,890 this year and a single person up to $950 this year.

We know that housing affordability continues to challenge many Canadians, especially those trying to purchase their first home. This is why we eliminated the GST for first-time homebuyers on new homes valued up to $1 million, a measure that can provide savings of up to $50,000. We also extended the grace period under the homebuyers' plan from two to five years for participants making a first withdrawal, until the end of 2028. This will provide cash flow relief of up to $4,000 per person per year for three years and will help households manage early expenses during the crucial first year of home ownership. I know how important that is, because when I talk to young people, some of them feel like they do not know if they can even dream of buying their own home for the first time.

Taken together, these and other actions reflect a balanced approach. What that means is immediate cost relief, targeted support for those who need it most and prudent management of the public purse.

Canada has the fiscal capacity to draw on our strengths and respond to global challenges. That is exactly what we are doing. We had the fastest-growing economy in the G7 in Q2 2026 and have managed our finances in a way that has reduced our deficit for 2025-26. While revenues have grown, we have directed most of this increase to helping Canadians with the cost of living. This is the balance that Canadians expect from their government: responding to global challenges with a responsible and pragmatic fiscal approach.

We cannot control global forces. As our Prime Minister has said, we cannot expect to control what is happening outside, but we can control what happens here. We cannot control the global forces that drive up prices, but we can control how we respond to them.

Our government is cutting taxes to help Canadians manage everyday expenses while we build a stronger, more independent economy. We will continue to respond to affordability pressures with fairness, discipline and a focus on results for Canadians, because that is what Canadians expect and that is what Canadians deserve. That is what Bill C-38 would do. This is how we build Canada strong for all.

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated my colleague's remarks when she said how good this measure is. Earlier today, the finance minister said that when they took it off for a while, they saw immediate results and it was benefiting the economy. Can you tell me why they would not want to have long-lasting results and eliminate this issue altogether going forward?

● (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I would just remind the member to address questions through the Chair.

The hon. member for Scarborough Southwest.

Doly Begum: Mr. Speaker, we believe in building an economy that is strong, that helps people grow and that helps people be independent in their own ways, even when they need support, as we saw during COVID, for example. What we are facing right now is unprecedented, so we need to provide support immediately. This is an immediate support that would help people get going to make ends meet.

In terms of long-term efforts, we will be doing those as well. They are two different things, and we need to be very focused on both of them.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was obviously delighted, as many others were, to listen to one of our newest members of Parliament on this side of the aisle. I listened carefully and heard from her that she believes it is important both to fight for the interests of Canadians and Canada outside of Canada by building more alliances and by diversifying our trade relationships and to fight for the interests of Canadians, especially those who are struggling more with the high cost of living.

Why, in her view, is it important to do those two things, especially in the context of what we hear from opposition MPs, who say that the Prime Minister should not try to address both challenges at the same time?

Doly Begum: Mr. Speaker, we have had a good relationship with our friends next door, the United States, and in the past it worked really well. Unfortunately we are facing a time right now when we cannot depend on that friend. Therefore, we must diversify, we must strengthen our economy and we must face the challenges we have at this very moment, which means that, while we have these kinds of measures, we also need to strengthen our ties across the world. We have great partners that are really interested. During the summit, we have seen the type of interest we are getting from across the world.

It is high time that we diversify our trade and build those partnerships as well, because Canada is a place where people want to invest. We are lucky to have a wonderful country like this where people are looking to unlock those opportunities.

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member opposite that immediate relief is required in these times. I am curious if she could answer why it took so long. Conservatives put pressure on the government in order to have this relief put in place. The Liberals admitted that it was immediate relief for Canadians. Why will they not go the full way and remove all federal taxes on fuel moving forward? If we need the relief today, let us do it today.

Doly Begum: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are doing.

The Prime Minister has been in government for just over a year. I joined in the last couple of months, and I am so proud that the government really listens to the communities we are representing, understanding those challenges and doing exactly what Canadians want us to do, which is fight for them and put in the measures of support they need as well.

Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member across the way talks about building the economy strong, so why is it that there are 500 projects, including pipelines, that are sitting on the Prime Minister's desk, and nothing is being built?

Doly Begum: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of measures we are working on. I would like the other side, the opposition, to actually support our measures and help expedite and move them along so we can actually help Canadians from coast to coast to coast. People need our support. People need us to govern. I would like the opposition, instead of delaying and instead of talking about different tactics, to come on board and do what people want us to do.

Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise for the first time in this fall session. I would like to talk about what it means to be an average Canadian.

We all know there is a moment that has become so familiar for so many Canadians. Someone pulls up to a gas station, they get out of their car, they put the nozzle in their tank and they just stand there watching those two numbers race each other. One number shows how many litres they are getting, and the other shows how much money is disappearing out of their bank account. For a lot of families, there used to be a point where filling up was almost an afterthought. If someone needed gas, they stopped and got gas, but today, people notice every single dollar.

There are two ways to measure the cost of living. The government looks at it like a speedometer, but families live with the odometer. Let me explain that. The speedometer tells us how fast prices are rising today. That is the inflation rate. The odometer tells us how far prices have travelled from where they started, and that is the number that Canadians cannot simply reset.

We hear that inflation is now around 3%, and that sounds like good news. Slower inflation is certainly better than faster inflation, but Statistics Canada tells us that grocery prices are still 29% higher than they were five years ago. The speedometer has slowed down, but the odometer has in no way gone backward. That is what Canadians are feeling right now.

We could put a hundred-dollar bill on someone's kitchen table and ask what that $100 bought for that family five years ago. We can then ask what that $100 would buy for them today. Nobody buys groceries with the consumer price index. They pay with real dollars, and those dollars simply do not stretch as far as they used to. That is the context in which we are debating Bill C-38 today.

The regular federal excise tax is 10¢ a litre on gasoline and four cents on diesel. Under this legislation, those rates would remain at zero until January 31. However, then something curious would happen. On February 1, half of that tax would come back, and on April 1, the whole thing would come back. We are debating tax relief today, while the date for taking that relief away is already printed on the calendar.

Our Conservative caucus has indicated that we will support keeping this relief in place, but this debate did not begin just this week. In April, Conservatives brought a motion before the House calling for the federal fuel excise tax to be removed for the rest of 2026, along with broader relief from federal costs on gasoline and diesel. That motion was unfortunately defeated, 192 votes to 134 votes. The issue was again raised in May. Members can disagree about how far relief should go or how long it should last, but the record is there.

I think there is something else we should understand about fuel, particularly for those of us who represent rural Canada. There is a tax that people pay that never appears on any government form. It is the cost of distance. If somebody lives in a major city, there may be days where driving is simply an optional activity. That is not the reality for folks living in rural Canada. There is no subway running past the farmyard.

The specialist for medical appointments is probably an hour or more away. The hockey rink one plays at is in the next town, and the away games are even farther, in the town beyond that. The hardware store might be 30 miles down the highway, and the part needed to get a combine moving again is most likely farther than that. There may as well be a line in the family budget called “the driving tax”. It is not because the government literally charges it, but because geography does. Every appointment takes fuel. Every grocery trip takes fuel. Every trip to work takes fuel for the vast majority of the folks I represent.

For many seniors, a car is not just a luxury; it is independence. It is church on Sunday. It is seeing their grandchildren on the weekend. A senior cannot move the hospital closer because gasoline got too expensive for them to go to their appointments. A farmer cannot move the field closer to their home farmyard. A trucker cannot make Winnipeg and Calgary neighbours all of a sudden. Distance does not negotiate with the household budget.

We can also think about one litre of diesel put into a tractor in Manitoba, the tractor that helps produce the crop. Next, the combine is running at about $250 an hour during harvest just to get the crop off, then another litre goes into the truck to haul the crop once it is off. There is fuel used again to get it to the processor. A truck takes the finished product to the distribution centre, and then another vehicle eventually delivers it to a store.

● (1835)

Much of that cost is actually borne and eaten by the farmers themselves, but the consumer is ultimately paying the rest of it when buying the finished product. That is what makes fuel different from so many other household expenses. The cost moves through the entirety of the economy. A contractor's truck carries tools to a job site. A delivery van carries somebody's order. A semi carries food right across this great nation. Fuel is buried inside the cost of moving virtually everything that we enjoy day to day. That does not mean that a 10¢ tax reduction magically cuts 10¢ off the price of bread. Of course it does not, but the cost of moving those goods adds up.

Even the government's own announcement points specifically to trucking, agriculture, food, housing, construction and delivery businesses when explaining who would benefit from this tax relief. Earlier this year, the government conducted what was almost a real-world economic experiment. For years we had to hear the Liberals argue about whether taxes at the pump really made much difference at all. Then, in April, the excise tax came off, and according to the government's own figures, gasoline prices fell by roughly 11¢ a litre on the very first day: tax off, prices down. Nobody thinks that the Government of Canada controls the world's price of oil. It cannot control every refinery shutdown, war, or international disruption, but government does control the taxes that it adds on top of those prices, and Canadians can tell the difference.

What worries me about the larger affordability debate is that we sometimes talk as though inflation's having slowed down has repaired the damage from the inflation that came before it. It has not. Inflation works a little bit like a ratchet. Prices can move up very quickly, and they rarely return all the way to the place where they began. We can think of an elevator as another example. Over several years, the cost of living has taken the elevator up. Now the government points out that the elevator is moving up a little bit more slowly, but the family standing several floors above where it started may be forgiven for not celebrating just yet.

That is why the same things that Canadians complained about being expensive a few years ago are still expensive today: food, housing, repairs, travel, fuel and just about everything in our day-to-day lives. The crisis changes shape, but the accumulated bill remains, and that brings me back to the April 1 date day etched in the calendar by the government and feared by Canadians. There is something odd about telling people that relief is needed today, while at the same time scheduling the tax to return just a few months from now, April Fools, except it is not a joke for Canadians.

That is essentially where this policy, as drafted, leaves the country. The relief does last a little bit longer, but then the meter begins running again. Meanwhile, the grocery bill does not have an expiry date, and neither does the mortgage. The farmer will not just get to suspend planting next spring until diesel becomes cheaper for them. The senior does not get to postpone a medical appointment until the price at the pump improves. Families have to live in the economy every single day.

There is a broader principle here that we should all remember: When the cost of living becomes difficult, governments instinctively start looking for something new to create, such as a new program, a new benefit, a new application or a new bureaucracy to administer the new program that they dreamt up. Sometimes that may be necessary, but sometimes there is a much simpler question worth asking first: Could government not just take less? A dollar that never leaves someone's pocket does not require an application form from the government to get it back. It does not require some administrative department in Ottawa, and it does not require somebody to qualify. It is simply still their dollar, as it should be.

Bill C-38 would provide temporary relief from one federal tax. The larger affordability debate is nowhere near finished, though, because Canadians do not experience the economy through a monthly Statistics Canada release. They experience it when they open their wallet. They experience it when they know that $100 simply buys less. They experience it when the drive to town costs that much more. They experience it when a litre of diesel works its way through a farm, a truck and eventually to their grocery store shelf. The speedometer may tell us inflation has slowed down, and that is a good thing, but families are still looking at the odometer, and they know exactly how far we have travelled.

● (1840)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have enjoyed the debate today, and I wanted to express the whole idea behind this. I have said this before. New Democrat Wab Kinew got elected and brought in getting rid of the tax levy on gasoline for the first six months, and I do think he also extended it. It was a great idea. I have been talking about the benefits of getting rid of the gas tax. That is one of the reasons that earlier the Prime Minister got rid of the carbon tax. It was the very first initiative he had.

The issue is that it does not matter who comes up with the idea. I am grateful that we are going to be passing Bill C-38, because Canadians would actually benefit. Does the member not agree with that?

● (1845)

Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, Canadians should be happy that we have His Majesty's loyal opposition to put forward good ideas that have been at times embraced by the government, such as the extension of the excise tax, or putting it on to begin with. I wish I had the Hansard record to count the number of times that the member defended the carbon tax as neutral for families and said that everyone was better off. He stands here and takes some sort of credit, like it was his idea. Give me a break.

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are acting like they discovered plutonium here and like this is the first time the idea has been brought up to actually suspend a tax that would reduce the cost of fuel. However, when I look at the debate record, Conservatives have been asking this for well over a year. It came from listening to the stories of people who just could not afford life. However, this tax we are talking about is just one component of what it means to have an affordable life.

Can I ask the member to talk about why the Conservatives came up with this idea to suspend taxes and cut them out altogether?

Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, for all of us, one of the best and the worst parts of this job is hearing people's stories, because it is important that we know them, but sometimes they are very difficult to hear. I am sure we have all heard those seniors who say they are making $20,000, and we wonder how on earth they are living and how they are eating. We all go to grocery stores. We all try to drive to medical appointments, and there are things I outlined in my speech.

It is heartbreaking to hear the challenges that these people are living with. We should be doing our level best, and this is one small thing. We need to control what we can control. We cannot control wars in the Middle East or the Strait of Hormuz being closed. We cannot control any of that. The only things that we can control are the taxes that we put upon Canadians and the way that we waste money here out of Ottawa. It is time that we do better for both, and lower taxes for Canadians so we can improve their quality of life.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member makes reference to the issue of the senior who makes $20,000 a year. I imagine that senior who is making $20,000 a year on a fixed income being able to receive dental benefits, yet the Conservatives want to take that dental benefit away from them. On the one hand, the member wants to stand up for seniors. On the other hand, he is voting against things that support affordability for seniors. Does that mean there is a new light that has shone over that particular member and he will say to the seniors who make $20,000 a year on a fixed income that he actually supports the dental program that the federal government is providing?

Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I support seniors living on fixed incomes, families and anybody who lives in my riding or across this country having the highest possible standard of life. We have vastly different views. As I outlined in my speech, the government sees any problem as an opportunity to create some big new bureaucracy, spend a whole bunch of money and then, when asked about the results, say, “We spent *x* amount of dollars”. People are struggling out there. Press releases saying they spent this much money do nothing to help feed Canadians, house them or keep them warm in the winter.

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House and speak on behalf of the residents of Kitchener Centre.

I would like to start with this: Finally, after advocating, pushing and working to put public pressure on the current government, it is agreeing to partially implement a piece of our plan to reduce the cost of living for Canadians. This all started on April 2 of this year. We started advocating to eliminate all federal tax on gas and diesel until the upcoming year to put relief for Canadians at the pumps and at the grocery stores. We were listened to, partially, but now here we are debating again, because it is coming back, it is being eliminated and the gas prices are going to immediately go up.

Again, this summer we started advocating, pushing, putting public pressure and talking. Our leader, Pierre Poilievre, is saying we have got to do this—

● (1850)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I will just remind the member not to use the names and only the titles.

The hon. member.

Kelly DeRidder: Our leader advocated for Canadians saying that we need to keep this off the price of gas. That is exactly what is happening now.

Finally, I would like to say it is a good start. We are keeping a portion of the gas taxes off for Canadians, but I really want to make it clear that it is not enough. Conservatives are calling for the elimination of all federal tax on gas and diesel, at least until Canada Day 2027. We have to control the affordability for Canadians inside our borders and inside this House to make life more affordable for Canadians. We need the government to listen to the Conservatives and put the whole measure in place, not just a piece of it: all federal taxes on gas and diesel until at least Canada Day 2027.

The fact is that the Liberals have introduced this piece of the Conservative plan, and I am sure people can see that it is now actually being used as a talking point, which is very telling to me. The talking point is that they have put in measures to save Canadians money, 11¢ at the pump. This tells me we were right all along to say that immediate relief for Canadians is what needs to get done.

Absolutely, it is 11¢, but if they took this measure the whole way, it would be 25¢ per litre of savings at the pump for Canadians moving forward. What I would like the current government to do is actually adopt our entire plan, and it could use that talking point in the future to say that it has saved 25¢ per litre for Canadians.

At the end of the day, what we are doing here is saving money and making life more affordable for Canadians who desperately need it. Of course, we will be supporting this. It is the Conservative plan. Absolutely, we will be supporting this. Our Conservative Party is now asking for the current government to eliminate all federal taxes on gas and diesel until at least Canada Day 2027 to save Canadians 25¢ per litre, not just 11¢ per litre.

Over the summer, we have worked tirelessly for Canadians. In our role as the opposition, we have continued to work and advocate over the summer for what we can do inside our borders to help with the pressures and get the relief that Canadians need moving forward. We have listened to their stories at the dinner table. We have met with Canadians. We have had the hard conversations over the summer, about having to choose between heating their home or putting food in their refrigerator. Some people are on the verge of losing their jobs because they cannot even afford to put gas in their tank to get to work. It is this snowball effect that we are seeing happen.

Through this parliamentary session we will continue to work for Canadians, to advocate for Canadians, to reduce the cost of living and to get us through what Canadians are facing now. We will keep putting pressure on the government, because we are listening. I want all Canadians, including residents of Kitchener Centre, to know that this political landscape that we are in today is not their fault. They are working hard, and raising a family or maybe they are on their own and cannot afford the essentials of life. This is what is not okay in Canada today. This is what we can actually control inside Canada today.

We want to create a Canada again where Canadians can put food on their table, get to work, have a full gas tank and a full wallet, and still save for their future. There are youth out there who are thinking they are never going to be able get a home. That is not the Canada that we deserve. That is not the Canada we should live in. We will continue advocating and putting pressure on the current government to get us back into the place we used to be.

The current Prime Minister stood in the House yesterday and told Canadians that the tariff war, the Iranian war and the Ukrainian war are what is driving up the cost of living for Canadians. I think that what we need to do, concentrating on the government, is focus on what we can control inside our borders.

● (1855)

We need to focus on the reliefs and measures that we can put in place. Canadians do not want to hear about exponential crises that are the cause for the fact that they cannot put food on the table. They want to hear there are measures being put in place to help them live a life they are used to living inside our Canadian borders.

I do not think John from Kitchener, who is now buying prepared meals for himself and his wife because he has to work two jobs just to stay afloat and does not have time to cook for his family anymore, wants to hear about what is happening in Ukraine or Iran. John wants to hear about tax relief, about removing the fuel standards tax, so that our grocery and gas prices come down. These are the measures that John wants to hear about. Paul in Kitchener says that he is being taxed too much, cannot afford to live anymore and does not know what he is going to do for his future. I am speaking to John and Paul directly right now. Conservatives understand. We are working, applying pressure and making sure that the government puts measures in place to help them with their everyday lives, with what they are saying at their kitchen tables and making sure their voices are heard in Ottawa so we can bring down the cost of living and inflationary spending and move toward a more affordable future for Canadians.

We found more solutions than Bill C-38. We found solutions that are calling on the government to adopt all of these measures moving forward. Number one I have already said a couple of times today, which is to eliminate all federal tax on gas and diesel until at least Canada Day 2027 so we can reduce the price at the pumps by 25¢, not 11¢. It will affect our groceries and people will feel it immediately at the pump. We want the government to permanently scrap the fuel regulations and industrial carbon tax so those taxes never come back on Canadians. My colleagues fought for 10 years. I did not as I am honoured to be here for my first term, but my colleagues fought for 10 years saying this carbon tax was detrimental. We won that debate, but the Liberals need to take it the full way. They need to remove the industrial carbon tax and the fuel standards tax for Canadians as well, more than a 1% cut for the lowest tax bracket.

I want to mention that over the summer, the Conservative team found $150 billion in savings. There is a weird misconception that Conservatives want to save money by cutting services or social programs. That is absolutely not true. This $150 billion in savings is inflationary spending on consultants, projects that are not being built but where money is being spent and fake asylum claims. The list goes on and on.

What I am saying to Canadians today is Conservatives are here for them. We have presented our solutions to the current government. We are listening to Canadians. Moving forward, we will push the government and work for it to create a more affordable life for people here in Canada.

Jacques Ramsay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the Conservatives, the perception is that this government has been slow to react. I would like to remind my friend on the other side of the aisle that the Iranian war started on February 28 and by April, this government came up with the fuel tax suspension. It is not adequate to say that we have been slow to react. I think we have actually been quite quick to react.

The Conservatives would like to make this measure permanent. If they want us to make this permanent, then I must assume the Conservatives feel they can confidently predict oil prices over the next six to 12 months. I certainly have not heard any expert saying that, so I am curious to know how they can.

● (1900)

Kelly DeRidder: Mr. Speaker, I want to set the record straight. I did not say the government was slow to react. I said that the Conservatives have applied pressure for 10 years advocating for that. We said the carbon tax was going to be detrimental to our economy. That is the debate that we won and the debate we are moving forward with. We are asking the government now to completely eliminate it, not just a half-measure or little pieces but completely eliminate it. It should not put in question the prices of oil or exponential circumstances that we have no control over.

We have control to reduce the cost of living for Canadians, and that is what we should be implementing today.

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was just mentioned by one of the Liberal government members that it does not matter where the idea comes from. Yes, it does for the Liberal government, because this idea was brought up in April, and previous to that other measures were presented by the Conservatives. They were all voted down by a majority of the House. This is exactly what we are talking about today.

To the member, if the Conservative proposal put on the floor back in April was actually approved in April, how much savings could that have brought to families and citizens across Canada?

Kelly DeRidder: Mr. Speaker, we have done the math, and if the full measure had been implemented right away, it would have saved the average Canadian $1,000 at the fuel pump over the course of the year.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a permanent tax reduction is the Conservatives' go-to response in every situation. How would that improve affordability? How is that going to help people, when the reality is that if the Government of Canada permanently reduces taxes, the oil companies will jack up their prices?

[*English*]

Kelly DeRidder: Mr. Speaker, we never said that we want to completely cut the taxes across the board for all Canadians. We do want to cut the fuel standards tax and the industrial tax. They are just another version of the previous tax the Liberals that we have fought against for 10 years. They have an economic impact on our society, and it is time to completely get rid of these taxes so we can go back to an affordable life.

Ellis Ross: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government just cannot get it right. On one hand, its members say that affordability is the best it has been for 10 years. On the other side, they recognize the affordability crisis our constituents are facing in Canada.

To the member, where are these stories coming from of Canadians struggling to put food on the table or gas in their gas tank?

Kelly DeRidder: Mr. Speaker, I do not think they are coming from the average Canadian. The average Canadian is really struggling right now. Canadians are struggling with everything. Their mental health is even being affected because they are having to choose between heat and food. These stories are not coming from the grassroots. They are not coming from people at their kitchen tables. They are coming from consultants or someone who thinks it is a better idea to do something different than give Canadians a little relief.

Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-38, the Canadian fuel affordability act, which would temporarily extend the government's fuel tax suspension at a further cost of $2.9 billion.

No party in the House has raised greater concern about the affordability crisis facing working Canadians and their families than the New Democrat Party. We know how expensive life has become with the sky-high costs of groceries, fuel and housing, and we know that Canadians need effective relief now. Unfortunately, the policy contained in this bill, which would ultimately cost over $5 billion, has failed to deliver the lower fuel prices Canadians were promised.

When this tax suspension was first implemented last April, New Democrats warned that its impact on prices at the pump would be limited because nothing in the legislation guaranteed that savings would actually reach consumers. We argued then that there was nothing to stop oil companies from absorbing some or all of the tax cuts themselves. We were right.

Canadians are now paying more for gasoline today than they did in April, and substantially more than they were paying before the latest global energy crisis began. On the day the tax suspension took effect, the national average price of gasoline was $1.69 per litre. Today it stands at $1.83 per litre. It is also more than 60¢ per litre higher than it was last Christmas, before the U.S.-Israeli invasion of Iran sent oil markets into turmoil.

The government has essentially given billions of taxpayer dollars directly to the oil companies, some of the most profitable corporations on the planet. While Canadians struggle with the cost of living, oil and gas giants are poised to collect $90 billion in profits this year alone, not because of innovation or increased productivity, but because they are gouging consumers. That is why New Democrats have opposed this policy from the outset, and why we continue to advocate for the future a better, more effective way to help struggling consumers, which is a windfall profits tax on oil and gas companies with the proceeds returned to Canadians who need relief.

This is not a radical idea. We have done it before in times of crisis. Canada imposed excess profits taxes during both world wars. The Liberals themselves imposed an excess profits tax on banks during the pandemic. It is an approach that makes sense. A windfall profits tax avoids the pitfalls we have just seen from the flawed policy contained in this legislation. It cannot be captured as corporate profits. It allows support to be targeted to those who need it the most. It does not encourage greater fossil fuel consumption at a time when the world is facing a climate emergency.

The irony of this fuel tax suspension is hard to ignore. Canadians who have chosen to reduce their emissions by purchasing electric vehicles, taking public transit, cycling or making other environmentally responsible choices are being forced to pay for another fossil fuel subsidy while receiving none of the benefits.

We cannot ignore the opportunity cost of delaying our transition to the sustainable energy sources of the future. Every dollar spent propping up an industry that is already enormously profitable is a dollar not invested in the technologies that could lower energy costs, strengthen our economy and free Canadians from the endless roller coaster of oil and gas prices.

The world is changing far faster than many people realize. In the early 2020s, we crossed an important threshold. For the first time, solar power became cheaper than fossil fuels and cheaper than coal, making it the lowest cost source of electricity available. Wind power followed closely behind as the second cheapest source. By 2024, over 92% of all new electricity generation added globally came from renewable sources. Solar power is now being installed at a staggering pace around the world, with more than a gigawatt of capacity being added every single day. That is equivalent to the output of a large, coal-fired power plant or a nuclear reactor.

● (1905)

The world now possesses the manufacturing capacity to produce as many solar panels as climate scientists say we need. The old arguments that clean energy is too expensive, too unreliable or incapable of meeting our energy needs simply do not withstand scrutiny. The global energy transition is no longer a question of possibility. It is already under way. While the Liberal government spends billions subsidizing fossil fuels, other countries, from Europe to China, are investing in the industries that will create the jobs, exports, productivity gains and economic opportunities of the future.

