



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

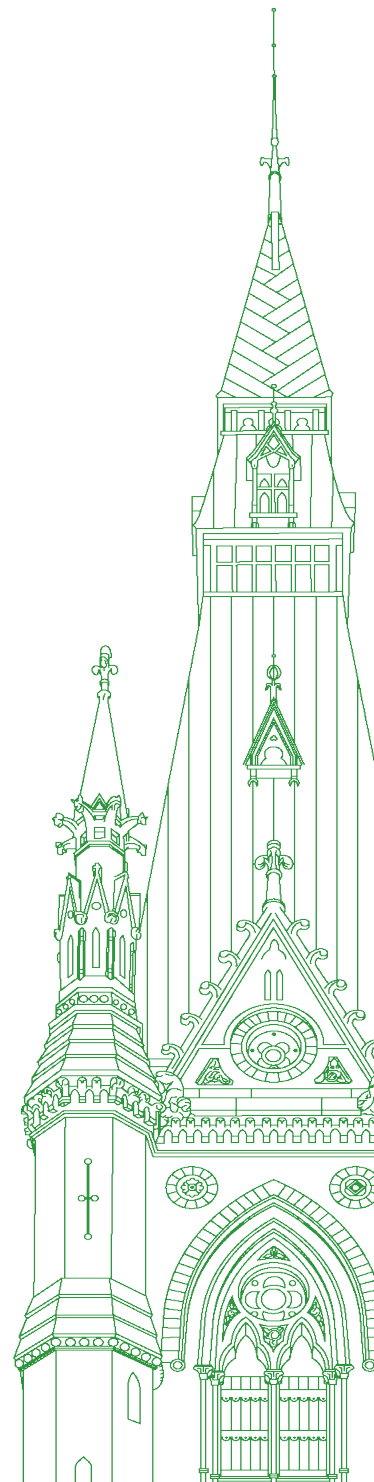
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Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 6, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

STRENGTHENING CANADA'S DEFENCE SECTOR ACT

Hon. Stephen Fuhr (for the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-40, An Act respecting production, procurement and investment in relation to national defence and national security.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (York South—Weston—Etobicoke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, entitled “The Next Phase of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy”.

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

[*English*]

Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of Conservative members regarding the foreign affairs committee's review of Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy. While this region is vital to Canada's future, the government report papers over four years of empty announcements, inadequate resources and delayed implementation. Instead of confronting threats, the government soft-pedals Beijing's military expansion, economic coercion and human rights abuses while pursuing a new strategic partnership with China.

Most notably, the Liberals refused to sign the Canada-Taiwan trade co-operation framework agreement fully agreed upon since March 2025 and absurdly recommend operationalizing an agree-

ment they refused to sign, simply bowing to Beijing's intimidation. Meanwhile, our weak hard-power contributions lag behind key allies, risking Canada's standing as a reliable security partner. Conservatives demand real action: sign the Taiwan trade agreement immediately, accelerate regional defence investments, publish transparent accountability scorecards and make all new engagement with Beijing strictly conditional on international law.

FINANCE

Hon. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Finance in relation to Bill C-38, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act on the extension of the federal fuel excise tax relief.

[*Translation*]

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting three petitions on behalf of residents in my riding regarding Canada Post.

The first petition is about something many people thought Conservatives would do but the Liberals are doing, and that is about door-to-door delivery. Community members are calling on the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement to reinstate the moratorium on community mailbox conversions and instruct Canada Post to maintain home delivery to all addresses that currently receive it. Who would have thought?

Routine Proceedings

The second petition is to save rural post offices. The Canadian postal service charter affirms that the provision of postal services to rural regions is an integral part of Canada Post's universal service. These residents call on the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement to reinstate the moratorium on the closure of rural post offices and to direct Canada Post to explore opportunities to strengthen the rural postal network instead of making it weaker.

In the third petition, petitioners in Mission are especially concerned about the future of our beloved post office in downtown Mission. They are calling on the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement to instruct Canada Post to maintain the post office located at 33191 1st Avenue in Mission as a fully functioning post office, as well as a sorting and delivering depot.

These petitioners note that Canada Post needs a new business plan and that the Government of Canada has not taken the necessary steps to make sure the CEOs are doing due diligence with Canadian taxpayer dollars. They do not want to lose their services because of bad management in Ottawa.

● (1005)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting three petitions.

The first petition was signed by over 7,500 individuals. They are calling upon the Canadian government to ensure that all eligible residents of Canada can access required health care, including gender-affirming care, as outlined in the Canada Health Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We know that gender-affirming care is a form of life-saving care and is evidence-based health care.

The Government of Alberta has limited who can have reasonable access to health care through Bill 26.

The petitioners also note that the Canada Health Act states that eligible residents of Canada must have “reasonable access to [required] health care services”.

I am very proud to table this petition on behalf of petitioners today.

RIGHT TO STRIKE

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition that I am tabling is in support of my bill, Bill C-247, and to pass it into law without any amendments to repeal section 107 of the Canada Labour Code and stop the violation on the right to strike.

The petitioners call on the government to stop abusing section 107 of the Canada Labour Code, which has happened over eight times under the Liberal government. The petitioners talk about how the government has repeatedly invoked section 107 to violate the right to strike and undermine fair collective bargaining, including against striking postal workers, railroad workers, port workers and flight attendants.

Petitioners also point to the Supreme Court of Canada, which recognized, in 2016, the right to strike as an essential and indispensable component of the right to collective bargaining.

At a time when countless workers across Canada are seeing the cost for essentials like housing, groceries and transportation skyrocketing, petitioners are calling on our leaders to pass my bill with haste.

AGRICULTURE

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the last petition I am presenting today calls on the government to suspend the AAFC staff terminations and to continue operating the research centre, research farms and the organic and regenerative research program for at least 24 months to provide cost-benefit transparency and ensure irreplaceable research capacity and long-term studies are not lost due to hasty decisions.

The petitioners are urging that we cannot base our good public health decisions on political sound bites. They have to be based on research.

OVER-THE-HORIZON RADAR SYSTEM

Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise on behalf of the people of Simcoe-Grey and cite specifically those in Clearview Township.

I present a petition from the residents who are opposing the location of an over-the-horizon radar system. The Department of National Defence has bought one large swath of land of over 700 acres that is prime farm agricultural land and plans to build over-the-horizon. That would be phase one. In phase two, it will be up to approximately another 3,000 acres. Many of the residents are fearful of expropriation and what that will do.

All of the petitioners understand that there is a balance between food security and national security. They realize, from looking at a map, there are other locations out there. They may cost money, but for them and future generations, we need to save this land. It is right beside the Minesing Wetlands as well, so there are a lot of issues with this particular area.

The petitioners are calling on the government to stop the building of the over-the-horizon site on the already purchased property, prevent future acquisition of prime farmland and the building of the over-the-horizon site on the prime farmland of Clearview Township and register the previously purchased property with the Ontario Farmland Trust to preserve its agricultural status.

• (1010)

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present a petition from Canadians from across the country who are opposed to the expansion of MAID to those who have only the underlying issue of mental illness. They note that mental illness is often recoverable. They are asking for the Government of Canada to recognize this and to adopt Bill C-218. This bill would stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those who have mental illness. We need to ensure those with mental illness have hope and not MAID.

* * *

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 at this time, please.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—DIESEL PRICES

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC) moved:

That, given that,

- (i) Canada's diesel prices have hit record highs over the last several weeks,
- (ii) Canada's diesel prices on September 28 were approximately 24 cents per litre higher than the United States average, and 31 cents a litre higher than the world average, showing that high prices cannot be explained by global factors alone,
- (iii) diesel powers the tractors that farm our food, and the trucks and trains that transport it, leading to bigger grocery bills for working Canadians,
- (iv) Canadians pay more than other countries for diesel because of high taxes, a low dollar and too much reliance on U.S. refineries,
- (v) Canada should have the most affordable diesel in the world, given that we have the fourth biggest oil reserves,

the House, in the interest of saving Canadians money and fuelling our country at home, call on the government to adopt the Emergency Fuel Relief Plan that:

- (a) provides for emergency pre-permitting and tax relief for the construction of diesel infrastructure, such as refineries, pipelines, rail and storage;
- (b) eliminates all taxes on diesel consumption until at least Canada Day; and
- (c) permanently eliminates taxes on diesel production; and call on the government to set the goal of boosting Canadian diesel production to one million barrels per day, allowing every Canadian business and consumer access to Canadian diesel.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with my colleague and friend from Bow River.

I rise today to speak to our Conservative opposition motion calling for an emergency fuel relief plan to cut diesel costs, increase

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Canadian fuel production and strengthen our ability to fuel ourselves at home.

Across Canada, diesel keeps our economy moving. It powers the trucks that deliver groceries to our stores, the equipment farmers use to bring in the harvest, the fishing vessels on our coasts, forestry and mining operations, construction equipment and essential services in rural and northern communities. When diesel costs more, everything that depends on it costs more too. Families feel it in the price of groceries, building materials, transportation and everyday essentials.

Canada's geography makes these pressures even harder. Goods must travel long distances to reach rural communities. Residents often travel long distances for work, groceries and medical appointments. Higher fuel costs follow them throughout their daily lives and make almost everything more expensive.

Higher fuel costs are not just a problem for the person standing at the pump. They show up in the cost of producing food, moving freight, building homes and keeping businesses open. In rural, northern and remote communities, those costs can be even harder to absorb. Many Canadians have no practical alternative to driving long distances, and businesses have no alternative to moving goods across our sprawling, vast geography.

The national Canadian average of diesel was roughly \$2.63 a litre, up roughly 38% in just three months. A week prior, it reached \$2.74 a litre. In my riding, diesel in Deer Lake reached \$2.77 a litre.

There is no question that events overseas have contributed to higher fuel prices. Conflicts involving Iran and Ukraine have disrupted energy markets and put pressure on fuel supplies around the world. Those pressures are being felt around the world, yet they do not explain why Canadians are paying approximately 24¢ more per litre for diesel than Americans and 31¢ more than the world average. For fishermen filling their boats, farmers running their equipment and truckers delivering our groceries, that premium adds up, and those higher costs are ultimately passed on to families.

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Canada cannot control conflicts overseas, but we can control the taxes, regulations and barriers here at home that add to the cost of producing and supplying fuel in Canada. International markets affect everyone, but Canadians should not be paying an additional premium created by taxes and barriers that the Liberals imposed on Canada. From farmers on the Prairies, forestry workers in British Columbia and northern Ontario and truckers moving goods across Quebec to fishermen in Atlantic Canada and workers supplying remote communities in the north, affordable and reliable diesel is important in every area of this beautiful country.

Canada's energy policy must reflect what it takes to live, work and do business across a country as large and diverse as Canada. Fuel costs do not stop at the pump. They move through the supply chain and into the price of food, building materials and everyday necessities. A single piece of harvesting equipment can consume more than 1,100 dollars' worth of diesel in a day. During harvest, those costs hit farmers especially hard. The Grain Growers of Canada estimates that fuel for one large machine could cost \$15,000 more this harvest than last year. That is before counting other equipment. I see the impact of those costs in my own riding of Long Range Mountains.

Michelle, a farmer from Cormack, wrote to my office about what those costs look like on the ground. In 2024, her farm spent \$86,543 on diesel. This year, she expects that this cost will reach approximately \$135,000. That is an increase of nearly 56% in just two years. That is only what her farm spends directly on fuel to keep its tractors and equipment running. Michelle explained that diesel is needed for everyday work, like preparing feed for their cows and cleaning the barns. It is also needed to spread manure and fertilizer; mow, bale and haul hay; and clear snow during the winter.

On top of that, her farm pays higher freight charges and fuel surcharges on feed, fertilizer, supplies and equipment parts, as well as the cost of transporting the milk. As Michelle explained to me, rising fuel prices at this level are simply not sustainable for farms. For farmers like Michelle, diesel is essential and not an option. If the equipment does not run, the farm cannot operate, and if the truck does not move, she cannot transport her product. These pressures extend across our economy. Diesel powers construction equipment, mining and forestry operations, and the trucks and trains that move goods across the country. Higher operating costs ultimately add to household bills.

• (1015)

This is why Canada's energy security matters just as much as immediate relief at the pump. Threats from Washington to restrict diesel exports to Canada further underline the urgent need to strengthen our domestic refining, transportation, storage and supply. Whether that threat materializes or not, Canada needs to prepare before a disruption reaches our communities. We should not wait for the next supply disruption before asking whether Canada has enough refining capacity or whether we can move Canadian fuel when it is needed. A country with our energy resources should have the infrastructure and capacity to better protect Canadians before a crisis happens.

Canada has the world's fourth-largest crude oil reserves, yet parts of Canada remain heavily dependent on imported refined petroleum products, much of them coming from the United States. In 2025, Canada imported approximately 485,000 barrels per day of refined petroleum products. Nearly 80% of those imports came from the United States. For a country with our resources, workers and expertise, we should be doing more to produce and refine the fuel Canadians need here at home.

For 11 years, Liberal antidevelopment laws like Bill C-69 and Bill C-48 have discouraged private investment and held back energy development. Instead of making it easier to build the infrastructure needed to move Canadian energy across Canada, Liberal federal policy has too often added another layer of uncertainty. Companies considering major investments need certainty. They need to know that projects can move through the approval process within reasonable timelines and that Canada is a competitive place to build and expand operations. Canada cannot become more self-reliant on fuel while continuing to impose barriers that make energy infrastructure harder and more expensive to build.

The Liberal government knows that cutting taxes saves Canadians money. It needs to stop making excuses and implement our Conservative emergency fuel plan relief to cut diesel costs, build Canadian energy and put more money back in Canadians' pockets. The Conservative plan is straightforward: lower costs now, increase Canadian fuel production and make Canada more resilient. Our motion calls on the government to take concrete measures to provide immediate relief, while increasing Canada's ability to produce, refine and distribute the fuel Canadians depend upon.

We should eliminate all federal taxes on diesel sales until at least Canada Day 2027 to give households and businesses relief that they can count on. That means removing federal taxes on diesel consumption, including the GST, so that farmers, truckers, fishermen and businesses can reduce their input costs and continue to provide Canadians with the food and goods and services that they rely upon. We should permanently eliminate federal taxes on diesel production, including the industrial carbon tax and the clean fuel standard, so that federal policy encourages affordable Canadian fuel production.

We should increase Canadian diesel and other refined fuel production to one million barrels per day within five years, with the goal of meeting demand across Canada and eliminating the diesel price gap with the United States. We should create emergency permitting for diesel refineries, storage, and transportation infrastructure so that fuel can reach the people and businesses that depend upon it. That includes the pipelines, rail infrastructure and storage facilities needed to move fuel reliably between regions and get it to market.

We should allow businesses to deduct 100% of investments in diesel production and distribution in the first year to encourage private investment in the capacity that Canada needs. If Canada wants new refineries, refinery expansion, storage facilities and transportation infrastructure, our tax and regulatory environment has to make Canada a competitive place to put that capital. We should also build a strategic refined petroleum reserve to protect Canadians during supply disruptions. Our plan would provide relief today while strengthening our ability to fuel ourselves here at home.

More Canadian fuel, better transportation infrastructure and emergency supplies would put us in a stronger position to meet our needs and supply our allies. These measures provide Canadians the relief they need from higher costs, but they also empower us to produce more of the fuel we consume and move it reliably wherever it is needed. Canada cannot control every event in Washington or disruption in global markets, but we can control whether we make it easier or harder to produce and refine fuel here at home.

Members of this House should consider the impact that higher diesel costs are having on Canadians in every region in this country. I encourage members from all parties to support this motion and help build a stronger, more affordable and more resilient Canada.

• (1020)

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for her advocacy for the citizens of Long Range Mountains.

As she may know, I worked in the refining business for decades. Although there have been some supply chain increases, on the whole, the price of fuel is, as she said, greatly impacted by global situations, which we do not have a lot of control over and are sometimes hard to predict. Our government has introduced measures recognizing the affordability issues that Canadians are facing, and Bill C-38 would take the tax off fuels until next year. Can the member comment on whether the Conservatives will support these measures?

Carol Anstey: Mr. Speaker, oftentimes, the Liberals like to take Conservative ideas and go part of the way, but they do not want to go all the way. I would suggest that they approve of our opposition day motion so we can provide real relief for Canadians. Instead of taking half measures on Conservative ideas, I would encourage them to support our opposition day motion, if they are really serious about the affordability crisis in this country.

Rob Morrison (Columbia—Kootenay—Southern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. I stopped at a small gas station in rural B.C., and the diesel price was over three dollars a litre. We are struggling with our logging industry and our farmers. One farmer in Grasmere cannot afford his cattle. There is another farmer

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in Creston who has the largest asparagus farm in B.C. Diesel prices are tormenting them.

How will this motion help them get through the tough times they are going through right now, not a month from now, but as of today?

• (1025)

Carol Anstey: Mr. Speaker, I can certainly relate to those stories because I have farmers reaching out to me consistently, all the time. It would provide immediate relief if we eliminated all those taxes right now. They desperately need it.

As I talked about in my speech today, when our farmers are paying a 48% increase from just two years ago on diesel, which is so much a part of their operations' direct and indirect costs, they cannot sustain higher input costs. They are in real trouble and facing real risks. We are fighting for our farmers and want to provide immediate relief to them because we know they are struggling right now.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at times the Conservatives need a reality check, quite frankly. At the end of the day, they like to take credit for the excise tax relief. I can tell the member opposite that the new Prime Minister, who was elected 18 months ago, recognized the importance of giving tax relief to Canadians. This is not the only government that has done that. Wab Kinew, the Premier of Manitoba, did it a number of years ago.

The Conservatives say it is a Conservative idea, but in reality it was a good idea, and it was a good thing for the Prime Minister of Canada, after getting elected, to give that tax break, because we are trying to help Canadians. That is what it is all about. Would the member not agree that it is about helping Canadians?

Carol Anstey: Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is any misunderstanding about how much I advocate for the people in my riding and in this country. I find it a bit rich that the member opposite gets up and attacks me for fighting and advocating for Canadians. If we had not put the pressure on, absolutely the Liberals would not have cut the taxes on gas. Yes, we will take credit, and yes, we will continue to fight for Canadians.

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Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and I often reflect on the fact that we represent coastal ridings where it feels like we get hit with high fuel costs on the way to the grocery store, at the grocery store and on the way home from the grocery store. I wonder if the member could share a bit more about what she is hearing in her community, because if it is anything like mine, food affordability is a major issue right now, and this would really help.

Carol Anstey: Mr. Speaker, there are vast distances between the communities in Long Range Mountains, just as there is in the member's riding, where places are rural and remote. In order for people to get to their medical appointments or get the goods and services they need, they have to travel long distances and have no alternatives. That is why this is especially important for the constituents we represent.

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Long Range Mountains, for sharing her time with me. I truly appreciated the words she had to share with the House. They were fantastic.

It is always an honour to rise on behalf of the people of Bow River. During the debate on Bill C-38, I invited the Prime Minister to Bow River. I asked him to stand in a field in southern Alberta at 10 o'clock at night, beside a farmer and his son facing the rain. That invitation still stands, even though the harvest is wrapping up in southern Alberta. It is probably the most expensive harvest these farmers have faced in their entire lifetime.

At this time of year, the work on our farms does not end when the sun goes down. The crop still has to come off, trucks still have to run and the livestock still has to be fed. The harvest is when a family finds out what a year of work will bring. The seed has been paid for, the fertilizer has gone on the ground and the machinery payments keep coming, and now the family has to bring the crop home. They cannot leave the crop standing until diesel gets cheaper. They cannot ask the weather to wait while Ottawa makes up its mind. It is the harvest.

A modern combine burns 60 to 80 litres of diesel an hour. Harvest days run 12 hours or more. That is 800 litres a day for one machine on one farm in one day. Diesel in this country now averages about \$2.60 a litre, and it has hit record highs for weeks. It should not cost this much to fuel the country with the fourth-largest oil reserves on earth. Canada should have the most affordable diesel in the world. The government will point overseas, at the geopolitical and the Strait of Hormuz. Oh my. Wars and global turmoil affect fuel prices everywhere, but they do not explain the extra costs Canadians have to bear.

Canadian diesel is now 24¢ a litre more than the American average and 31¢ a litre more than the global average. A wheat farmer in Montana, just a short drive south of Taber, Alberta, sells into the same world market as my neighbours, but an Alberta farmer is paying 24¢ a litre more for diesel. Before any seed is in the ground, our farmers are already starting the season at a competitive disadvantage. Canadian farmers are paying more for fuel than their competitors in the United States and other markets for three main reasons. These are high taxes, a weak Canadian dollar and an overreliance on American refineries. That is why I support this motion and our emergency fuel relief action plan.

At the end of September, the national diesel price was around \$2.60 a litre. For a farmer, this is a bill that grows with every hour the combine runs. The Grain Growers of Canada has put that cost into terms this House should understand. One large combine burning 70 litres an hour and working eight hours a day for 30 days, with bulk diesel rising from \$1.10 to \$2 a litre, has added to the harvest a bill of more than \$15,000. This is the increase for one machine. It is not the increase for the tractor pulling the grain cart, it is not for the trucks hauling to the elevator and it is not for the truck delivering fuel.

That money could pay down the operating loan. It could replace worn tires. It could help carry the farm through the winter. Instead, it goes into the fuel tank. From the fuel tank, it goes into government coffers. A farmer can work longer hours, but a farmer cannot bargain with an empty tank.

This motion is not just for our farmers. It is for every Canadian family that sits down at the dinner table each night. Think about a loaf of bread. Before it reaches the shelf, someone has to grow the wheat, someone has to harvest it, someone has to haul it to be milled, the flour must reach the bakery and the bread must reach the store. Each of those trips requires fuel. The same is true of potatoes, corn, vegetables, meat and the feed that keeps livestock growing. Every step carries tax. The last stop is the family at the till. By the time that food reaches the checkout, the family buying it is paying the compounded cost of every tax along the way.

The government cannot claim to care about food affordability and grocery prices by sending Canadians a few hundred dollars each year and ignoring what is driving those prices higher. It is the fuel for the farmers, truckers and businesses that produce and deliver our food. Parents feel it every week. They put groceries back at the till. They buy less meat. They skip fresh fruit.

The Conservatives are not asking for anything complicated. Our emergency fuel relief plan has two parts.

The first part would save Canadians money today. We would take every federal tax off diesel sales until at least Canada Day. That means extending the full excise tax cut until July 1, 2027, and taking off the GST.

● (1030)

The government announced plans to keep the excise tax off only until January 31, 2027, and half the tax would return in February. The full tax would return on April 1, April Fool's Day, just as farmers are preparing for another growing season. Why bring the tax back just as the seeding bills start to arrive? It only goes to show that the government does not keep farmers in mind when it drafts policy and, by extension, it does not keep Canadians in mind.

Farmers plan their year in the winter. They sit down with their families and then with their bank and work through the numbers before a single seed goes into the ground. They need to know what fuel will cost, because uncertainty at the pump becomes uncertainty on the entire farm.

We would also take the tax out of making diesel, permanently scrap the federal industrial carbon tax and permanently scrap the clean fuel regulations. According to Environment and Climate Change Canada's projections, and as reported by the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the clean fuel regulations are projected to add up to 16¢ per litre to diesel and 17¢ per litre to gasoline by 2030. That is not small. Natural Resources Canada's agriculture sector energy use analysis indicates that 2023 fuel use on Canadian farms was roughly 3.8 billion litres of diesel and 1.5 billion litres of gasoline. That consumption would mean \$613 million in additional diesel costs and another \$254 million in gasoline costs for the agriculture sector alone. Altogether, that is nearly \$870 million added in annual fuel costs. These are costs that farmers cannot simply absorb and that ultimately work their way through the entire food supply chain. That alone more than wipes out the \$600-million benefit seen by increased canola sales.

The second part of our motion today is about fuelling our country at home. Canadian workers should be turning Canadian oil into Canadian fuel. Instead, we rely too much on American refineries. We pay for that diesel in American dollars, and with a low Canadian dollar, every one of those litres costs more. We need to create shovel-ready zones and prepermit land for refineries, pipelines, rail and storage. A company that follows every safety and environmental rule should know it can build before even applying. We should let companies deduct 100% of their investment in the first year in new refineries, refinery expansions, pipelines, rail, diesel and crude storage and the equipment to run the oil through those plants.

The Conservatives call on the government to build a strategic reserve for refined fuel. Today, Canada keeps no national emergency reserve. That is a problem, especially in a global crisis. The goal is clear. Boost Canadian diesel production to one million barrels a day, give every Canadian business and every Canadian family access to affordable Canadian diesel and close the price gap with the United States within five years.

This comes back to two kitchen tables. At one table, a farm family is working through the bills. The farmers have had a long day in the field and the numbers are bigger than they have ever been before. At the other table, a family is working through a grocery receipt. That family is deciding what needs to be left off next week's list because the bills are higher than they have ever been before. The families might live hundreds of kilometres apart, but the relationship between the two cannot be ignored. The cost of fuel hits

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both of them. We should not ask either family to accept another speech about affordability without action to follow it. The Liberal government's actions have fallen short. They have made matters worse for Canadian families.

Today, members have a choice. They can call on the government to extend tax relief. They can support making fuel easier to produce, store and move. They can stand with the people who grow our food and the people trying to afford it. The crop will not wait and the bills will not wait, and neither should this House.

I urge all members to support this motion.

● (1035)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was born in the Northwest Territories and grew up in Edmonton. He understands the importance of building a stronger and healthier economy.

We can look at the number of initiatives that have taken place over the last 18 months. When we take a look at those initiatives, the one I would highlight today is getting rid of the carbon tax on gasoline and now reducing the excise tax. These are substantial savings for Canadians at a time when affordability is such an important issue.

When we have policies of this nature, they need to be done in a measured way. I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts on that issue and do a comparison—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Bow River.

David Bexte: Mr. Speaker, I would have to say there is no such thing as a measured way with unreasonable policies. We get them out of the way. If they are bad policies, we put in good policies.

Whether the Prime Minister has spent some of his life in Alberta or not, I do not think there is a direct connection between that and the understanding of what the lives of a common person and a common family on a limited budget are like today, with the costs increasing day after day.

Limited tax relief is not the answer. Full tax relief is the answer.

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Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last question highlighted the difference between the Conservatives' approach to this issue and the Liberals' approach to this issue. They are talking about "measured", and we are talking about making a substantial difference in Canadians' lives by removing the entirety of everything the government can control in terms of the price of diesel.

The member talked about the most expensive harvest he has ever seen. I am wondering if he could talk about the impact of that on our food prices at the grocery store in the rest of Canada.

• (1040)

David Bexte: Mr. Speaker, my esteemed colleague always has a great perspective on the world.

The cost cannot be underestimated, and it is so easy to do, because it comes in what seems like small bits, but collectively and adding it up, it compounds into a massive impact on the budget of families and farmers. It is thousands and thousands of dollars in a year coming out of a budget and going to taxes. Thousands and thousands of dollars go into the system for compounding taxes that are seen at every step of the supply chain.

That money does not contribute to a good economy. It is not additive. It is a burden on our society, it is a burden on the people and it just makes life more expensive.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the member can then provide clarification. Based on that question and his answer, is the Conservative Party of Canada's position that there should be no form of taxation on diesel or gasoline?

David Bexte: Mr. Speaker, that is an interesting question from the member across the way.

Should there be no taxation? In an ideal world, there would be none at all. There would be no income tax, no sales tax, no excise tax and no GST. However, we do not live in a world like that. It is not ideal yet, and it may never be, but taxes should be cut to the absolute minimum possible with the smallest possible government to deliver the minimum viable product. A small government means small taxes.

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could articulate the direct, but also the indirect, costs to farmers of diesel and what that means to their farms. I know he knows the space very well.

David Bexte: Mr. Speaker, it is about where I come from and what I live. The day-to-day experience of farmers is that every bill is more, and it is more by thousands of dollars, whether it is for the trucker delivering fertilizer, the fertilizer itself, the seed or the feed. It is all of it. Everything is more, and it is thousands of dollars per day, per month and per year.

I cannot overestimate how much money gets consumed in taxes.

[Translation]

Claude Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know that Canada cannot take energy security for granted. In recent years, global conflicts have caused major disruptions to the world's energy supply. Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the war in Iran

have both had a significant impact on international energy markets. Events thousands of kilometres away drive up global fuel prices, which increases costs here in Canada.

Gas and diesel are part of everyday life for millions of Canadians. Whether we commute to work, drive kids to school, go shopping, visit family, run businesses or operate farm equipment, transportation is integral to everyday life and essential to the Canadian economy. Rising gas and diesel prices have a direct impact on Canadians and put significant financial pressure on families.

Canadians deserve to have a serious debate in the House of Commons on the causes of these rising costs and the solutions that will make a real impact. With their proposal, the Conservatives would have us believe that because Canada has oil sands reserves, all we need to do is stick a pipe in and diesel will come out the other end, and that is how we would solve the problem.

Although we do have large reserves of bitumen, it needs to be processed before it can be extracted. It then has to be refined and transported. The situation in eastern Canada is different from the situation in western Canada. All of that means that there is no easy solution. At the end of the day, though, this issue raises two far simpler questions: One, how can we bring down costs for Canadians today? Two, how can we make Canada less vulnerable to future disruptions?

I attended a meeting of the European Union's energy ministers in Ireland. One of the major issues on the table was, of course, diesel supplies. The EU is dealing with high costs, but it is much more concerned about supply. All that to say, the government believes that Canadians need both: a reduction in current costs and greater energy security for the future. A responsible energy strategy requires both immediate action and long-term planning. They go hand in hand, unlike what we are seeing in the Conservatives' motion.

That is exactly the approach that our government is taking. Supporting Canadians at this time of high gas and diesel prices is a priority for our government. That is why we have taken action.

To respond to these rising fuel prices, we reduced federal taxes on fuel by 28¢ a litre by suspending the federal tax on diesel and gas. More recently, we introduced a bill to extend that support until January 31, 2027, and then to partially reduce the tax until the end of March. These tax cuts will help Canadians save at the pump. Of course, this support will not resolve all of the challenges facing global energy markets, since foreign conflicts continue to disrupt supply. However, it will provide real support to Canadians while we are working at the international level to resolve this problem.

Last Friday, G7 leaders met to discuss the impact that the high price of diesel was having on their respective countries, including Canada. To address this problem, the G7 leaders agreed to coordinate the release of 100 million barrels of oil and diesel to respond to the pressures affecting global energy markets.

Canada's contribution to this effort involves increasing private sector production and making 23.6 million barrels of Canadian crude oil available to global markets. I would also remind the House that this crude oil needs to be processed into diesel. Canada is also contributing to this effort by producing more diesel and other products at its own refineries. In fact, in April 2026, Canada's diesel production increased by 16.3% over the previous year, reaching nearly 730,000 barrels per day, the highest level of production ever recorded in our country. It is important to mention that.

• (1045)

Furthermore, during the same period, Canadian diesel exports rose by 64.7%. These measures have already paid off. The national price of diesel has fallen by more than four cents per litre since October 2. That said, more needs to be done to bring down the cost of living for Canadians, and our government is currently taking steps to ease this burden.

While working to reduce the price of gas and diesel for Canadians, we are implementing various measures to leave more money in the pockets of Canadian families. For a family of four, the Canada groceries and essentials benefit will amount to nearly \$1,900. That same family will receive the Canada child benefit, which will provide them with \$7,000.

Thanks to our personal income tax cut, this family will also save a further \$840 this year, plus an additional \$800 through Canada's national school food program. Furthermore, this family could save up to \$16,000 a year thanks to our government's affordable child care program, as well as \$730 a year through the Canadian dental care plan. These are all measures that the opposition, led by our Conservative friends, voted against.

Affordability is central to our government's work, and we are always going to strive to help families cope with the cost of living, including by lowering the price of diesel and gas.

Along with measures to support Canadians, our government is taking steps to strengthen the energy security of Canada and its allies in order to improve our resilience to global energy supply disruptions. This means ensuring that our fuel transportation and storage infrastructure is up to the task and that our supply chains are reliable and resilient. Achieving this will require a regulatory framework that allows major projects to move forward with greater certainty and efficiency.

Business of Supply

Canadians have been clear: They want projects to happen faster. Opposition members are calling for the same thing. Investors want more certainty. Workers want to progress from the design phase to construction. That is why our government created the Major Projects Office, to clear the way for these major projects and fast-track decisions, because attracting investment depends not only on what Canada has, but also on its ability to get projects off the ground.

Since the creation of the Major Projects Office, more than 15 projects in the energy, natural resources, and infrastructure sectors have benefited from streamlined processes, representing \$126 billion in investment in our economy and the creation of more than 60,000 well-paying jobs.

• (1050)

[English]

The need for that work has only become clearer as the world has changed. Countries around the world are rethinking supply chains. Markets are becoming less predictable. Allies are looking more closely at the resources and infrastructure that underpin their economy, and Canada must do the same.

Energy security is essential to keeping energy and everyday living affordable in Canada. Reliable energy supplies can protect Canadians from sudden price shocks and can support businesses. Our energy future must focus on reliability, diversification, infrastructure investment and responsible development of our energy resources. By maintaining a secure and affordable energy system, we can strengthen our economy while improving the financial well-being of all Canadians. That is precisely why the government has made nation-building infrastructure a priority.

Just last week, the Government of Canada designated the Pacific link as a project of national interest under the Building Canada Act. The project has the potential to move approximately one million additional barrels per day of Canadian oil to international markets and further diversify Canada's export opportunities beyond a single customer. That decision reflects a simple reality: Canada needs more options, Canada needs more customers and Canada needs infrastructure capable of connecting our resources with both Canadian and international markets.

The question today is not whether Canada should build major energy projects. The answer to that is a clear yes, and more importantly, the government is taking concrete steps to get them built.

Business of Supply

The Pacific link advanced not because someone announced a target. It advanced because government, industry and partners came together to begin the work of turning an idea into a project. That is how things get built: not through wish lists but through planning, investment, consultation, engineering, construction and execution, which are all things that are lacking in the motion before us today.