This transformation is not limited to only wealthy countries. According to the Rocky Mountain Institute, renewable energy capacity is growing twice as fast in countries of the global south as it is in developed countries. Communities that have historically lacked reliable access to energy are increasingly leapfrogging directly to clean electricity. These examples matter because they show that the transition is about far more than reducing emissions. It is about freedom, freedom from volatile energy prices, freedom from domination by oil and gas monopolies and freedom from the dangerous geopolitics that have always accompanied fossil fuels, where access to energy can be manipulated, restricted and weaponized.

We can see the consequences of that reality unfolding right now in Cuba. For more than 60 years, Cuba has lived under an illegal U.S. economic blockade that has been repeatedly condemned by the overwhelming majority of countries at the United Nations. Today, that pressure is intensified into an American effort to choke off Cuba's energy supply altogether. When fuel is cut off, hospitals struggle to operate, water systems fail, food spoils and ordinary people suffer. Let us be clear, this is not an unintended consequence. Humanitarian catastrophe is the objective.

Canada has a long tradition of pursuing an independent relationship with Cuba. We have maintained diplomatic relations since 1945, consistently opposed the U.S. economic blockade and built deep cultural and commercial ties between our peoples, yet, as humanitarian conditions worsen and the Trump administration cruelly and illegally blockades Cuba's fuel supplies, the Liberal government has refused to speak out.

That silence is difficult to reconcile with the principles articulated by the Prime Minister in his speech in Davos. There, he argued that middle powers like Canada have a responsibility to defend sovereignty, human rights and solidarity rather than bowing to the exercise of power by stronger states. He cautioned against the temptation to "go along to get along" in the face of coercion and intimidation from superpowers. Those are admirable principles, but if they mean anything, they must apply to Canada and Cuba as well.

Canada should speak out strongly and demand that Donald Trump rescind his illegal blockade. We should stand with the Cuban people by providing immediate energy support to keep essential services running while helping the country rapidly build the renewable energy capacity needed to free itself from imported fossil fuels and the threat of future energy blockades. This is ultimately the lesson before us today.

Investments in clean energy are not simply climate policy. They are affordable policy. They are industrial policy. They are security policy. They are investments in a future where communities are less vulnerable to geopolitical conflict, less dependent on scarce resources and more capable of determining their own destiny. The technology exists. The costs have fallen. The solutions are available, so let us stop the destructive and senseless expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure and consumption on a planet crying out for relief. Let us stop subsidizing the oil and gas industry, which does not need the money. Canadians do. Let us start investing in the energy supplies of the future that will lower costs, create jobs, build our economy and protect our planet.

Canadians can count on New Democrats to support positive and constructive policies in this place that will actually help them with the affordability crisis they are facing. We will continue to oppose corporate giveaways by the Liberal government, which are supported by the Conservative Party, that simply enrich corporations while Canadians struggle every day.

● (1910)

Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that energy consumption is changing globally. Perhaps I do not see it happening as rapidly as he hopes, but I agree that the world is in the process of electrifying and greening, and cost curves are clear for renewables and storage. However, that does not provide relief today to Canadians affected by price spikes driven from global uncertainty or Canadians who own combustion engine vehicles. It seems to me that postponing the excise tax is a practical and prudent response in the short term.

I would ask my colleague if he sees a place for short-term affordability measures, such as the suspension of the excise tax.

Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, I think what my hon. colleague and I agree on is that Canadians need immediate relief and need help with the affordability crisis. I pointed out, and quoted statistics on this, that the policy of the Liberal government to cut the excise tax on oil and gas has not resulted in that. That is not just my opinion. It is the numbers; it is the math.

I quoted that the price of gas the day before the Liberals dropped the excise tax back in April was lower than it is today. The prices are much higher today at the pump, and there was no mechanism whatsoever to ensure that oil companies did not just raise prices when the excise tax came down. That was a criticism we raised at the time, and it is probably a mechanism that should be put in this legislation as well to make sure that every penny of this tax relief goes to consumers. That might actually help Canadians, but this legislation does not require it.

● (1915)

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am a little confused by the NDP member's comments about rounding the math. I do not want to criticize him for going off topic so much, because I will probably do a bit of that in three hours when I have to speak, but in some of his comments, he said that taking this tax off would somehow subsidize the oil companies. I do not see how he can say that when it is going to help take taxes off the consumer at the pump. Could he explain how he rounds that math?

Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, it is very easy math. In fact, it is not just math. It is what has actually happened in the last five months.

When the tax was cut at the pump, nothing stopped oil companies from bumping up prices, so the consumer ended up paying more anyway. That is what we are talking about, and there is no price control on the oil companies whatsoever. Here are the statistics taken from the Statistics Canada website. This is what the government says. On the day the tax suspension took effect, the national average price of gasoline was $1.69 per litre. Today, it stands at $1.83 per litre. I think it is pretty obvious that if we are paying $1.83 a litre today and were paying $1.69 a litre before this policy came in, we are paying more for gas today. The policy has failed.

[*Translation*]

Mario Simard (Jonquière—Hébertville—Pays-des-Bleuets, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague entirely. While the intention may be commendable, the indicators suggest that the assistance may not reach the people who are struggling the most. As legislators, the last thing we want is to help greedy oil and gas companies make bigger profits.

We definitely need a mechanism to ensure that the tax relief goes directly to the most vulnerable. I have a solution, and I wonder if my colleague would agree with me. Instead of sending oil and gas companies billions of dollars in tax credits and support, would it not be better to increase old age security for the most vulnerable, for seniors struggling to put food on the table with nothing but the GIS and OAS to rely on?

That might be a better solution.

[*English*]

Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is absolutely right. The intentions of this policy may have been good, but the execution has failed miserably. People are paying 14¢ per litre more today for gas than they were before the government decided to give $5 billion in a cut to the fuel excise tax. That is because oil companies pocketed the difference.

Here is another piece of math, and it is a matter of public record. Oil and gas companies are on course to making $90 billion in profit this year. Where did the $5 billion go? It did not go into the pockets of people who were filling their tanks. They are paying more today. Oil companies are making more. It is clear where the money went, and that is why the NDP is pushing for a windfall profits tax to take a piece of those profits from the oil and gas industry and then direct that money to the Canadians who really need it.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal (Edmonton Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise on behalf of my community of Edmonton Southeast. As Parliament returns for the fall sitting, I am proud to stand in the House with my Conservative colleagues as we fight for a more affordable life for all Canadians.

This evening, I have the privilege of debating legislation that not only is Conservative in principle, but reflects a policy that Conservatives have been pushing for months. The tabling of Bill C-38 by the government represents a successful policy push by Conservatives that would help ease the strain on the wallets of millions of Canadians, but while this legislation is a step in the right direction, it does not go far enough.

Earlier this year, the federal government temporarily suspended the fuel excise tax, reducing the tax on gasoline by 10¢ per litre and on diesel by four cents per litre. That relief was supposed to expire after Labour Day. Conservatives fought that tax increase and called on the government to extend the relief. Now the government has changed course. Under Bill C-38, the excise tax would remain suspended until the end of January, and half of the tax would return in February and March, before the full tax would return in April.

Any relief for working Canadians is good news, but Canadians should understand what this legislation would actually do. It would not eliminate the tax. It would delay its return, and it would leave in place other federal taxes and regulatory costs that continue to affect the price Canadians pay for fuel. That matters because fuel is not simply another household expense. Fuel moves our economy. It gets workers to their jobs. It powers farm equipment. It moves building materials to construction sites. It delivers food to grocery stores and products to businesses across this vast country. When the cost of fuel increases, those costs do not remain at the gas station. Those costs move through our supply chains and eventually land on the bills paid by Canadian families.

We are already seeing the pressures. In July, gasoline prices were up over 25% compared with the year before. Energy costs were up over 16%. Transportation costs increased by over 7%, while grocery prices rose another 3%. Canadian households now carry about $1.76 in debt for every dollar of disposable income. At the same time, consumer insolvencies are up over 5% from the year before. These are not simply numbers on a spreadsheet. They represent real Canadians trying to make their paycheques stretch further.

Just this Sunday on my way to the Edmonton airport, my ride-share driver shared some of the struggles he faces every day. This hard-working man from south Edmonton is named Peter. Peter came to Canada 25 years ago and built a life for himself and his family. He owned and operated a small business in our community, employed local residents and contributed to Canada's economic engine. After almost three decades of working hard and providing for his family on a single income, it was finally time for him to retire, but there was a problem. The rapidly increasing cost of living meant that his retirement savings could no longer keep up with the price of everyday essentials.

● (1920)

After decades of contributing to Canada's economic base and providing for his family, Peter's wife is now forced to work a retail job. At the same time, Peter cannot enjoy his well-deserved retirement years. Instead, he drives for a ride-share service five days a week just to keep his head above water. Unfortunately, Peter's story is all too common among Canadians.

We used to have a simple bargain in this country: work hard, earn a decent paycheque, provide for one's family, buy a home in a safe neighbourhood and, after decades of work, enjoy a secure retirement. After 11 years of Liberal government, that bargain has been torn apart. Canadians like Peter can no longer enjoy the fruits of their labour because the cost of basics continues to eat away at their paycheques and savings.

That is why Bill C-38 cannot be where this conversation ends. The government itself recognizes that fuel tax relief benefits truckers, agriculture, housing, construction and delivery businesses. If lower fuel taxes help those sectors today, then Canadians should not be satisfied watching those taxes being returned in only a few months.

Conservatives are proposing something more substantial. We have called on the government to remove all federal taxes on gasoline and diesel until at least Canada Day 2027. That means going beyond the excise tax suspension and addressing costs attributed to the clean fuel regulations and the industrial carbon tax. The common-sense Conservative proposal would save drivers up to 25¢ per litre and put as much as $1,000 back into the pockets of Canadian families. That is the difference between temporary relief and meaningful relief.

Conservatives fought the return of the fuel excise tax after Labour Day. The government changed course, and Canadians will save money because of it. That is a positive development, but we should not confuse a temporary extension with a solution to Canada's affordability crisis. Canadians still face high fuel prices, rising grocery bills and household budgets stretched too thin.

Conservatives will always fight for measures that leave more money in Canadians' pockets while continuing to push for greater and longer-lasting relief, because Canadians like Peter did everything we asked of them. They worked hard, built businesses, raised their families, paid their taxes and contributed to their communities. They deserve more than another temporary relief. They deserve a Canada where hard work once again provides the opportunity to get ahead, build a good life and retire with security. That can only be done by extending government tax relief until at least July 1, 2027, and permanently removing the clean fuel standard and industrial carbon tax.

● (1925)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has been interesting. What the Government of Canada has done is taken more of a holistic approach in dealing with affordability, because it is not new. It is something the Prime Minister has made a commitment to since the last federal election, and even prior to that. He has been Prime Minister for 18 months, and there have been a number of different measures. We can talk about getting rid of the carbon tax. We can talk about the income tax break for over 20 million Canadians. Today it is the excise tax on gas, which is important legislation. I am glad the Conservatives are going to support it.

What about other initiatives that are also helping out with the issue of affordability, such as the dental program, the pharmacare program and the national food program in our schools? Does the member support the whole package?

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, Conservatives welcome anything that saves Canadians money.

However, when the measure is a half-measure, not a full-fledged plan, then we must ask the government to do what is needed so that Canadians can keep more in their pockets and have an affordable life. The government is proposing to cut these taxes only until April. We are asking for relief to be given until Canada Day 2027, and to also get rid of the fuel standard tax as well as the industrial carbon tax, which are driving up the cost of fuel and which drive up the cost of everyday living.

● (1930)

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, could my hon. colleague comment on whether he thinks that if we actually followed the Conservative plan and reduced all of the taxes it would actually benefit the citizens of Canada far more than the 25¢ a litre, so they could afford to get out, go to work and buy their groceries? Does the member think that would be better for the overall economy than this half-measure that the government is proposing?

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: Mr. Speaker, my learned friend was a CPA by profession in his past life, and I believe no one knows numbers better than he does. I totally agree with him that the policies that the government has at least agreed to adopt are not going to help as it intends them to, or they are only going to help for a bit.

We are saying the government should get rid of these taxes, those that do not make sense and those that make life unaffordable for Canadians. I agree with what my friend has said, word for word, in his analogy.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member did not answer the aspect of the question dealing with affordability by providing supports. Let me give a specific example about a senior on a fixed income, collecting $20,000 a year. The government has a program for dental services for that particular senior, and that makes the dental services more affordable for the senior. Does the member support that aspect of governance? Does he believe the government has a role in programs of that nature with respect to affordability?

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: Mr. Speaker, going back to the root cause, it is good that the government is providing those reliefs, but who is going to look after the real cost of those reliefs? Why do we not get rid of the anti-energy laws that are making life unaffordable? It is like the government is creating a problem and then providing a solution for it. We do not believe in putting bandages on wounds. We believe in providing real medicine, and in this context, the real medicine is to get rid of the taxes on fuel that are driving up costs, be it the standard fuel tax or the anti-energy laws.

[*Translation*]

Jacques Ramsay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to the debate on the Canadian fuel affordability act. This measure is truly helping the people of my riding, La Prairie—Atateken, who sometimes have to travel long distances to get to work or as part of their job.

Our government is well aware of the pressures associated with the cost of living in Canada, specifically the rising cost of fuel as the world faces serious geopolitical tensions. Across the country, we have seen gas prices skyrocket. This is causing difficulties for many Canadians, so much so that filling up at the gas station has become a source of anxiety for many people.

Our government understands this situation well. That is why we have decided to extend a concrete measure that gives consumers a break. One day, all Canadians will have electric vehicles and will no longer be at the mercy of international events, such as closures of the Strait of Hormuz. However, that day has yet to arrive. That is why the Prime Minister announced in April that the government would suspend the federal excise tax on gasoline and diesel until Labour Day, September 7. Still, our approach has always been flexible. It became clear over the summer that geopolitical tensions were still elevated, which was keeping prices at the pump high. That is why the Minister of Finance announced this month that the full suspension would be extended until January 31, 2027, followed by a 50% reduction until March.

In my opinion, this decision demonstrates that our government is truly listening to Canadians, studying the facts and developing tangible measures to support Canadian families and businesses. With this announcement, we are suspending the federal excise tax of 10¢ per litre of gasoline and four cents per litre of diesel. We estimate that this suspension of the excise tax is saving Canadian consumers about $5.75 on filling a 50-litre tank using regular gasoline. This suspension comes on the heels of the cancellation of the federal consumer fuel charge that was enacted on April 1, 2025, which was already delivering direct savings to Canadians at the pump. That measure helped reduce overall inflation and lower costs for all Canadians. The suspension of the federal excise tax is a step in the same direction.

This is just one way our government is working to make life more affordable for all Canadians.

I want to mention the tax cut to lower the tax burden on Canadians, which came into effect on July 1, 2025. Canadians are paying less tax because our government lowered the first marginal personal income tax rate from 15% to 14%. Thanks to this change, 22 million Canadians now benefit from tax relief of up to $840 per year for a two-income family.

The government also cut the GST for first-time homebuyers of new homes valued up to $1 million and reduced it for new homes valued between $1 million and $1.5 million. This represents savings of up to $50,000.

Furthermore, we are helping 12 million low- and moderate-income Canadians pay for essential goods with the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit. Since the spring, we have been making regular, increased payments to the families and individuals who are eligible for this benefit. The amount has been increased by 25% for five years, starting in July 2026. These payments, made at the start of each quarter, will provide quick access to funds to help families cover their day-to-day expenses. In total, these measures mean that a family of four will receive up to $1,890 this year thanks to the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit. They will then receive $1,400 per year for the next four years. A single person, meanwhile, will receive $950 this year and $700 a year after that.

● (1935)

Our government also made the national school food program permanent. I am especially proud of this measure, which provides school meals to nearly 400,000 children every year, saving participating families with two children in school roughly $800 a year in grocery bills. Another equally fundamental but less publicized measure is our roll-out of automatic federal benefits. By the 2028 tax year, 5.5 million low-income Canadians will automatically get the benefits they are entitled to, including the Canada groceries and essentials benefit and the Canada child benefit. Automatic income tax filing for these Canadians ensures that they receive the benefits they are eligible for without having to apply.

Finally, I will close by also mentioning the ambitious measures we have implemented to foster competition in the telecommunications and financial services sectors in order to lower prices, allowing Canadians to change providers more easily and pay less in banking and service fees. At a time when disruptions in global supply chains and geopolitical tensions are pushing prices up, our government is taking action. Our government wants to build a stronger economy to create more job opportunities and higher wages. Simultaneously, we will lower costs to make life more affordable across the country. That's how we can ensure more certainty, security and prosperity for more Canadians, now and in the future. I hope this bill will provide Canadian consumers with some much-needed relief when it comes to gasoline and diesel.

● (1940)

[*English*]

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to please emphasize the importance of lowering costs on Canadians. Could he actually lay out all of the measures taking place right now, as well as answer why they are not implementing the entire plan and eliminating all the federal tax on gas?

[*Translation*]

Jacques Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, it is important to understand the timing of the tax suspension. Our Conservative friends will tell us they have been advocating for this measure for years. However, a measure is only effective when it is implemented at the right time. Right now, we are experiencing geopolitical tensions due to the war in Ukraine and especially to the war in Iran and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. A measure is only effective when it is implemented for a specific reason, and we will be able to cancel it once this risk disappears, which I hope will be as soon as possible.

Mario Simard (Jonquière—Hébertville—Pays-des-Bleuets, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I understand that there is a right time for implementing such a measure, but we also need indicators to prove that it will have the desired effect on the most vulnerable. That part is a bit more difficult.

We are in favour of helping people who are struggling to afford housing, clothing and food in these difficult times. Gas is an essential consumer good. However, it is still important to make sure that this measure will not help the greedy oil and gas companies rack up even bigger profits. There is already a dedicated policy of giving those companies billions of dollars in support. I, for one, think that the government could make an effort to support seniors as well and increase old age security by ending its support for oil and gas companies. Perhaps my colleague is in favour of that.

Jacques Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is glossing over the fact that this measure is temporary, whereas he is proposing a measure that will be permanent and may not be appropriate. That said, his concerns are valid. I think we do need to monitor the situation. I have no indications and have not heard anything to suggest that the tax suspension has benefited the oil companies. Obviously, the cost of gas has continued to rise, but I think that can mostly be attributed to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. I think that, without the tax suspension, the price at the pumps would be even higher today, probably above $2 per litre.

Louis Villeneuve (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a family doctor, my colleague treated thousands of patients during his career. I would like to know why affordability is so important to him.

Jacques Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Brome—Missisquoi for that excellent question.

As we know, affordability means economic security, income, employment, food security, and healthy food to eat. These are all key determinants of health that enable Canadians to be productive and enjoy life. This is what I saw every day in my office. Our job is not just to heal all ills. We must also advocate for quality of life, and that starts by looking at the key determinants of health, economic security being probably the most fundamental one.

I am very pleased to say that my government is constantly thinking about this issue.

● (1945)

[*English*]

Amarjeet Gill (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak, on behalf of the great people of Brampton West, to Bill C-38, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act, also known as the Canadian fuel affordability act, and the impact of high prices on Canadian businesses and families.

After visiting and talking to the residents of Brampton West this summer, I can say that this is an incredibly important issue affecting Canadians. For months, Conservatives have delivered a simple message: Stop raising costs, cut taxes, lower the cost of fuel and let Canadians keep more of the money they earn. Now, after months of Conservative pressure, the government would be extending the fuel tax relief. That is good news for Canadians, but let us be clear. This would not be permanent tax relief. It would be a temporary extension. The tax is still scheduled to come back, and Canadians deserve better than a temporary break from high prices.

Conservatives have been fighting for lower fuel taxes because we understand something the government has been slow to recognize: Fuel taxes do not stop at the gas pump. They travel through the entire economy. When it costs more for fuel, it costs more to produce our food, build our homes and supply our businesses, and eventually we all end up paying higher prices.

The government itself now acknowledges that the fuel tax relief benefits truckers. It also benefits agriculture, construction and housing. Conservatives agree. In fact, we have been making the argument for years. That is why we fought against higher fuel prices. That is why we demanded relief. That is why the government should go further. If lower fuel taxes help Canadians today, why bring those back tomorrow? That is the question the government needs to answer.

Under the current plan, the regular federal excise tax is 10¢ per litre on gasoline and four cents per litre on diesel. The suspension would be extended through January. Then the tax would come back again at half the regular rate in February and March, and the full rate is scheduled to return in April 2027. Let us think about that. Canadians would get relief today, but the government has scheduled the tax to come back. That is not a long-term affordability plan. Conservatives believe that Canadians need long-lasting relief because the affordability crisis will not disappear in February. The grocery bills and mortgage payments will not disappear in February. The family that needs its vehicle to get to work will need gasoline in February and beyond. Why should the tax break disappear?

I represent the wonderful riding of Brampton West. This issue is very real for the people I represent. Brampton is a working city. It is a trucking, manufacturing and small business city. Every morning, people get up early, get into their car or truck and go to work. They are not driving because it is a luxury. They are driving because they have a business to run, a construction site to reach or children to take to school. These Canadians work hard. Increasingly, they feel like the government is taking more, while their paycheques buy less. They see it at the grocery store, in their housing costs and every time they fill their tank. That is why Conservatives have been demanding affordability measures that put money in people's pockets.

Canadians do not need more bureaucracy or another complicated program. Canada is competing for jobs. We are competing for investments. We are competing for manufacturing. Communities such as Brampton know what happens when those jobs leave. Recently, Brampton has experienced the devastating uncertainty surrounding the Stellantis assembly plant. Thousands of workers and their families have been affected. Those workers do not need more speeches about competitiveness. They need Canada to become competitive, affordable, and a land of opportunity. That means lowering the cost of doing business, and it means encouraging businesses to hire here.

• (1950)

Conservatives believe Canada should compete by making our economy stronger with lower taxes, faster approvals, more investments, more productions and more Canadian jobs. We should make Canada the best place in the world to invest, build and hire, because every investment represents something more important than a government announcement. It represents a paycheque. It represents a worker. It represents a family. The government estimates that extending the fuel tax suspension would provide billions of dollars in additional relief. That is good, but it raises another question: If keeping that money in the economy helps Canadians now, why should the government be in such a hurry to take it back?

Conservatives believe that the money Canadians earn belongs to Canadians. The government must justify taking it. Families know where their money is needed. Maybe it is a mortgage, groceries, the hydro bill, hockey registration or keeping a small business alive. Canadians do not need government telling them how to spend every additional dollar. Conservatives also understand who ultimately carries the burden when government raises the costs. It is the trucker leaving Brampton before sunrise, the contractor trying to keep a project on budget, the small business owners wondering whether there will be enough left at the end of the month, and the parents sitting at their kitchen table deciding which bills get paid first. Government policy should make their life easier, not harder.

Conservatives will support meaningful tax relief. We will support measures that make life more affordable. However, we will also continue pushing the government to go further, because one temporary tax measure cannot undo years of rising costs. Canada needs an economic plan based on growth that rewards work, investment and entrepreneurship. We need to build homes, infrastructure and energy projects that create jobs, and we need to bring down the cost of doing business. That is how Canada becomes competitive, that is how wages grow, that is how opportunities are created and that is how we give young Canadians the hope that working hard will get them ahead.

Bill C-38 presents the government with an opportunity. It can acknowledge what Conservatives have been saying: Canadians are overtaxed, families need relief, businesses need lower taxes and our economy needs to become more competitive. Therefore, extend the relief, make affordability the priority, keep fuel prices down, lower taxes on work and investment, get Canadian projects built, bring investment back to Canada, protect Canadian manufacturing and create powerful paycheques for Canadian workers.

Conservatives believe in the Canadian worker. We believe in our farmers, our truckers, our tradespeople and our entrepreneurs. We believe that Canadians should be rewarded for working hard, so our message with respect to Bill C-38 is simple: Any relief is welcome, but temporary relief is not enough. Keep taxes down, bring costs down, make Canada competitive, protect Canadians' jobs and let Canadians keep more of what they earn, because Canadians do not need another band-aid solution. They need everlasting affordability. They need good jobs, better opportunity and an economy where hard work pays again.

A government cannot run from a fundamental responsibility to protect and help citizens. Canadians deserve safety, security and affordability. That is what families in Brampton West and across Canada are asking for, and that is what Conservatives will continue fighting for.

• (1955)

Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the hon. member recognize the importance of affordability at this particular time with regard to this particular measure, but I would like to know more. How come the member has refused to support so many other affordability measures that have come before Parliament, where he had an opportunity to support them but he chose each time not to?

Amarjeet Gill: Mr. Speaker, if the member had listened to my speech, I encouraged every measure as welcome. Every measure that helps Canadians, Canadian families, Canadian workers or Canadian business is welcome. We Conservatives believe this bill is a half measure that would not give Canadian families and businesses the long-term relief they need. Only after months of Conservative pressure is the government now extending this temporary measure. We will continue to pressure the government until it gives Canadians real long-term relief and takes all the taxes off fuel.

One thing I would like to say is that we will welcome any ideas, and if they are willing to accept our ideas, they are also more than welcome to accept them to make—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Yellowhead.

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member's statement, and I agreed with everything he had to say there. My question to him would be this. Does he think it would be better if the Liberals actually had a long-term plan rather than making short-term, interim adjustments and things that are not going to necessarily last for the economy and for Canadian citizens?