A major pipeline will strengthen the long-term energy security of both Canada and our allies. On that note, let me add that the Trans Mountain Corporation is advancing optimization projects that would increase TMX capacity by about 360,000 barrels of oil per day. These projects will support Canada's diversification efforts, increase our resilience and strengthen energy security globally.

Energy security, however, also includes a range of energy types and projects. In September 2025, following the successful opening of LNG Canada phase one, our government referred LNG Canada phase two to the Major Projects Office. In September 2025, LNG Canada phase two expanded LNG Canada's facility to double production from the current 14 million tonnes per year to a total of 28 million tonnes per year. This project will deliver low-carbon-intensity Canadian energy to the global market, helping diversify Canada's trading partners, particularly in Asia and Europe.

Just last week, the private sector proponents of this project announced a final investment decision: Major Projects Office referral, September 2025. Last week, there was a final investment decision, which actually brings \$33 billion of investment into our country and strengthens the energy security of Canada and its allies. Thanks to this investment, thousands of jobs will be created as part of this project across the country, supporting our workers and our economy.

In November 2025, our government referred the Ksi Lisims LNG project to the Major Projects Office. It is a proposed floating natural gas liquefaction, production, storage and offloading facility with a marine terminal located on the north coast of British Columbia. This project represents a \$30-billion investment into Canada, and once built would operate as one of the most low-carbon facilities of this kind in the world. Since then, in May and June 2026, Ksi Lisims signed supply agreements with German purchasers for millions of tonnes per year of LNG supply. One of the purchasers, the Uniper utility, said, "Canada helps diversify Europe's energy supply and strengthens resilience against future disruptions."

Further, the approval of the natural gas Sunrise expansion project, in partnership with 38 first nations, is also key to our objective of strengthening Canada's energy security. It will add \$3.3 billion to Canada's economy annually and generate over \$700 million in tax revenue, which we use for roads, hospitals and schools in B.C. At peak construction, it will create over 2,500 jobs to support Canadian communities. This approval, which was done in under two years, is part of our work to make Canada a clean and conventional energy superpower.

In August of this year, our government announced, alongside the provinces of Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador, the largest clean energy investment in North American history, at nearly \$70 billion, to generate 14,000 megawatts of renewable power through the Churchill Falls and Gull Island hydroelectricity projects. The energy generated from these projects will be enough to power all

the homes in Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto combined, while supporting 23,000 jobs and contributing \$31 billion to Canada's GDP.

• (1055)

These investments are about ensuring Canada is better prepared for future disruption. We are now expanding our approach by streamlining the review of all projects in Canada. Our government made more progress than any other in history by signing one project, one review agreements with provinces to reduce duplication between federal and provincial permitting processes.

We are now implementing one project, one review, one year through the building Canada strong act, Bill C-39. This bill, currently before the House of Commons, would strengthen our project review system by providing all required permits, not less, within a single year. This improvement would significantly quicken our permitting system, which has for too long been seen as discouraging investment in Canada.

These improvements would be made while maintaining strong environmental standards and a robust consultation process with indigenous people, in full respect of indigenous people's constitutional rights. Our government will always strive to build partnerships with first nations, Métis and Inuit, which is why one of our first acts in office was to double the indigenous loan guarantee program and support indigenous equity in major projects. Our government is pursuing both tracks at the same time: affordability measures for Canadians today and infrastructure that strengthens Canada's resilience tomorrow. Now, that is a plan.

Our government has been focused on both objectives in the extension of the federal fuel tax relief and by advancing the infrastructure that will strengthen Canada's energy security over the long term. The challenges facing Canadians are happening now, and that is why the government acted when fuel prices began rising earlier this year. Canadians are asking for results. We all agree on that. They want relief from high costs. They want reliable fuel support. They want confidence that Canada will be better prepared when the next disruption comes, and it will.

Business of Supply

The government is acting on both fronts. It has delivered fuel tax relief and is working to strengthen domestic supply chains. It is advancing infrastructure that will make Canada more resilient in the years ahead. We can make diesel more affordable. We can make Canada more secure. We can do both without pretending that Canada alone controls the global price of diesel. This is the practical approach Canadians expect.

• (1100)

Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we went from a swampland to the salad bowl of Canada. We have over 125 farmers in the Holland Marsh. They farm 7,000 acres. At Eek Farms, they are commercial third-generation farmers. They are feeling the impact of the diesel prices.

Can my hon. colleague please explain to the farmers of my community how this will impact their growing season?

[Translation]

Claude Guay: Mr. Speaker, of course, we recognize that diesel prices are affecting farmers across the country and around the world. Unfortunately, that is the reality that has been caused by geopolitical developments.

I mentioned my trip to Ireland with the European energy ministers from countries where agriculture accounts for as large a share of their gross domestic product as it does in Canada. They, too, must contend not only with costs but also with supply—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): We will now resume questions and comments.

The hon. member for Québec Centre has the floor.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for providing a compelling overview of the many measures the Canadian government is implementing to support families, particularly middle-class families and those who need it most.

I would like to invite my relatively new colleague, who is already doing a great job in the House and in his riding, to tell us which of these measures he believes are most important to the people in his riding.

Claude Guay: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that great question, which really highlights our government's ambitions.

The price of diesel is indeed a challenge across Canada, but the most important issue remains affordability. Diesel costs are exacerbating unaffordability. In my riding, the number one thing I hear about is affordability. That is why I would say to my colleague that the most important measures are all the affordability measures that our government has put in place, particularly the grocery benefit and all the family supports.

Thousands of children in my riding are benefiting from the national school food program. As everyone knows, Quebec led the way on low-cost child care, and that program has been expanded across the country. Our support for child care has had a significant impact.

• (1105)

[English]

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the parliamentary secretary is aware that when he refers to the new pipeline, now rebranded as Pacific link, and says it is moving Canadian oil, that it is not actually moving Canadian oil. The project description from the Government of Alberta correctly describes the project as moving diluted bitumen. “Canadian oil” suggests it might be crude that could go straight to a refinery, which this cannot. It is a more hazardous project, being diluted bitumen.

Does the government not think it is important to correctly describe a project that it thinks is in the national interest?

[Translation]

Claude Guay: Mr. Speaker, we will take that into consideration. I believe my colleague's facts are accurate regarding what flows through the pipeline, and I would be happy to discuss that with her.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government says that the pressures on diesel prices are the result of global factors that will not go away quickly. The member talks about relief, but the relief he is proposing is temporary. That will only prolong the uncertainty that our supply chains and businesses are facing as they make investment decisions.

Why not support our motion and give Canadians more lasting relief by eliminating all federal taxes on diesel until July 2027?

Claude Guay: Mr. Speaker, when we look at this motion in isolation, we lose sight of all the long-term affordability measures the government has introduced since taking office. Of course, as we have always done, we will need to continue monitoring developments with respect to diesel over the coming year.

I believe that, at this time, we are providing a reasonable period of predictability. When it comes to investment and predictability, that is precisely what Bill C-39 intends to provide. Through this measure and its one-year review standard, we are seeking to give industry the certainty it needs to make investments.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments on the opposition day motion, and my question is related to both the short term and the long term. He made reference to the issue of affordability, which is something the government takes very seriously. The Prime Minister has talked about it virtually since the last federal election, and this is a major aspect of it. Also, we have to think in terms of the long term.

Business of Supply

My colleague referred to a number of investments and potential projects, with some that are actually being developed today. I wonder if he could provide his thoughts as to why it is really important that we look at both sides, the importance of affordability along with the expansion of our markets.

[Translation]

Claude Guay: Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question. That is exactly why the government is taking both short- and long-term measures.

The short-term measures are all the affordability measures we have introduced. The gas and diesel tax cut is also a short-term measure, a short-term strategy.

Regarding the long-term strategy, I would say that opening up our oil and gas exports to other countries will get us a price that is much closer to market value. Right now, we depend on a single customer, so Canadian exports are sold at a discount. That is because we have only one customer, only one country buying our oil.

[English]

Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I like our opposition day motion today because our motion is pretty simple. We have to cut diesel taxes and produce more fuel in this country.

I heard a farmer from Weyburn, Saskatchewan, on the radio last week who said there has been a 100% increase in diesel prices year to year, and a 25% increase in diesel prices from August to now. This will come to consumers sooner or later.

Why would the government not support our motion today? It would trickle down to the consumers.

• (1110)

[Translation]

Claude Guay: Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons why it is difficult to support this motion is because it fails to include many factors. It does not take into account the fact that our oil industry is integrated with that of the United States. Canada and the United States have refineries that produce different types of products, like diesel, of course, using both light crude and heavy crude oils.

Since our country as a whole is integrated with the United States, we cannot simply say that we are just going to lower prices. We depend on existing international markets and supply chains. We therefore need to provide some relief. We need to have measures to improve the financial situation. We need to do so in the short term, while we build for the long term.

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I extend my regards to all of my colleagues. Before I begin, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Jonquière—Hébertville—Pays-des-Bleuets, a riding with a very lovely name, by the way. We are very pleased with it. The name-change process took some time, but the effort was well worth it.

I would like to take a moment to say that a provincial election was held in Quebec yesterday. Quebeckers elected a new government, a Parti Québécois government. I wanted to use my time in the House to congratulate Paul St-Pierre Plamondon, his team, and the Parti Québécois, and to tell them that we are proud of them. I

would especially like to congratulate my colleagues from the Laurentians, colleagues from my riding: Geneviève, from Mirabel; Dieudonné, from Les Plaines; Pierre Nantel, from Argenteuil; and Audrey Bujold, a mother of four, from Bellefeuille. I want to offer them my congratulations. It will be a real pleasure to work with them.

In an election like this, many people lose and leave their seats. On election nights, we see a lot of the candidates and MNAs. I just want to take a minute to recognize not only all of the candidates and all of the members who are leaving the Quebec National Assembly, but also their teams, the people who work with them but whom we did not see last night. Regardless of party affiliation, these people, like the ones in my own riding, help constituents with issues related to health care, day care and school. They serve the public. Today, they are facing a major personal transition. I want to recognize the commitment of all those who work in an elected official's office. Everyone here has a team. Even if those people were not in front of the cameras yesterday, I want to tell them that, everything else aside, we are thinking of them. Our teams are important and deserve our recognition.

I also wanted to say that people in the Laurentians are making it clear how they feel about the Alto high-speed train. More than 60% of voters in Mirabel voted against the high-speed train. If you look at the map along the route, with the exception of two places where there are stations, the vote is clear. It is clear in Papineau. It is clear in Argenteuil. It is clear throughout the Laurentians. It is clear in Lanaudière. It is clear in Mauricie. It is even clear in Trois-Rivières. It is clear in the Quebec City region.

This project is a mistake. Quebeckers made that clear yesterday. The government needs to reconsider this project, particularly given that Alto's methods, business practices, lack of transparency and the way it pays out bonuses are contrary to all our democratic ideals and to all the ideals we hold about good business practice for a project like this. The fact that the people at Alto are being driven by Bill C-15, a law that also contradicts our democratic ideals and violates people's rights, should also give us pause. We know that expropriations are on the horizon. We know that Alto is already laying the groundwork. We know that Alto's relationship with the truth is murky, to put it very politely. It is clear that today, the government must acknowledge that Quebeckers said no to this project last night.

Now, let us get back to the Conservative motion. I thank my colleagues for proposing it. It should come as no surprise. The Conservatives are in favour of removing all taxes, although which ones depend on the day and the subject. Today, we are talking about diesel.

Business of Supply

This motion is full of shortcuts and statements that are not backed up by facts. However, there is a reality behind it. Diesel is a key input in the transportation of goods. It is a key input for the cost of the food we eat, for taxi drivers and for people in construction. It is a key input whose price has increased considerably. I would simply like to remind the House that the Bloc Québécois has repeatedly asked, during a crisis, for special relief measures to be offered to businesses and individuals who use diesel as an input.

We are talking about targeted measures, and that is exactly what we are discussing today: We have to acknowledge that the increased cost of diesel is significantly affecting supply chains, yet at the same time, we need to be fiscally responsible. We cannot vote every tax like this into oblivion every time a problem crops up, without conducting any studies, without any facts and without first doing our job. I think the Conservatives should follow our example and adopt the Bloc Québécois's approach. I think there is a way to target measures more effectively and be fiscally responsible while still reducing supply chain costs. That is the challenge I am putting to the Conservatives today. Clearly, the Bloc Québécois would have a hard time supporting this motion as it stands.

• (1115)

Once again, I am calling for facts and studies, for details about the impact of these taxes and the effect on government revenues of measures like this motion by the Conservatives, or the excise tax suspension introduced by the government.

We are members of the opposition. Our job is to legislate, to look at motions and bills and ask ourselves the following questions. Is the money being redistributed to the right people? Is it making life more affordable for the right people? How is it affecting taxpayers? Is it a gift to the oil companies? Often, the answer is yes, or unknown, because the Minister of Finance is not giving us information.

Yesterday, there was a committee meeting on the excise tax. I asked the Minister of Finance a factual question, and his answer shows that we are not off to a good start. I asked the minister whether the department had conducted any studies on the excise tax rebate of 10¢ on gas and four cents on diesel, for example, to see what proportion is actually going into taxpayers' or consumers' pockets and assess whether this measure is actually working. Are we talking about 90%, 85% or 75%? Did the department do its job?

The minister told me that 100% of the excise tax rebate is going into people's pockets, that there is no need to conduct studies, that this is an easy calculation and that the answer is obvious. People at home can figure it out on a napkin. That is basically what the minister told me.

The member for Québec Centre is right in front of me. He taught the impact of taxation at the university level. He understands the importance of doing the math. That does not necessarily mean we are against it. It means we are being asked to vote for bills without knowing the impact they will have. Is the money being redistributed to the right people? Is it regressive?

The minister showed up at the committee meeting with an infographic, with cartoon-style speech bubbles, and told us he had an infographic. He is the Minister of Finance and likes to remind ev-

eryone that he is in the G7. The finance minister of a G7 country shows up in committee with an infographic, without any studies.

The excise tax has been suspended in Australia. Researchers at the University of Melbourne concluded that due to a lack of competition, among other factors, it has effectively become an oil subsidy, that a significant portion of the tax was stuck in the distribution network and that the money was not all ending up in people's pockets. Some might say that Australia is so far away. In the U.S., it has been suspended in several states. As it turns out, nearly a quarter of the tax cut ended up in the pockets of oil companies.

During the Senate Committee of the Whole, Senator Gignac put the question to the minister, but the minister refused to answer. The same thing is happening in the debate on today's motion. The Conservatives want to suspend all taxes, claiming that it will help Canadians, but without considering competition issues or the fact that oil companies are going to fill their own pockets. If they want to subsidize oil companies, they should say so, they should tell us that that is part of it.

As a member of Parliament, my job is to think about the 20% or 25% of people earning the lowest incomes, people who have seen no increase in their real purchasing power for years, whose wages are lagging behind, who have to use their vehicles to get to work or engage in construction or agricultural activities. My job is to ask myself whether these are the people who will benefit directly from the measures proposed today.

We are talking about permanent measures. The minister told us yesterday that his excise tax measure is targeted, but that it affects everyone. We therefore had to ask whether it was targeted or whether it affected everyone, and if he had any definitions in that regard. There were no definitions. The minister says that this is temporary, yet there is nothing more permanent than a temporary tax cut. History has taught us that. These tax cuts become permanent. Yes, I quoted Milton Friedman. Imagine that.

One witness told us that the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz will continue to affect the supply chain long after the crisis ends. We cannot keep cutting taxes without knowing what impact it will have, especially since, and I will say this again to the Conservatives, the federal government's budget situation is troubling. There is no plan to balance the budget. Several fiscal anchors have been abandoned. The government is not being rigorous. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has said that the definitions for what constitutes capital investment are inconsistent. Yesterday, the minister could not even tell me whether an excise tax cut is a capital investment.

Business of Supply

When the Conservatives move a motion like the one before us today, I want to know how it will affect the public purse. We cannot keep cutting taxes left and right and then expect the budget to balance itself. It is not like an apple that falls from the tree. Gravity will not simply take care of that. I urge the Conservatives to be more thorough and to give us the facts. I also want to let the government know that it has to give us the tools we need to do our parliamentary work.

• (1120)

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member gave a good speech. He is always very intelligent. As for the tax cut, it is hard to know what is going to happen in Iran with this crisis. We need to be responsible. We can cut taxes and continue to assess the situation.

Does my colleague not agree that this is a responsible action?

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, before the events involving the Strait of Hormuz, there was the war in Ukraine. Fertilizer supplies and the fuel market were affected. As for the government's position, there is a different prime minister now, and, with all due respect to my colleague, it is hard to tell who is who.

What I am saying is that the Bloc Québécois has put forward proposals. We recognize that the supply chain depends on diesel. That is true in agriculture, it is true for taxi drivers and it is true for paratransit. We put forward measures that were targeted, costed, budgeted and responsible, but the government has not acted on them yet.

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to talk about the election, thank those who have left and congratulate the winners, but I want to start by talking about something I noticed in my colleague's speech. He said something that struck me.