Amarjeet Gill: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague. We are looking for a permanent solution for the problems that have been created in the last 11 years of Liberal government rule. We need to provide a better relief structure to Canadians and eliminate the industrial carbon tax, eliminate unnecessary taxes on business, cut red tape, do the needful things that help Canadians and bring Canada and Canadians to a point where they can live with good affordability, they can buy a house and they can have meat at the food table every single day.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the last question was a bit surprising. The government has dealt with and continues to deal with the issue of affordability. We understand it, and we continue to look at ways we can improve upon it. Today it is Bill C-38, dealing with the excise tax on gasoline. I am glad the Conservatives are supporting it, but we have also brought in a number of different measures, such as a tax break for the middle class, by which 20-plus million Canadians benefited, and a series of programs to address the issue of affordability for seniors who need dental work and for children in schools who need meals. However, the Conservative Party opposes those.

Can the member explain to the House, and through the House to his constituents, why the Conservatives do not support those aspects of affordability, feeding children in schools and providing dental services for low-income seniors?

Amarjeet Gill: Mr. Speaker, we are always in for measures that are going to help Canadians. I agree with my colleague that Canadians on fixed incomes are especially hard hit by taxes on fuel. No Canadian should have to make the choice between heating or eating, nor between rent or dinner. We are going to continue to pressure the government to remove all the federal tax on gas and diesel until at least Canada Day 2027 to save Canadians up to 25¢ per litre.

Further to your question, whenever you are going to bring any pragmatic idea that is going to improve the health of Canadians in any aspect, we will support those measures, and we will continue to work for Canadians in this Parliament and beyond so they can have a better life in Canada.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I will just remind the hon. member to address his comments through the Chair and not otherwise.

Resuming debate.

● (2000)

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Québec Centre.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful to have the opportunity to speak this evening to highlight the Government of Canada's efforts to make life more affordable. This very important piece of legislation, Bill C-38, is part of those efforts.

As we know, Canadians are having to cope with an increasingly complex and unpredictable world and, unfortunately, this world is also, in many respects, more dangerous and more expensive.

In view of this, the Canadian government continues to focus on what it can control: building a stronger Canadian economy, diversifying our foreign trade, forging more alliances with countries that share our values, ensuring responsible fiscal management and supporting Canadians in managing the cost of living.

Allow me to give a very concrete example. For several months now, shipping traffic in the Strait of Hormuz has been disrupted. This has led to soaring oil prices, a sharp rise in gas prices and increased costs for other essential goods.

Did the Canadian government, or Canada, start this war in Iran? Of course not.

Has the Canadian government taken action, and should it take action, to reduce costs for Canadians? Of course it has, and it should.

Global conflicts and the persistent, significant disruptions to these supply chains stemming from the Middle East or elsewhere, including the conflict in Ukraine, are not things the Government of Canada can stop or even control.

However, what we can do here in Canada and in the House of Commons, and what we are already doing, is help Canadians who are bearing the brunt of these conflicts through no fault of their own.

The federal fuel excise tax has been suspended since April 20. Earlier in September, the Minister of Finance and National Revenue announced that the Canadian government had decided to extend the temporary suspension of the federal fuel excise tax until January 31, 2027, and then to apply a rate equal to 50% of the regular excise tax rate from February 1 to March 31, 2027. This will help reduce daily expenses for Canadians, particularly those related to road transportation and the food, agriculture, housing, construction, and delivery sectors.

The suspension of this tax is expected to save Canadians up to about $5.75 on a 50-litre tank of gas. These are real savings for families. It also means lower costs for truckers and businesses. This measure is expected to provide more than $2.4 billion in relief to Canadians in 2026–27.

By lowering the price of gas and diesel at the pump, the Government of Canada is taking real action to support all those who are currently facing very real challenges.

I want to point out that this temporary suspension of the federal excise tax builds on other measures that have already been announced and put in place. I will give an example. Even before the conflict in the Strait of Hormuz began, economies, businesses and workers in many countries, including Canada, were thrown into uncertainty by a historic increase in tariffs.

Is Canada responsible for the upheaval in global trade and the resulting rise in the cost of essential goods? Of course not.

Should the Government of Canada take action and has it done so? Of course it should, and it has.

To help Canadian families make ends meet, earlier this year, for example, we launched the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit. This new benefit is based on the GST tax credit and provides increased support to two million low- and modest-income Canadians. That is just the beginning. Starting in July of this year, middle- and lower-income Canadians received higher quarterly payments. The benefit will be increased by 25% for another five years and will add approximately $8.6 billion in additional support to families that are struggling to make ends meet, including middle-income and modest-income families.

● (2005)

In total, a family of four could receive up to $1,890 this year and then about $1,400 a year for the next four years. A single person could receive up to $950 this year and then about $700 a year for the next four years. This is real support. It is concrete and tangible. It is helping people buy groceries, pay bills and cover essentials.

That is not all. We also cut taxes for 22 million Canadians by lowering the tax rate for the first personal income tax bracket from 15% to 14%. In 2026, that reflects savings of $420 per person and $840 for a two-income family. We also eliminated the goods and services tax, or GST, for first-time homebuyers of new homes valued up to $1 million and reduced it for homes valued between $1 million and $1.5 million.

In addition, we made permanent Canada's national school food program, which is helping 400,000 children and their families access high-quality meals at home and at school, saving the parents of two children an average of $800 a year on groceries.

We have also taken very real action to improve the banking system's fairness and affordability for Canadians, especially those struggling to make ends meet. Since March, for example, consumers can no longer be charged more than $10 if their personal bank account balance is too low to cover a payment. In addition, non-sufficient fund fees cannot be applied if the account overdraft is less than $10.

This year, we are also going to begin automating the payment of federal benefits. This will help up to 5.5 million low-income Canadians get the benefits they need and are entitled to receive.

In conclusion, the Government of Canada is focusing on the things it can control, like building a stronger, more resilient Canadian economy, while at the same time helping Canadians who struggle in their daily lives under cost-of-living pressures caused by the many severe global disruptions that we are familiar with.

For all of these reasons, I sincerely ask all members of the House to vote in favour of the bill.

[*English*]

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did not catch all of the member opposite's comments, but he talked about a lot of the programs the Liberals were spending money on. Would he not agree that it is better for the individual taxpayer, the consumer out there, to actually take less from the consumer and not tax them like the government does with this excise tax? Would it not be better to just not have the money taken away from them to move it around versus spending the money on all the other programs the Liberals have?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, in fact, we are doing two things. First, we reduced income tax for 22 million Canadians, which is quite a large number. It has been, unfortunately, opposed by the Conservatives. The second thing we are doing is helping those who struggle more than richer Canadians. The member has heard my list of measures. For example, the national school food program is helping thousands, in fact more than 10,000 children in my region, who otherwise would struggle to go to school with a full belly and therefore would also struggle to learn what they need to learn to become good citizens.

● (2010)

[*Translation*]

Mario Simard (Jonquière—Hébertville—Pays-des-Bleuets, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague astutely pointed out that the measure we are discussing this evening is tied to the current situation. He also talked about the measures the government has put in place to help people cope with the cost of living, even though we do not agree on everything.

However, there is one matter the Liberal government often overlooks, namely, the issue of seniors. Those who have suffered the most in the wake of the pandemic are seniors aged 65 to 74, who continue to suffer from inequity and whose purchasing power has never increased.

Since my colleague started off by saying that the government should help people when they are going through tough times or facing difficult economic conditions, does he agree with me that increasing old age security for people aged 65 to 74 would be a good measure?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful for such an excellent question. I want to briefly mention three points.

First, as my colleague is aware, OAS has been increased for people over the age of 75 in light of the very clear evidence that seniors over the age of 75 not only have greater needs, but also lower incomes, and that older women, among others, live in more precarious circumstances for a variety of reasons that are well understood.

Second, I want to mention the Canadian dental care plan, which helps approximately 25,000 people in his riding, including several thousand seniors. This represents savings of about $800 a year. I encourage my colleague—whose leader, unfortunately, opposes the Canadian dental care plan—to talk about it at length with the seniors in his riding when he sees them. I am sure he meets with them regularly.

The third point is automatic benefits. As I was saying, there are nearly 5.5 million Canadians whose tax returns will be processed automatically, which will maximize the chances for these seniors, for the most part, to receive the benefits they need.

Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remember very well that my colleague has visited me several times in my riding in the past.

We are talking about lowering gasoline prices by 10¢ per litre and diesel prices by four cents per litre, not to mention getting rid of the carbon tax. My colleague has also talked about the many programs that our government has put in place since the beginning.

Which program does he think is helping his constituents the most? Which one has the biggest impact on families and people in his region?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I am always very pleased to hear and even see my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst. As my colleague knows, and as I have seen myself, his constituents really like him. They see him as an excellent MP who is on the ground and always there to advocate for his riding. It is a particularly important riding in northern New Brunswick. The Acadian community needs him, and he is always there to support it, despite all the challenges of serving a region that is a little farther from the major centres.

Speaking of the most important programs, I know that roughly 20,000 families in his riding receive the Canada child benefit. It reduces child poverty in his riding by 50%. He has been there to support that measure from the start.

[*English*]

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House to represent the great residents of Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay. Their words and their feedback will always guide me in this chamber, as they do in this debate on Bill C-38.

For rural and remote communities like the one I represent, driving is a fact of life. It is not a choice. When I checked GasBuddy before coming to the House today, I found that regular gas was priced as high as $2.09 per litre and diesel was $2.95 a litre. Whether someone lives in Tulameen, Princeton, Keremeos, Cawston, Osoyoos, Rock Creek, Midway, Greenwood, Grand Forks, Christina Lake or Castlegar, a basic fact of life is that they drive, which means that almost everyone is paying high prices at the pump.

The journey I just described across my riding is 360 kilometres. Unlike the urban regions of the country that many Liberal colleagues across from me represent, there is no SkyTrain. There is no subway, no LimeBike and no e-scooter that my constituents can turn to and travel across our riding in.

Transportation costs are also affected by high gas prices. These costs then transfer to nearly every item on store shelves. Keeping prices down at the pump, as we have been speaking about for the past year, means keeping prices down on essential items at Walmart, Canadian Tire and Safeway. This is true not just for my constituents, but for anyone across the country who lives in a remote or rural region, from island communities to our Arctic territories.

This is why, since the spring, my colleagues and I on this side of the House have been arguing that at a time of higher gas prices, the result of both conflict abroad and policy decisions at home, it was of the utmost importance for all members of Parliament to act to reduce the price of gas where we can do so. No one is pretending it can or should magically fall to zero, but providing tax relief at the pump is the least we can do when so many Canadians are in need.

It is no coincidence that the lack of an affordable life is the number one thing I heard from my constituents this summer. I am guessing everyone else heard the same thing while they were in their ridings this summer. Of course, there were other issues, including health care, tariffs and wildfires. In my region, as many know, wildfires hit Summerland and the Penticton area tremendously. This was obviously what people talked about, but gas prices were very important because they have skyrocketed 25.7%, while overall energy costs have surged 16%. This pushed transportation costs up 7% while grocery prices rose 3%.

A recent poll found that 63% of Canadians oppose the Liberals bringing back the fuel excise tax, including 43% who strongly oppose it. This includes 72% of seniors, 68% of women and 61% of those aged 35 to 54. Opposition crosses every region of the country: 71% in Manitoba and Saskatchewan; 64% in British Columbia, Alberta and Atlantic Canada; 62% in Ontario; and 60% in Quebec. Everyone is opposed to this tax, in other words. There is no reason the House cannot deliver for them.

● (2015)

When the Liberals offered what they called summer gas tax relief, it was clear that what they were offering was not only insufficient, but very confusing. When I asked government members about this policy, they made no commitment to it beyond the summer, and the member for Delta also made it sound like the policy was meant to help people explore our home province and go camping.

While I did have the opportunity to see much of my beautiful province this summer, it was not cheap to do so. In fact, I know several British Columbians who cancelled road trips and hunting expeditions this summer because the cost was too much and the price of gas was too high.

Those costs will only rise as the snow starts to fall. That is why my colleagues and I were clear on the need for an extension to the gas tax relief so it could go further and for longer than just the summer until Labour Day. The bill before us today is because of those efforts, stopping what would have been a punishing tax hike at the pumps just this month.

The Liberals' rosy rhetoric has not matched what Canadians are seeing in their wallets or on their bank statements. They cannot afford higher taxes. Thanks to Conservatives keeping up the fight for affordability, Canadians will keep more money in their pockets when they are filling up at the gas station this month, but we can go further. We can improve the bill before us.

Bill C-38, as it is currently written, would suspend the fuel tax until January 31, 2027. Half the tax would return on February 1 and the full tax on April 1. Is the Liberal government predicting that Canadians will not be challenged by the costs at the grocery store, by their heating bills or by the price of the pump by April 1? Is everything going to change by then? I do not believe the Liberals have invented that kind of crystal ball, so why time-limit the relief people need? Why reimpose taxes they are currently recognizing as unnecessary?

The Liberals have filled their treasury with unnecessary taxes and fees from Canadians' pockets. They have wasted far more tax dollars than we need in order to fund health care, road repairs or national defence properly. Canadians should not have to pay more for Liberal waste.

The Minister of Finance himself said that truckers, farmers, home builders and delivery drivers benefit from fuel tax relief. Would they not benefit more if the government extended this relief to Canada next year, as we are calling for? Would they not benefit by permanently eliminating some of the government's gas taxes at the pump, as Conservatives are calling for? Of course, the only reason to allow gas taxes to go higher is that the government would choose to prioritize raising taxes instead of providing limited relief.

Removing all federal taxes on gas and diesel, including the fuel excise tax, is what we are calling for. Eliminating costly fuel taxes like the fuel standard tax permanently would help keep prices lower. The Liberal government does not need more of Canadians' gas tax dollars for wasteful boutique projects like Alto rail, which will cost Canadians $60 billion to $90 billion in its life cycle. Instead of forcing families of four in my community to spend between $8,000 and $9,000 on eastern Canadian priorities, they want to see their gas tax dollars spent on efficient local infrastructure, like a secondary route for the South Okanagan to Kelowna, which we have been calling for for years.

Conservatives support the Liberals' half measures like those in Bill C-38 if it means Canadians can get some savings, but we will be pushing for more. The legislation has the potential to provide more relief for longer, but only if we amend it. I hope all colleagues in the House can work together to do just that.

● (2020)

Caroline Desrochers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very curious to hear my colleague talk about how the Conservatives have been keeping up the fight to maintain affordability for Canadians. I find that a bit ironic. If that is the case, I am wondering if my colleague could explain why they voted time and time again against all measures of affordability for Canadians, including the dental care plan, the tax break for 22 million Canadians, pharmacare and the national school food program. I could continue, but the House is only sitting until midnight.

Government Orders

Helena Konanz: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have been pushing to make life more affordable. When we have packages of bills that come at us or policies that come at us that do not make sense, of course we are not going to accept every one. We need Canadians' lives to be more affordable. We have been pushing for lower taxes on gasoline everywhere, but in a riding like mine, where it is a seven- to eight-hour drive from end to end, one can understand why Canadians or why the people in my riding need to have gas prices go down. That is what we have been pushing for since last year.

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was recently in your riding and saw some of the issues that you talked about—

The Deputy Speaker: I am going to interrupt the member. I know it is a late hour. One cannot use the “you” when referring to the other member. I remind the member to speak through the Chair when talking to another member.

I will invite the member to continue.

William Stevenson: Mr. Speaker, if we look at the timing of things, I do not know about the riding in B.C. but I know that in my riding in Yellowhead, quite often gas prices are at their absolute lowest in January. They then start rising again in the spring. Every time it hits me. That is when the prices actually get to their highest.

Do you think that the timing of their removal and then the putting of them back on is actually going to help Canadians going forward?

● (2025)

The Deputy Speaker: I will not be responding. Again, I remind the member to speak through the Chair, not directly to the other member.

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

Helena Konanz: Mr. Speaker, obviously this is a temporary fix. I do not think there is anyone in the House or anyone in Canada right now who thinks that life is going to be a lot more affordable by April, when this tax relief is due to end in the bill. We need to look at the long run here. This is going to be a tough winter. This is going to be very difficult in my riding.

In particular, as many members know, many people in my riding have suffered through the recent wildfire disasters. Our tourism has hit, unfortunately, rock bottom right now, because of the fires during our big tourist season. It is not just in my riding. Throughout Canada, we are going through a very difficult time, and we are going to need relief far beyond this April.

Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am perplexed by the answer that my hon. colleague gave, two questions ago, to my colleague from Quebec, when she had said that she would always support affordability measures but not all of them. She is happy to support this one. I would like to congratulate her for supporting this piece of legislation going to committee.

When else has she supported affordability measures? I am thinking of the tax cuts for 22 million Canadians. She did not support that then. When it came to providing seniors with a dental care program, she did not support that. When it came to helping our young kids to be able to have access to good food so that they could learn in school, she did not support that either.

I think that this is the first time that she is supporting an affordability measure. I wonder if the hon. member would like to comment on why is it that this is now the first time that she is doing it, although I should not look a gift horse in the mouth. I am quite happy that she is supporting this going to second reading.

Helena Konanz: Mr. Speaker, I am so glad the member is looking a gift horse in the mouth so readily. The Liberals have a deficit of nearly $100 billion. It is one of the highest deficits ever. It is my children and the children of Canadians right now who are going to suffer when they try to pay back that deficit.

[*Translation*]

Caroline Desrochers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are here today to talk about Bill C-38.

Everyone knows that we have been experiencing tumultuous times for over a year now. During the 2025 election, we made a firm commitment to be there to help Canadians, and that is what we have been doing since our new government took office. We have introduced measures to improve affordability for Canadians. We are also laying the foundation for a more long-term economic vision to build a stronger and more resilient economy, while addressing all of the challenges posed by the unfair trade war. We have introduced programs to help workers and businesses weather the storm. Obviously, what we are focused on this evening, particularly in our debates, is how to support families and make life more affordable. Since we very first took office, we have truly stayed the course. We are doing what we said we would do and we are laying the foundation for a stronger, more solid economy in the future.

We have already implemented many affordability measures. Earlier, it was interesting to hear my colleague opposite talk about the current military conflict and the impact that it is having on gas prices. If I recall correctly, last spring, when we began talking about the potential effects of this military conflict, many of the members opposite were laughing and saying that we were making something out of nothing. Today, it is very clear. Every time Canadians go to the pumps, they see just how much of an impact conflicts and the geopolitical situation around the world can have on us.

What we are proposing today are in fact measures to extend the suspension of the excise tax that we announced in the spring. We announced earlier this month that we would extend the temporary suspension of the federal fuel excise tax until January 31, 2027. We will then gradually reduce it by 50% until the end of March 2027.

Like all the measures we have taken since the beginning of our new government's mandate, these measures are well thought out, gradual and rooted in reality. We live in the real world, in the real world that Canadians live in. We want to take time to review the situation and see if it will change. That is why we are taking this gradual approach. That will really help reduce the daily expenses of families and Canadians, and it will help businesses in the food, agriculture, housing, construction and delivery sectors.

With the suspension we announced in the spring, which has been extended, the federal excise tax of 10¢ a litre on gasoline and four cents a litre on diesel has been suspended. It is estimated that this will save about $5.75 per tank of gas. Assuming that many families fill up about once a week, that adds up to fairly significant savings at the end of the year. This is just one of many examples of everything we are doing to continue to help Canadians deal with the challenges of our times, including the cost of living.

We are doing all this while also laying a solid foundation for the economy, as I said earlier. We currently have the strongest growth in the G7. We just returned from an exceptional week during which people from around the world converged in Toronto because everyone is interested in what is happening in Canada, and in the message our government is sending to businesses and investors, both foreign as well as major Canadian pension funds. That is why, last week, we saw record commitments to invest $500 billion here in Canada.

Suspending the excise tax is one measure among many aimed at making life more affordable for Canadians. We have announced, implemented and extended several such measures since the beginning of our mandate.

• (2030)

What is clear from our actions is that our government will continue to be there for Canadians. The social programs we have put in place continue to play a central role and are truly the key to everything we do. We will not leave any Canadian behind. We know that many families are struggling to make ends meet. People do not need abstract promises. They need tangible, immediate and lasting support. That is what we have been doing since we took office, since our new government's mandate began last year in April 2025.

I will mention a few measures that we have put in place. There is the Canada groceries and essentials benefit, which helps 12 million Canadians. As we speak, those 12 million Canadians are already benefiting from a GST credit supplement that will truly provide them with additional support. This assistance will provide a family of four with up to $1,890 in the first year and then $1,400 a year in subsequent years. That is real support for groceries, bills and everyday expenses. However, that is not all that we have done. We have also eliminated the federal consumer fuel charge. That measure was made official a year ago when Bill C-4 was passed.

We have also reduced income tax for nearly 22 million Canadians. We lowered the tax rate for the first income bracket from 15% to 14%. These are tangible savings that add up. Earlier, my colleague mentioned the launch of the Canadian dental plan. When I talk to people in my riding, Trois-Rivières, I see that the cost of living is a key concern for them. It is a top priority, just like the tariff war and the economic situation. These are the issues that matter most to them. People are always talking to me about the dental plan. When I visit seniors' residences, people are always talking to me about the dental plan. It changes people's lives. It provides real support to families who are not fortunate enough to have very generous insurance plans. Being able to count on the dental plan makes a real difference.

We have also eliminated the GST for first-time buyers of homes costing less than $1 million. Of course, this is in addition to all the work we are doing to make housing more affordable, particularly through Build Canada Homes. Naturally, we are building affordable housing and social housing across the country, but it is also important to support Canadians, particularly young families, so that one day they can plan on getting on the property ladder. These are concrete measures.

We have also introduced measures to reduce the costs associated with the banking system. We know that, sometimes, when families are struggling, cheques can bounce. One thing leads to another and then another, increasing stress for people and families who are struggling to make ends meet. That is why we have set a $10 cap on the fees banks can charge customers when their accounts are overdrawn.

In closing, I will say that we are here for Canadians. We have proven it through concrete measures. Extending the fuel excise tax holiday is one of the other measures we have already taken. It is true that we are living in difficult times. It is true that Canadians everywhere are going through tough times, but on this side of the House, we will always be there to help Canadians by making life more affordable.

• (2035)

[*English*]

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked a question to our colleague earlier today and I will ask it again.

I am just wondering if the member opposite feels that it is better to continue to not take tax off to give relief to Canadians, versus bringing back a tax to offset the cost, which is taking from one pocket and putting it into another pocket for Canadians.

Would it not be better to just not take the tax and extend this fuel excise tax holiday forever?

[*Translation*]

Caroline Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we listen to Canadians. We held pre-budget consultations. We travel around our ridings and listen to what people have to say.

Canadians elected us in 2025 based on the plan, the real plan that we submitted to them, with figures no less. They elected us on that basis. We made a commitment to Canadians that we would keep moving these measures forward, and that is what we are doing. We are living up to our commitment. We continue to be there for Canadians with measures like the one under discussion this evening.

Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since my colleague is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, I am sure she will be able to tell us about a few housing-related programs.

In my riding, houses are springing up like mushrooms, so to speak. Municipalities across my riding are exceeding their construction targets by more than 300%.

When we talk about affordability, we mean ensuring that people can find housing at a lower cost. I wonder if my colleague can talk about the various infrastructure and housing programs in the minister's portfolio.

• (2040)

Caroline Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. We actually just made an announcement today regarding the Canada rental protection fund. We have now opened applications for the Canadian housing acquisition fund, which will preserve existing affordable housing to ensure that it is not put back on the market at a higher rent after being renovated. We are investing $1.5 billion in the Canadian housing acquisition fund.

This is, of course, in addition to everything else we are doing through Build Canada Homes. We have already signed agreements with 19 provinces, agencies and organizations to build affordable housing across Canada. We are talking about social housing and affordable housing. We also changed the definition of affordable housing to lower the threshold to 30% of a family's income, to ensure that Canadian families can afford housing that meets their needs and fits their budget.

[*English*]

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been really heartening to hear today the recognition from the Liberal benches of the degree to which the excise tax impacts affordability. One of the things, though, that we have also heard is that, especially with the way the price of diesel is going, the impact on the price of food is going to continue to be felt. It is not going to be a short-term problem, yet the government is proposing a short-term solution.

Therefore, I am wondering if the member can explain why the government has chosen to put itself in a position where it has to keep renewing this, and spending time in the House on it, when it is a problem that is clearly going to be a long-term problem. They could make this a long-term solution, cancel the tax and help, particularly food producers, with affordability by providing stability in that environment.

[*Translation*]

Caroline Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, I talked about the Canada groceries and essentials benefit in my speech, as did some of my colleagues. These are all measures that are helping Canadian families cope with higher grocery costs. On top of that, we also created a national food security strategy, which will really help the food processing sector and help lower grocery costs.

[*English*]

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege and honour, as always, to rise on behalf of the people of Elgin County, St. Thomas and London, although, despite our absence from this chamber over the last few months, I note that not much has changed with the Liberals. They are still out of alignment with where the majority of Canadians are right now, which is finding that they cannot afford life in this country after 11 years of the Liberals. They are still unwilling to look in the mirror and recognize that they themselves are the problem and, therefore, not the solution. More importantly, they must be dragged kicking and screaming into doing the right thing. The bill they are coming forward with today is a step in the right direction, but only a step, and only a little nudge towards where we ultimately need to be.

Back in April, when we were seeing the rising high gas prices in this country, Conservatives said we need to cut all of the federal taxes on fuel for Canadians to give them a break. The Liberals eventually came around, but they offered a fraction of the tax relief we were pushing for, for a fraction of the time. Even this proposed extension does not go nearly far enough when Canadians still cannot afford to fill up their fuel tanks. I will say that is especially clear in ridings such as mine where driving is a necessity and not a luxury. If someone is living in Vienna, Fingal or Port Stanley, Ontario, they have to drive to get around. Oftentimes, workers have to drive to get to work. Students have to drive to get to school. This is a reality.

High fuel prices and high fuel taxes bear a disproportionate weight on rural Canadians, the people who the Liberals have often looked down upon and have not really acknowledged. We know this by looking at what the Liberals themselves have said about fuel taxes in the past.

Now, interestingly enough, going back to April, when we originally called for this fuel tax cut, the bigger one, not the Liberal one, Liberals pooh-poohed it. They kind of brushed it off. The finance minister said, when we asked if they were going to cut the fuel taxes, “we will not take lessons from the Conservatives.” That was on Monday. On Tuesday, they took our policy.

We have had other examples of this where people have risen in the House of Commons on the Conservative bench and asked the Liberal government when it was going to provide tax relief at the pumps for Canadians, and the Liberals said anything other than yes, because they fundamentally do not believe in it. We know this.

For example, the member for Winnipeg North actually said that it was “far right” to oppose the Liberal carbon tax. Mark Holland, the former Liberal health minister, rose in this chamber and, believe it or not, said that if a family takes a road trip, they are letting “the planet burn” because they are filling up the tank to go on a nice, affordable family vacation.

This is what we have heard from the Liberals, time and time again, about their true allegiance. They actually support fuel taxes because they do not want people to fuel up their cars. Steven Guilbeault, a former Liberal cabinet minister, said opposing the carbon tax is a plan “to let the planet burn. It is immoral.”

This is what we get from these Liberals who, when it is politically to their advantage, decide to pretend that they are actually against the carbon tax and that they are actually against fuel taxes. A fuel tax is a tax on productivity. It is a tax on anything that needs to be shipped. It is a tax on groceries. It is a tax on transport. It is a tax on literally anything in a productive society, but when Liberals see taxes, they see opportunity.

Funnily enough, going back to April, when we were calling on the Liberal government to cut fuel taxes, the Minister of Jobs and Families rose in the chamber and saw dollar signs. She said there was “a generational windfall.” Her response in question period to my colleague, the deputy leader of the Conservative Party, was that Liberals would spend the money better than Conservatives would.

That is what the Liberals see. They see opportunities. They see Canadians as a cash cow, while Canadians see a life that is unaffordable and has only gotten less and less affordable under the Liberals. That is why we reiterate our call to eliminate all federal taxes on fuel. We think it should go until at least Canada Day, but I would personally say that we need to be looking at ways to get federal fuel taxes off entirely.

● (2045)

This is a lever the government has at its disposal. It is a direct way to make life more affordable for Canadians and to ease the pressure, not just on rural Canadians, but on industry, students, single parents, seniors and anyone who needs fuel to live, either directly or indirectly. This is common sense. The Liberals have already come part of the way. Why do they not come the whole way? Why do they not actually take a stand for a real, concrete affordability measure that would support Canadians where they are right now?

This is where I go back to my thesis from the beginning of my comments. The Liberals have to be dragged kicking and screaming into doing the right thing. This was true with the consumer carbon tax, and it is true with the federal fuel excise tax holiday. It will probably be true with the industrial carbon tax. At some point, they will come along with us because they realize the error of their ways, and they will pretend that they were with us the whole time.

Ironically, gaslighting comes without a carbon tax when the Liberals do it. I do not know how they have managed to make that work, but why do they take so long? I do not know if it is that they had to see the polling. I do not know if it is that they were waiting to find out if it was politically to their advantage, but it is the right thing to do.

It is interesting that all the deficit hawks somehow emerge from the Liberal benches when we start talking about the need to give Canadians a break on fuel. These folks are nowhere to be seen when the Prime Minister is posting $70-billion dollar deficits. They do not care about the deficit then.

Just to pre-empt a potential question that may come from one of my colleagues opposite, this is because of heightened fuel prices due to things that are matters outside the government's control. No one is claiming the government is responsible for some of the global factors, but it is responsible for taxes. This is because of a sudden surge in prices, which means that the fuel tax revenue the government is going to get was never actually budgeted for.

Unless the government's previous budget was based around this war, which I do not think it was, the government never foresaw the increase in fuel revenue, so it is not actually hurting the government coffers, of which there is a lot that needs to be trimmed, but that is a topic for another day. This measure would not actually hurt the government coffers, but not doing it is hurting Canadians. Not doing it is putting pressure and strain on families who already cannot withstand it.

I mentioned earlier today in the House a story that was actually very difficult for me to hear. It was not as difficult as it was for the people sharing it. A group of seniors I met with spoke about the fact that they are literally skipping meals because of food affordability problems, and ever since I posted that clip on social media, I have had other people reach out to share very similar things, heartbreaking things. They are the human faces that go along with the stats we have seen about the millions and millions of Canadians who are now using food banks, who have never before had to.

People who are employed, people who have jobs and careers, are finding that that is not enough to survive in Canada after 11 years of the Liberals, who do not put affordability front and centre, who are not devoted to saving Canadians money, who are not putting forward a concrete plan to save Canadian jobs and who are following their Prime Minister, the very model of all talk and no results.

The results are that the Liberals have to put forward this bill because they have failed Canadians. The Liberals have to put forward this bill because Canadians cannot afford the price at the fuel pumps after the Liberals have driven up the cost of absolutely everything.

We are the party that is fighting for Canadians. We are the party that is fighting for Canada. We are the party that is going to make sure that fuel taxes are not driving more people into untenable situations with household finances that are sending them to the food bank. It is a sad reality that most people would never have thought possible in a G7 country, that food bank stats would become the norm. We are not even surprised. The Liberals smirk and chuckle when we raise them because it is just window dressing to them, but we will continue to stand up for that.

I want to say to the Liberals now that I would be happy to support any measure that saves working Canadians money, but I want to know, if they are going to take our policy on this, why they are not taking the whole thing. They should get rid of the federal fuel taxes once and for all, not just for a few months, but in a way that is meaningful in the long term.

If it is right for Canadians now, it is right for Canadians always.

● (2050)

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was really struck by my colleague's remarks, particularly his remarks near the end of his speech about how, if it is right for Canadians now, then why would the Liberals not go the whole way and take the tax off permanently?

The reason that resonated with me so much is that there is a cost to uncertainty. We are here in the House renewing this exemption, and it has been admitted today that we may be doing it again and again. With there being so much to accomplish in the House, I am wondering if my colleague would expand a bit on his remarks and talk about some of the other things we could do for Canadians if we did not have to come back to spend a day on this topic every three months.

Andrew Lawton: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith has been doing tremendous work on the affordability file, and it is an honour to be sitting near her once again in my new seat in the chamber.

Stability is absolutely important. I have already heard from businesses that have dealt with the lack of ability by the Liberals and the Prime Minister to get a deal that will protect Canadian jobs. They are already having trouble planning ahead with not knowing what tariffs and countertariffs are going to be in front of them. Fuel costs are another great example of this. They do not know how to possibly budget for something when the Liberal government is trying to provide this incremental approach without dealing with the totality of the problem.

What I said in my initial remarks holds true here. Governments need to use every lever available to them to protect affordability for Canadians. The government is only pushing that lever just a bit and not telling Canadians what they can expect in the future.

● (2055)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one would ultimately argue, as this is coming from the far right, that there are a number of things the government has done. Bill C-38 is just one example of us giving a very important tax break to deal with affordability.

Since the Prime Minister and 70-plus Liberal MPs were elected, there have been a number of policy initiatives, some of which we are waiting for the Conservatives to say they support too, such as the grocery program that puts money into the pockets of Canadians and the national dental care program, not to mention the program to support hundreds of thousands of children in Canada. All of that the Conservative Party is opposed to, yet they say they support affordability measures. Why do they not support all the measures that this government and the Prime Minister have put in place to support Canadians on affordability?

Andrew Lawton: Mr. Speaker, I am a student of history, and I have really venerated this chamber. I have a great deal of respect for the loquaciousness of my colleague from Winnipeg North. For example, in December 2023, he said that anyone who opposed the carbon tax was "far right". In February 2024, he said Conservatives were "climate deniers" for opposing the carbon tax, and later on that same day, he said opposing the carbon tax meant we wanted to let her rip. I do not know what he meant by "let her rip", but I think he was catastrophizing about something that the Liberals are now claiming credit for.

They have no credibility on this issue whatsoever. The sooner they come around to our position, the sooner Canadians will get the break they deserve.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this is an awkward question to ask the hon. member for Elgin—St. Thomas—London South. I am distressed. When he asks the Liberal members why they do not support all of the Conservative platform, I do not think it is just a rhetorical question. I wonder why the Liberals do not, because they have abandoned their own platform. Almost all of the people across the way ran on a platform that mentioned climate change 38 times, and as Steven Guilbeault pointed out, it did not mention pipelines once.

I am in a House where people on both sides of the aisle believe that we can throw stones at glass houses and glass never breaks. I do not think that is credible, but I wonder if my hon. colleague has any comments.

Andrew Lawton: Mr. Speaker, whatever our policy disagreements, I know that my colleague is tremendously consistent and clear in her position, which, as she alludes to, is more than can be said for the Liberals.

The Prime Minister is for pipelines in Alberta and is against them in British Columbia. He has people in his caucus who are very much against pipelines and others who claim they have turned over a new leaf. Sooner or later, Canadians are going to wonder where the results are. The reason the Prime Minister is all talk and no results is that delivering results will mean having to pick a side on these contradictory positions.

I am glad there is some moral clarity on this issue from one side of the aisle. We are certainly not getting it from the Liberals.

Pauline Rochefort (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Rural Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Bill C-38, the Canadian fuel affordability act. This legislation is a focused and practical response to very a real pressure facing Canadian families and businesses: the sharp increase in fuel costs caused by global conflict and disruptions in international energy markets.

Canadians did not create these circumstances, but they are paying the price. Bill C-38 would extend the full suspension of the federal fuel excise tax introduced earlier this year until January 31, 2027. It would then restore the tax at half its regular rate for February and March, before returning to the regular rate on April 1.

[*Translation*]

In the case of gasoline, the full suspension represents a savings of 10¢ per litre, compared to four cents per litre for diesel and aviation fuel and 10¢ per litre for unleaded aviation gasoline. These savings are significant across Canada, but they are particularly significant in rural and northern communities, including the one I represent, the riding of Nipissing—Timiskaming.

• (2100)

[*English*]

In my riding, driving is not a choice. It is often the only realistic way to get to work, attend a medical appointment or bring a child to a hockey practice. Residents from Mattawa to Englehart and throughout our many rural communities regularly travel significant distances to obtain services that residents in large urban centres may find only a few blocks away. For many of our residents, there is no subway, commuter train or bus waiting around the corner. Distances do not become shorter when fuel prices rise, and medical appointments cannot be postponed until prices fall. That is why any national affordability policy must understand the realities of rural and northern Canada, and Bill C-38 does exactly that.

Fuel costs also affect the businesses and workers sustaining our regional economy. In the little clay belt, one of northern Ontario's most productive agricultural regions, our farmers use diesel to operate tractors and other machinery to transport livestock and deliver food to market. In a region with a shorter growing season, that work must often be completed within a very narrow window. A farmer cannot simply park the tractor because diesel has become more expensive. Fuel is not a discretionary expense in agriculture. It is part of the cost of producing the food Canadians depend on.

The same is true in forestry. Harvesting equipment requires fuel. Trucks travel into the forest, carry logs to mills and move finished products to customers. At a time when northern Ontario's forestry sector is already facing tariffs, market uncertainty and difficult operating conditions, reducing diesel costs provides meaningful relief to workers and businesses. The benefit extends well beyond into manufacturing as well.

[*Translation*]

Gincor Werx is a company in Mattawa that manufactures specialty trucks. Throughout the riding of Nipissing—Timiskaming, there are manufacturing companies and mining industry suppliers shipping equipment and parts to northern Ontario, Quebec, and other parts of Canada. These products do not transport themselves. A drop in diesel prices has ripple effects well beyond gas stations. It helps the truck driver transporting food products north, the construction company hauling aggregate and building materials, the logging contractor transporting equipment, and the courier service delivering supplies to a small business. Ultimately, a drop in diesel prices helps reduce costs throughout the entire supply chain.

[*English*]

Bill C-38 would also extend relief for aviation fuel, and that is especially important in northern Ontario, where aviation is not simply about holidays and business travel. It connects rural and remote communities and supports medical transportation, emergency response, firefighting, search and rescue, workforce movement and the delivery of essential services.

No single measure will solve every affordability challenge. Bill C-38 is not presented as a permanent answer to global energy volatility. It provides immediate, time-limited relief in response to an extraordinary external pressure, full stop. Some will argue that this bill does not go far enough and that the excise tax should be abolished permanently. I would respond that being a responsible government means addressing the immediate pressure while preserving the fiscal capacity required to fund health care, infrastructure, national defence and other essential services that are important to all of us in this chamber.

Bill C-38 takes a measured approach, with full relief through January, followed by a two-month transition at half the regular rate. We can provide immediate affordability relief without abandoning the longer-term work of making our economy more competitive. Long-term ambition and immediate affordability are not competing objectives. A responsible government must be able to advance both at the same time, and that broader approach is reflected in our government's current legislative agenda.

Alongside Bill C-38, the government has introduced Bill C-39, the building Canada strong act. That legislation is intended to bring greater speed, certainty and predictability to federal project reviews, to strengthen trade corridors and supply chains, and to support the workers who are building our next generation of Canadian infrastructure. We saw the evidence of Canada's economic potential at last week's Canada investment summit in Toronto, which resulted in nearly $500 billion in investment commitments and financing for Canadian infrastructure, businesses and our strategic industries.

We are also seeing progress in Canada's economic performance. Today, our Minister of Finance spoke to us about results. According to the OECD, Canada's real GDP grew by 0.8% in the second quarter, and that is the strongest quarterly growth among G7 countries. That is important. By comparison, the economies of the United States and the United Kingdom grew by 0.4%, Japan's by 0.3%, and those of France, Germany and Italy by 0.2%.

I recognize, however, that these figures do not mean that every household feels economically secure. Economic growth does not erase the pressure on Canadians, including the residents in my riding of Nipissing—Timiskaming. It does not erase the pressure that they face when buying groceries, homes or fuel, but these figures demonstrate that Canada has important strengths on which to build.

Across the G7 and G20, countries are confronting higher costs arising from war, tariffs, trade disruptions and volatility in global energy markets. It is happening in other countries. What distinguishes governments is how they respond. Our response is to provide immediate relief. That is what we are doing in Canada: protecting workers and businesses, attracting investment, diversifying our trade and accelerating the projects that will make Canada more productive and resilient while creating good-paying jobs. This is something we all want in this chamber.

Bill C-38 would put money back into the pockets of Canadians. It would support the businesses that move our economy and recognizes that the transportation realities of rural and northern communities are important. For those reasons, I want to tell the citizens of Nipissing—Timiskaming watching this presentation that I will be supporting Bill C-38, as it is so important to our riding.

● (2105)

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the member opposite's comments. I am sure she read the bill, as it is only a few lines long. She said that it would help all these different programs across government and supply all these things, yet when we look at what it would do, it would just not take more tax from Canadians.

Can the member opposite tell me how not taking more tax would actually support building more businesses, help people get back to work and support all the social programs she mentioned? I cannot quite follow the logic when we have all this extra spending, yet we are just taking less tax and are helping people not spend as much at the pumps.

Pauline Rochefort: Mr. Speaker, certainly, the savings is about five dollars on a typical 50-litre fill-up. However, savings add up quickly when we recognize that this impacts truckers and so many different types of vehicles that travel on the road. It helps to support our economy. In other words, the impact extends beyond the pump. It is broader.

For our government, and for all of us in the House of Commons, it is important. This particular relief is costing our government $5.3 billion if we take what was originally provided earlier in the year with this additional relief. It is a considerable amount. As I pointed out, as we look at balancing so many elements in our economy, in our society and in our country, it is important that we ensure we have the fiscal capacity to balance all of these different measures.

A final point is that this is the second time our country is acting, because we recognize that the conflict in the Middle East is continuing. We will all work together and continue to have an eye on this particular situation.

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my esteemed colleague for her wonderful speech.

Like her, I represent a large rural riding. When I was talking to my constituents over the summer, the cost of living came up a lot, as did the cost of gas. The people in my riding understood that the recent spike in gas prices was due to various international factors and global instability. As a federal government, we need to focus on what we can control. We also need to listen to people. This bill extends the suspension of the excise tax. I see it as a measure that meets the needs expressed by the people in my riding.

I would like to ask my colleague why it is important to listen to people and take action. We heard about certain issues during the summer, we returned to Parliament, and now, in the first week, we are taking concrete steps to help with the cost of living.

I would like to ask my colleague what she thinks of the situation.

● (2110)

Pauline Rochefort: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague's question. I know how hard he works in his riding. It is indeed very important to listen to our constituents. That is why I am very pleased to see that our government is meeting his constituents' needs.

This evening, several of my colleagues have talked about our measures. A suite of measures has been implemented to help address the cost-of-living issue for Canadians.

[*English*]

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said a few times today, it is heartening to hear my colleagues across the aisle recognize that diesel and gas prices have an impact on affordability. It is good of them to recognize that their constituents are calling for this kind of relief.

I wonder why they are again resorting to short-term measures. They have acknowledged that this is a conflict that is not going away, that has an impact. They have acknowledged the need to work on the things they can control. Why stop here?

Pauline Rochefort: Mr. Speaker, that is a fair question. Certainly, I can appreciate that some would say it is not enough and some would say it is too much. Basically, as I have pointed out, it cost our government $5.3 billion. I think there may be an answer in that as well.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe I will be splitting my time with one of my colleagues.

The Deputy Speaker: I will interrupt the member. To be clear, there is no splitting of time. They are all 10-minute and five-minute slots. The member is welcome to her 10 minutes, but she does not have to use all of her time.

I will let the member continue.

Tamara Kronis: Mr. Speaker, like lasagna or moussaka, food prices are built in layers. Four cents of excise tax sits on top of a freight surcharge, which is layered on top of additional labelling requirements, new packaging restrictions and the cost of fertilizer, refrigeration, shipping, tariffs and taxes.

No single cost explains the whole grocery bill, but the grocery bill comes at the end of a long conveyor belt, and every additional cost placed on that belt eventually moves toward the consumer. At a time of record food bank use, when those of us who shop animatedly compare prices with each other in disbelief, when people are skipping meals to save money, we owe it to Canadians to ask what every decision we make in this place means for the cost of food.

When the Prime Minister claims, as he did in this chamber on March 25, that “Affordability is the best it has been in over a decade”, it is clear to me that he has not been to the grocery store. Food prices are now 29% higher than they were five years ago, while they rose only 9% over the previous five years. If we feel like food inflation has accelerated, that is because it has.

Bill C-38 is a very short bill that would do three things. It would extend the fuel tax holiday on gasoline, avgas and diesel until January 31, 2027; it would bring back half the normal rate from February 1 to March 31; and then it would restore the full tax on April 1, 2027.

I support this relief, but I think it should not be fleeting. The cycle of providing temporary relief, panicking at the expiry date and extending it for a few more months leaves too many businesses wondering what will happen next. Diesel prices are already extraordinarily volatile. Statistics Canada reported on September 17 that producer prices for diesel rose 9.6% in August alone and were 75% higher than a year ago. These are enormous movements in the price of an essential business input.

Now, Ottawa cannot set the world price of oil. Parliament cannot legislate peace in the Middle East or guarantee the price of a barrel of crude next spring, but when the market is unstable, there is an even greater responsibility for government to provide stability in the things that it does control. Nowhere is that more important than in food.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada estimates that transportation accounts for seven cents of every dollar Canadians spend on domestically produced food. The comparable figure in the United States is less than five cents. This is because Canada has longer distances, a more dispersed population and a climate that requires us to move food enormous distances, particularly through the winter. Fuel prices, therefore, have a direct relationship with the cost of feeding our country.

We see this in my home communities on Vancouver Island. Out here, people speak of planes, trains and automobiles, while in B.C., we also have seaplanes, helicopters and ferries to contend with. Much of our food arrives after travelling by truck, rail, ship or some combination of the three. There is always another transportation leg before it reaches a grocery store in Nanaimo, Ladysmith or Gabriola. The cost of diesel, therefore, enters our food system long before the produce truck arrives at the grocery store loading dock.

Farmers use diesel to fuel their equipment during planting and harvest. Ingredients travel to processors. Packaging has to be manufactured and delivered. Warehouses consume energy. Refrigerated warehouses consume even more energy. Finished products travel to distribution centres, grocery stores, restaurants and institutions.

I am chairing a national food affordability task force, and I heard about the cost of diesel at every farm, every processor and every grocer I visited this summer. High diesel costs have a cascading effect across the supply chain, and uncertainty amplifies that effect.

● (2115)

The Agri-Food Analytics Lab at Dalhousie University has found that diesel and grocery prices have moved remarkably closely together over the last 30 years. That does not mean diesel alone determines the price of food, but it confirms what anyone involved in the food supply chain already knows, which is that energy and transportation costs, that is, gasoline, aviation gasoline and diesel, are deeply connected to what Canadians eventually pay at the grocery store.

The Dalhousie lab has modelled what the present diesel shock could mean. If high prices persist through the winter, grocery inflation could peak between one-half and seven-tenths of a percentage point higher. A shorter-lived spike could produce an effect closer to three-tenths or four-tenths of a point. Either way, it is going to cost us. The Dalhousie analysis works the diesel and other cost shocks through contracts, inventories and the supply chain over many months and provides a solid basis for believing, as many members have said today when answering questions and in their remarks, that the government will need to extend this measure again and, very possibly, again.

We spend enormous effort in this place debating grocery prices after they have risen. We need to start thinking about affordability problems before they show up at the checkout because uncertainty and volatility have a price. Businesses protect themselves against it through shorter contracts, larger contingencies, higher working capital requirements or delayed investment. Smaller businesses generally have fewer ways to hedge their exposure and less balance sheet capacity to absorb a sudden change. Dalhousie's agri-food lab has highlighted precisely that vulnerability among smaller processors and independent distributors as one of the many explanations for why we are experiencing food inflation.

As well, there is a broader principle here that does not depend on agreement about the ultimate tax rate. If the policy objective is to hold this tax at zero while energy markets remain severely disrupted, then why do we not give businesses a horizon measured in years rather than in weeks or months? Our food costs would really benefit from that. A government faced with volatile markets should be trying to reduce uncertainty, not add another layer to it.

The Prime Minister talks a lot about the things we can control. Well, government taxation is one of those things. Not every increase in food prices has the same cause, and government cannot control all of them, but where government itself is adding cost or uncertainty, we have an obligation and an opportunity to act.

Agriculture and food businesses experience individual departmental policy decisions cumulatively. That means they pay the transportation cost, the packaging cost, the tariff, the regulatory cost, the energy cost and the tax at the same time. Each department may conclude that its individual measure may have a modest effect, but grocery costs do not stay nicely in departmental silos, and the cost of the whole is sometimes more than its parts. The final price reflects the entire supply chain and all of the policy changes along the way.

Canada will always be a country in which food travels considerable distances. Diesel and avgas are critical inputs. Temporary relief can buy time. We should use that time. Four cents a litre is only one layer in the price of food, but it is a layer entirely within Parliament's control. When diesel prices are already up 75% in a year, we should be looking for layers we can take off, not deciding when to put them back on.

I support the relief contained in Bill C-38. I would like us to go further, however, and provide the long-term certainty that lets businesses plan.

● (2120)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the excise tax on gasoline has been a very high priority for the Prime Minister and the government in recognizing the issue of affordability. It is an important aspect that the government is wanting to pass. I want to extend my gratitude and recognize that we could not be passing it today without the collaboration of all members of the House of Commons. We see that the value is really for Canadians. It is a very important part of what the Prime Minister and the government as a whole have been talking about, so I want to express some appreciation for the collaboration. I think it is important to do so.

I would just like to get the member's comments about how we can do some wonderful things if in fact we want to work together to deliver for Canadians.

Tamara Kronis: Mr. Speaker, I feel as though I should buy a lottery ticket. Thank you for those kind words, and thank you for the recognition that we are here today extending this relief to Canadians because Conservatives have pushed this point over and over again. It is because we continue to bring up affordability, we continue to focus on the people we serve in our communities and we continue to bring their stories to the House over and over again.

I would say that it is wonderful to work together, but I would like to see you paying—

The Deputy Speaker: The member cannot speak directly to the parliamentary secretary. She has to speak through the chair to the member. The member has done it three times.

I will let her finish her comments, and then we will go back to questions and comments.

Tamara Kronis: Mr. Speaker, it is very late, and I apologize for not speaking through you. I have the utmost respect for you, both as a person and as an institution.

I would say to the members opposite that the best ideas never rise to the top without debate and without listening. The government pushed a lot of things through in the spring. I would urge it to take the time to listen and to allow us to do our job as the opposition, which is to provide constructive commentary that hopefully helps the government see that it could do more. In this case, that is extending the excise tax relief more permanently.

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's wonderful speech, and I would like her to expand a bit on something. She said that a lot of what government does is control what it can control, which has a big effect. The Liberals have a $78-billion deficit and had an extra $6-billion-plus in spending after they came out with the budget, so they have controlled a lot of what they are going to spend. Meanwhile, they are kind of ignoring the extra GST and the extra oil revenues from the high prices of gas and oil, which they are consuming. This could go a lot further if they intended.

Can you expand on how the Liberals' choices are affecting our citizens?

● (2125)

The Deputy Speaker: I know it is late, but I will remind members again not to use the word “you”.

I will not be responding, but I will let the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith respond.