We saw the former Quebec government doing the Liberal Party's bidding when it came to Alto. Everyone who was part of that government is now gone. On the other hand, those who were against Alto, namely the Parti Québécois and the Conservative Party of Quebec, have made huge gains. One has formed the government, and the other has risen from the ashes and elected 19 members to the National Assembly.

If the government still intends to push ahead with the Alto project, I think it will need support in Quebec. I do not know where it will find it, but pushing ahead and expropriating Quebec land through the Crown—what message does that send to a party hoping for sovereignty?

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, the Quebec government's position will become clearer. I think we can see where it is heading on this issue. I think we are seeing a consensus emerge.

One thing is certain: The government has been spreading disinformation on this matter from the start. We have the Parliamentary Budget Officer's assessment. We are being told that the costs provided were off by at least 30%, and we do not even have the analysis of the request yet. We do not know about passenger-kilometre subsidies, but we do know that the project will not finance itself.

When it reaches \$140 billion, \$150 billion, \$160 billion or \$170 billion, knowing that infrastructure budgets are interconnected, who is going to pay for that? It will be Quebeckers, when it comes to paratransit, public transit and east-west mobility in the Laurentians, which we need in the Laurentians. When budgets exceed that amount, it does not show up anywhere.

We have been sounding the alarm from the very beginning. I am saying that we were right too soon. Every new fact that comes to light—independent facts from people who are not paid by Alto to invent studies and facts—proves that we were right. I think the government should recognize that and give us more credibility.

• (1125)

Claude DeBellefeuille (Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what I found interesting in my colleague's speech is that he gave examples of assistance measures that could be targeted to individuals and businesses that use diesel and that could benefit from a reduction or some form of assistance to deal with higher diesel prices.

Does my colleague think that some of those target groups would be farmers, for example?

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, when we look at the excise tax bill, for example, we see that it contains a number of provisions, because agricultural diesel, which is dyed diesel, gets special tax treatment. It is not taxed in the same way. We have the fiscal and legal tools to be able to target support measures and, at a lower cost to taxpayers, remove pressure and lift the lid on the most sensitive parts of the supply chain where rising diesel costs have the greatest impact, even on people who do not drive. We need to think about the people who walk, ride their bikes and take public transit. I have news for my colleagues: These people also eat, so we need to think about that.

That is why the Bloc Québécois is making broad but targeted proposals that would have a significant impact on taxpayers' purchasing power while being fiscally responsible. As I said, I do not understand why there is not unanimous support for this type of measure.

Mario Simard (Jonquière—Hébertville—Pays-des-Bleuets, BQ): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague from Mirabel, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the new Premier of Quebec, Paul St-Pierre Plamondon. I will point out that the Quebec National Assembly now has a majority of separatist members, if we add together the members of the Parti Québécois and Québec solidaire. That may be a good thing for the future.

I would also like to congratulate the candidates elected in my region, in Saguenay. I am thinking in particular of Marie-Karlynn, with whom I loved working, and my young friend Émile Simard, who has the same name as my son. A few people sent congratulations to my son yesterday after Émile Simard was elected in Dubuc. I am also thinking of my dear friend Jimmy Bouchard in Jonquière. I am really looking forward to working with him. I would also like to recognize the candidates who lost. People make friends in politics. I am particularly thinking of Yannick Gagnon of Coalition Avenir Québec, who lost the election in Jonquière. He is still a dedicated member of the community who cares deeply about making life better for the people in the Saguenay region. My hat goes off to him, and I hope that his future career will be everything he hopes for.

Let us return to the motion. As I often say, it is Groundhog Day: The Conservatives' love affair with the oil and gas sector continues to repeat itself. Everything is an excuse to advance the interests of the oil companies. There is a contradiction here: The Conservatives are using their opposition day to argue that we should provide more support to the oil and gas sector so that it can export more. Even with the rising cost of living, the Conservatives still see this as an opportunity to advance the interests of the oil companies. The crisis in the Strait of Hormuz is driving up the price of diesel right now, and the Conservatives see this as yet another opportunity to advance the interests of the oil companies. Perhaps they have managed to inspire the Liberals. As I will explain in my speech, so far, the world champions at advancing the interests of the oil companies have been the Liberals.

Let us return briefly to the motion. Personally, as my colleague from Mirabel demonstrated very clearly, I do not believe that eliminating these taxes would help people who are being hit by higher diesel prices. Instead, as we know, it is the oil companies that will once again benefit from the handouts bestowed upon them by the government and the Conservative opposition. A number of experts have said so. I am thinking in particular of Luc Godbout, as well as Normand Mousseau from the Trotter Energy Institute. At the end of the day, when we take a closer look, who are the big winners when a tax on gasoline or diesel is eliminated? It is big oil.

To me, it does not make sense to deprive the government of revenue in order to support the profiteers in the oil and gas sector. I do not see the logic in that. As we know, the needs are immense. Think about education and the health transfers, which are often lacking. A balanced federal budget is far from a certainty. The deficit is skyrocketing. I do not think we need to make matters worse by eliminating the diesel tax. Instead, as my colleague from Mirabel said very clearly, we need to find targeted measures to support the people who are hardest hit. Let us be clear: reducing government revenue so that everyone has to pay more, while increasing oil companies' profits, is a very bad idea.

That said, I want to address another issue. Let us talk about the federal government's lavish generosity and shamelessness when it comes to oil and gas. I am going to share some staggering figures. Rest assured, they will evoke some strong feelings. Between 2021 and 2024, oil and gas companies raked in \$131 billion in profits. Of that \$131 billion in profits, \$80 billion was paid out as dividends to oil and gas companies. I would like to point out that 80% of

Business of Supply

Canada's oil and gas companies are owned by foreign interests. Of that 80%, approximately 60% are American.

• (1130)

We are talking about \$80 billion in dividends. That means that every year, \$12.5 billion leaves Canada and goes to the United States. We are in a trade war. That is \$12.5 billion flowing directly from Canada to the United States, based on the period from 2021 to 2024. In July of this year, Cenovus announced that it would post record profits for its second quarter. It posted a profit of \$2.8 billion, four times as much as in 2025.

What are we being told today? The Conservatives are once again proposing handouts for the oil and gas sector. Meanwhile, the government, with the support of the Conservatives, wants to make Canada an energy superpower. The Prime Minister has said so repeatedly.

When we look at the situation, we have to ask where Canada's energy exports are going. Between 70% and 80% of our energy exports go directly to the United States. We are in a tariff war with the U.S. The U.S. is our main customer when it comes to energy exports. One of the only products not subject to tariffs is oil. If we take a closer look at the export figures, we will see that, in 2025, 91% of our oil exports went directly to the United States.

What is the federal government's strategy? Its strategy is to say that we need to build oil and gas infrastructure so our economy can resist pressure from the United States. Who benefits from building this infrastructure, though? This is the outrageous part. New infrastructure benefits the greedy oil and gas companies that do not want to pay for it, and it also directly benefits Americans. The government is using public money to pay for oil and gas infrastructure for the profiteers in the energy sector. Ultimately, that benefits the Americans collecting dividends. I think that is as absurd as it gets.

The economic sectors subject to tariffs are receiving little to no support from the government. We paid \$34 billion for the Trans Mountain pipeline. Each and every one of us paid for it. The Leader of the Opposition had the decency to point out that oil and gas companies were corporate welfare recipients. I rarely agree with him, but he was right. These companies are making record profits, yet they do not want to pay for their infrastructure.

What is more, the government is adding insult to injury by saying that it will fund another project, the Pacific link pipeline, which will cost about \$43 billion. That is \$34 billion spent on the Trans Mountain expansion project and \$43 billion spent on the Pacific link pipeline. It is also important to note that, last year, the fossil fuel industry received \$10 billion in subsidies. That brings the total up to about \$85 billion. I am not talking about the construction of Trans Mountain; I am talking about the financial support provided by the federal government. This support amounts to \$85 billion since 2020.

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It is clear that the federal government has made its bed. Its main goal in the tariff crisis is to support the only sector that is not subject to tariffs: oil. It is also the only sector that primarily serves Americans, since they are the majority owners of the oil and gas companies. Canada is investing billions of dollars in this industry. What the Conservatives are asking us to do today is to be even more generous and eliminate a tax. Once again, this would mean that taxpayers would end up footing the bill for these greedy companies. It is outrageous.

• (1135)

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand where Bloc members are coming from on the issue. They have a great deal of reservations with the affordability plan, in essence, or they have started questioning it: Is the tax break being passed on to the consumer? I think it is a fair comment.

We have provided assurances. The Prime Minister and the government, recognizing the issue of affordability, see this as a way to support Canadians and businesses in the short term. It is being taken all the way to April in one form or another.

It is an affordability issue. The assurance has been provided to the Bloc that we are ensuring the tax break goes to our constituents. I am wondering if the Bloc can be very clear on whether it supports the tax break.

[Translation]

Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, it is quite surprising to hear an elected official rise and say that there is a connection between giving consumers a break by reducing the tax on gasoline. It is quite surprising when we consider the context, knowing that this government is investing an obscene amount of money, billions of dollars, in the only sector that is not tariffed.

If they really want to help the people who need it most, they should increase old age security by \$110 a year instead of paying \$43 billion for a pipeline. They should take that money and give it to the people who truly need it, instead of supporting an economic sector that generally benefits only Americans.

A member must be pretty brainwashed to defend that kind of idea.

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. He seems to be assuming that if we lower taxes, the oil companies will pocket that money.

We could discuss and debate that, but what I find unfortunate about his remarks is that he overlooked the fact that diesel prices are currently rising. Let me give an example from the agricultural sector. This fall, farmers have pay up to 25¢, 30¢, 40¢ or 60¢ more per litre to bring in the fall harvest, a harvest that will not necessarily sell for a higher price, because farmers sell their products at the prevailing world market prices. They are the ones who will have to absorb this staggering increase in energy costs.

I think it would be a good idea to give them a little breathing room, but my colleague does not seem to agree that consumers should get that breathing room.

Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, I have two quick things to say. First, we support targeted measures. My colleague from Mirabel made that clear earlier.

As for what my colleague said in his preamble, he should look at Ontario. Taxes there were cut significantly. However, it is not taxpayers, not ordinary Canadians, who benefited, but the big oil and gas companies.

The amount of support Canada is giving the oil and gas sector is obscene. Ten, 15 or 20 years from now, when people look back on this time, they will realize that this was one of Canada's worst mistakes. Most countries, especially European countries, have embarked on an energy transition. Here, the government is doing the worst thing it can do, which is investing in oil and gas to support these people who are making record profits.

• (1140)

Claude DeBellefeuille (Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is always nice to listen to my colleague lay the groundwork for the kind of analysis that really is lacking here in the House when it comes to any of the issues surrounding the oil industry.

In his question, my Conservative colleague seemed to imply that we were not in favour of helping farmers who are currently struggling because the diesel they need to harvest their crops now costs them twice as much. However, that is not the Bloc's position; quite the contrary.

Could my colleague tell us about the targeted measures we would agree to that would help farmers reduce their production costs?

Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, we need to look at the targeted measures my colleague from Mirabel mentioned earlier. However, the government has yet to carry out an analysis.

By introducing blanket measures and scrapping all taxes on diesel and gas, it is propping up the oil and gas companies. We must support the people, we must take a step back, and, above all, we must ensure that this type of measure does not end up allowing the oil and gas companies to become even richer.

[English]

Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the MP for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Business of Supply

There is an old saying in military circles: Amateurs talk strategy; professionals talk logistics. It is as true on a farm as it is in an army. Getting a crop in the ground and off the field is a logistics exercise from start to finish to have the right equipment in the right place at the right time with fuel in the tank, and that fuel is diesel. Diesel is not a luxury fuel. It runs the tractor and the combine. It runs the grain truck and the locomotive that takes the crop to port. It runs the potash mine and the gravel hauler, and the pickup trucks that Canadian workers drive every day. Nothing in Canada's food system moves without it. Right now, Canadians are paying more for it than they should, for reasons this government can control.

Last month, diesel fuel averaged \$2.74 a litre in Canada and a year ago, it was about \$1.53. That is an increase of nearly 80%. On September 28, Canadians were paying about 24¢ a litre more than the American average and 31¢ more than the world average. This is a country with the fourth-largest oil reserves in the world. Global turmoil explains why prices went up everywhere. It does not explain why they are higher here.

Let me talk about home. Harvest in Saskatchewan has not been kind this year. With waterlogged fields, heat, hail and delays, producers in my riding were already behind, and then diesel costs spiked at precisely the moment they needed it most. Grain Growers of Canada estimates that fuelling a single large combine would cost more than \$15,000 more this harvest than it did last year. Reporting out of Saskatchewan this fall put the added cost of diesel fuel at roughly \$20 an acre. The president of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan summed it up plainly, saying that "[i]n the spring, [farmers faced] record...fertilizer prices. Now [it is] record...diesel prices, and on top of that, [trade uncertainties threaten what they will get for the crop].... [They are] looking at higher expenses and possibly lower returns."

Here is what members opposite need to understand about agriculture. Farmers are price takers. A manufacturer can raise the price of what they sell. A canola grower near Lanigan or a wheat farmer outside of Moose Jaw cannot. They sell whatever the world price is that day, less the cost of freight. Every cent added to the cost of diesel fuel comes straight out of their margin. There is nobody to pass it on to and the diesel bill does not stop at the farm gate. The grain is trucked to the elevator. It goes by rail to the coast. The fertilizer comes back the other way. Processors, packers and grocers all run on fuel. The cost compounds at every link in the chain and it lands at the checkout in Moose Jaw and in downtown Toronto alike. Tax the farmers' fuel and that is taxing the food. Tax the truckers' fuel and that is taxing everything they carry.

I expect the government members will stand up today and say they have already acted. They suspended the federal excise tax on fuel and they have extended that suspension. I will give them that. It was the right call. Conservatives called for it and Canadians welcomed it. However, let us look at the calendar. Under the government's own plan, the excise tax on diesel fuel comes back at half-rate on February 1 and at the full rate on April 1. Anyone who has spent time in rural Saskatchewan knows what this means. Farm fuel use is not spread evenly across the year. It comes in two surges: seeding in the spring and harvest in the fall. In between, through the winter, the machines sit in the shed and the fuel bill is at its lowest.

• (1145)

The government's relief arrives in the months when farmers are using the least diesel. The tax comes back on April 1, just around ground thaws and when the trucks that serve agriculture go back to work, when the farm trucks and the semis haul seed and fertilizing fuel out in the field and the grain is still moving to the elevator. There is relief through the quiet months, but the tax is back for the busy ones.

It does not stop with the farmer. Spring is when the seed moves, when the fertilizer moves, when the trucks and railcars that serve agriculture are running flat out. Everyone knows those leaders will carry the tax again. Some members will say it is only 4¢ a litre. In Ottawa, 4¢ sounds small, but if we multiply it across every truckload of seed and fertilizer, every load of grain to the elevator, every delivery that keeps a farm running in the spring, it is not small at all. On a farm already absorbing record fertilizer prices and record diesel prices, there is no such thing as a cost that does not matter.

Here is the question for the government: If the tax was worth suspending this fall, why is it worth bringing it back in the spring? Nobody in the House can promise diesel prices will have come down by April. If, as the government's own news release says, this relief is meant to help the food and the agriculture sectors, we should not set the end date right in the middle of the agriculture year. This is not a plan built around how farmers work. It is a plan built around a fiscal calendar in Ottawa.

Our plan is different. We would eliminate all taxes on diesel until at least Canada Day to carry farmers through seeding, not just through winter, to carry truckers through spring hauling, and give Canadians real breathing room, not a countdown.

Business of Supply

I want to be honest with the House about something. Tax relief alone does not close a 24¢ gap. Tax relief is the bridge. Supply is the destination. Canadian diesel is more expensive than American diesel because we do not make enough of our own. In southern Saskatchewan, much of our diesel comes from the co-op refinery in Regina. It is a tremendous asset, but western Canada still relies on fuel brought in from the United States. Last year, nearly 80% of the refined petroleum products Canada imported came from the United States.

For decades, Canada has shipped its crude oil south and bought it back as gasoline and diesel as a profit to American companies. With a weak Canadian dollar, every one of those imported litres costs us more. This is not just an affordability problem, but a vulnerability. We have the resource. What we have lacked is the will to build.

For 11 years, the Liberal government has blocked and delayed the projects that would have made us self-reliant, like pipelines to carry Canadian crude oil and diesel across our own country, expanded production and a strategic reserve to protect us during shortages. Energy east was abandoned. Approval timelines stretched into decades. Investors noticed and capital went elsewhere. The result is exactly what the motion described: fewer ways to produce, refine and transport our own fuel.

Members opposite may have a new leader, but it is the same caucus and the same cabinet that built the record, and Canadians are paying for it at the pump. We have a better plan. We have shared it within my speech. We are asking the Liberal government to listen to us, to listen to the farmers within my riding and across Canada, because we are a food-producing nation. We are a breadbasket and we are starving our own people because of bad Liberal policy. There needs to be a change. We are asking for support.