Tamara Kronis: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that my colleague brought up the concept of control. One reason we want the gas tax relief extended and made permanent is so we can give businesses the chance to exercise that control themselves.

We know that farmers plan around growing seasons. I have, of course, spoken to farmers who tell me over and over again that energy costs are hampering their ability to plan. Trucking companies negotiate contracts, but their margins are so slim that they are struggling to stay afloat, and certainty around the cost of fuel for the long term would make a big difference. Grocery distributors build networks, but changing buying patterns based on volatile pricing is actually messing with inventory levels and even creating extra food waste. Processors make investments that they have to pay for over years, and uncertainty is making them blink, which is stifling innovation and further impeding productivity.

The government talks about wanting to control the things that we can control. Relieving the tax burden on a permanent basis would not only allow us to control the things that we need to control but would also allow businesses to plan.

Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your allowing me to speak to Bill C-38, the Canadian fuel affordability act.

While Canada is starting from a position of strength, the global economy is becoming increasingly uncertain. New and unjustified tariffs, trade tensions, and conflicts in the Middle East and Europe are driving up costs for households and businesses and are creating economic uncertainty here at home for all Canadians. Our government recognizes this and is taking action to help Canadians manage rising costs and navigate these global economic uncertainties. Earlier this year, we temporarily suspended the federal fuel excise tax, saving Canadians and Canadian businesses 10¢ per litre on gasoline and 11¢ per litre on leaded aviation fuel. The impact was immediate, with gasoline prices declining by 11¢ per litre on the first day of implementation. That was real relief for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Building on our decision earlier this month, the Minister of Finance and National Revenue announced our intention to extend that temporary suspension until January 31, 2027, and apply 50% of the regular excise tax rate from February 1 through March 31, 2027. That means that Canadians in my riding of Mississauga—Lakeshore on the shores of the great Lake Ontario would benefit with extended relief and continued cost reduction per litre for gasoline and diesel. Let me be clear: This measure would help lower costs for Canadians, including truckers and businesses in the food and agriculture, housing, construction and delivery sectors. This is another example of our government's delivering timely and meaningful relief when Canadians need it most.

By reducing pressure on gasoline and diesel prices, we would be helping Canadians manage today's challenges, while laying the foundation for longer-term growth and prosperity as we build on the strongest economy in the G7. This is just one part of a broader effort to lower costs for Canadians. It is one of the first measures our government took after assuming office. Members opposite will recall that one of the first things the Prime Minister did upon assuming office was to cancel the consumer fuel charge, helping Canadians to save money at the pump in most provinces and territories. Our government also removed the requirement for provinces and territories to have a consumer-facing carbon price as of April 1, 2025.

At the same time, our government recognizes that affordability challenges extend well beyond the cost of fuel, and that is why we have taken additional steps to put money, and more money, back into Canadians' pockets. For example, we introduced the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit. By building on the former goods and services tax credit, we are increasing the amount provided to low- and modest-income Canadians by 25% for the first five years, as of July, 2026. In addition to that, we provided a one-time payment in June, equivalent to 50% of increases in 2025-26, with an annual value of the GST credit.

Our government is responding to global challenges with a responsible and pragmatic fiscal approach. It is important to note that while we may not control every global event, with respect to the ones that are impacting prices, I want to assure my hon. colleagues and all Canadians that our government is doing what is necessary to take and make a deal that helps those impacts. By lowering costs for Canadians from coast to coast to coast, the government is providing supports to their affordability challenge while creating an economy where Canadians have more control in building their own future. Above all, these government measures will empower Canadians to get ahead and minimize the impacts on their cost of living.

Canadians naturally want to keep more of the money they earn. They want greater opportunities to support their families, invest in their communities and build their future with confidence. Our country is at a crossroads. Many people around the world choose Canada. New Canadians are seeking freedom and opportunity. Throughout history, Canadians have proven themselves to be resilient, to overcome adversity, and over the years, they have grown more prosperous. They will continue to build. We will persevere, more united than ever, to protect our sovereignty and strengthen its resolve. Standing together, we are navigating this crossroads.

● (2130)

I returned recently from overseas, and I had witnessed many around the world celebrating Canada's standing. The Prime Minister is sought after for his leadership and experience, just as much as Canada is sought after for its critical minerals and untapped potential. Canada is valued as a trusted partner that abides by the rule of law and social justice.

As chair of the defence committee, I can attest that boosting Canada's defence industrial strategy is renewing our confidence while stimulating our economy. More than that, it bolsters our national pride. Events recently, such as the major attraction at the investment summit, speak volumes. They will enable major projects and build our economy, which sustains and supports the social programs Canadians rely on and expect. Just as the EU and so many around the world welcome Canada, we welcome every effort to broaden our reach and foster relations to reduce geopolitical threats that have impacted price challenges here at home.

This bill would help support Canadians, and I hope my colleagues will support this measure for the greater benefit of all Canadians.

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to comment on the member opposite's speech. I felt as though I was listening to a radio. He has a great radio voice. I actually was captivated by some of his comments. In one of them, he said he has just returned from overseas. I would like to ask whether any of the countries he visited were actually oil-producing countries that were taxing their citizens on the fuel they have, compared to importing it. These other countries, I am assuming, were actually importing all their oil and not benefiting from oil they have in their own country.

Does any other country you visited actually have a fuel excise tax for its citizens?

The Deputy Speaker: Just before I let the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore respond, I will give the umpteenth reminder that members should speak through the Chair and not use “you”. Even if the member prefaces it by saying “through the Chair” and then kind of wanders over to different ideas, they still have to go back to not using “you”.

I invite the member from member for Mississauga—Lakeshore to respond.

Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member makes reference to excise taxes in other parts of the world. Most European countries, which is where I was, actually do have excise taxes on their fuel. In fact, fuel was much more expensive than it is here at home in Canada. More importantly than that, the countries I was in were also harnessing renewable energy. They are at the forefront of some of the most critical measures to foster wind power and solar power. They are relying so much more on other energy sources. To answer the member's question, they in fact have very high excise taxes on their fuel.

● (2135)

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am perhaps asking the hon. member for Mississauga—Lakeshore to turn back and reflect on some of his previous background. I think he was the minister of finance in the government of the province that did the most to reduce greenhouse gases when the province of Ontario shut down its coal-fired power plants. I think he may know something about reducing pollution and saving lives, reducing greenhouse gases while also saving people money in that province.

I wonder if he has any reflections. I am disappointed that all we would be doing is a temporary relief on an excise fuel tax instead of taxing major oil and gas companies on the excess profits they are receiving right now, but perhaps the former minister of finance has some thoughts.

Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, during the time I was there, provincially we did quite a bit to decarbonize Ontario's reliance on coal. We became one of the lowest-emitting provinces as a result of those measures. We tried to do everything we could to modernize that system, which was expensive but long-term and has great benefits to the overall costs and to the climate. We were trying to make our green energy process an economic process with greater long-term benefits.

I value the member's question. I value her desire to have us do more in that regard, and I know that the Prime Minister also has a great desire for climate initiatives to harness green energy alongside the things we are doing as an energy superpower.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could provide his thoughts on what has been a very important issue, that of affordability, and on how the Prime Minister and the government as a whole have taken on the issue, wanting to be able to deliver on it in many different forms.

This is a very important step, with Bill C-38 giving that 10¢-a-litre extension in terms of a break. Once we hit the end of January, it goes to 5¢ a litre. It is one part of a much bigger picture of the very important issue of affordability.

Could the member provide his thoughts on that?

Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's initiative around looking at this as a wholesome package.

Bill C-38 is only a portion of the work that is being done by the government to lower overall costs and improve affordability measures for Canadians, including introducing the Canada groceries and essentials benefit, cutting taxes for 22 million Canadians, providing and eliminating the goods and services tax for first-time homebuyers, cancelling the federal consumer carbon tax, making the national school food program permanent, introducing automatic federal benefits, lowering costs and strengthening competition for essential services, expanding and entrenching the Canada child benefit, lowering costs for child care and kids' essential services, like the $10-a-day child care and interest-free student loans, for that matter, and the Canadian dental care plan—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Yellowhead.

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-38 and to the very real issue at the heart of this legislation, which is affordability.

For more than a generation, tax policy has been designed to effect social policy. Taxes have been designed to curb our citizens' behaviour, not to benefit taxpayers. Tax policy has not been developed for what is best for the long-term future of Canadians. When taxes interfere with people's way of life, making it cost more to buy food, get to work or go to medical appointments, there is something wrong with our tax system.

For families in Alberta and right across Canada, affordability is not an abstract economic concept. It is the price at the gas pump. It is the grocery store bill, the cost of getting to work, the cost of moving a truckload of farm products. It is the cost of building a home. For many Albertans, it is simply a question of whether they can afford to drive the distances that life in a large, rural and resource-producing province requires. That is why the government's decision to extend the federal fuel excise tax suspension matters. However, it is also why we have to look carefully at how we got here and what happens next.

Conservatives have been raising this issue for months in the House. During question period back in April, actually on my birthday, I asked the question as to whether the government would extend the suspension of the excise tax until the end of the year. The Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience refused to commit to any relief for Canadians beyond September 7. If the Liberals had dealt with the issue back in the spring, we would not be here today having the same conversation. Are we going to have to do this again next January, when the government realizes the suspension is not enough again? I think all members would appreciate not having to repeat the same debate a third time and would ask the Liberals to consider extending this suspension until Canada Day.

We pushed the Liberals to cut the tax. Then we pushed them to stop taking that relief away, but it needs to go further. Mind you, our proposal in April went beyond just the excise tax. We also called for the suspension of the GST on gasoline and diesel, the removal of costs associated with the clean fuel regulations, and the elimination of the industrial carbon tax. The government, however, chose a much narrower measure, by suspending only the federal excise tax. Its own figures estimate that this measure would provide more than $2.4 billion in relief. Now, after that temporary measure was scheduled to expire, the government is looking to extend it.

Bill C-38 would keep the federal excise tax suspended through to January 2027, and in February and March the tax would return at half the regular rate. On April 1, April Fool's Day next year, the regular federal excise tax rate would return. It is not a joke. That means about 10¢ per litre on gasoline and 4¢ on diesel. If lowering the fuel tax provides significant relief today, why should Canadians automatically face the full tax again on April 1? Why does the government continue to ignore Canadians who are in desperate need of help?

As we debate Bill C-38, I want to take this opportunity to speak about the issue that touches every Canadian, every working family and every business in this country. As the only chartered professional accountant with tax experience in the House of Commons, I understand both the importance and the complexity of the different layers Canadians have to deal with in tax. Canada's tax system has become far too complicated. For too many Canadians, understanding their tax obligation requires navigating a maze of rules, exemptions, credits, deductions and administrative requirements. That complexity comes at a cost. It consumes valuable time and resources for families and businesses. It creates uncertainty for those trying to invest in and plan for the future, and it makes it harder for Canadians to understand how much they are actually paying in tax.

A reform of our tax system is not simply about changing the tax rate. It is about building a system that is simpler, more transparent and more fair, one that Canadians can understand and businesses can navigate with confidence. Canadian workers and businesses deserve a tax system that rewards hard work rather than making it harder to get ahead. Small businesses, in particular, need a system that allows them to spend less time dealing with paperwork and more time creating jobs, investing in their communities and growing their businesses. Our tax system should work for Canadians, not the other way around.

● (2140)

What is most frustrating with the bill is that the government originally described it as temporary relief. Now it is extending that relief, and I would not be surprised if next year we are back, having to extend it again. The original suspension was supposed to end two weeks ago. Instead, the government is now rushing to extend it through the end of next January and will then phase the tax back in the following two months.

That change reflects the economic circumstances Canadians are currently facing. It also reflects the fact that the affordability problem did not disappear when the temporary measure was scheduled to expire, two weeks ago. The government has recognized that, and I think Canadians will thank them for it. The question now is whether the extension is sufficient. For many Canadians, particularly those who drive long distances or operate businesses dependent on transportation, the answer will depend on what happens after March 31, because the reality of fuel costs in Canada will not suddenly disappear on April 1.

We also need to recognize the role fuel plays in Canada's competitiveness. Transportation is not an optional part of our economy. It is fundamental to it. When the costs of moving goods rise, businesses face higher operating costs. When transportation costs rise, competitiveness suffers. Regardless of the current political climate, we are still very much competing with the United States, which does not have the layers of taxes and bureaucracy that we do here at home. This is just one more chip away at our global competitiveness, and Canadian businesses are suffering as a result.

Another idea we may want to consider is permanently removing the excise tax on Canadian petroleum products to benefit Canadian companies. That is why fuel tax policy is about more than what someone sees at the gas pump. It is also about the cost of moving the Canadian economy.

The House should not stop asking questions simply because the government has taken one step. We should be asking what happens next. We should be asking what relief will continue. We should ask how federal tax policies affect the cost of transportation. We should ask how those costs move through the supply chains, and we should ask whether Canadians can realistically afford this tax's return in April 2027.

Conservatives have been raising these issues for months. The government has now extended a measure that it originally described as temporary, and that is why Bill C-38 matters, but this debate should not end with the passage of the temporary extension. The bill is needed. No one is doubting that. Canadians need this relief at the pumps, but there is more we can do. There is more we need to do.

We need to continue pushing to remove all federal taxes on gas and diesel until at least Canada Day next year; we need to permanently scrap the clean fuel regulations, and we need to remove the industrial carbon tax, so Canadians can save approximately 25¢ per litre. On this side of the House, we are committed to continuing this fight, and we hope to continue making measurable progress.

At the end of the day, the bill would be good for Canadians, and for that reason, I will be supporting it. Canadians deserve an economy where working, producing, transporting and building are affordable.

● (2145)

Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently I came back from a G20 meeting held by the world's largest crude oil producer, the United States, where there is a combined excise tax in Texas of 38¢ a gallon. Countries everywhere are struggling with the global effects of this war. They are exploring different ways to do this. Most have not eliminated excise taxes or even reduced them. The only two I am aware of in addition to Canada are Norway, which brought its tax back at the end of summer, on August 31, and Germany, which has reduced its tax until December.

I am wondering if you consider those lessons and you think about them and the implication of these policies. When you look further abroad, are there other affordability policies you think we can learn from or that Canada should consider?

The Deputy Speaker: Before I let the member for Yellowhead respond, the member again used “you”. This is just a friendly reminder to all members, and I know it is late, to not use “you” and to speak through the Speaker, not directly to the other member.

The member for Yellowhead.

William Stevenson: Mr. Speaker, I have made that mistake many a time tonight, I know, and eventually I will break that habit, I am sure.

The Conservatives will continue to scrutinize measures and continue to raise the concerns we have heard from Albertans and Canadians, who continue to ask the government where their temporary reliefs are. Comparing ourselves to many of the other countries is quite difficult when we compare our tax system, especially when we look at, as the member opposite brought up, Norway.

Norway may have an excise tax that it has changed, but Norway has a completely different system, in which their personal individual tax and their corporate taxes are much higher than what we have in Canada. Their system is going to be looking at quite a difference in terms of what they actually spend on.

However, this goes back to our choices, which is what we are debating here in the House. It is about the choices that we are going to make, going forward, on what we are spending and how we are taxing our citizens.

● (2150)

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my hon. colleague whether he thinks the Liberals have plagiarized our playbook with this bill.

William Stevenson: Mr. Speaker, as Conservatives, we are proud of the role we played in securing this win. I feel like this is a win on the Conservative side. We have never stopped fighting, and we will not stop fighting, for more affordability measures. We pushed for this at the beginning, and we actually achieved what we wanted back in April. That part of it has been very beneficial.

Yes, the Liberals are plagiarizing our playbook, as the member said.

Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada cannot control the global forces driving up energy prices, but we can control how we are responding. Our plan balances support for Canadians without compromising our fiscal position. Does the member opposite agree that extending the suspension through the winter would give Canadians greater certainty in managing their household transportation costs?

William Stevenson: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we are definitely in favour of any tax relief. However, because it is going to come back in April, given the way it is proposed, it does not really help with long-term certainty. Knowing what is going on for the next six months will help with some planning, but people need to plan far beyond six months for their future, whether it is for work or for what they are going to be doing for the next year. It is very important that the measures are extended past April.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about stability. I am wondering if he could elaborate on the ways in which certainty over the long term breeds stability, which breeds affordability.

William Stevenson: Mr. Speaker, certainty, predictability and clarity are very important for both businesses and individuals in planning their future affairs. We need to have that. That is one thing the government could provide to citizens if it actually had a good policy going forward.

Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at 10 o'clock this evening, I think it is fair to recognize, as all of us can acknowledge, that it has been a long day. Nonetheless, it is certainly very much the case that this issue is important.

As we return to the House, I believe it is worth reminding ourselves of something that can be lost amid the disagreements of this place. Canadians expect us to come here not simply to argue but to deliver results. They expect us to scrutinize legislation. They expect us to ask difficult questions. They expect us, as an opposition, to hold the government to account. However, they also expect us to recognize a good idea when we see one and to work together when legislation can make life a little easier for the people we were elected to serve. That is the spirit in which we approach Bill C-38.

On this side of the House, we have long said that we are prepared to support sensible measures that provide meaningful financial relief to Canadians. There is nothing contradictory about challenging legislation when we believe it falls short and supporting legislation when it moves in the right direction. That is not partisanship. That is Parliament doing its job. Bill C-38 is a measure we can support because its central objective is one that I believe members across the House should be able to agree upon: Canadians need some breathing room.

Families are making very difficult choices right now. Parents are looking at the grocery bill and deciding what can wait until next week. Young Canadians are wondering whether home ownership will ever be within reach. Seniors on fixed incomes are watching every single dollar, and small business owners are absorbing higher costs whenever they can. Farmers and producers are paying to fuel the equipment and vehicles they need simply to do their jobs. Governments cannot and should not solve every challenge confronting a household, but governments can make choices that leave Canadians with more of their own money and avoid unnecessarily adding to the cost of everyday life.

Of course, permanent relief is better than temporary relief, but as we return to Ottawa, members on all sides should reflect on what we heard in our communities over the summer. For me, and I suspect members from every party, one subject came up again and again, and that is affordability.

People in Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga are not speaking about affordability as an abstract economic concept. They are talking about what remains in their bank accounts after their mortgage or rent is paid. They are talking about the cost of groceries, heating their homes, getting their children to hockey practices and filling the tank so they can get to work. That last expense matters enormously, especially in rural and small-town Canada. That is not to diminish the very real affordability challenges facing people in Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal or other major urban centres, but transportation looks very different outside Canada's largest cities.

For millions of Canadians, driving is not a lifestyle choice; it is a necessity. There is no subway in many locations. There may be no commuter train. In many communities, there may be little or no public transit whatsoever. The grocery store may be kilometres away. A medical appointment may require travelling to another community. Getting to work, taking a child to school or operating a farm may mean getting behind the wheel because there simply is no other practical alternative. When fuel costs rise, those Canadians cannot simply choose not to drive. They have to find the money somewhere else in their family budget. That is why federal fuel tax relief matters.

The government's temporary suspension reduced the federal excise tax by 10¢ per litre on gasoline and four cents per litre on diesel, among other fuel categories. The government itself estimated that the temporary measure would provide more than $2.4 million in tax relief in 2026. Extending that relief is therefore a step in the right direction, and Conservatives support doing so, but it also raises a reasonable question: If removing this tax temporarily provides meaningful relief to families, workers, farmers and businesses, then why should Parliament not have a serious discussion about making that very relief permanent? That is the larger conversation we believe Canadians deserve, because every single dollar matters to a household that is stretched.

● (2155)

Ten cents on a litre may look small when written on a spreadsheet in Ottawa, but Canadians do not buy one litre of gasoline at a time. A farmer does not operate one piece of equipment for one kilometre. A tradesman does not drive up to one job site a year, and a parent in rural Canada does not make one trip to the grocery store. Those costs accumulate. So do savings when government chooses to reduce them.

We would prefer permanent relief. We have been clear about that from the get-go, but we should also remember the old principle that we ought not allow the perfect to become the enemy of the good. If this legislation means Canadians keep more of what they earn, then it deserves our support. Perhaps it represents something else as well: an acknowledgement that the concerns expressed for years by rural Canadians, small-town families, farmers, tradesmen and commuters are legitimate and deserve to be heard in this very chamber.

The affordability challenge, however, extends far beyond the gas pump. Statistics Canada released new results from the 2024 Canadian housing survey showing that 23.2% of Canadian households were living in housing considered unaffordable under the conventional measure of spending 30% or more of household income on shelter costs. Among renters, that figure was 33.7%.

That same survey tells another troubling story. In 2018, 11.1% of Canadian households reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with housing affordability. By 2022, that had risen to 14.5%. In 2024, it reached 23.3%. In other words, dissatisfaction with housing affordability more than doubled between 2018 and 2024, including an increase of 8.8 percentage points in just two years.

Behind every one of those statistics is a person. It is the young couple wondering whether they should postpone starting a family because they cannot afford a larger home. It is the renter watching another lease renewal approach with anxiety. It is the family whose mortgage payment has increased and who now has to decide what else can be cut from the monthly budget.

The pressure is not confined to housing. Statistics Canada reported that in the spring of 2024, 45% of Canadians said that rising prices were greatly affecting their ability to meet day-to-day expenses. That was up 33% from just two years earlier. The burden was particularly pronounced among Canadians with lower incomes. Fifty-nine per cent of people in the lowest income quintile reported being greatly affected, as did 52% in the second and 48% in the third. More than half of Canadians between the ages of 25 and 44, or 55%, said rising prices were greatly affecting their ability to meet everyday expenses.

Those numbers should command the attention of every member of this House regardless of partisanship, because affordability should not be simply a slogan we deploy when convenient. It should be a test we apply to the decisions we make right here.

Does a measure make it easier or harder for a Canadian family to balance its budget? Does it leave a worker with more or less money at the end of the month? Does it recognize the realities facing a farmer, a senior, a young person or someone living in a community where driving is not optional? These are practical questions, and Canadians deserve practical answers.

Bill C-38 would not solve Canada's affordability challenges. No responsible member of the House should pretend it does, but it would provide relief. It recognizes the real pressures facing Canadian households, and it moves, however incrementally, in the direction of allowing Canadians to keep more of their own money.

We will continue to argue for permanent fuel tax relief. We will continue to challenge the government where we believe Canadians deserve better. That is our responsibility as His Majesty's loyal opposition, but our responsibility is also to support measures that help Canadians when they come before the House. Canadians are making difficult choices every day. Parliament should be looking for responsible ways to make some of those choices a little less difficult. On this measure, we have the opportunity to do precisely that, and that is why we will support it.

● (2200)

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear my colleague mention that, for once, the Conservatives will support a measure that will put money back in Canadians' pockets.

However, I cannot help but note some hypocrisy in my colleague's speech. She mentioned that affordability should not be simply a slogan. However, when we look at her voting record, we see that she voted against almost all of the measures that we put in place to help Canadians deal with the cost of living, including the tax cut for over 21 million Canadians, the school food program, which has become permanent, and affordable child care spaces, to name just a few.

Does my colleague not see a major discrepancy between her voting record and what she is saying this evening about the importance of affordability? How does she reconcile what she said in her speech with her past actions, with the way she voted in the House?

[*English*]

Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Mr. Speaker, here before all of us tonight, we have to recognize that our job is to advocate and work and fight for the Canadian people. The government, for the last 11 years, has continually been making promise after promise, announcement after announcement. We need to do significantly more doing and significantly less talking.

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the hon. member could reflect a little bit on the history of how we got to this place today and perhaps on the fact that the Liberals seem to be taking our good ideas and running with them. This particular bill would be another example of that. I am wondering if she could talk a little bit about the history of this idea of reducing the gas tax over the last couple of years.

Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Mr. Speaker, I think, as the loyal opposition, that we should take this as a compliment. My father once taught me that one never has to worry about who gets the credit as long as the job is done. I think, in this case, it is very clear where the idea came from. Nonetheless, what is most important are the results and Canadians getting results at the gas pump.

● (2205)

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Mr. Speaker, in her response to my question, my colleague talked about the need for more doing and less talking. However, over the past year and a half, we have implemented meaningful measures. We have made Canada's national school food program permanent. We have lowered taxes for more than 21 million Canadians.

That is in addition to all the other measures we implemented in budget 2025 and the economic update. Still, when we rolled out these meaningful measures—not just empty words—to help put more money in Canadians' pockets, my colleague voted against them. I am just trying to square that with what we heard tonight.

I completely agree with her that we need to be there for ordinary folks, but how does she reconcile what she said tonight with her voting record?

[*English*]

Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to reconcile what I am suggesting tonight, and that is the fact that we need to get the government to stop spending. We need to get spending under control. The deficit has doubled from what the government inherited. We, as an opposition, have identified $150 billion in potential savings, roughly $10,000 for every Canadian. Instead of having money swallowed up by unnecessary spending, like spending money on consultants or the boondoggle that is the Alto project, perhaps the government needs to put its money where its mouth is and look after Canadians.

Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, this has been quite a debate this evening. I know that over the last number of years, we have watched the Liberals lay burden after burden upon Canadians, particularly with the deficit spending. We now see a reversal of a whole number of these things, whether it is this idea or some of the major project announcements that we have heard. I am just wondering if the member has seen a change in the rhetoric. I am just wondering if the member is seeing a change on the ground back home.

Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Mr. Speaker, our support for this measure is very straightforward. When Parliament has an opportunity to leave more money in Canadians' pockets through lower fuel taxes, this measure is just a common-sense prerogative. I know, from people in Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga, that when I am at the grocery store, when I am out at different community events, the tone is consistent. The concern is consistent, that affordability is the number one issue and that we need to get this under control.

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this feels like déjà vu. It was not that long ago that we were here debating nearly the exact same issue as we are today.

Today, we have in front of us a bill. As opposition members, we get to propose ideas through opposition day motions, which are not necessarily binding upon the House or the government. Back in April, we were debating virtually the exact same thing. I would point out that the Liberals voted back in April against removing the tax on gas and diesel fuel. I reluctantly must compliment the Liberals on this bill.

Another thing about this bill is that it is quite brief, which is amazing for the Liberals. Generally, the Liberals say they are doing one thing, then come out with a bill that does three to five things; some of the things we like and some of the things we do not like. They have made it very easy to support this bill. Perhaps the bill is a day late and a dollar short, but nonetheless, it is a good bill.

This bill would remove the gas tax going forward past January. I think that is something that we have been calling for for a long time. This is an idea that the Conservatives put forward. What is becoming a trend in this Parliament is that we have the good ideas and the Liberal government steals those ideas, plagiarizes those ideas and implements those ideas. We will continue to do that. We will continue to propose good ideas that the government can then take and run with.

I just want to talk a bit about what this means for people who live in northern Alberta. The further away from Edmonton someone lives, the more their average driving per year happens to be. The average person in Enilda, which is a couple of hours north of where I live and about three and a half hours north of Edmonton, drives probably 28,000 kilometres a year. If someone lives in Keg River, which is about three hours south of the Northwest Territories border, they are driving 38,000 kilometres a year on average. If someone lives in Edmonton, they are driving about 14,000 kilometres a year on average. If someone lives in Vancouver, they are driving about 10,000 kilometres a year.

I say that to show that when people live outside major city centres, they are generally driving significantly more. This is why we have been proposing this type of legislation. This is something that would definitely help those folks. The savings may be modest, but they would impact those at the bottom much more. When they save $500 a year on fuel, that is 10 tanks of gas, essentially. For someone from Keg River or from Peace River, that neck of the woods, it could translate to approximately $500 a year in savings with these fuel reductions.

I argued back in April about the fact that we are coming into harvest season, and the farmers use a lot of diesel fuel when they are bringing in their crops. That is the reality. Diesel fuel makes our economy work. Diesel fuel makes it so that the farmers can take the food off the field. It makes it so they can truck it to a terminal. It makes it so they can take it from the terminal to the processing facility. If it is flour, that flour is then trucked to a bakery, which is then baked into bread. Often, that bread is then trucked to a grocery store. Every step along the way takes diesel fuel. When the diesel fuel price is reduced just marginally, it can have a big effect because of all those steps along the way, and it makes a big difference. That is one of the cases that we have been making and we will continue to make.

The other thing that we want to talk about in this session is about putting Canada first. We want to make sure that we have a government that takes care of Canadians first.

● (2210)

Some of the ways to do this are around changing the tax structure, and we support this particular bill. However, other things are just around ensuring that Canadian industry and business have the tools and that they have a government that is ensuring that Canadian businesses are taken care of. We have seen just recently in the United States, Donald Trump has put tariffs on our Canadian honey producers. This is a major challenge, particularly for western Canada and Alberta, as 70% to 90% of our honey, depending on the year, will cross the border and go to the United States.

What is very interesting about that is that we import more honey into Canada than we export into the United States. This tariff is just driving the cost of our honey up, as a 50% tariff as it crosses the border going into the United States makes it kind of unaffordable for Americans to buy our honey. We are bringing in honey from around the world, and we are bringing in more of that than we send to the United States. We could perhaps displace that foreign honey with our own honey, provided we were to protect the border a bit more. People would say, “We have free trade agreements and that would allow for the importation of honey from other parts of the world” and that is all true.

The challenge that the honey producers have in Canada right now is that there is stuff called adulterated honey or fake honey. It is stuff that just says “honey” on it but actually is not honey. It is made from corn syrup, rice syrup or a different sugar product and it is made to look like honey. In the past, we discovered this was happening. We would test the product that would say “honey” on the bottle and it would turn out that there was no pollen in this product. That was a pretty easy test. We could just test for the presence of pollen. If there is no pollen in honey, it obviously was not made by a bee because bees collect pollen and they tend to accidentally drop it in the honey, generally. Based on that pollen, they can actually tell where in the world that honey came from. There was this product sitting on the shelves here in Canada that said “honey” on the bottle, and there was zero pollen in it so we knew that it was not honey. Honey producers in Canada said this was a problem, so we started to test for that. Lo and behold, pretty soon, this stuff had pollen in it. It turned out that players around the world were buying pollen from Canada, dumping that pollen into the sugar water, essentially, and shipping it back, calling it honey.

I tell this entire story to say that there are mechanisms in place, things that we can do, to help our honey producers to ensure that our honey is consumed here in Canada. If we work hard on protecting our consumers from this adulterated honey, if we work to control the border around this adulterated honey, that will reduce the competition of our honey producers against stuff that is not honey. We have been calling for this for a very long time, but now it seems like there is a big opportunity to fix this problem. I am looking forward to seeing some action from the government on this topic, particularly because our honey producers are being disproportionately penalized by the 50% tariff that the United States has placed on honey. We have put a countertariff on the honey from the United States, and I anticipate that will have some effect. Instead of 80% to 90% of our product heading across the border down to the United States it will be diverted left and right across this country to other provinces. I am sure some of the honey was coming from the United States and different places.

Honeybees in Canada are extremely important. Approximately one-third of our food production relies on the bees to do their pollination, so it is incredibly important that our beekeepers remain viable in this country so that we have a stable food supply.

● (2215)

Pauline Rochefort (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Rural Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed my colleague's comments related to honey. In my own family, we do, as a hobby, produce honey and maple syrup so his comments were very relevant to me. I do appreciate the need for labelling to say that things come from Canada, so well said.

Tonight we heard many comments from our colleagues across the aisle about the fact that it would be great if the relief were more permanent or if it could be extended. For me, the question is around the uncertainty. We did not know six months ago where we would be today and we do not know where we will be in six months. I would like to hear the member's comments about how we can fix things in the longer term when there is so much uncertainty.

Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, Stephen Harper, back in 2007, pursued an agenda of decoupling us from the United States because, he said, we were good friends with the United States at that time, but it was a great risk to Canada that 90% of our commerce went to the United States. He worked on signing 42 free trade agreements around the world. He worked very hard to diversify our markets for our energy, given that we are an energy superpower. We had 14 pipeline projects on the books. We had several LNG projects on the books. All of these things came to a grinding halt when the Liberals came to power over a decade ago.

The Prime Minister now has kind of taken up that torch, albeit in a different fashion, but when he is willing to take our good ideas and willing to follow the mantra of Stephen Harper, we will continue to support that.

Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am hoping my colleague can acknowledge that supporting the bill before us is not giving the government a blank cheque. Could he speak to the hardships and impacts that fuel prices are having on people in his riding, be it business owners, farmers or young families?

Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, Steve Van Raalte texted me just the other day. He is a heavy-duty mechanic. He is on the road often, driving from one job to the other. He was complaining to me about how the cost of fuel was really affecting his bottom line. He lives in a competitive environment and has to set his rate based on the other mechanics in the area. He lives kind of far from town and therefore is stuck paying this diesel price. He was saying that it was affecting his ability to make a living because he is on the road a lot with his mobile mechanic service.

● (2220)

Doly Begum (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently, and I was quite intrigued by the story the member shared about the honey producer.

It is remarkable to learn about some of the things that you are interested in.

I want to ask something a little related to what you talked about but different from this specific legislation. If you were to suggest something that we could do as a Parliament, as government, to support producers like the one you referred to, the honey producers, for example, who are growing locally, what would you suggest? Sometimes we do end up with products that are not actual honey, for example, and it would be great to have some ideas on that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I would remind the hon. member to please address her comments through the Chair.

The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member knows this, but northern Alberta produces about a quarter of Canada's honey. Alberta produces about half of Canada's honey, and northern Alberta produces about half of that, so about a quarter of Canada's honey comes from northern Alberta. I always say that my riding is the promised land. It is literally flowing with milk and honey.

Particular places in the world are of concern when it comes to this adulterated honey. One of the things we could do is block the border to some of these products coming in. There is a biohazard risk with some of the mites that may come in with the product. Also, some players have been bad actors in the space. We could just say that the door is shut to those places, particularly right now.

Scott Anderson (Vernon—Lake Country—Monashee, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in late medieval Europe, the church sold something called indulgences. Indulgences were cash donations that would allegedly result in a person's temporal sin being removed or mitigated if they contributed money to the church. It was a highly innovative business plan that succeeded wildly until it backfired into 200 years of Reformation.

The Liberals have rediscovered a remarkable new form of indulgences, and they call it standing up for Canadians. First, they demand cash and tell us it will help save the planet. Second, they make it a tax so people have no choice. Then, when Conservatives try to stop them, they call us regressive for supposedly not wanting to save the planet. Finally, they bow to reality and common sense, adopt half of the Conservative ideas and expect kudos because no longer doing what they did in the first place is such a great idea that they expect thanks from Canadians.

They did it first with the carbon tax. First, they taxed energy. Then, when Canadians complained that making energy more expensive was making everything else more expensive, they told them it would clean the air. When Canadians finally got angry enough, the Liberals stopped collecting part of the tax and held a press conference to announce that they had rescued Canadians from the problem they created in the first place. Now they are doing it with the excise tax, the tax they installed over 50 years ago that they have only now discovered is not really necessary after all, until next year, that is, and then apparently the Liberals need half of it back.

This doublespeak and magical thinking has become a hallmark of the last decade of Liberal government. Instead of looking toward the good of Canadians, it looks toward the health of the government coffers, already shrunk to nothing under the weight of its wild and irresponsible spending.

Should we not instead be asking how this tax benefits the people of this country, rather than how it helps the Liberal government and Brookfield? Is the federal fuel excise tax a good tax or a bad tax for Canadians? Is it helping us or hurting our small and large businesses and our productivity as a nation? Is it helping our families? Do our jobs feel safer because of the excise tax? Are our streets cleaner? Are we more secure as a nation? Are those not the kinds of questions we should be asking about the excise tax?

Ottawa's message now seems to be that the tax is necessary until it is not. Removing it is irresponsible until the Liberals do it, and once they do it, we need to applaud them for protecting us from it. It is a little like setting somebody's pants on fire, handing them a bucket of water and expecting a thank-you note.

There are only so many things to say about this bill. I am going to vote for it not because it is a wonderful bill but because it is the best we are going to get from this gang. I am going to talk about something else instead.

The Prime Minister spoke to the European Parliament and got a standing ovation. The president of the European Union says she wants Canada to become the EU's first-ever associate member. There is even a line going around about how it would be lovely if Canada became the 28th state of the European Union instead of the 51st state of the United States. Those are lovely words, and they pair well with the Prime Minister's tendency to swan about in European sitting rooms, sipping wine and eating caviar, or whatever else it is that drives the bills to Canadian taxpayers into the stratosphere.

I have no doubt that the EU would love to get its hands on Canadian natural resources, but let us look at the reality. In 2008, the European economy and the American economy were roughly the same size. Today the American economy is roughly 50% larger. In 18 years, one of them grew like a teenager and the other one grew like a lump of coal. Mario Draghi, former head of the European Central Bank, a man of the same political convictions as the Liberals, wrote a report for the EU. His findings were that in the last 50 years, Europe had not created a single company from scratch worth more than 100 billion euros, not one. In the same 50 years, the Americans created six companies worth more than $1 trillion.

Europe's response to the Draghi report was, naturally, to hold a summit about the Draghi report. As for red tape, members have probably heard about the bendy cucumber regulation. Europe even had rules on how curved a cucumber could be. It repealed them in 2009, and to this day, that is the fastest decision the EU has ever made. It tried to ban refillable olive oil bowls in restaurants. It even gave us the cookie banner, that little thing that comes up asking us to accept all or not. It is the single greatest destruction of human productivity since Solitaire came pre-installed on Windows.

● (2225)

Here is my favourite: our free trade deal with Europe, or CETA, which we started negotiating in 2009 and signed in 2016. Now it is 2026, and it is still only provisionally in force because member states have not ratified all of it. The French Senate actually voted it down two years ago. It has been 17 years. My daughter went from kindergarten to a university degree in the time it took Europe to decide whether it likes Canadian beef.

Now we are told that the EU is going to be our new security partner too. This was clearly done without anyone thinking to ask the Canadian Armed Forces. After Russia invaded Ukraine, Europe announced strategic autonomy: no more dependence on America. Then, and this number comes straight from the European Defence Agency, nearly 80% of what the European government bought for its militaries came from outside the EU, and about 60% came from the United States. Almost 100% of the discourse the EU spends on strategic subjects is spent pleading with the U.S. to send more of it. Apparently, strategic autonomy is when someone declares independence from a country and then sends their credit card to the folks they just declared independence from.

Europe has 27 armies, one currency and no phone number. Henry Kissinger reportedly asked 50 years ago, “Who do I call if I want to talk to Europe?” It has since answered him: Call a switchboard, press “4” for defence, and be placed in a queue that is currently working on the 60-year-old question of Cyprus.

As well, there is a hot war in Europe, the biggest since World War II. It threatens to spread into a third general European war that will almost certainly become a conflagration on a scale we have never seen before. We should help the west in every way we can, but the Liberals want to make us political and economic partners with the combatants too. Again, that will be good for Europe and wonderful for Brookfield, but is it good for Canadians?

Here is Canada's situation in plain numbers. About three-quarters of everything we export goes to the United States. The EU, with a CETA deal we spent 17 years on, takes under 10%. Roughly $3.5 billion in goods crosses the American border every day. If we replaced the U.S. with the EU, we would need to sell Europe eight times more than we currently do, and we would have to do it by sailing past the one country that is actually next door.

The Americans are now the world's largest oil producer and largest natural gas exporter. Europe pays two to three times the American price for industrial electricity, and having shut its nuclear plants, it is now heating itself by burning press releases about hydrogen. One does not leave a booming neighbour for an anxious war-torn continent because the neighbour is going to be rude for the next two years. I will take a rude customer who buys 75% of my product over a polite one who buys 8% and needs a subcommittee to even approve the invoice.

Here is the part the Prime Minister's speech writers skip. Donald Trump leaves office on January 20, 2029. That is a hard date. It is a constitutional date less than two and a half years from tonight.

Therefore, Canada has two good options. Option one is to negotiate with Trump now. He likes deals. It is the one thing everyone agrees he likes, and we have leverage. He needs our potash, our oil, our uranium, our electricity and the aluminum in every beer can from Buffalo to Bakersfield. Option two is to hold our ground, protect our industries, not give away anything permanent and wait 28 months. That is it. That is less time than it took Europe to schedule a second reading of our trade deal.

Either way, the worst option is option three, which is to rebuild our entire economy around a partner engaged in a war and whose greatest strategic achievement of the decade is creating a unified phone charger, which, I will grant, is a real achievement. I have one, and it is excellent, but it is not a foreign policy.

My message to the Prime Minister, delivered with all the affection of a rural Conservative to a central banker, is this. The Europeans gave him a standing ovation. He can enjoy it. He can frame it. They are very good at applauding. They have had 70 years of practice in applauding historic steps by others. When the applause stops, our biggest customer is still just a walk across the border, still growing, still the largest economy on earth and in 28 months, under new management.

Mr. Carney, if you want to move to Europe, enjoy the wine and caviar, but please do not take us with you because the rest of us cannot afford it. Fix the—

● (2230)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I remind the member not to use the proper name of the Prime Minister or any member of the House.

Scott Anderson: My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Prime Minister to fix the fence with the neighbour instead, and while he is at it, get rid of the excise tax permanently.

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the content of my Conservative colleagues' speeches will never cease to surprise me, I think, because there seems to be a real disconnect between what they say and reality. The reality is that Canadians expect us to work to make the economy stronger and more resilient.

That means diversifying our economic partnerships abroad. We need to maintain a relationship with the United States, but we also need to look at how we can diversify markets elsewhere, including in Europe. That also means implementing affordability measures, like the one we are discussing this evening.

It must be a bit strange for my colleague to vote in favour of an affordability measure, since the Conservatives always vote against such measures. This time, they are going to make an exception. I think Canadians can see through the official opposition. The results of the last six by-elections speak for themselves. Canadians see that our plan to make the economy stronger and more resilient is working.

Does my colleague agree that Canadians want us to truly work on making the Canadian economy stronger and that we need to stop this type of rhetoric that has no basis in reality?

[*English*]

Scott Anderson: Mr. Speaker, that was a bit of a mix of gratuitous insults and propaganda, but I am not quite sure. Obviously, we all want the Canadian economy to be strong. I think this is fairly obvious. I do not think that my supporting the bill in any way suggests that I think the Canadian economy should not be strong. I am not sure where that came from.

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the speech by my colleague immensely. I was just surprised that he did not mention anything about the defence relationship that the Prime Minister seems to be pursuing with China. I was just wondering if he had any comments on that.

Scott Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister's intent all along was to move toward the EU and join it as much as possible. He has been presented a perfect opportunity with all the tantrums going on south of the border. The meeting with the Chinese is quite likely another red flag, a gratuitous red flag, to throw in front of Mr. Trump, who will hit the ceiling as usual, further making it difficult for the next American administration to repair the damage that he has done. Mr. Carney is making it almost impossible for the next administration—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I would remind the member not to use the name of any member of the House.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this evening, the bill we are considering is a straightforward measure. It is about affordability. It is about extending the fuel tax break. It is a measure that will put more money in Canadians' pockets.

My colleague did not say much about it in his speech, but earlier, my colleague from Peace River—Westlock said that it was a good bill. He even described extending the fuel tax break as an amazing idea.

How does my colleague feel about finally supporting a measure that actually helps with affordability? During this session, can we expect to see him supporting the measures we are putting in place to help Canadians with affordability? Can we expect to see him support what his colleague described as the amazing work our government is doing to help with affordability and to make the economy stronger and more resilient?

● (2235)

[*English*]

Scott Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I would not categorize the government's work as amazing. I would categorize it as a half measure destined to become even less soon. If it is good to reduce or stop the excise tax now, why in the world would it be a bad idea next year?

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Mr. Speaker, I would like to finish this discussion with my colleague. Tonight, we are talking about affordability; we are not discussing all the other points he could have raised in his speech.

If affordability is important to him, why has he consistently voted against our measures, whether it be tax cuts for the middle class, Canada's national school food program or all the other measures we have introduced over the last year and a half?

Why has he finally decided to support affordability measures this evening when he has been voting against them for the past year and a half?

[*English*]

Scott Anderson: Mr. Speaker, it is because this time the Liberals have not shoved all sorts of other things into the bill to make it unpassable.

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House to speak on behalf of the people of Bow River. I spent my summer, like most of us, back in the riding. It was such a joy visiting with my neighbours, visiting with colleagues and experiencing the world of agriculture: being on the farm, being on a tractor and watching the combine start up in the fall. It is a time of life and a time of the season that brings everything home. That is payday for so many farmers and so many people in my riding. The potato harvest is under way, and there are some challenges, and the sugar beets have yet to start, but this is the time of year when the bills get paid. This is also the time of the year when costs are incurred.

Before I start discussing the specific measures in Bill C-38, I would like to begin by briefly describing the sheer absurdity that has characterized the Liberal government's use of carbon taxes. I have heard from constituent after constituent about how the affordability challenges of the last decade have become an affordability crisis. The rising costs of necessities like food and housing have pushed families into a constant struggle to make ends meet. A Conservative solution to bring down the cost of living has always been on the table: Stop taxing every aspect of life.

The most notorious of taxes during the last several years was the consumer carbon tax, a tax on all kinds of fuel. Canadians despise this tax, especially the residents of ridings like mine, who need affordable fuels to get around, to move goods, to do their jobs and to simply live their lives. This tax extracted money callously from producers, processors, manufacturers and the average Canadian consumer.

Conservatives called over and over again to get rid of this costly tax. The pleas of Canadians who were looking for relief were only denied, dismissed and derided by the Liberal government. Let us not forget that during this time, the current Prime Minister acted as a key economic adviser to Trudeau.

We were told constantly that this tax was effective, that the struggles of Canadians to pay for basic needs were worth it in the end and that anyone claiming otherwise just did not understand how great the carbon tax was. What happened as soon as the 2025 election rolled around? The Liberals had the most miraculous change of heart toward the consumer carbon tax. Seemingly overnight, the entire front bench flipped sides on the destructive policy they were so intent on keeping alive just days or weeks before.

The overwhelmingly clear conclusion from this blatant flip-flop is that nowhere in the adjustment of carbon taxes is there any sincerity to improve affordability for Canadians. These changes spring up to act as a cheap gimmick when the government thinks the time is right or to counter the relentless pressure it feels from the common-sense Conservatives. The green fallacy of the Liberal caucus is starting to crumble.

All of that context brings us to the subject of the discussion today, which is the extension of the federal fuel excise tax suspension until early next year. Clearly, the end of the consumer carbon tax after years of Conservative pressure did not constitute the ending of taxing fuels. The industrial carbon tax, the clean fuel regulations and the fuel excise tax were all ready to fill the hole left after the consumer carbon tax was repealed.

The effects are just the same. The costs of these taxes permeate through our economy and continue to increase the price of essentials for all Canadians. Our trucking, agriculture, fishing, forestry, housing, construction and delivery sectors are hit the hardest by these costs, but every household bears the ultimate burden.

Compound taxation occurs every time energy is needed in the economy. At each of the seven to 15 times auto parts cross the Gordie Howe bridge, costs compound for businesses. Every time food moves from planting to harvesting to processing to the warehouse to retail and finally to the trip home to get to the family's kitchen, tax costs are compounding for families.

Putting this in terms that anyone driving through Bow River this month can see with their own eyes, it is harvest. Right now, combines are running from the moment the dew burns off until well past dark. A modern combine burns 60 to 80 litres of diesel every hour it runs. On a 12-hour harvest day, that is about 800 litres for one machine on one farm on one day. That is before we count the grain trucks hauling to the bins, the tractor pulling the grain cart or the dryer running through the night.

● (2240)

There are an estimated 50,000 combines working across western Canada. If each one runs about 300 hours this harvest threshing, that is more than one billion litres of diesel burned just to bring in this year's crop. That means every cent of the federal tax on a litre of diesel will cost western farmers more than $10 million this harvest. The federal excise tax alone takes more than $40 million. The 25¢ a litre in fuel taxes that the Conservatives are calling on to remove is more than a quarter of a billion dollars out of farm families' pockets in one harvest just from combines.

Conservatives spent months fighting the fuel excise tax to win Canadians more savings as the cost of everything is rising. The finance minister, after an agonizingly long delay, finally announced the half measure of temporarily delaying the Liberal gas tax hike planned after Labour Day. After even more months of Conservative pressure, the Liberals are now offering an extension to this delay. My constituents would like to know why the government keeps putting up such a tremendous fight against bringing Canadians long-term relief from this tax.

If the Liberals are now admitting that fuel taxes matter and that affordability depends on this critical necessity being cheap, then why can they not commit to permanently reducing the cost of fuel for everyone? It seems almost like the Liberals get a kick out of constantly keeping Canadians on the edge of whether or not this tax will be suspended or renamed. Keep in mind that energy poverty leads to real poverty, and our economy writ large is in crisis.

I was listening earlier to members from the government talk about this bill as a great measure for Canadians. One of them described it as an example of the Prime Minister's "commitment to affordability". A temporary suspension of the fuel tax is not a commitment. It is another Liberal half measure getting rolled out after months of Conservative pressure. At a time when citizens need real relief from the Liberal-created affordability crisis, Conservatives are calling for the government to remove all federal taxes on gas and diesel until at least Canada Day 2027.

Gas prices have skyrocketed nearly 26%. The measure would save Canadians up to 25¢ a litre and would bring as much as $1,000 in savings for the average Canadian family. This is not a small or negligible sum. When Canadians are facing an unprecedented cost of living, where many are $200 away from not being able to balance their chequebook at the end of the month, all savings matter.

Of course, it is more than just Conservatives who are demanding a permanent change. Polling shows that 63% of Canadians oppose the federal government from bringing back the fuel excise tax, and that includes 43% who strongly oppose it. When this many Canadians are against a fuel tax hike, the government has more than enough support to follow the Conservative plan to bring down the cost of fuel.

I want to quickly return to my neighbours. A family running two combines on a grain operation near Tabor will burn roughly 40,000 litres of diesel this fall on the two machines alone. At 25¢ a litre in federal fuel taxes, that is more than $10,000 on one harvest. That is $10,000 that is not going to new tires for the grain truck, not going to school clothes for the kids, not going to paying down the operating line that carries the whole year's risk and not circulating through the community. Farmers cannot pass that cost on. They do not set the price of wheat or canola. They take what the market gives them, and every extra dollar at the pump comes straight out of the family's bottom line.

The federal excise tax alone will make about $1,700 from one family this harvest. Every week that the government drags its feet on that tax, it is families in Bow River who will pay for it. Canadians everywhere are feeling the pain of filling up their gas tanks. The best the Liberal government can do is offer a temporary suspension of their gas tax. That is not good enough. If the Prime Minister is serious about a commitment to affordability, then this is a great opportunity to demonstrate his commitment by permanently removing the tax.

When the Prime Minister talks about his commitment to affordability, I would invite him to come to Bow River and stand in the field this October at 10 o'clock at night while a farmer and his son are running because the forecast calls for rain. He should ask the family what a temporary half-measure tax suspension means to them. They will say they need certainty and need to know what the cost of fuel will be.

In conclusion, Conservatives are not asking for anything complicated. We are asking for the common-sense elimination of this and other fuel taxes instead of an insincere half measure. Canadians are looking for real relief, and a temporary measure will not cut it. I hope the government will be able to get on board with this demand as it addresses this important matter.