• (1150)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to note, right at the beginning, because the member tried to give the impression that the government does not understand the crop season, as an example, that the Prime Minister was elected back in April 2025, and there was a gas levy given back on April 20 of last year. I think that fit quite well in terms of the farming cycle. The issue of affordability has been very important for the government, and this is the reason we continue to extend the tax levy.

Does the member not at least recognize that fact?

Fraser Tolmie: Mr. Speaker, I recognize the fact that I have been here for five years. The Liberal Party has been in power for 11 years. Its members have failed to listen to the Conservatives, who have been calling out warning signs for years to be able to actually protect Canadians from the challenges we are facing globally. There has been no response. They have always said that they have had it under control, that everything is good, and then all of a sudden they are here to fix the problem. They have created the problem. Canadians deserve better.

Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was very fortunate about a year ago to be able to go out to this great member's area. I remember flying in on that plane

and looking out the window and seeing those beautiful fields of golden canola growing. I know it is near and dear to the production of agriculture out there.

I wonder if the member who just spoke could relay exactly what this motion would do if and when passed. How much would it help those great farmers out there who are helping with these great canola fields that I witnessed when I was out in his area?

Fraser Tolmie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for a real question, and I am so sorry I was not there when he came to my riding. That is just a bit of contention. I did go to Barrie, and he was not there.

To answer the question, farmers need relief. They need a government to understand what they actually do. They feed Canadians and they feed the world. Any time we put taxes on them or we make things difficult for them, whether it is with fertilizer or fuel, it affects our food and our food chain. We need a better solution for farmers. They need relief, and they are getting tired of not being heard.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by thanking the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan for splitting his time with me.

Would he not agree there might be some fundamental principles on which we could all agree that we think that in Canada we should process raw materials before shipping them out and capturing the value-added jobs here?

Fraser Tolmie: Mr. Speaker, I always like to try to find the centre and a solution that appeals to everybody. We have tried to do that from our side, but we have been shut down by the Liberal government every time we have tried to propose something. I am always about value added, especially in the agriculture sector with regard to the crops we are shipping off, and that is open to all areas. We do have a refinery in Moose Jaw, and we have a refinery in Regina as well.

• (1155)

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, today's Conservative opposition day motion puts forward a number of points, some of which I will agree with and some of which I will not agree with.

I want to focus on the areas of what I think is commonality. I began to suggest this in my last exchange with the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan. Today's Conservative opposition motion looks to what we could do to create more infrastructure in Canada for producing more Canadian-owned fossil fuel products. I would like to start by trying to keep my remarks to some broad principles. We should do it more often in this place, by the way. We should try to find the areas around which we can agree, and then maybe work to make those things happen.

Obviously, I think we do need a consumer carbon price. The Conservatives are not going to agree with me, but then again, neither is the new version of the Liberals.

I will take this moment to correct the Liberal member for Winnipeg North, who has said a number of times that this country elected a Prime Minister. I hate to be so persnickety about it, but in the Westminster parliamentary democracy system, we do not elect prime ministers. We elect members of the House under the Westminster parliamentary system of government, within which we are supposed to be equals. Each of us is equal to the others as members of Parliament, and the Prime Minister is to be first among equals, not lord above all. Ever since Pierre Trudeau created the Prime Minister's Office, there has been a steady, some would say, creep, and every now and then it is a major grab, for more power to the PMO.

Let us get back to first principles around resources. One of the things I would hope we could agree on is that Canada's economy lags in productivity. Would it not be good if we actually addressed that and improved Canada's productivity? What would do that? Our productivity lags when we export more raw resources. It improves when our balance is towards manufactured products where we have value added. That improves productivity always.

As a country, we have been known for a very long time as hewers of wood and drawers of water. If we are going to improve our economic future and economic sovereignty, we need to do two things. First, Canadians need to control our resources. Second, we need to process more here before we export. Those two things would make us a stronger and healthier economy. I submit that neither is happening. There is a great deal of talk about how we are diversifying our market for fossil fuel exports, and I will talk about that.

However, I will turn to the basics. We have basically become a branch plant. Earlier today, a parliamentary secretary boasted of money invested in defence contracting to a company, General Dynamics, a wholly owned subsidiary of a U.S. company. That is not a Canadian investment; that is yet another branch plant investment where we are under the control of a transnational corporation based in the U.S., in terms of that particular investment.

Basically, after at least decades or a century of lamenting that we do not control our own resources here in this country through resource sovereignty, I certainly agree with the point my hon. colleague made a moment ago that we should have strategic reserves. If we had strategic reserves of our own resources, we could control those resources and protect them from the tariffs that the White House is administering. If we used our own money to buy up, for instance, what we wanted to put in a reserve and sell only to Canadians or allies, we could do that at market prices, for instance for potash, so the producers are properly compensated. Then we would have that reserve and could protect it for Canadians.

We could even create funds. Canada savings bonds were advocated by the Green Party in the last election. We had it costed out by the Parliamentary Budget Office. It would work to create a guaranteed return on investment for individual Canadians to invest in our own economy and keep key strategic resources protected from U.S. tariffs.

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However, we still maintain a rip-and-ship economy. We still export raw logs from British Columbia, when our sawmills are begging for fibre so they could work full shifts, work 24 hours of the day and keep workers employed in mill communities. However, we cannot, because we do not control our own resources. They get shipped out before processing.

● (1200)

Even in the great bastion of the free-market economy, the United States, the state of Alaska does not allow unprocessed salmon to be exported. In British Columbia, out it goes. We even have factory trawlers just offshore so our Canadian wild Pacific salmon that is harvested in British Columbia gets processed on Chinese-owned vessels. We have to be very careful, when we go to the grocery store, to make sure we are getting a B.C. product processed in B.C., not one that says in the fine print that it is processed in the People's Republic of China, on a factory trawler just offshore. We have to stop exporting our raw resources unprocessed.

Because of the topic of the opposition debate, I am going to extend the rest of what I am going to say. This applies to all the resources I have talked about so far. We need to improve productivity, get value added and not export before we have gathered up every ounce of economic benefit for Canada. What the Conservatives are saying in the motion is absolutely true. We export fossil fuels raw. We do not have refineries to process our own gasoline, so it goes down to the U.S., and we buy it back. Why is that? Let us just unroll that a bit.

In the early 1970s, there were 40 refineries in Canada. Now there are about 17. Why did that go down? It was not red tape. If anything, it was lax enforcement of environmental regulations that caused us to lose so many refineries. The U.S. brought in stricter air quality control standards for refineries that forced U.S. refineries to continually modernize. However, the masters of our refineries were owned by the U.S. and did not really care if ours rusted out. They did not care if we were non-competitive, because we would only be competing with them in the U.S. anyway, so they did not invest or modernize.

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When the Trans Mountain pipeline was built, the first version of it through the 1950s was bringing actual crude oil from Alberta to the Lower Mainland, to Burnaby, where there were four refineries that processed it. That meant that the people who lived in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia were buying gas for their cars and diesel for their trucks that was processed locally. It cost less.

Of course, we now have one refinery left, not four, and what goes through the Trans Mountain pipeline does not go for Canadian use. It gets put in Aframax tankers. The horrible project the Liberals are going to bring is going to destroy Roberts Bank, which is a sensitive zone of an extreme level of importance ecologically. It is going to turn that into the end point for a diluted bitumen pipeline. It will put it into larger tankers and ship it offshore. It is mostly going to go due south. It does not go to Asia.

If we want to look at the little bit that goes to Asia of what we are now exporting, I will reference what is in the spring economic statement, which is the most recent update I can find. Of the fossil fuels Canada exports, 90% goes to the United States. That is after the people of Canada paid for the Trans Mountain pipeline to take diluted bitumen out of Burnaby. It mostly goes south.

What goes to China, by the way, and this might be of interest to know, is diluted bitumen. Bitumen is a solid tar substance to which a diluent is added to make it flow through a pipeline. That is all. There is no value added at all. When it gets to a refinery, the diluent has to be taken out because it is not part of an improved product. Then it is shipped back to Canada. The only part of the Kinder Morgan pipeline system the Liberals held onto when it was sold was the part that runs from the U.S. north so they could take the diluent out of the diluted mess it gets and ship it back to northern Alberta.

However, when bitumen gets to China, in the most recent statistics I can find, roughly between one-third and one-half of what gets to China is solid bitumen, tar, which it uses to pave roads. I imagine the whiz kids in the PMO who are looking for big slogans do not want to call Canada a tar superpower, so they pretend it is an energy superpower when we are shipping out diluted bitumen.

Why do we not build refineries here? It is costly. There is a low return on investment. If there were a high return on investment, producers would want to build refineries. However, the policy of the Green Party since 2019 has been that we should process our fossil fuel products here, use only Canadian oil here and not be subservient to U.S. corporations that at this point own most of the oil and gas sector in this country. It should be Canadian.

• (1205)

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I liked what the member opposite said at the beginning of her speech when she talked about how it would be good if we could work together in this place on things we have in common. Certainly, when it comes to diesel production and reducing the use of diesel in Canada, I think there are a number of strategies we could agree on, such as our electricity strategy, for example, to displace some of the diesel that is being used. Another idea is our small modular nuclear reactors. I think this would be great technology to take to the north to perhaps even heat greenhouses to address the food insecurity issue there.

I wonder if these are the kinds of things that the member was saying it would be good to work together on.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I love agreeing with the member for Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong. Unfortunately, this will not be one of those occasions.

What we do not have, as she described it, is “our” small modular reactors. There is not one in commercial operation anywhere in the industrialized world. There may be one in China, but it is hard to verify. It is a future technology with lots of issues attached to it, including very high expense. If we want the cheapest, most reliable electricity, the very fastest we can get it, we would be rolling out solar and wind as fast as we could, with battery storage backup.

Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have had an exchange of questions throughout my intervention and throughout her intervention about some commonalities we are facing and some of the challenges that farmers in my riding are experiencing. I would like to hear what kinds of impacts she is facing in her riding with food security and the increased costs of fuel, and how that is affecting her constituents.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest irritants in my riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands is the presence of free parking for large bulk carriers in what are called anchorages. The port of Vancouver just takes ships that are partially filled and sends them to wait. As the member will know, the grain farmers suffer from the poor transportation lengths to get prairie grain shipped to the port of Vancouver and efficiently sent to their buyers.

It has gotten worse since we got rid of the wheat board, but one thing that happens is that CN and CP are not prepared. They seem not to know that, every fall, there is going to be a harvest of grain and that they should be prepared for it. There is CN, where the largest shareholders are Bill and Melinda Gates. CP's full name is the Canadian Pacific Kansas City railway. They are not very interested in whether Canadian farmers get their grain to market.

My constituents are very worried about it. One time, we had to ship grain from the Prairies by truck. The price went way up. We almost ran out of feed for livestock on Vancouver Island because we have an extremely bad supply chain. It has nothing to do with price of diesel. It is just bad planning and bad management.

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 a point. We talk about diversifying, and a major aspect of that is actually working collaboratively with the different levels of government and with private industry in order to, for example, increase the number of refineries in Canada. I think it is important to recognize, when we talk about these initiatives, the projects of the future, that many of those projects are coming out of the discussions that have been taking place over the last 18 months.

I am wondering if the leader of the Green Party can actually provide her thoughts on the importance of working collaboratively, because as one government, it is very difficult to do it.

• (1210)

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, nothing that has been talked about in the last 18 months, two years or five years has had anything to do with Canada's ownership of our own resources. We would have to go back to Peter Lougheed to find a leader who understood the principles of how to deal with a fossil fuel resource and how to control it. His first rule was to think like an owner. We do not. We think like serfs: What can we do to better serve the masters of the universe who own the oil and gas industry globally? They own Canada's oil and gas industry, but we pretend it is Canadian.

I am going to reference Gord Laxer's 2021 report titled "Posing as Canadian". Ninety-eight per cent of the companies in the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers are using—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Québec Centre.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

I am fortunate to rise today to speak to an important concern for the good and well-being of my constituents. I am obviously talking about the high cost of living.

However, before I do that, I would like to highlight the election of three important MLAs who will play a major role for my constituents in the coming years: Patrick Paquet, Étienne Grandmont and Julie White. These are three members from different provincial parties with whom I very much look forward to working to invest in our community and support middle-class families and those who need it most.

I would also like to express my great esteem for two members who have left office, either because they retired from politics or because they were defeated last night: Mario Asselin and Pascal Paradis. Mr. Asselin and Mr. Paradis did a tremendous amount of work for the well-being of their constituents, and I wanted to acknowledge that. Of course, I would also like to acknowledge the work of the volunteers on all the election campaign teams and mention how much is going to change for the riding teams of former members of Parliament. I wish those members and all the teams that supported them all the best, good health, happiness and success in the future.

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Let us come back to the cost of living. We recognize that many Canadians, including many in my riding, are struggling to make ends meet. Many are struggling to pay for groceries, gas, rent, which is also very expensive, and other expenses. We also understand that the very high price of diesel is causing problems for many Quebeckers and Canadians. This is something that is happening around the world, and we need to understand, as everyone does already, that many factors are beyond the control of Canada and the Canadian government. That said, I want to point out that diesel prices here in Canada remain lower than in most of the other G7 countries.

The cost of living remains a significant concern for the Government of Canada. We have already introduced many measures to help Canadians in these hard times, and we will continue to do so. For example, we cut taxes for 22 million middle-class Canadians, and we eliminated the federal consumer carbon tax. The Government of Canada also removed or reduced the GST on eligible new homes for first-time home buyers. Just a few months ago, we introduced the Canada groceries and essentials benefit to provide direct support to households that need it most. I will come back to that in a moment.

We also introduced Bill C-38, the Canadian fuel affordability act, to help with the cost of living. Bill C-38 will extend the temporary suspension of the federal fuel excise tax until January 31, 2027. In practical terms, that means that Canadians will continue to save about \$5 every time they fill up their gas tank.

As members have surely noticed, when this measure was implemented in April, it had an immediate effect. The price at the pump immediately dropped by an average of approximately 11¢ a litre across Canada. By extending this rebate through to January, we will be able to continue to support Canadians and businesses that are suffering because of high fuel prices in general. The excise tax will be gradually reinstated. Following the current temporary suspension, the excise tax will be applied at only 50% of the regular rate for two months, which means savings of approximately five cents a litre on gas and two cents a litre on diesel in February and March 2027.

The motion we are debating today focuses mainly on energy prices, but we obviously need to analyze all of this in a broader context, namely, affordability for Canadians. We have already introduced many measures to help Canadians make ends meet. A good example, as mentioned earlier, is the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit. It is a significantly enhanced version of what was previously known as the GST credit.

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• (1215)

The big difference is that, with this enhancement, Canadians will receive 25% more money this year and over the next four years of benefits. These tax-free payments are helping more than 12 million low- and modest-income Canadians, including tens of thousands of people in my own riding. If we look at the one-time top-up to the benefit that was paid this summer, a family of four will receive up to \$1,900 this year and about \$1,400 in each of the next four years. Eligible Canadian families received a payment just yesterday, on October 5, and the next payment will be made in three months.

I will end with a very quick summary of four very significant affordability measures for people in my riding.

First, there is the Canada child benefit, which reduces poverty by 50%, especially in neighbourhoods in my riding where families are struggling to make ends meet. Nine out of 10 families receive this benefit.

Second, there is the Canadian dental care plan, where 88% of participants, including tens of thousands of people in my riding, say they are very satisfied. Six million people are enrolled in the Canadian dental care plan, including a very large number in Quebec. It also reduces pressure on Quebec's health care system, which really needs it, and it improves not only oral health, but overall health. Third, there is Canada's national school food program, which helps 100,000 children in Quebec alone go to school on a full stomach. Le Pignon Bleu, in my riding, is doing incredible work partnering with this important program. It is not just any food; it is healthy, locally produced and consumed, and contributes to children's overall development. Fourth is the national child care program. Some 900,000 children in Canada benefit from it. Eight provinces have reduced child care costs to \$10 a day across the country, and the remaining provinces and territories have reduced child care costs by more than 50%. In Quebec, that amounts to \$2 billion in federal transfers to the provincial government, which is equivalent to funding 150,000 child care spaces in Quebec alone.

In closing, I know that there is still much work to be done, but we will always be there to help Canadians, particularly those who need it most.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to put a question to my esteemed colleague, the former minister.

My question relates specifically to the oil industry. I have previously given a speech about the ownership of the fossil fuel sector in Canada, which is largely controlled by American interests.

I would like to ask the former minister whether he agrees with me that we would be better off shifting our energy policy toward Canadian industries.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, who is unfortunately a little further away from me physically than she was before. I have always had excellent conversations with this member, whose experience and expertise inspire many other less experienced members in the House.

I would like to say that there are indeed two issues. The first is obviously to protect Canadian workers, including those in the oil

and gas sector. The second is to ensure that the profits and control associated with that industry remain in Canada as much as possible.

This is part of a broader approach by the Canadian government to ensure sovereignty, not only in terms of energy, but also in terms of the economy, particularly when it comes to controlling large properties and major industries.

• (1220)

[English]

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate all the work of my colleague.

The Liberals talk about consistency and predictability. What about the next version of the bill? The building Canada really strong act is, I am sure, what the next one will be.

We have had three different iterations of a pilot project on inter-switching for grain movement in Canada. We had one in 2014, one in 2018 and one in 2023. Continuing these pilot projects makes it impossible for grain haulers and shippers to make investments in sidings to make sure that interswitching is actually successful.

If predictability is important in the bill, why are the Liberals doing yet another pilot project on interswitching and not making that element permanent?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree on the importance and value of pilot projects. That is not always the case, but this is often how lessons are learned locally for well-targeted projects. Then, if it is worthwhile and appropriate, these pilot projects are expanded over time and across the country.

My colleague is more of an expert on this issue than I am, but like him, I would like to see how the lessons learned from this pilot project could be used to extend the pilot project in question over time and across the country.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, the idea of the excise tax exemption is in good part to provide affordability for Canadians. It is all part of a bigger package that the government has brought forward.

I am wondering if he could expand on why it is important that we bring in affordability measures such as this to support Canadians.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, there is a lot to talk about when it comes to affordability measures for Canadians in general.

[English]

I want to flag one example, which we may be talking too little about in this House. It is the universal child care program that we put in place just a few years ago. I was in Quebec in the late 1990s and early 2000s when it was implemented. For many decades, provinces and Canadians were looking forward to such a program. Many thought it would never be put in place, but it came to Quebec earlier, and then it finally came to children and families across Canada, with 900,000 children benefiting from the program every day.

Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak today about diesel prices. It all relates to food costs and high food costs, especially in northern Canada.

I will go back to a promise made by the Prime Minister during the last election. It is funny how people expect us to just forget all those promises the Prime Minister made. That was why he was elected. It was based on those promises. The promise I am going to talk about is the one he made to northern Canadians, that he would be measured by prices at the grocery store.

Why is food so expensive in the north? I think we all know. The reason is two words: transportation costs. Those already high transportation costs just went higher with higher diesel prices, as we all know. It is a reason our leader brought forward the emergency fuel relief plan. The plan would provide for emergency prepermitting and tax relief for the construction of diesel infrastructure such as refineries, pipelines, rail and storage. It would eliminate all taxes on diesel consumption until at least Canada Day. It would permanently eliminate taxes on diesel production and would call on the government to set the goal of boosting Canadian diesel production to one million barrels per day, allowing every Canadian business and consumer access to Canadian diesel.

Again, the Prime Minister promised that he would be measured by prices at the grocery store. I see this every day. I was just responding to a social media post. Prices have always been high in the north. That is true. They have been high but they are even higher, when the Prime Minister promised, just 18 months ago, that he was going to bring those prices down. The promise he made to Canadians did not stop at the northern borders, as far as I am concerned and as far as northerners are concerned.

What are Canadians experiencing at the grocery store because of increased fuel costs? I have an article from Bloomberg. It is from September 29 of this year. It reads, “Diesel prices surge to historic highs, hitting consumers harder than ever.... Experts say elevated fuel costs mean higher price tags on items ranging from food and clothing to construction materials for months to come, with diesel demand poised to go up further as winter approaches.”

The article continues, “The price of a round-trip haul by a semi truck between Montreal and Toronto would have cost roughly \$850 on Jan. 1. Now the total would amount to \$1,400, said Mike Millian, president of the Private Motor Truck Council of Canada.... ‘It’s really dramatic. It’s tough to absorb.’”

Imagine that trip, which is only around 1,000 kilometres. Edmonton is the base from which most of the food in the north comes;

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it heads north from that point. Imagine the cost increase for food when the round trip is from Edmonton to Tuktoyaktuk, and that trip is 7,000 kilometres. We can only imagine what the math is, seven times as much as that trip from Montreal to Toronto.

I will go back to the article. It reads, “Diesel powers industries ranging from agriculture to mining and manufacturing, and the bigger expenses they face are likely to show up as higher sticker prices on consumer items.”

It continues, “It hurts everybody. There’s not anybody this doesn’t affect,” said Millian.”

I will go on: “The shippers and retailers who face those transport surcharges often find they have little choice but to raise prices for shoppers. ‘If you’re an independent grocer and you’re on an overall margin of 2% and you’re getting fuel surcharges from your suppliers, you’re in a tough spot,’ said Gary Sands, a senior vice-president at the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers, which represents about 6,900 stores. ‘It becomes very difficult to not pass on those fuel surcharges.’”

That is the reality we are facing. That is why, again, our leader came forward with the emergency plan that we are putting forward, which would reduce the cost of diesel to at least attempt to bring those costs down or keep those costs lower than what they are right now.

I have another article. This one is from CBC: “The price of diesel is skyrocketing. Here’s why Canadians may soon feel it at the grocery store”. This is the other thing that we have not really talked about. We have talked about the increase in prices, but why? There is not enough supply.

• (1225)

“The problem is that diesel is in extraordinarily short supply, experts say”. The article continues, “This is going to be somewhat of a secret killer of the North American economy, if this is not addressed in the next few months,” Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis firm Gas Buddy, told CBC News.”

“Diesel prices historically rise even more in the winter, according to energy analyst Dan McTeague, meaning ‘we could be looking at a very, very expensive winter ahead, not just for truck, for transport industry, airlines, trains and whatnot, but also for consumers.’”

“It’s a concern for Canadians as any time the price of diesel goes up, it impacts every part of the food supply chain: shipping, storing and producing, according to Evan Fraser at the University of Guelph’s Arrell Food Institute.”

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Some would say this whole situation in Iran is out of the Prime Minister's control, but he has things he can do in Canada right now to limit those impacts to consumers and to transporters that transport our food to these remote areas that eventually impact consumers. He can effect that change. Even though he cannot affect what is going on in Iran, per se, he can still help lower those diesel prices in Canada today by having the simple ability to vote for our plan to lower taxes on diesel and to increase the supply of diesel in Canada.

Again, I would just call on the Prime Minister to do the right thing. I did not get the chance to ask Liberals across the way if they are going to support our plan and our emergency fuel relief plan, but they have a choice: They can support it and dramatically lower the impacts of those higher diesel prices on food costs in Canada. I read about the prices and the food costs in northern Canada. I have made the trip there for several years now and watched those food prices sort of grow over the last three years. The Prime Minister promised those northerners when he looked at the camera and said they would be measured by prices at the grocery store and also by energy prices of home heating. That is how he was going to be measured. He made that promise that it would be okay if he was elected as the Prime Minister. Right now we are not seeing that.

We are not seeing lower prices. We are not seeing lower prices even in my hometown of Fort St. John. Just a dozen eggs is about eight dollars and a loaf of bread is about seven dollars, depending on the type of bread a person buys. Milk is getting a lot more expensive. An example I talked about yesterday was that a jug of milk in Inuvik this summer was \$18. Imagine a family living in Inuvik and having to buy a jug of milk for their family. With two kids at home a family would go through about two jugs of milk a week. That is about what we used to go through. Even the cost of milk is exorbitant, all because of those higher transportation costs.

I started by asking why food is so expensive in the north. I have a two-word answer: transportation costs. The Prime Minister, though, has a choice today. He can vote for our motion to lower diesel prices. In effect, lower heating costs, transportation costs and food costs all the way down the line would benefit Canadian consumers. He can vote for our motion or he can vote against it and cause northern food prices to go even higher. It is his choice.

• (1230)

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, our government is committed to reducing taxes for Canadians. We brought forward Bill C-38 to take the tax off all fuel. I think, and hope, the member opposite would agree that it is very difficult to predict the situation globally in terms of the Strait of Hormuz and the various wars that are coming.

Would he not agree that the prudent thing is to continue to monitor the situation and introduce responsive affordability measures as we know more about the global situation?

Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, I think that is a little bit vague. We have already seen sort of a muted response to these high diesel prices from the Liberals. Our plan is just a lot more thorough and a lot more effective: emergency prepermitting and tax relief would eliminate all taxes on diesel consumption until at least Canada Day,

permanently eliminate taxes on diesel production and then even boost what we have as a reserve to one million barrels per day.

Our plan would be a much more effective response to not only this diesel crisis, but similar crises in the future.

[Translation]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech, specifically the Conservative motion under debate today, is no different from the debates we have come to expect from them. I think almost all of the opposition days in the House have been Conservative opposition days seeking to benefit the oil companies.

However, if we look at the reactions to international tensions in recent months, there has been pressure for a lower gas tax, which the Conservatives achieved because the Liberals gave it to them. There has been a really substantial increase in all possible federal subsidies for oil companies. Last week, the government even made a commitment to buy a new pipeline and build it at taxpayers' expense.

However, none of that has had any impact on prices at the pump. In fact, prices at the pump continue to rise. If we look closely, the only thing increasing is oil companies' profits. Ordinary Canadians continue to pay more, despite the fact that the government is giving more money to oil companies.

Does my colleague really think that his is the right solution?

• (1235)

[English]

Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, that question was a bit out of touch if he is saying that what we are suggesting is just going to put more money in oil and gas companies' pockets. This would land directly in consumers' pockets when they pay less at the grocery store.

I would challenge that member to come with me to the Arctic any time of the year and look at food prices and the associated transportation costs. Our efforts are to bring down those transportation costs to bring down the cost of food for northerners. That is what we are about. I am not sure what he is about.

Rob Morrison (Columbia—Kootenay—Southern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it really gets complicated. Where I live, which is in the southern part of B.C., the price of diesel per litre is three dollars. Our logging industry is suffering and our transportation costs are huge because we are small. What I really like about the bill being proposed is the fact that it is more complete. It would not just to lower the price of diesel right now, but also follow up with production, which is so important. We need something more than just a quick fix.

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Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, this shows we have a government that just seems to put out fires as it goes, versus our Conservative potential and future government, what our leader has said and the potential for us to govern. We have a really good plan that would change things not just for the short term, but for the future for Canadians, which would bring down costs and bring more security for loggers and transporters of food to the north, and really for everybody. We have a plan and I trust that the Liberals will support it today.

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to our opposition day motion, which would give some solutions and save Canadians money right across this country.

I am honoured to be splitting my time with the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot today as well.

I have often said in this House, “No farms, no food.” It is very important that we add to that: “No affordable farms, no affordable food.” It is critical that Canadians understand the connection between what happens on the farm in food production and the impact of those input costs on the farm on the cost of groceries on the grocery store shelves. I will get to that later today.

I want to start my speech by thanking all of the farmers in my riding of Foothills who are finishing up the harvest. Many of them have worked 24 hours a day, religiously, to get that crop in the bin. Many of them have just finished up, and it looks like a good harvest throughout southern Alberta. We are very happy and proud of all the work they have done over this seeding, through the summer and the harvest. Because we know the pride that farmers take in their work, we know the anxiety they have felt as they watched their input prices increase exponentially from last year to this year.

I want to highlight some of the stories I have heard from farmers not only in my riding but certainly right across Canada.

I spoke to one of them as I was driving to the airport on Sunday. Roy was telling me they were finishing up the harvest on Monday and now he has to have a very difficult conversation with his family. Normally, he budgets about \$50,000 for his fuel bill for harvest. This year, his bill was over \$130,000. He is having to have that discussion with his family about where they are going to find the money to pay that fuel bill. He is being honest with his family. He does not know how they are going to pay that bill, and that is a story that I have heard from farmers right across this country. Unfortunately, it is a story that has become all too common.

Another farmer in my riding has a small farm. He has about a 2,000-acre farm, and the fuel bill is another \$20,000 this year above what he is used to, and it was almost 18,000 litres of fuel.

On Kate's family farm in Saskatchewan, they will pay an additional \$90,000 on their fuel bill for harvest this year.

A potato farmer in P.E.I., Aike, said that when fuel gets more expensive, everything in P.E.I. gets more expensive. To put things in perspective, he said, he is looking at a 70% jump in the fuel costs this year from the same time last year. That is from one farmer.

Another P.E.I. farmer, Nathan, said the high diesel prices are “putting a squeeze on our bottom line”. Last year, his total diesel cost for the entire harvest was about \$7,000. This year, he is only

halfway through the harvest, and it has already gone over \$14,000. He said, “Every year I'm saying this is the most expensive crop we're putting in, [and] I'm getting kinda tired of saying that”.

A grain farmer in southern Alberta said diesel is costing him another \$5,000 a day just through harvest. That is costing him another \$100,000 on his fuel bill, and that is just one farm.

Now, we are talking about farmers, but our fishers are facing much the same costs. In fact, I saw some comments from Carl, who is out in B.C. He said some are wondering if they will even be able to survive, and some question if the boats will even leave the harbour. Bob says this is taking the profit right out of fishing. He said, “Some of us aren't even going to take our boats out.”

Again, that correlation between the costs of producing the food and the costs at the grocery store shelves is very real. The Liberals like to say every day that the impact of their policies, like an industrial carbon tax and the Liberal fuel standard, do not impact the cost of groceries. One of Canada's pre-eminent experts, Dr. Sylvain Charlebois, said the other day, “The correlation between diesel prices and food prices that you see at the grocery store [shelves] is one of the highest of all factors”. One of the pre-eminent experts on food prices in the country has said there is a direct correlation between the costs of fuel prices and the costs on the grocery store shelves.

These costs that our farmers and our fishers are facing are not abstract. These are very real costs that are being carried by our farm families right across this country and by our small business owners, our fishers and the workers who are trying to manufacture and process those foods to get them to our grocery store shelves. These are costs being borne by the shippers, the truckers and the manufacturers.

Every time we add those costs, at every link in that supply chain, that cost just grows exponentially until we get to the case where we are, at the grocery store shelves, where more than a third of Canadians now say that the cost of food is their biggest budget anxiety, where we have record numbers of Canadians lined up at food banks and where we among the countries with the highest food inflation in the G7. There are very real consequences of the bad policies and bad decisions of the Liberal government.

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● (1240)

How do we absorb these costs? How do we ask our fishermen and our farmers to absorb these costs? Many of them are asking themselves right now, as the harvest has just been completed, and they do not know. They cannot pass all of those costs on to their customers. In many cases, they have to absorb those costs, and that is the difference between them being economically viable and us losing, once again, more of those family farms, which our rural communities so desperately rely on.

Our farmers are tough. We know they are resilient. They will find a way to make it through and get that crop off this year. However, I would say to my Liberal colleagues that we cannot keep asking our farmers to be tough and resilient. Tough and resilient does not pay the bills. Tough and resilient does not get that crop off into the bin, get it trucked to the terminal, get it trucked to the processor or get it trucked to the grocery store. Being tough and resilient does not pay the bills, and it does not put affordable food on the table.

Ultimately, this is about what impacts each and every one of us, and that is Canada's food security. The farmer is not the end of the story; he is just the beginning. He is a very integral part of that story, but he is not all of it. We know that energy, and diesel especially, drives our country. The anti-energy Liberals have put this at their feet. For this diesel crisis, this cost crisis we are facing, they like to blame global factors, but this crisis lies in the decisions they have made, and it lies squarely within their responsibility.

I found it interesting yesterday during question period, when our leader was asking some questions about the buy Canadian policy the Liberals keep talking about when in fact they are investing in American companies, that the Prime Minister got up and said the government is committed to building the Pacific link pipeline, and the Liberal members were cheering. I could not help but kind of laugh at that because for the past 11 years, those same members, that same Liberal cabinet, were doing everything they possibly could to crush Canada's energy sector.

They scared investors away from energy east. As a result, eastern Canada is importing 130,000 barrels of oil and gas every single day to power eastern Canada when we could be doing that from western Canadian resources through the energy east pipeline. The northern gateway pipeline was approved by the Harper government, but the Liberal government came in and cancelled the northern gateway pipeline. Northern gateway would have been built at this time, moving Canadian energy and ensuring that we were more self-sufficient.

As a result of that, last year, diesel was about \$1.53 a litre. As of September 21, it is \$2.74 a litre. According to Grain Growers of Canada, that is adding another \$1,100 worth of diesel per day per combine per farm, which is another \$5,000 a day. This is what it is costing Canadian farmers every single day. This is why I am encouraging the Liberals to support our Conservative motion, which not only provides a break on diesel prices and tax relief for Canadian farmers but ensures that we put the mechanisms in place to increase production and refining capacity here in Canada, which is critical and would not only solve this problem today but solve it for the future.

I would encourage my Liberal colleagues to support our Conservative motion today to ensure that we save Canadians money today and tomorrow and, most importantly, that we show our Canadian farmers we are standing with them and we understand the anxiety they are facing. We want to make sure they can afford to put affordable food on Canadian tables every single day.

● (1245)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, shortly, I will get the opportunity to provide more detail on the specifics of the Conservative motion, but I want to take up the member's comments. The Conservatives seem to have this fixation on going back to Justin Trudeau. I will provide some further comment on that also, but I think it is important to recognize that there was a change in government when our new Prime Minister was elected.

Since the last federal election, we have seen significant movements, whether in tax relief or commitments to build. We are talking about Pacific link. We are talking about LNG Canada phase two. These are significant ways we are supporting the economy while at the same time dealing with the issue of affordability.

Would the member not recognize that?

John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, what I do recognize are commitments to do something at some point. I will go back to Bill C-5, which Conservatives helped the Liberals pass, the Building Canada Act, because we wanted to be there to support building Canadian projects, nation-building projects, at speeds not seen in generations. Nothing happened.