● (2245)

Pauline Rochefort (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Rural Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to come back to a point that I think is important.

My colleague commented on our Prime Minister being an adviser to a former government. I simply want to point out that he was named the governor of the Bank of Canada by a Conservative prime minister. The same Conservative prime minister, at the recent investor summit, praised our current Prime Minister in the House of Commons. I simply want to hear my colleague comment on how the citizens in his riding feel about our current Prime Minister.

David Bexte: Mr. Speaker, that is a very interesting question from the member across the way. By and large, the constituents in my riding do not think that the current Prime Minister is really helping them with affordability. They look at the history of the Liberal government over the past 11-plus years, and they see typical, standard Liberal dogma driving the narrative. This is not good. The current Prime Minister was the trusted adviser and the whisperer into the ear of the previous prime minister, and his fingerprints are all over the economic policy from the last Parliament.

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that the 10 years that Stephen Harper was the prime minister of this country are finally looked back on as a golden age in Canada, and I know that the Liberals have been taking our good ideas and running with them. Perhaps the Prime Minister will continue that legacy of Stephen Harper of signing free trade deals around the world, moving our economy away from the United States, building pipelines to both coasts and building LNG projects so we can feed the world the energy that it needs.

If the Liberal government continues to do those kinds of things, will we support those kinds of efforts?

David Bexte: Mr. Speaker, that was a fantastic question from my esteemed colleague from the biggest riding in northern Alberta.

As long as there is common sense, this is what Conservatives have been asking for forever: tax relief and affordability for Canadians. If the proposed legislation from the government makes sense, then it is easy to support, but if it is loaded up with poison pills, if it is contradictory internally or if it has all kinds of omnibus-type consequences, then it is really hard to support. If the government sticks to the issue and presents common-sense legislation, it makes it easier to support.

● (2250)

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke of leadership in his speech. Real leadership is taking an interest in the cost of living and introducing a bill to extend the excise tax holiday in the the first week of Parliament's return. Leadership is implementing a range of measures, as we have done since the first day we were elected, to lower taxes for the middle class, make the school food program permanent or implement various employment insurance-related measures, such as temporarily suspending the one-week waiting period. That is the kind of leadership that helps Canadians cope with the cost of living. What is not leadership is talking about affordability in the House and then voting against every single measure when the opportunity arises.

I would like to know whether my colleague sees this bill as an example of our government's ongoing leadership in helping Canadians cope with the cost of living.

[*English*]

David Bexte: Mr. Speaker, it is an example of hypocrisy, the way I see it. This is, I think, a good bill. It would give affordability for Canadians, but it is short-term. If it is so good now, why was it not good six months ago? Why was it not good a year ago? Why was it not good five years ago, when these measures and taxes on fuel and energy were raised and raised again? It was the current Prime Minister who was whispering in the ear of the previous Parliament to institute the carbon tax. He thought that was fantastically good policy. That hypocrisy is on the table now for Canadians to see.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to address the House tonight. I want to start my remarks by talking about the kind of society we have been and the kind of society I would like us to be.

I recall that when I was elected in the 2015 election, which was right on the tail of the Harper years, various indicators showed that our country was doing well. At the time, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had won the election on the promise of “Well, maybe things are good, but we think we can do even better.”

At the time, I recall making an argument in the House about the strength of our society being shaped so much by our commitment to equality of opportunity and by the fact of Canada's combination of the policies we had and being a society where taxes were low, development was encouraged and economic activity could be pursued. It was also a society where there was a baseline of social programs in areas such as health and education that were available to everybody. This combination of a baseline of social supports and an environment in which new ideas, new investments and new businesses could start and grow was the right combination for facilitating a high degree of social mobility.

Somebody who came from a less privileged background could still reasonably aspire to be among the most successful in our country. This potential, this hope, could animate the dreams and imaginations of the next generation. This was a source of strength for our country, of prosperity, of opportunity and also of social cohesion. People saw themselves as having a kind of equal opportunity, an equal ability to pursue the Canadian dream, regardless of the background they came from.

I believe it is so important that we be, and restore our commitment to being, an opportunity society where people of all backgrounds and of all ages, particularly young Canadians, regardless of the family they came from and regardless of the circumstances, can have big dreams and can make those dreams a reality.

However, what I hear today when I talk to young Canadians is a great deal of frustration, loss of hope, and a sense that we have become divided as a society. We have become on the one hand a nation of people who already own their home, and on the other hand a nation of people who have no hope that they will ever own their home. We have become a nation of, in some cases, people who are doing well and who respond to our social media posts about people struggling by saying, “Well, I'm not struggling”, but then there are many Canadians who are struggling and who do not see the hope or the possibility of getting ahead anymore.

This is because 11 years of government policy has favoured elites and favoured incumbent holders of power at the expense of the people striving to get ahead. It has also pushed jobs and home ownership out of reach for more and more young people. We have become less of an opportunity society, and as a result, we have become more divided between those who are already at a certain level or position economically and those who struggle to even imagine that they could achieve the basic things that we associate with being able to achieve the Canadian dream.

The basic things that a young person seeks from a material perspective starting out are to be able to have a good job and to be able to afford a home. That foundation of job and home is the basis on which people are able to start a family and achieve those not just material but also critical personal goals in terms of having the children they want to have, building the life and setting up the future they want to be able to provide for the next generation. However, more and more young people struggle to find a job, cannot afford a home and are delaying family formation. Now we see that this is leading to a failure, in many cases, for people to achieve the family goals they want.

• (2255)

If we look at this statistically, the number of children people say they want on average compared to the number of children people are having on average demonstrates that many young Canadian families are not reaching the goals they have identified as wanting to pursue, which is much more than a material tragedy. It is something much deeper and more profound that is being lost. We see frustration, anger, hopelessness and increasing division as a result of the way we have declined in being an opportunity society.

The hope of the Conservative Party is to fight for those who are struggling and give voice to their concerns, but also to propose constructive policies that will restore the sense of hope and opportunity that has defined our country. We are shaped in every region of the country by a certain frontier spirit, a sense that through struggle and striving, an individual should be able to get ahead, have a home, have a job and provide the beautiful and simple things that their family is seeking.

While saying that there is so much more to do to restore that opportunity society, I note that the debate tonight highlights some areas in which Conservatives are winning the debate about key issues facing this country. Conservatives have for 10 years made arguments about the need to build nation-building infrastructure and about the destructive implications of the carbon tax, and we have won those debates. It does not mean that our proposals about repealing unjust taxation or building nation-building infrastructure have been fully implemented in government policy. We are still seeing many failures in terms of government action, but it is clear from the conversation, from the things being said back and forth, that we have won those debates.

We have also won important cultural debates. It was not that long ago that Liberals were constantly running down our heritage and history, attacking figures like our first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. Stephen Harper's celebration of the Canadian victory in the War of 1812 was criticized by the Liberal establishment as promoting extreme militarism or some nonsense like that. Today, the government is saying more that recognizes the positive legacy of people like Isaac Brock and Sir John A. Macdonald. We can see that on some cultural issues and economic issues, Conservatives have been winning debates and advancing arguments. I welcome that. Sometimes Liberals talk as if it is some big political win that they have conceded major arguments that Conservatives have been making, but I am proud of the fact that on economic and cultural issues, Conservatives have been making the arguments and moving the ball forward.

We are doing it on the affordability issue as well. Conservatives have put forward proposals for tax relief for Canadians in terms of gas taxes, and tonight we are debating government legislation through which the government is saying, although not quite directly but by implication, that Conservatives were right. These are the kinds of measures they are putting forward because we have won those debates.

Conservatives can take pride in the fact that we are winning these arguments, but also recognize that there is more work to do, because the government, although piecemeal in conceding certain arguments, continues to have a broadly statist agenda when it comes to development. The Liberals continue to think that the big ideas, the big initiatives, the big push to get things done must be controlled through the centralizing power of government, whereas Conservatives believe in unleashing opportunity for everyone. We believe in rebuilding the opportunity society.

For instance, we supported the idea of having some exceptional circumstances for major projects to be able to move forward. However, what we proposed as a better path was reforming the impact assessment process in general so that proponents of projects large and small did not have to come cap in hand to government, and anyone with a big idea could see a path to getting it done.

While we are seeing some Conservative victories in terms of winning these arguments, there is so much more work that needs to be done to undo 11 years of damage under the Liberal government and to restore the opportunity society that all Canadians, particularly Canadian young people, are seeking.

• (2300)

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague began his remarks by talking about the kind of society we want and what we want for our country's future. On this side of the House, we have a plan that translates into concrete measures aimed at strengthening the Canadian economy and making it more resilient, to ensure we have a stronger Canadian economy that gives us the fiscal capacity to support measures like the one we are debating tonight, that is, extending the suspension of the excise tax.

I think it is safe to say that Canadians have repeatedly demonstrated their confidence in our plan for Canada, whether during the last general election or in the six by-elections, including the most recent ones that took place over the summer.

I would like to ask my colleague whether the results of the recent by-elections are a sign of the public's confidence in our plan, particularly as it relates to building a stronger economy that meets everyone's needs.

[*English*]

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I will just point out to the member that our job in this House is to have substantive conversations about substantive issues. He may take pride in particular by-election results. In my 11 years in this place, I can say that those are the kinds of results that we see ebbs and flows in.

What Canadians will ultimately judge members of Parliament on are the results they see. It will not, in the final analysis, be on the big speeches, the promises, the meetings and the summits. Those things can be steps towards the implementation of concrete policy changes, but in the final analysis, Canadians will ask, am I better off or worse off as a result of the decisions of the government? That is the question.

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax happened during the election, but in this Parliament we are at a really explicit point in time where the Liberals are taking our ideas and running with them. Now, I just want to bring us back a couple of decades to where Stephen Harper started an ambitious agenda of making it so we were not so reliant on the United States. He probably started that back in 2007 or maybe prior to that.

I am wondering if the member can just reflect on some of those great ideas that Stephen Harper had, and if we can push the Liberal government to pursue some of those great ideas.

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, the member raises a great point in terms of debates that Conservatives have won, which I was talking about in my speech. When Stephen Harper took office, we were very limited in our free trade agreements. We had free trade in North America and were very limited beyond that. Stephen Harper subsequently negotiated trade deals with countries representing over 60% of the world's GDP with a massive expansion of our trading relations with like-minded democracies in Europe and in the Asia-Pacific. That was a huge step forward in terms of diversification and reducing our dependence on the United States. However, in 11 years of Liberal government, we did not seize on that opportunity because roadblocks were put in the way of infrastructure projects and of other kinds of developments that would have allowed us to seize the opportunities presented by these new trade deals.

Diversification in terms of strengthening partnerships with like-minded democracies is a great concept. It is not new. It is just that we have lost 11 years of what could have been progress.

● (2305)

Doly Begum (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I go out in my riding to talk to my community and my colleagues go out to talk to their community, one of the things we hear about is how much people appreciate a leader who understands what is going on in this country, sees the issues and does exactly what people want him to do. The Prime Minister is working hard.

One of the things that fascinates me is how this government talks about some of these issues, but when it comes to supporting the bills, the legislation that actually supports people, those members are not there. Why?

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, in terms of who is going to be there or not there, I want to respectfully say to this member that I know she was an NDP member of a provincial parliament previously, and that she referred to the Liberals as being "untrustworthy", "conniving" and "the surest path to greater evil". I wonder if this member would speak openly about some of the policy decisions of the government now and whether she is comfortable with them.

It is amazing to see how so many Liberals have swallowed themselves whole. I am glad we are winning the debates on things like cutting taxes, but it is hard to understand how those members reconcile—

Ned Kuruc (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for years Conservatives have been calling on the Liberal government to provide meaningful relief to Canadians. We have raised concerns about the rising costs of gas, transportation and groceries, and have warned of the pressure facing families, workers, seniors and small businesses.

Today, the government is extending a fuel tax relief measure that it originally said would be temporary. Why is that? It is because the economic reality has proven Conservatives right. Gas taxes matter. The price Canadians pay at the pump matters. When the government adds taxes to fuel, those costs spread throughout our entire economy.

Gas is not a luxury for most Canadians. It is an unavoidable expense. People need to get to work. Parents need to take their children to school, medical appointments and sports, and seniors rely on transportation to buy groceries and attend appointments. Businesses need fuel to move products and serve their customers. The truck driver delivering goods across the country feels the increase, as does the farmer operating machinery, the construction worker driving to a job site and the small business paying for deliveries, which ultimately results in Canadians paying more at the grocery store. Every added expense along the supply chain is passed down to families buying food, clothing and other everyday essentials.

That is why Conservatives fought the Liberal government's proposed increases to fuel taxes. After months of Conservative pressure, the Liberals have now been forced to delay that increase until early next year. I will say, any relief for working Canadians is welcome, but let us be clear, this is not the result of a government that suddenly understands affordability. It is the result of Canadians speaking out and Conservatives refusing to back down.

The government's own announcement recognizes that truckers, farmers, home builders, construction workers and delivery companies benefit from fuel tax relief. Liberals previously argued that the fuel taxes had little impact on affordability. Now, by extending this relief, they are admitting that lower fuel taxes reduce costs throughout our economy. If suspending the tax helps Canadians today, then keeping fuel taxes low should be a priority. This short extension is another Liberal half measure. It does not provide the long-term relief that Canadians need. Gas prices have risen by 25.7%, energy costs have increased by 16.6% and transportation costs have climbed by 7.8%, while grocery prices have risen by another 3.1%. These are not just numbers. They determine whether a parent can afford to drive to work, whether a senior can pay the rent and still buy groceries, or whether a small business can continue employing local workers.

In Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, I hear these stories every day. Neil is a 63-year-old resident who came to my office looking for help because he was struggling to pay his rent. As we looked through the programs that were supposed to be available to him, he learned that he did not qualify for many of them. Neil began tearing up in my office. Now at 63 years old, he is looking for a second job just to keep a roof over his head. That should alarm every single member in the House. A Canadian who has worked hard and contributed through his life should not have to take a second job at 63 simply to survive. Our seniors should not be returning to the workforce because they cannot afford rent, groceries and transportation.

Here is the reality for too many Canadians: higher taxes, raising prices, unaffordable rent, growing debt and less hope that the next month will be any easier. The Liberals would have Canadians believe that this is normal. The government needs to stop telling Canadians how well they are doing and start listening when they say they are falling behind.

Canadians understand something that Liberals have ignored for far too long, which is that taxing fuel makes life more expensive. That is why the Conservatives are calling on the government to remove all federal taxes on gas and diesel. That means removing the 7¢ per litre imposed by the clean fuel regulations, taking the GST off fuel and permanently cancelling the industrial carbon tax. Together, these measures could save Canadians up to 25¢ per litre and as much as $1,000 per year for the average family. That would be real relief, not another temporary pause or announcement designed to get the government through the next few months.

● (2310)

Canadians need lower prices that they can actually see when they fill their tank, buy groceries and pay their monthly bills. Across the country, people are skipping meals, relying on food banks, putting the cost of groceries on credit cards and working multiple jobs just to stay afloat.

At the same time, the Liberal government has recorded almost $26 billion in foreign aid spending over the last two years. That includes about $460 million to Ethiopia, $340 million to Haiti, $312 million to Bangladesh, $306 million to the Democratic Republic of Congo, $275 million to Mozambique, $265 million to Tanzania and $238 million to South Africa. In times like this, every dollar must be tied to measurable results and spent in Canadians' national interest. That standard has not always been met. The Auditor General previously found that Global Affairs Canada could not properly show whether $3.5 billion in foreign aid spending under its feminist international assistance policy was actually improving conditions for women and girls. That is not accountability.

We need to stop sending our taxpayer dollars overseas. We should cut the gas tax instead. We are the Canadian government. We should be looking out for Canadians. Canadians deserve to know where their money is going, how it is being used and what results it is producing. Instead of increasing costs for families buying groceries, it should eliminate wasteful spending and bring those savings home.

It should also take a serious look at its priorities before telling struggling Canadians that there is no money available to help them. Canadians should not have to choose between filling their vehicle and putting food on the table. Seniors should not have to choose between paying rent and buying medication. Parents should not have to tell their children that they cannot attend hockey practice because the cost of driving has become too high. Small business owners should not have to lay off workers because taxes and transportation expenses have destroyed their bottom line.

Canada is a strong and generous country, but a government cannot continue trying to help everyone everywhere while ignoring the people struggling here at home. The Liberals' decision to delay their fuel tax increase proves that Conservative pressure works. It confirms that fuel taxes contribute to higher prices and that relief is possible when the government is finally forced to listen. However, Canadians need more than a temporary extension. They need a government that respects how hard they work for every dollar, controls its spending, lowers taxes and puts their needs first.

Conservatives are proud that our pressure helped secure this relief, but our work is not finished. We will keep fighting to remove federal taxes from gas and diesel; lower the cost of food, transportation and housing; and defend seniors such as Neil who deserve dignity and security after a lifetime of hard work. Canadians have carried the burden of the current government's costly policies long enough. It is time for lower taxes and bringing down the cost of living for Canadians first. The first responsibility of the Government of Canada must be to the people of Canada.

● (2315)

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, my colleague shared stories of constituents in his riding having to do with the cost of living.

What does he tell people when they ask him, “Why did you vote against a tax cut that could help me if I am in the middle class? Why did you vote against the national school food program for my school-aged children? Why did you vote against affordable child care services for my children? Why did you vote against suspending the one-week waiting period for employment insurance?”

When he tells us these stories, I wish I had the full picture. How does my colleague justify these votes to the constituents who come to see him to talk about the cost of living?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I would remind the member to ask his questions through the Chair.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Ned Kuruc: Mr. Speaker, the stories I hear from my riding are these: "Keep fighting for me. Keep trying to lower taxes. Keep the Liberal government accountable. We trust in you, and we know that you are going to go to Parliament to fight for us", just as I am fighting today to cut all the fuel tax for Canadians to put money back in their pocket.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek cited some relatively small amounts of money that have been sent overseas to the poorest of the poor. I do not know if he is aware that the Liberals broke their election platform promise to not cut foreign assistance, and they took another page out of the Conservatives' platform by cutting $2.7 billion from overseas development assistance.

Does my colleague agree that we should make sure that the Canadian pension plan, the over $714 billion that we have contributed over our working lives, is invested in Canada? The majority of it is not invested in Canada. A great deal is invested in the U.S. Should we not repatriate that with a change to the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act?

Ned Kuruc: Mr. Speaker, the member raises some very good points. The Liberals did break their election promise, but they have also broken a lot of other promises. We were supposed to get a deal in July.

Going back to her question, I agree with her. I agree that Canadian money should stay in Canada, but what can I say? The Prime Minister holds about 93% of his stock assets in U.S. companies, so why do we think he would do anything different?

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for his speech this evening. He is fighter for his community and it is better for having him as its representative.

What we are debating tonight is in no short order a half measure. It goes a bit of the way, and we will take any relief we can get for Canadians. What does the member think we should be doing next to bring more relief for Canadians in this country?

Ned Kuruc: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question. He also fights very hard for his community.

What should we be doing? There is a lot, but we need to start with getting rid of the fuel tax. It is the one thing that Canadians can feel right away.

I would propose, although this is not the forum for it, our Conservative economic plan. We have identified $150 billion in savings that Canadians can benefit from. We are starting here, but we have proposed a plan that I hope my colleagues on the other side will at least take a look at.

We are in a trade war; make no mistake about that. The President has put unjustified tariffs on us, and we have to fight against that. In order to do that, we have to look at Canadians first. We need to keep money in Canada. We need to look at wasteful spending, of which we have identified 150 billion dollars' worth, come together and work on that for the sake of Canadians and for the sake of moving forward.

● (2320)

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to talk about an issue close to many Canadians' hearts, including many residents in my riding: affordability. Despite the Prime Minister's words that he thinks affordability is the best it has been for a decade, Conservatives know that is just simply not the case.

I want to start tonight by reading some stories from constituents who have written to me over the past several months while Parliament has been absent to tell me about the troubles and difficulties they are facing in paying their bills and having money at the end of the month.

I will start with Barbara from Beaverton in my riding. She wrote to me, "I'm a single person. I own a home and do home care. I work a lot. I try to balance at the end of the month, but I'm still short." Barbara works hard and tries to budget, but she is still short at the end of the month. She is short at the end of the month because of rising costs in Canada, inflation caused by inflationary spending by 10 years of Liberal government and higher costs, including fuel costs, which we are talking about tonight.

Next is Sheila, who is from Sutton in my riding, in my community. She wrote to me and said, "We are seniors and now have to be on a strict budget to be able to afford simple meals." That is not dignity in retirement. Seniors should be able, in a rich country like Canada, to put more than simple meals on the table after a lifetime of hard work.

Cindy from Beaverton, wrote to me and said, "We are farmers, and everything costs more, from diesel to fertilizer, to parts, steel, repairs and maintenance." It is tough for farmers. I come from a community that has a strong history of agriculture, as do many of my colleagues in the Conservative Party. It is tough being a farmer, working hard, paying bills and trying to put food on not only their table, but the tables of thousands of Canadians across the country.

However, everything costs more, as Cindy said. Unfortunately, we have a government that does not recognize that, does not acknowledge that and does not understand agriculture in any way, shape or form. In fact, the Prime Minister says that Canadians do not use steel. We know that Cindy and her family operate farm machinery made of steel to put food on our tables.

That is an example of one thing that is not included in this temporary measure: the indirect effects of the industrial carbon tax on farmers, which farmers have been talking about for months now, but there has been no response from the government.

Carol, also from Beaverton, wrote to me and said, “We are blessed to have a tax-free pension and have no mortgage, and we are in our eighties and have few needs, but our younger generation, they need help through this crazy time.”

Similarly, Char from Stouffville, who is also concerned about young people and her children, wrote, “We are retired and managing since we own our home and don't drive much these days, but our children are affected by gas, mortgage, grocery prices, so cut the red tape, let the economy build and thrive, reduce tax.”

These families are concerned about the next generation, and so am I, and so are many of my younger colleagues in the Conservative caucus, because it is the next generation that has to pay the debts of the government. We are facing the largest budget deficits in this country outside of the pandemic, and every dollar spent by the government that is borrowed is a future tax dollar that must be paid by the next generation.

Nowhere is affordability more acute for the next generation than when it comes to housing, an issue I have raised many times in the House and will continue to raise, because the next generation is getting short-changed. They were promised the Canadian dream: Work hard, play by the rules, save money, plan and then buy a home and start a family. However, that is not happening. That is not happening at all for the next generation, who are continually locked out of housing. Despite lots of talk from the other side, we have no action. There is very little action.

In fact, we know exactly how much action we have received from the government because the Minister of Housing told us last week and again today in the House. For all of the government's effort over the last 18 months, including a new bureaucracy, billions of dollars allocated to it and more staff, what have the Liberals done?

● (2325)

The government has committed to, not built but committed to build, 19,000 new housing units. Its target was 500,000. After 18 months, it has 19,000 units to show for it, and they are not even built, just committed to. That is a drop in the bucket. It is de minimis. It is irrelevant. The Liberals have not even started to address the problem, despite their promises that we would build at speeds never seen before, that never since the Second World War would the government move at such haste. The result of its haste is 19,000 units out of a 500,000-unit target.

In fact, the government's own housing agency, the CMHC, says that this year alone, the government will be hundreds of thousands of units of housing below their target. They estimate a gap of anywhere between about 180,000 to 230,000 homes just this year, not even going into the future. We are going in the wrong direction.

Despite the government and the Prime Minister saying that affordability has never been better and that rents have never been lower, we are not building any homes. It gets worse than that because, this year, CMHC has reported that we will build fewer homes in 2026 than we built in 2025. Not only is the gap getting bigger, but we are going in the wrong direction.

I sympathize with Carol and Char, who are concerned about the next generation and their ability to afford to live in the country, buy a home and start a family. Lastly, Christine from Stouffville wrote to me that, for the costs arising for basic living expenses, such as food, utility and transportation, there seems to be no break in sight.

I agree. There seems to be no break for Canadians when it comes to the government. It has been 11 years with no break and higher costs on all things, whether it is fuel, housing and even one's taxes going up every year. I sympathize with my constituents, and I am here to tell them tonight that we will continue to fight for an affordable Canada for them. We will continue to drag the government kicking and screaming to do the right thing, because it seems that we always have to drag it to the right place.

As for the proposal we are speaking to tonight, the suspension of some taxes on some fuels, but not all taxes on all fuels, of course, it is a good start, but it is just a start. We do not want a pat on the back for this. I do not care about a pat on the back for this. We want relief for Canadians, and that is good enough, but the Liberals opposed this measure. They might have collective amnesia but, just a few months ago in May, we proposed this measure during an opposition day motion. Liberal member after Liberal member got up and told us that this was a bad idea and they voted against it.

We knew it was a good idea in May and, thankfully, the government has changed its mind, or at least half of the way there, to get us to where we are today. It does not go far enough. It does not extend the cut long enough and it does not include other hidden taxes on fuel. I will just raise one example that it does not include. The clean fuel regulation is a big one. It is a big one on the cost of gasoline and diesel, as it is 17¢ a litre on gasoline and 16¢ a litre on diesel.

One does not have to take my word for it. That is the analysis from the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Moreover, the clean fuel regulation, the Parliamentary Budget Officer says, is a regressive tax. That means it hurts households that can least afford it. He said, at the time, that “lower income households generally spend a larger share of their income on transportation and other energy-intensive goods and services compared to higher income households”.

I seem to remember the member for Kingston and the Islands getting up and opposing our opposition day motion, saying that, actually, it would be wealthy Canadians who would benefit the most from this tax. When we have economic advice like what we are getting from the member for Kingston and the Islands, it is no wonder we have the deficits we have.