We now have the building Canada strong act because the first one was not enough. I am expecting that about a year from now, we will have another bill from the Liberal government. It will be called the building Canada really, really strong act, because we could not get it right the first two times. That is what I am expecting from the Liberal government.

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his great speech. A lot of his speech was about farmers. Farmers are generally bound by the price they can sell their products for, because of the market. The cost of doing business is something that we, as the Canadian government, can control.

Can my colleague explain a bit about what has happened over the last 20 years in the beef industry that now causes beef prices to be so high?

John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from northern Alberta for the question. He has been such a great champion for the honey and bee industry. I always appreciate working with him.

My colleague is exactly right. We have seen cattle numbers in Canada continue to decline, which is driving up cattle prices, but there are also those input costs with having to truck these products from one end of the country to the other. The Liberals like to think this does not impact the cost of doing business.

We are adding costs to every link in the supply chain: growing the food, processing the food, transporting the food and putting it on grocery store shelves. What happens when we tax every single part of a supply chain? Of course, the cost of that product on the grocery store shelf is going to go up. That is what Canadian consumers are having to face right now.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend from Foothills mentioned that the east-west pipeline was cancelled, but part of the problem there relates to this debate today, which is the ability of Canadian refineries to process bitumen. None of the refineries in Atlantic Canada could have done that. The Irving Oil refinery in Saint John had no plans then, nor does it have plans now, to add an upgrader.

On our capacity to process Canadian raw resources here, would the member not agree with me that there is no point in shipping diluted bitumen to the east coast of Canada only to put it in tankers to go to the United States?

• (1250)

John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is exactly right, which is why I think it is so important that one of the elements of our opposition day motion is not only to take the tax off diesel today but also to put in elements to fast-track permitting to increase that refining capacity not only in western Canada but also in eastern Canada.

In western Canada, we export diesel. We have more than we can supply because we do not have a pipeline to eastern Canada. However, if we were able to put policies in place to fast-track that permitting, to increase refining in eastern Canada so it could be self-sufficient, I think that would be a great step forward.

That is why I am hoping my colleague will support our opposition day motion.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could give a clear indication of whether the Conservatives recognize that suspending the excise fuel tax will, in fact, not only help farmers but also help all Canadians. Do the Conservatives support that?

John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I think what our producers and our farmers want is predictability. While the Liberals continue to put these taxes on and take them off, there is unpredictability. We are asking the Liberals today to take all taxes off fuel from now until Canada Day to have that predictability and to save Canadians money now.

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by congratulating the new Premier of Que-

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bec, Paul St-Pierre Plamondon, all the candidates who won their races, and my old friend of 25 years, Éric Duhaime, who has been fighting for Quebecers for so long and has made historic gains.

Obviously, the Conservatives do not want a referendum on sovereignty, neither in Alberta, nor in Quebec, nor anywhere else. Ten years ago, under a Conservative government, there was no referendum on sovereignty. In fact, there was not even a sovereignty movement in Alberta. The Bloc Québécois had all but disappeared, and the Parti Québécois was defeated. Ten years later, there is a referendum looming in Alberta, and the new government in Quebec is threatening to hold another one. National unity is a prime minister's primary responsibility, and as the future government, the Conservatives aim to unite Canadians through hope and the core principles of our country. We want to bring all Canadians together to create a truly united country.

One way of doing this is to make life more affordable and help Canadians save money. Diesel is expensive at the moment. Even people who do not own a car or truck that runs on diesel are feeling the pinch, because every item they buy—whether it is groceries, clothing, furniture or anything else for their home—is transported in a truck or on a train that uses diesel fuel. Diesel prices have hit record highs over the last three weeks.

Obviously, we are not going to blame the Prime Minister for the war in Iran or for the war between Russia and Ukraine. That is beyond his control. However, the price of diesel here in Canada is between 24¢ and 30¢ per litre higher than in the United States, and it is about 32¢ per litre higher than the world average. Every other country is grappling with the same wars in Iran and between Russia and Ukraine, yet they are not paying as much as we are here in Canada. Why is Canada paying more under this Liberal government?

First, many hidden taxes are still embedded in the prices we see here in Canada. There are the clean fuel regulations, which add between six and seven cents per litre, according to government documents. Other experts say that the figure is more like 10¢ per litre. There is also the industrial carbon tax. The Liberals love to say that there is no consumer carbon tax, but when they tax the production of something, that obviously increases the cost to consumers, because those refineries have to add that to the price. The GST also still applies to diesel fuel, so that adds another 12¢ or so per litre. All of that feeds into the costs paid by our farmers, our truckers and other businesses that provide us with essentials, and that is one of the reasons prices are higher.

Business of Supply

Then we need to sell our oil to the United States to buy back the diesel they refine. The U.S. benefits while we pay the price. Obviously, we produce a lot of diesel here in Canada, but the problem is that the diesel produced in Canada is not available to all Canadians. We are paying foreigners a refining margin instead of keeping that money here at home. Lastly, we do not have a reserve of refined petroleum products. Today, the Conservatives are presenting a positive plan to save Canadians money, make our country more self-reliant and increase affordability.

• (1255)

First, we are proposing eliminating all taxes on diesel until at least July 1. We are proposing eliminating some taxes permanently, like the industrial carbon tax and the clean fuel regulations. That would allow us to produce and supply diesel for Canadians more cheaply.

Second, we are proposing emergency permitting, emergency pre-permitting and tax relief for businesses that invest in diesel infrastructure, refineries, storage and transportation here at home. That would allow businesses to invest that money now to build. In the United States, I found at least five examples of refineries that were built in less than three years. Some people say that it takes 15 or 20 years to build a refinery or to make small improvements to our energy infrastructure, but that is not true. It is a self-imposed limit.

For example, British Columbia has to import diesel from the United States, even though we have the fourth-biggest reserves of diesel here at home. By lowering costs today and becoming more self-sufficient in the medium term, we will be able to protect our consumers and make groceries, clothing, furniture and other products more affordable here in Canada.

We will also be able to safeguard our self-sufficiency. Our aim is to produce one million barrels a day within five years, to supply every Canadian market with Canadian diesel and to build up a strategic reserve. We would build up this reserve during periods when prices are at their lowest. That way, we would have it at our disposal when prices are higher. That is how we will ensure Canada remains affordable and secure, and that is how we will become masters in our own house.

[English]

Before I begin, I would be remiss if I did not offer congratulations to the newly elected Premier of Quebec, Paul St-Pierre Plamondon, and the PQ. I also congratulate all others who were elected. In particular, I congratulate my friend of 25 years, Éric Duhaime, who made major gains in this election and has been fighting for Quebecers his entire life. We wish him much success in the National Assembly.

Obviously, we, as Conservatives, do not want a referendum on national unity in any province. We do not want one in Alberta or in Quebec. We want the country to be united. Unfortunately, we see that there is now a referendum in Alberta and there is a referendum threatened for the future in Quebec.

About 10 years ago, there were no referendums to separate in any part of the country. There was no separatist movement in Alberta whatsoever. The PQ was defeated. The Bloc did not even have party status. Here we are, 10 years later, with one for sure and

another possible referendum. These are in two of our most cherished provinces.

The measure of the Prime Minister is how he can keep our country united. As a future prime minister, my mission will be to truly unite the country and to make all those who have lost faith in the country regain hope that they can have a great life, their hard work will pay off, young people will be able to afford homes and that every single province and its industries will be fully respected. That is the hope we offer to truly unite our country from coast to coast. One way to do it is to make our country affordable, independent and safe here at home.

Our plan today is the diesel relief plan. It proposes to tackle the fact that we have diesel prices that are 24¢ to 30¢ a litre higher in Canada versus in the U.S. and the rest of the world. Our mission is to eliminate that gap, produce the equivalent of a million barrels of diesel every single day and supply every Canadian market with Canadian-made diesel.

We have a plan to eliminate all federal taxes on the production and consumption of diesel to incentivize the fast construction of refineries, transportation and storage of diesel through 100% one-year expensing of investments and emergency permits, and to create a strategic petroleum reserve that would prepare us for moments just like this. This approach would bring down the cost of not just the diesel, but also everything that comes in a truck, such as food, groceries, appliances and clothes. Everything would be more affordable in a more autonomous country.

• (1300)

Let us make Canada the most affordable, richest and most secure country anywhere on earth.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, whether it was during the week prior to the break week or even today, Conservative members who stand seem to give the impression that they would like to see all forms of taxation taken off the price of diesel. The leader of the Conservative Party applauds that.

Canadians need to know very clearly from the Conservative Party of Canada if its position is to permanently get rid of all forms of taxation on gasoline.

Business of Supply

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, our position is that we should permanently get rid of the industrial carbon tax, which applies to the upstream production of petroleum and the refining of diesel products. We should permanently get rid of the so-called clean fuel standard, which is a tax that drives up gas at the pump by at least six cents a litre, rising to 17¢ a litre. It should be gone forever. We propose to suspend until at least Canada Day the excise tax and the GST.

The combined effect of that will be in the neighbourhood of 20¢ a litre, and that would reduce the costs for our truckers who bring us products, our farmers, our rural people who drive diesel-powered vehicles and people in Atlantic Canada and parts of Ontario who still heat with diesel. Everything is more expensive when we drive up the cost of diesel.

I noticed that the member forgot to mention that Canadian diesel prices are 24¢ to 30¢ a litre more expensive than American and worldwide prices. That is a homemade problem, made by the government, for which the Conservatives have the solution. We ask them to vote for our plan for diesel price relief for all Canadians.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, what a pleasure for me, as the leader of the Green Party of Canada, to be able to put a question to the leader of the official opposition. It is rare that we have this chance leader to leader.

I wonder if the member would like to comment on the fact that so many billions of dollars of subsidies are going to projects that are primarily based in the United States. For instance, we hear a lot about Ksi Lisims' LNG project that will be a floating LNG terminal. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of Western LNG, which is, of course, Texas-owned and -based. The so-called LNG Canada operation is 40% Shell oil. Other than Shell, the next owners are Petronas from Malaysia, PetroChina and Korea's state-owned gas company.

There is nothing Canadian about it, except the name. Does this bother the leader of the official opposition?

• (1305)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the member's question was about subsidies. Canada's oil and gas industry should be so wildly profitable that it does not need any subsidies. In fact, LNG Canada, the first project, which was approved by the previous Conservative government, did not require subsidies, even though it is the single biggest project in the history of the country at \$40 billion. Why? It is because it is wildly profitable to take natural gas, which goes for \$2.50 in Canada, and sell it for \$25, 10 times more, in Asia.

Why do we need subsidies now? It is because the Liberal government blocks these projects, ties them up in red tape, taxes them to a level that is too high, breaks our legs and then says we should thank them for giving us a crutch.

In reality, we believe we should get out of the way and off the backs of our energy sector so that these projects are profitable, pay into the treasury, rather than take out, employ people and make us richer, make life more affordable and make us more autonomous here at home.

[Translation]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, the Leader of the Opposition implied that a Conservative government in Ottawa would dampen Quebec's drive for independence. This raises several questions for me. Let us look at the facts rather than his speech: Yesterday, Quebecers elected a Parti Québécois government, which obviously advocates for Quebec's independence. Under Conservative leadership, from 2012 to 2014, a Parti Québécois government was also elected, one that advocated for Quebec's independence. For the benefit of my Conservative colleague, I would like to add that the Bloc Québécois has never disappeared. The Bloc Québécois is still here. There have always been people fighting for Quebec to stand on its own two feet.

My question is this: Can he not acknowledge that it is a legitimate aspiration for a nation to have its own country?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, after 10 years of Conservative government, the Bloc Québécois did not even have official party status in the House of Commons. In Quebec, the Parti Québécois was in opposition. At that time, discussions about a referendum were not even happening, because the Conservative Party had managed to unite the country, as it always does. It had recognized the Quebec nation, restored to the provinces the powers that rightfully belonged to them, including the Quebec nation, and respected all Canadians. Young people also had the hope that they could buy a home, start a family and build a good life. In a climate of hope like that, the situation we face today did not exist.

Unfortunately, we are now faced with two referendum initiatives: one that is very real and another that is being threatened. Now more than ever, we need a prime minister who can unite Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to address the House in regard to the opposition motion before us today. It is a motion that I personally cannot support. At the end of the day, I believe the government's policy is the right direction we should be following.

There are a number of things the Conservative Party does not take into consideration. The primary one has to be the reality of what is happening around the world today. What is taking place in the Strait of Hormuz and in the Middle East is having a profound impact on prices not only here in Canada, but in fact around the world.

Business of Supply

I posed a question to the leader of the Conservative Party, and then another question was posed to him, and from my perspective, two things came out of them. The latter question posed to him was about the issue of taxes. He raised the United States and the rest of the world, saying that Canada was above the average. It is important that we get a sense of what is actually taking place in the G7 countries, which are the most industrialized countries in the world today. Our price on diesel fuel is no higher than it is in many of the other G7 countries, which includes countries such as the United Kingdom, which has England, and others.

Being very selective is something the Conservatives are very good at doing when trying to draw comparisons. Canada overall is, relatively speaking, in a very okay position compared to G7 countries on the price of diesel. Can we do more? That is ultimately one of the reasons we have taken the actions we have since the spring economic update. That was one of the issues coming out of the questions for the leader of the Conservative Party.

Another issue, the one I specifically asked the leader about, was in regard to the Conservatives' position on taxation with respect to fuel. I suspect their position is even further to the right than President Trump's, quite frankly. If we listen to what some of the Conservatives are saying, whether today or in the week prior to the break week, one could easily draw the conclusion that they believe, or at least some believe, or want to imply that we should be getting rid of all forms of gas taxes. Then they go on to give a number of reasons, which ultimately lead to farmers.

That is where I would like to begin my comments, although somewhat belated. Conservatives like to talk a great deal about farmers, as if the Government of Canada has not been sympathetic to the farmers of our nation. Nothing could be further from the truth. I would challenge members across the way to indicate a prime minister who has been as aggressive, along with cabinet, in trying to pursue additional markets that go beyond the United States. I do not believe they would be able to identify a prime minister, cabinet or government caucus that has been as aggressive in pursuing export markets that ultimately will support our farmers.

Let me give a good example of that. I had the opportunity to get a better understanding of what is taking place in the Philippines, because of the trade discussions happening today with Canada and the Philippines, which are led by the Prime Minister and the President of the Philippines.

● (1310)

Agriculture is on the agenda, and that is only one of many discussions that have been taking place over the last 18 months. In fact, we have seen well over 20 trade and security agreements signed off on by the Prime Minister and this government since the last federal election.

I will go to one agreement that I tie myself fairly closely to, because the Minister of International Trade has been very accommodating in listening to what I have to say about the potential between Canada and the Philippines. I am encouraged by how agriculture is being brought into the picture. I am someone who grew up in the Prairies and lived in all three prairie provinces, and I have been talking to farmers. The first farm I visited when I was 13 years old was the Stoyne farm just outside of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. I

rode on the big tractors at 13. I understand the farming community in good part, although maybe not as well as others who are farmers and so forth, but understanding the industries has always been important to me, whether it is the canola or pork industry, which I have provided comments on in the past.

I can say that the government, in particular our Minister of Agriculture, is very much on top of the file in regard to farmers, as is the Prime Minister, who also grew up in the Prairies. I suspect that if we were to have discussions with farmers, what we would find at the end of the day is that creating additional markets for their product is something they see great value in. Tell me another government that has been as aggressive at pursuing that.

Another good example would be canola. My home province of Manitoba benefited because the Prime Minister took an interest in trying to take down barriers between China and Canada, which ultimately dealt with some tariffs on canola.

We can talk about Farm Credit Canada and how it continues to support our farmers during what can be very challenging times. The special levy tax put on by the federal government was actually put into place by the current Prime Minister. The Conservatives like to say that it was their idea. Ultimately, the idea might have come from Wab Kinew, the Premier of Manitoba, who years ago gave a gasoline tax break to the people of Manitoba shortly after the last provincial election.

The point is that it does not matter where the idea came from. What is important is that we recognize that there is a need today to deal with issues such as affordability. This is something the Prime Minister, this government and every member of the Liberal caucus understand. It is a reflection of what we are seeing and hearing within our ridings. We want to deliver for the constituents we represent, and the affordability issue is an important issue for every one of us. We are a strong, united caucus on the issue of affordability and in supporting the initiative that the Prime Minister has taken in providing direct relief through the levy on taxes on gasoline.

● (1315)

That is not the first time. In fact, the very first action that was taken when he was selected as the leader of the Liberal Party and became the Prime Minister was getting rid of the carbon tax on gasoline. Was that 13¢ a litre or 17¢ a litre? I cannot think of the exact number. I think it was close to 17¢ a litre.

Bob Zimmer: Whose idea was it?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it was our current Prime Minister who actually got rid of it.

The member opposite wants to challenge me and ask whose idea it was. Let me tell him something. At one time, the Conservatives were against it. They then became in favour of it and then they were against it. That is the Conservatives' track record on it.