Let me conclude by saying a message to my residents. I will continue to get up in the House and tell their stories and drag the government to do the right thing every day, because we are fighting for a more affordable Canada for all Canadians.

● (2330)

Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated my colleague's comments, but I disagree with a great deal of them. Fundamentally, they are rooted in a story of Canada that is not remotely accurate. Our deficits and debts are among the best in the G7. There is so much work to do, but so much work has already occurred. Rents are down, housing prices are down and we are pushing forward on the affordability agenda with the decision we will hopefully be making at the end of this debate.

I would like to talk about farmers. The member mentioned farmers, and I think it is very important that we do so.

So much of what we talk about did not impact farmers, at least not the way that it did citizens in cities. They had purple gas. They were not paying the excise taxes at 13¢ provincially. It was four cents in my home province. It was four cents federally. Farming activity is not subject to the industrial carbon tax. Of course, as a business, a farm is not really paying GST in that sense. That is an input credit.

Diesel is an expensive input right now, and I want to hear the member's thoughts on what we can do to support farmers in that sense.

Jacob Mantle: Mr. Speaker, we can support farmers by extending any support we can for input costs. The member says that farmers do not pay the industrial carbon tax. They do, actually, indirectly, because fertilizer and other industrial goods that are inputs into the manufacture of food and the growing of food bear those costs. When the fertilizer manufacturer pays the industrial carbon tax, who does the member think he charges that to? Who does he think that is passed on to? It is the farmer who buys the fertilizer. Obviously farmers are bearing that burden, and that comes through the supply chain into the cost of groceries, which we have seen explode in this country.

Ned Kuruc (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's community knows that he is fighting for them and trying to save them money along the way. We are here to save Canadians money. We are proposing to cut all of the fuel tax, but what other ideas does he have to save his community money and all Canadians money in these turbulent economic times?

Jacob Mantle: Mr. Speaker, the one thing we have proposed, at least with respect to this debate tonight, is to broaden the scope of this relief for Canadians, for example by including the clean fuel regulations, which add 16¢ per litre on diesel and 17¢ per litre on gasoline. That is more than the entire relief being offered by the government. Why will the Liberals not include that?

Jake Sawatzky (New Westminster—Burnaby—Maillardville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has mentioned that this is an important time to cut costs for Canadians, and I have a simple question: Will he be supporting this bill to do so?

Jacob Mantle: Mr. Speaker, any bill that the government brings forward that cuts tax for average Canadians, I will support.

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this evening, I want to recognize that we are working together to pass this bill. This is a good example of what we can accomplish when we work together, something that we are not used to seeing from the Conservative opposition. I would therefore like to know whether this is a sign of things to come in this fall parliamentary session.

Will the Conservatives finally understand that Canadians expect us to work together to help them deal with the cost of living? Will the Conservatives now support the various measures that we are putting in place? Is what we are seeing today a shift in the Conservatives' stance?

[*English*]

Jacob Mantle: Mr. Speaker, obviously, if the government brings forward good ideas that help Canadians, it will find support in the opposition. If it brings forward bad proposals that hurt Canadians or hurt our economy, it will find opposition. It would make it a lot easier to work with the government if every time we proposed an idea, members did not get up and say that they will not take lessons from the Conservatives or that it is a bad idea, just as they did with this. We proposed this in May of this year. Every one of them stood up and voted against it, and now they are bringing it forward. When they talk about collaboration, it goes both ways.

● (2335)

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of my hard-driving constituents in the expansive riding of Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke to speak to Bill C-38, an act to amend the Excise Tax.

Yesterday, the finance minister told the House that the Liberals would take no lessons from the Conservatives. Today, class is in session, and the lesson plan is lower taxes. Conservatives have been calling for gas tax relief for months, while Liberals enjoyed vacations in Tuscany. They left the decision to extend the gas tax holiday until the last minute in an effort to maximize uncertainty.

The Liberal decision to end this tax break in the middle of winter is perplexing. The Prime Minister has claimed he speaks to the United States President regularly. Does the Prime Minister have secret knowledge about when the conflict over the Strait of Hormuz will end? Based on the legislation before us, it appears the Liberals think the oil shipments through the strait will be at 50% of pre-war levels by January 31, and the entire strait will be open by the end of March. Of course, the Liberals have no idea when the conflict will end. The government wants to provide as little relief as it can get away with. Hiking the tax by 50% on February 1 is its way of boiling the frog slowly.

It takes a certain level of Liberal arrogance to call a bill that schedules tax hikes the Canadian fuel affordability act. This is all part of a plan with the Liberals. They call the bill, which would hike taxes, affordability. They call inflationary spending affordability. They call doubling the deficit fiscally responsible.

Despite their elbows up rhetoric, the Prime Minister is adopting the exact same form of state-led capitalism we see coming from the White House. The fact that the Prime Minister copied the U.S. President's plan to launch a sovereign debt fund is very telling about how both view the economy. The U.S. President has often compared himself to a mall manager, while the Prime Minister acts like a bank manager. Neither of them should be so intimately involved in the operations of any particular business.

This is exactly why Norway's actual sovereign wealth fund does not invest in Norway. It is the exact opposite of the sovereign debt funds in Canada and the United States. These debt funds are specifically designed to pick domestic companies. The temptation to politically interfere in the operations of companies or on behalf of the companies is too great.

We have too many examples of this already happening in Canada, even without the sovereign debt fund. The company formerly known as SNC-Lavalin is a perfect example. The last prime minister tried to bully his justice minister into letting SNC off the hook for bribery and corruption. When that did not work, he fired her. Then he replaced her with a man whom the current Prime Minister made our UN ambassador. Now SNC has a new name and new business partners who together have formed the consortium Cadence.

When the Liberals released a request for proposals to build Via's high-frequency rail system, Cadence submitted a proposal that called on the Liberals to scrap this popular plan and replace it with a much more expensive high-speed rail line. One of the partners in the consortium is the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, whose former president just so happened to be the Clerk of the Privy Council. Together they cooked up a secret plan to privatize the most profitable parts of Via while taxpayers pay for the rest of Via.

If the Liberals are going to hike taxes, the least they could do is not actively make every alternative form of transportation more expensive, yet that is the plan they cooked up with their billionaire buddies last week, to privatize our airports and to privatize Via Rail. Now, their first bill back proposes to hike the gas tax in the middle of winter.

To defend these choices, the Liberals have already started to point to examples of Europe. The Liberals want Europe's private airports without its robust airline competition. They want a French company to build their high-speed rail, without France's transparency laws. They want European levels of gas taxation to force us all into Chinese cars running on an electric grid powered by Brookfield.

What the Prime Minister really wants is to partner with Europe to impose carbon tariffs. The legacy media may have memory-holed the fact that the very first policy the Prime Minister ever proposed when he was just a Liberal leadership candidate 20 months ago was to impose carbon tariffs on Canadians who dared to purchase products from countries without a carbon tax. Is it any surprise the carbon tariff Prime Minister appointed the only Liberal MP to acknowledge carbon tariffs are coming as his parliamentary secretary?

● (2340)

This is all part of the Liberals' war on affordability. From their ban on plastic food packaging to their inflammatory deficit spending, everything they touch becomes more expensive. When the U.S. President endorsed our Prime Minister, he said it was because they agreed on many things. When President Trump attacked our Conservative leader, it was because we did not support the President's agenda.

What the Liberal Prime Minister and the Republican President agree on is that they should be at the centre of every consequential economic decision in the country. They both agree that the government should serve the interests of the investor class. Now the Liberals even have one big, beautiful omnibus bill to make Bay Street great again. Even Liberal-funded reporters are calling this latest move Trumpian. We would think they would have caught on to the similarities when the Prime Minister literally borrowed an oversized novelty page from the U.S. President's playbook on his first day in office.

Fortunately for Canadians and Americans, there is still one political party on this continent that actually believes in freedom. As our leader ably demonstrated last week, there is a clear path to long-term sustainable economic growth, and that is to empower the free people in a free market. The Prime Minister and the U.S. President have a faith-based approach to running a country's economy. They have the faith that their business acumen is more than enough to pick winners and losers.

Conservatives put our faith in the Canadian people. We trust Canadian entrepreneurs to out-innovate and out-compete the world. We trust Canadian consumers to buy the products and services that work best for them. We reject the tired idea that a president, a prime minister or even a king can decide who we can trade our property with. We believe in cutting red tape for all businesses, not just the ones that hire the best Liberal lobbyists. We believe in cutting taxes for all businesses, not just for the ones that invest in projects that Liberals find politically acceptable to support. Conservatives trust and believe in Canadians because we have confidence born of true patriotic love.

The Liberals and Republicans have succumbed to the siren song of economic nationalism and protectionism. That is rooted in insecurity. It saps confidence. It breeds corruption. It makes life less affordable. Is it really any coincidence that the sectors of our economy protected from foreign competition are the most expensive, such as domestic air travel, cellphone bills, insurance rates and broadband Internet? Canadians can reasonably blame the U.S. President's actions for the high price of gas, but Canadians have only the Liberal Party to blame for the high cost of everything else.

While the finance minister can pretend not to copy our policies, he cannot ignore reality for long. Canadians are being squeezed, and the Liberal plan to hike the gas tax in the middle of winter is not the solution. The Liberals are already raking in GST windfall from higher gas prices. They do not need to compound the pain with a frosty tax hike on February 1.

Instead of teasing Canadians with temporary tax relief, the Liberals could do the hard work of committing to substantial tax reform. Of course, this would actually force the Prime Minister to spend time in Canada rather than hitting the globalist gala circuit. It is clearly more enjoyable for the Prime Minister to spend all his time in Europe re-reannouncing our partnership strategy for a new future alliance for a strategic future.

Instead of introducing a bill to raise gas taxes and calling it a fuel affordability act, maybe the Prime Minister could use some of his international rizz to negotiate an end to the conflict over the Strait of Hormuz. With any luck, that would earn him a Nobel Peace Prize, which we could trade off for tariff relief, or instead, he could spend his time helping his former colleagues at Brookfield partner with a Crown corporation he controls to launch a new maple-flavoured investment fund.

Barring any attempt to subvert the fixed elections act, Canadians will get to render a verdict in October 2029 on how they think the Prime Minister has spent his time in office.

● (2345)

Braeden Caley (North Vancouver—Capilano, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, graciously, over two decades ago, the member joined a group of students visiting Parliament, which I was a part of, and spoke about why the place mattered. It is somewhat of a surprise, at this advanced hour in the House proceedings tonight, to hear a verifiable bedtime story of snakes and ladders, of partisan attacks and personal attacks taking us variously across the globe and the country. Given that we are in the midst of a trade war, we are seeing businesses and workers impacted by tariffs that are unprecedented in any of our lifetimes.

Why does the member feel that is an important use of the House's valuable time, at such an important moment for our country? Maybe she could confirm, on a measure to lower costs for Canadians, how she actually intends to vote on this bill.

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. colleague for his comments, but I did not enter the chamber or the House of Commons at all in my life before I became a member of Parliament. Unfortunately, he must have me confused with someone else.

I have the right to speak on behalf of the people I represent, and they are telling me they cannot afford to live. The grocery store is almost out of bounds. It used to be a place to socialize, but now it is a place they dread. I believe that my speaking on behalf of the people who are trying to get the message that they need more affordable prices to government is duly acceptable.

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is a freedom fighter in the House, and we are proud to have her on this side.

My question is about the member's riding. She mentioned that it is expansive, and I am familiar with it. I know it is longer than most, end to end, and especially longer than many urban ridings the government members come from.

When fuel prices rise, and when government actions cause fuel prices to rise, can constituents and residents in her riding drive less? Can they drive less to work? Can they drive less to the grocery store? What happens to them when these costs rise? She has a big riding, and they have to go to far places. What do they do in that situation?

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the expansive size means they need to have transportation to go to work or to the grocery store. We do not even have a bus system. We have no public transportation available, save for a new start-up service in the city of Pembroke, which helps no one living outside the city area. In fact, there are people living in rural areas who cannot even afford to get a car to get a job or to keep their job. They are having to give up their jobs because they cannot afford to get there. Seniors have to be masterful at planning their week out to get groceries or to see the doctor, because every cab ride costs them a minimum of $10. When one is on a very low fixed income, that takes up the entire month.

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is one of the most experienced members of the House in terms of years of service. In fact, she served for nearly a decade on the government side during the Harper years.

In her speech, she was quite critical of our government's economic policies, which aim to strengthen the Canadian economy and make it more resilient. Her former leader, Mr. Harper, spoke at our recent economic summit in Toronto about the value of our government's economic policies.

I would like to hear her thoughts on Mr. Harper's speech at the recent economic summit in Toronto. I would also like to know how she reconciles her speech tonight with the one Mr. Harper gave in Toronto.

● (2350)

[*English*]

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, to bring back the spirit of former prime minister Harper in the House, he used to be reviled, but now he is seen as one of the best prime ministers we ever had in Canada. Like Prime Minister Harper, who made decisions based on what was right, this party does also, and we will do our job in Parliament in looking at each proposal that is made. If, like Mr. Harper, he supports certain things and we support certain things, we will vote in favour of them.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): There being no further members wishing to speak, pursuant to order made on Monday, September 21, Bill C-38, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act, extension of the federal fuel excise tax relief, is deemed read a second time on division.

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

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

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

EMPLOYMENT

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the constituents struggling to make ends meet.

I want to begin by congratulating the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance for responding to my question without engaging in personal insults or cheap partisan attacks. This is a significant improvement over his last response, yet he declined to answer the actual question. Still, the response to my question was illuminating.

Given the Prime Minister's central pitch to voters was that he alone could save the Canadian economy, the news that economic growth is near zero is devastating to his brand. Canadians thought they were getting a technocratic central banker. Instead, we got an investment banker using taxpayers' pensions as leverage to catalyze a growing debt crisis.

The parliamentary secretary's answer reveals the dilemma the Liberals find themselves in. Unlike some of the more fanatical colleagues who describe the economy with unrealistic exuberance, the parliamentary secretary spoke about “signs of progress” and “building foundations”. A shrinking economy destroys the Prime Minister's brand. A booming economy destroys the justification for deficit spending. An anemic economy is just what the Liberals want. It was Justin Trudeau's justification for turning Canada back into a deficit country. It is this Prime Minister's justification for doubling Trudeau's deficit.

Unfortunately, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer made clear in June, there is just a 1% chance Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio will go down. This public debt is being used for the largest corporate welfare spending spree in Canadian history. This debt binge is happening at the exact same time investors are demanding higher interest rates for government debt.

The Liberals want us to ignore the slow growth, the job losses and the debt spiral. At the same time, they accuse us of ignoring the May jobs report. I looked at the jobs report, and it is not as rosy a picture as the Liberals would have us believe. The headline claims 88,000 jobs were created, yet Stats Canada hired 33,000 people to conduct the census in May, and 17,000 of the remaining jobs were in construction, which sounds great until you realize this is Canada, where we build more in the spring and summer and less in the winter.

When compared year over year, there has been no job growth in construction. We cannot say the same for retail. In May, 35,000 Canadians lost jobs in the retail sector. In fact, since May 2025, over 61,000 retail jobs have been lost. Despite what the Liberals would have us believe, Donald Trump cannot put a tariff on the mall.

The other big sector with job gains was in culture and recreation, because camps, resorts and other seasonal tourist businesses began hiring for the summer season. I know Liberals think they can control the weather with taxes, but they cannot claim credit when the sun shines. For 11 long years, the Liberals have been promising their deficit spending would turbocharge growth and investment. It has not.

Recently, the Prime Minister said that they are investing tremendous amounts of money in the country like we have never seen before. Oh, my apologies, that was a quote from President Trump. Here is the Prime Minister's quote: “We’ve secured new investment in the country of a size not seen, arguably, before.” Well, set aside the hyperbole and the Prime Minister's narcissism, Canadians can see the truth for themselves. Liberals love low growth. Only Conservatives are fighting for a strong economy.

● (2355)

Madeleine Chenette (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages and to the Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I really like about adjournment proceedings is that it does allow us the chance to publicly correct the record.

Conservatives were very quick to say that Canada was in a technical recession. We now know that is not the case. In August, Statistics Canada confirmed that the Canadian economy grew at an annualized rate of 3.3% in the second quarter, and also revised its Q1 figures to show that the economy grew in those months as well.

It would be nice if the Conservative Party were as quick to celebrate these achievements as they are to tell us that Canada is broken. However, sticking to the facts does not make for good social media clips or help with fundraising emails.

[*Translation*]

The world is changing rapidly. The U.S. is imposing new tariffs on Canada that are designed to hurt and divide us. At the same time, conflicts in Europe and the Middle East are driving up prices the world over. Despite these challenges, however, Canada continues to show resilience. While the new U.S. tariffs are creating headwinds, the Canadian economy is holding to a position of relative strength.

We certainly recognize that some workers, families and small businesses continue to be under pressure. That is why it is important to look at the facts, as well as the Canadian economy's overall performance. Canada's economic strength is recognized internationally. The International Monetary Fund predicts that Canada will be one of the fastest-growing economies in the G7 this year and next. Economic growth rebounded strongly in the second quarter, with real gross domestic product up 3.3%, as I mentioned. Canada had the strongest quarterly growth in the G7 and posted a second consecutive increase in real gross domestic product per capita. In addition, our net debt-to-GDP ratio sits at just 10.2%, far below the G7 average of 101.8%. In fact, Canada's net debt burden is far lower than any other G7 nation.

These facts show that Canada's economy is built to withstand global uncertainty and to continue to grow. This resilience is a direct result of the targeted measures our government has taken to support Canadians, such as making fuel more affordable for Canadians. That is why the government introduced Bill C-38, which extends the temporary suspension of the federal excise tax on gasoline, diesel and aviation fuel until January 31, 2027, after which 50% of the usual excise tax rate will apply from February 1 to March 31, 2027.

By reducing fuel and transportation costs, this measure will provide targeted relief to workers, families, farmers and businesses across the country, including in sectors that rely heavily on transportation and construction.

The government is also taking broader steps to make life more affordable, including through the Canada groceries and essentials benefit, income tax cuts for 22 million Canadians, the cancellation of the consumer carbon tax, and the GST relief for first-time homebuyers of new homes. Taken together, these measures will allow Canadians to keep more of their hard-earned money. Each one reflects a consistent principle that our government upholds, specifically that federal support must be timely, targeted and fiscally sustainable.

[*English*]

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the latest Liberal talking point is to claim Canada is the second-fastest-growing economy in the G7. This is like your teenager claiming they were the least drunk person at the keg party.

What the Liberals do not like to mention is that the fastest-growing economy in the G7 is the United States. That means the U.K., Germany, France and Italy are all growing slower than us. Despite the slow growth in Europe, the Prime Minister has spent two-thirds of his overseas travel in Europe. He even enjoyed a family vacation in Tuscany while telling Canadians to vacation more at home. It is easy for the Prime Minister to fly to a nice privately owned European airport and give the same speech announcing the same new partnership strategy for a future alliance, for a new strategic future with the EU.

Talk is cheap, and fancy speeches in foreign capitals do not put food on the table for Canadians.

● (2400)

Madeleine Chenette: Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that our government is delivering timely, tangible and fiscally sustainable relief for Canadians at a time when they need it, and we are doing so from a position of economic strength, not decline.

In a more uncertain world, the government is focused on what it can control, advancing nation-building projects, removing barriers to growth, unlocking private capital and making investments to build the strongest economy in the G7. That is how we will ensure that Canada not only avoids the worst-case scenarios predicted by many at the outset of the U.S. trade actions last year but also emerges stronger, with a boost today and a bridge to a better tomorrow.

THE ECONOMY

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the evening.

Before I begin my comments, I will note that we have had a debate throughout the entire day on Bill C-38. Many of the things I want to say that relate to my question from June were said during the debate on Bill C-38 as well. The point I would like to make, and I hope the government side can hear it, is that even though the Prime Minister has commenced a process to erase the legacy of Justin Trudeau, to move away from his most disastrous policies, structural reforms are still needed to ensure that small businesses, the businesses that pay the majority of taxes in Canada, are made whole.

We are going to see that through taxation and regulatory reform on a major scale, but we have not seen that yet. I encourage the government to heed the words that small businesses, the ones with eight to 10 employees, still need market access to the United States. These are 50-year-old relationships that are in jeopardy right now.

Today, business leaders from across western Canada came to Parliament. I will acknowledge that they are happy with Bill C-39, the Liberals' big, beautiful bill. They are happy about the attack the Liberals are going to make on organized labour, even though the Conservatives are still debating it and trying to figure it out. However, they have stressed the need for regulatory reform and measures that are going to help small businesses in western Canada. In Manitoba, for example, 50% of exports go to the United States. It is higher in a lot of other provinces. We have to take that relationship seriously.

In my question back in June, I highlighted that Canada has lost 100,000 entrepreneurs over the last two decades, and there has been a 19% increase in business exits since 2019. That is not acceptable. Right now, we are facing major challenges, but the government can do a couple of things better. It can look at the RTRI. Very few businesses understood what that program was, and the Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada was around nine months late in delivering it based on the timelines he stated when the program was announced.

If the Liberals say we are at economic war, why would they make businesses wait nine months for a program they said they would deliver in three months? That is simply not acceptable. We need confidence that the public service, the ministers and the parliamentary secretaries are going to step up, hold their public servants to a higher standard, do things in their power and actually move at the speeds they said they would in the last election. So far, we have not seen that. It has to change. We have to stand up for Canada. The government needs to stand up for Canada, and it is not doing that in a responsible way.

The final statistic I will mention is that according to a TD Economics report, graduates in mathematics, computer science and engineering are less likely to remain in Canada than non-STEM graduates. The University of Waterloo shows that the highest performing students are the most likely to leave Canada after graduation. Those are the entrepreneurs starting businesses. They are going to the United States to do that. We need to bring in the structural reforms to support small businesses and—

● (2405)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Madeleine Chenette (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages and to the Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the global economy is undergoing a rupture. Geopolitical threats are mounting, and countries around the world are grappling with severe trade disruptions and significant economic risks. This includes the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, which continues to disrupt global energy supplies, drive up energy prices and increase uncertainty worldwide. Canada, as we all know, is not immune to this turbulence. That is why we tabled Bill C-38 to extend the temporary suspension of the federal fuel excise tax.

As members of the House will remember, last spring our government temporarily reduced federal fuel excise tax rates to zero cents per litre. While that measure was set to expire on Labour Day, Bill C-38 proposes to extend it until January 31, 2027. Fifty per cent of the regular excise tax rate would then apply from February 1 to March 31, 2027. This means that Canadians would continue to benefit from lower taxes, saving 10¢ per litre on gasoline and four cents per litre on diesel, helping households and businesses manage transportation and operating costs.

[*Translation*]

For many small businesses, transportation and fuel costs remain a significant expense. Extending this relief measure will help businesses manage their costs while continuing to invest and create jobs.

However, supporting Canadians through the current challenges is not just about providing immediate relief. It is also about ensuring that our economy remains strong, competitive and resilient in an uncertain world. While new U.S. tariffs add uncertainty for Canadian businesses and workers, Canada is starting from a position of strength.

With a robust economy and a clear growth strategy focused on driving investment, increasing productivity, strengthening domestic industries and expanding access to global markets, Canada is well placed to respond to external pressures.

Domestic activity has remained strong and our continental supply chains have been more resilient than expected, thanks to the adaptability of Canadian businesses and the fact that CUSMA protections shielded approximately 85% of Canadian merchandise exports from recent U.S. actions.

The business climate in Canada has recovered, and companies are diversifying both their suppliers and their markets. The figures show that Canada has what the world is looking for. Canada leads the G7 in terms of per capita foreign direct investment inflows. Overall, real GDP grew by 1.9% in 2025, despite persistent global uncertainty.

The outlook for the future remains encouraging. A Statistics Canada survey shows that businesses plan to increase their capital expenditures this year, while the International Monetary Fund forecasts that Canada will post the second-fastest growth in the G7 in 2026 and 2027.

Since the start of 2025, Canada has created more than twice as many jobs per capita as the United States, with the majority of these jobs in the private sector. Things have really taken off since the start of 2025. At the same time, inflation averaged 2.1% in 2025, while wages have risen faster than prices over the last five years.

Overall, these results show that the Canadian economy continues to grow, attract investment and create jobs despite a highly uncertain global environment. These results are no accident. They are truly the result of work that enables us to strengthen the economy and prioritize affordability—

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford.

Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I will note the point made by the parliamentary secretary in respect to global uncertainty, but I would just ask the member to acknowledge, despite their efforts and their policy of erasure in respect to Justin Trudeau, that we can do more for small businesses in Canada today through regulatory change, supporting trade resilience and actually building the major projects that we thought were going to take place this year under Bill C-5, legislation that Conservatives supported again.

I understand that the first project will be approved in the coming weeks, but we need not one; we need 100. We have to move at speeds we have never seen before, and we are not seeing that from the current government, so please, stand up for Canada, get the bureaucracy out of the way and do more to support our small businesses.

● (2410)

Madeleine Chenette: Mr. Speaker, Canada's economy has demonstrated considerable resilience during one of the most challenging periods in recent history, and our SMEs know that our government is there to help them with all our programs to make a difference for them. Therefore, despite ongoing geopolitical instability, trade disruption and economic uncertainties, Canadians continue to benefit from a strong economy, rising wages, moderating inflation and a resilient labour market. We will continue to do whatever it takes to build an even stronger and more competitive economy for the future, and our SMEs in Canada know that we are there for them.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Calgary Crowfoot not being present to raise during the Adjournment Proceedings the matter for which notice has been given, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until later this day at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:11 a.m.)

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