Business of Supply

The current Liberal leader, today's Prime Minister, who was elected in the last federal election, made a commitment to Canadians on the issue of affordability and he is delivering on the issue of affordability in many different ways. He is not just dealing with the tax on gas, whether it is the carbon tax or the levy that has been applied.

We constantly hear from members opposite, and even from my colleagues, about the importance of affordability. It has not stopped there. When we talk about affordability, this is affordability that benefits farmers. The tax break that was given, shifting from 15% to 14%, helped 22 million Canadians. To my Conservative friends, many of those people are farmers.

Understanding that there are ways in which we can directly help Canadians with the price of food, we not only converted the GST rebate but, significantly, put up front literally hundreds of millions of dollars and converted it into the Canada groceries and essentials benefit. Again, we are dealing with the issue of affordability. Once again, our farmers will benefit from that program.

I put it in that form because I want members to recognize that one does not have to be in the opposition to value and appreciate what our farmers do for our nation. They are the ones who provide the food on our table.

I have travelled on the highway in the Prairies, where we see four, five and more combines forming a row and harvesting wheat from the fields. It is an impressive sight. In the province of Manitoba, when I think of farmers and producers, it goes beyond just the crops. I have talked about how important the pork industry is to my home province of Manitoba, from those who process it to those who have the barns and get the pork ready to be put in places like HyLife, Maple Leaf Foods and Winkler Meats. These are important people who play a critical role in food security.

Food security is important to every member of the government caucus. For this reason, we often talk about why it is so important to support expanding the year-round production of things like vegetables and fruits so that we are less dependent on countries like the United States in dealing with food security. These are some of the measures the government has put in place to support our farmers and Canadians as a whole.

● (1320)

Today, we have the Conservatives saying, "Here is our idea", because they want to one-up, in the best way they can, what the current government is proposing, even though when they had a chance to do things like this when they were in government, they did not. Now they are in opposition and they see a government actually taking some of these initiatives, they want to say they can one-up them.

No one can accurately predict what the price of fuel is going to be six months from now. We might like to think we can. This is a measure that was put in place on April 20, I believe, as part of the spring budget update. It was meant to provide temporary support, with a suspension until the Labour Day weekend. That was in Bill C-30, if members want to look it up. We are grateful that the Conservatives supported that legislation. That was great.

Over the summer, going into August, a decision was made that we needed to be able to extend that tax break, which is somewhat similar to what the Province of Manitoba did when it brought in its initial price reduction on gasoline. That is exactly what Bill C-38 would do. It would allow for that extension, which incorporates diesel and gasoline. I can say it makes a very tangible difference for consumers.

I am very much aware of the Bloc's concern with respect to the issue. How can we ensure that the tax break, whether it is given by the Province of Manitoba or the federal government, is being passed on to consumers? I believe we have some of the best civil servants and independent officers of Parliament, along with different stakeholders, who can ensure that those oil companies have a sense of accountability so that, in fact, that tax break goes directly into the pockets of the consumer. That is something we take very seriously. It is the reason why we are doing it in the first place.

This is a government that is not only focused on short-term relief. It is trying to resolve the problem and secure our future so that Canada can be more independent in issues of this nature. It is the reason why we had the Pacific link announcement. It is the reason why we had the LNG Canada phase two announcement. These are multi-billion-dollar announcements that are going to increase Canada's capacity.

The leader of the Green Party talked about refineries. If we want more refineries in Canada, we have to continue to do what the government is doing, which is working collaboratively with other jurisdictions. We have to create the climate that will allow for the expansion of our refineries. I think we have 16 now. Maybe it is 17. I am not 100% sure. I know Manitoba is one of the only provinces that does not have one. I would like to see private businesses, private enterprises and the provincial governments, in particular, working with the federal government on ways we can do that. This government, headed by this Prime Minister, has made it very clear that we are a government that will work collaboratively with other jurisdictions, the private sector and, in particular, investors to build a stronger and healthier Canada for all and an economy that is there for all Canadians. That is what we are all about.

● (1325)

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to challenge my colleague's comments about the benefits the Liberal government has brought forward, particularly for Canadians but certainly for Canadian farmers. It is much like the Liberals' fabled buy Canada policies when, in fact, they are buying American.

It is very similar to the Liberals' fuel regulations. My colleague said this benefits Canadian farmers, but 73% of the carbon credits from the fuel regulations standards are going to imported fuel. This means that almost a billion dollars in credits from the Liberals' fuel regulations are going to subsidize foreign imports into Canada, mainly from the United States.

Business of Supply

Would my colleague not agree that high taxes, red tape and a multitude of bureaucratic hoops for these processors and farmers to jump through are the reasons why the Liberals' fuel regulations are not benefiting Canadian producers, and that there is a better solution?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, no. I disagree with the member, because all we need to do is look at what has been taking place in the last 18 months. In the last 18 months, we have seen investors from around the world looking at Canada as the right place to invest in. They can look at what took place in the city of Toronto when the Prime Minister hosted the world's investors and generated the possibility of just under half a trillion dollars' worth of potential investment.

It is unheard of in Canada for a prime minister to do what he has been able to accomplish, especially in the time frame of 18 months. That is the reality, so I disagree wholeheartedly with what the member is suggesting.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1330)

The Deputy Speaker: I welcome members having exchanges, but there is only one member recognized at a time. I remind the member for Foothills to hold himself back for a moment.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong.

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader for his passion for Canadian farmers and Canadian agriculture, and then I want to add to that.

He has reiterated that our government is clearly willing to bring affordability measures to help Canadians at this crisis time. Twice, we have exempted the fuel tax, with Bill C-30 and Bill C-38. However, let us not forget that some of those fuel taxes actually go back to municipalities to help with critical infrastructure.

We cannot predict what the situation is going to be in the Strait of Hormuz and whether that is going to be resolved soon. It would be irresponsible to extend past the time frame that we can predict, what the revenues would be and what the benefits for Canadians would be. Would the member agree?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, yes, I would agree. That is one of the reasons why I brought up how there is no one inside the House of Commons who can make a prediction about what the price is going to be in six, seven or eight months with any absolute certainty. That is because of what is taking place in the Strait of Hormuz and in the Middle East in general.

The manner in which we are bringing forward the excise tax relief on gasoline is the most appropriate way. It is the responsible way to plan for the budget going into the future.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I did not expect to be speaking to the issue of pork in Manitoba, but I cannot help myself in responding to the hon. parliamentary secretary. The history there is fascinating. We should learn the lessons.

It was Pierre Trudeau who killed the Crow rate, which made it harder for prairie farmers to ship out their grain. That led to a glut

of grain on the Prairies, which meant asking, “What do we do with all of this grain?” They put it in mega hog barns, with thousands of sows in the same barn, and fed them the grain, because if they could not ship the grain out, they could ship the hogs out.

Where did they go? They are not local food security for Manitoba. Only 10% are consumed in Canada. Most are shipped out. Millions of live pigs are shipped to the United States, bringing us back to the same argument we are making here. They are not processed in Canada. Live pigs are sent to Iowa, where they are fattened up, fed lots of drugs and slaughtered. Meanwhile, the hog barns have so contaminated Lake Winnipeg that it is dying.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely, totally disagree with the leader of the Green Party. She should be talking to people in the Manitoba pork industry and get a better sense of where it is today.

I have been on this file since the nineties, when we had the hog barn issue. The reason we have two million piglets going to the United States is that we do not have enough barns in the prairie provinces, particularly in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. There is a movement afoot to expand the number of farming facilities.

The member undercut such an important industry. We are talking about 10,000 direct jobs in the province of Manitoba because of the pork industry. That is not to mention indirect jobs. If they go out to Brandon and Neepawa, not to mention Winnipeg, they will see the impact the pork industry is having. It is very real and very tangible.

I suspect that there are thousands of people, including the premier of the province, who would be upset with the leader of the Green Party's comments.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I want to reflect on what the member said. That is the situation today. I am looking at how this evolved, and I recall how many municipalities, local governments, across Manitoba passed bylaws to stop having mega barns put in their communities, making life less livable and hurting local farmers. They were stopped by a draconian law from former NDP premier Gary Doer, who took away the right of local municipalities to ban these productions in their communities.

• (1335)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, in a positive way, we should note that things have changed through technology and so forth. It is an industry that is doing exceptionally well today in the province of Manitoba.

True to form, when the member spoke, she talked about how we should be processing more within Canada, something I support. I hope to see this not only in our hog industry, but also in our petroleum industry.

Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is from the Prairies, and so am I. He knows that the backbone of the prairie economy is the family farm.

Business of Supply

Family farms tend to be a little smaller than the bigger commercial farms out there, but small family farms are probably being hit the hardest when it comes to skyrocketing diesel prices, because the margins they are operating with are very tight. One farmer talked to me about the price from last year and what he is planning for for next year, and he said he is looking at a difference of between \$40,000 and \$50,000 on his small family farm just in the cost of diesel for him to put the crop in the ground and get the harvest off. He has to plan ahead, and he is penciling in a difference from last year to next year of \$50,000.

What does the member think this farmer is going to do? He cannot pass that cost on. He has to absorb that cost. That is why we have this motion today. What does the member have to say about that?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, there is the short term and there is the long term. In the short term, the government is providing tax relief. In the long term, it is important to recognize that, whether it is through the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of International Trade or the other ministers, we are aggressively looking for new markets for our farmers.

I suspect that in the long run, the healthiest thing we can do for our farmers is to support them by finding and supporting new markets that go beyond the United States. At some point, we will re-establish well in the United States, but we need to expand the export market, and that is something this government is aggressively pursuing. I suspect that our farmers in the Prairies will very much appreciate that fact.

Braedon Clark (Sackville—Bedford—Preston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on something the member just mentioned, which is the balance between short-term and long-term factors. Perhaps he could touch on some of the short-term moves the government has taken, like the removal of the fuel excise tax, and the longer-term projects on affordability, like Churchill Falls or other projects that he might want to mention.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that. I had a lot of time to talk about the short term. Let me go into the long term.

As the member would know, we have the Major Projects Office. Out of the Major Projects Office, 24-plus submissions have been brought in. We are talking about close to half a trillion dollars. In every region of Canada, whether it is for copper mines, at the port of Montreal or in Atlantic Canada, we are seeing a high level of interest where there are major projects in the works, and it is all because of collaborative federalism headed by the Prime Minister.

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I get started, I would like to say that I am sharing my time with the member for Lethbridge.

We are here talking about a motion regarding diesel prices, which are basically out of control. They are getting higher, with the potential to go even higher, and our Conservative motion is to cut diesel taxes to save Canadians money and produce more fuel here at home.

We have already seen how a weakened economy over the last 10 years has made us vulnerable to tariffs, and this is going to get

worse with a diesel shortage. No matter where the dispute is happening, this diesel shortage is coming, and it is going to affect Canadians in more ways than one. The Prime Minister blamed the provinces for taxes, but the Prime Minister forgot to mention his own taxes on fuel, which include the industrial carbon tax, the clean fuel regulations on diesel and the GST on diesel.

I have seen this before. I was in MLA in B.C. when the Coquihalla Highway was washed out, and in turn the pipeline that was sending fuel products from Alberta to B.C. was shut down. That turned to rationing for people living in Vancouver and on Vancouver Island of 30 litres per fill-up. It was that bad, and in fact, the public safety minister at the time, Farnworth, said that it could work if people were not greedy and would not take any more. There were even travel restrictions. It got so bad that our neighbours to the south helped us out on request by shipping more fuel to Vancouver, and Alberta was doing everything it could to turn the taps back on again. This is where we are heading if we do not take this issue seriously.

When we are talking about rationing fuel at a government level, a citizen is at the bottom of the list of those using fuel. The priority will be emergency service vehicles, as it was in B.C., public transit vehicles and commercial transport trucks, which are relevant here, because the cost of groceries depends on the transport of food products to the grocery stores. That is not to mention the farmers who need diesel for the harvest. None of these producers or transporters are going to absorb that cost. They are going to pass it on to the consumer, who is already struggling.

Two million people are visiting food banks in Canada. The price of groceries and goods is going to go up if we do not address this in the short term, the medium term and the long term.

The priority goes further, to road repair, military vehicles, critical infrastructure, home care workers and municipal service vehicles. If someone lives in a northern community like mine, municipal service vehicles matter when they want to pick up garbage or want to clear the roads and the highways of snow. Fire trucks, ambulances and B.C. first nations government service vehicles will be a priority. They were a priority during the fuel crunch back in 2022 in B.C.

B.C. ferries, coast guards, tugboats, emergency vehicles, pilot boats, Canada Post, vehicles for the provision of critical government services and airport authority vehicles were all priorities at the top of the list in B.C. when we faced a fuel shortage, as were school buses, taxis, agriculture and farm-use vehicles, veterinarians supporting flood response, and intercity buses. That was a very temporary shortage of fuel that B.C. was experiencing.

Business of Supply

● (1340)

However, it went further. There were travel restrictions in B.C. The travel restrictions for British Columbians applied to Highway 99, Highway 3 and Highway 7, and they were enforced by the RCMP. Only approved travel was allowed. If a citizen wanted to travel to visit their family members, under the fuel crisis it was not allowed, and they could be charged. They could be charged and fined if they did not follow the fuel restrictions. There were essentials as well, including a person returning to a principal residence or an aboriginal exercising their rights as affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982.

This is serious. Nobody is blaming the Liberal government for the wars or the issues happening all around the world that are causing diesel shortages globally. No one is blaming the government. We are talking about what is possible, right here and right now, to help offset the price at the pump for Canadians and help with affordability. That is all we are asking for. In fact, it is something the Conservatives have suggested before to make life more affordable for Canadians. The Liberals took up some of our Conservative ideas, like getting rid of the carbon tax, but they then turned around and said they were going to create the industrial carbon tax. It was kind of a bait-and-switch move. That industrial carbon tax applies to farmers.

In terms of refining more product here, that is another old issue. During the fuel shortage in B.C., Premier Horgan himself said that we needed more refining capacity and the best place to do that was in Alberta. That is what we are talking about today. We need to cut the red tape and get more capacity to address affordability issues for Canadians.

What made it absurd in B.C. was that at the time, the B.C. NDP were using every tool in the tool box to shut down the pipeline from Alberta to B.C., even though they were told that legally they could not do it and constitutionally they could not do it. They were using every tool to shut down the pipeline. The Alberta NDP, which was in power at the time, then created legislation to turn off the taps to stop fuel from flowing to British Columbia.

We had the NDP fighting the NDP. What did the B.C. NDP do? They threatened to go to court. This is after B.C. was entertaining a legal challenge to stop a pipeline from Alberta to B.C. B.C. turned around and said that if Alberta shut down the pipeline that sent fuel to B.C., it was going to go to court. I was sitting in the legislature scratching my head thinking that on one hand, we did not want oil shipped to B.C., but on the other hand, we wanted the fuel to continue.

The interprovincial trade barrier that the Prime Minister promised to get rid of is a lot bigger than wine. It has gotten to the point where we are talking about diversifying away from the United States, but not touching fuel products because everybody knows how interconnected we are. Yes, we produce diesel here. We could produce more, but we take crude oil and pipe it to the United States, and it turns it into fuel products like jet fuel, gasoline and diesel and sells it back to us.

If we want to be an energy superpower, if we want to be more independent, we have to look at refineries. If we want to address affordability, we have to look at refineries, that supply and demand.

Being part of the G7, Canada was part of that announcement saying that we were going to release more reserves to alleviate the crunch. Canada does not have reserves.

I ask every member in this House to please support our motion to make life more affordable for Canadians.

● (1345)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my friend could provide his thoughts. After serving in the B.C. legislature, does he recognize the important role that provincial governments, in particular, have in dealing with issues like natural resources?

We talk about refineries and whether we want to increase the number of refineries. It has not been confirmed, but I think we have 16 or 17 refineries across the country. If we want to increase that number, the only way that could really be done in a practical way is by getting the three major stakeholders together, the private sector, provincial government and its entities, and the federal government. By working collaboratively, we might be able to get some more refineries built.

Could I get his thoughts on that?

Ellis Ross: Mr. Speaker, I think we are having the same conversation about Pacific link, but the price tag for that pipeline is going to be enormous. Who is going to pay for that? It will be the taxpayer.

It is possible, but I think in terms of a crisis and talking about affordability, and the supply and demand of diesel and fuel products, this conversation is long overdue. It should have happened 10 years ago.

● (1350)

Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know residents in the member's riding greatly appreciate the great work that he is doing.

I just want to highlight something that happened in my neck of the woods in Abbotsford—South Langley. Diesel prices are so high that truck drivers had a convoy from Abbotsford to Vancouver in the Lower Mainland to make sure they could alert the government about the high prices. Canadians are struggling to fill their tanks. They are struggling to go about their day-to-day jobs.

Business of Supply

I would just like to hear from the hon. member about the Conservative platform. What are our Conservative ideas that we could implement against high diesel prices?

Ellis Ross: Mr. Speaker, the member is doing a good job representing the good citizens of Abbotsford.

We should get rid of the taxes on fuel, and create more supply by building more refineries and expanding the production that we currently have. If we think about it, the Liberals have actually taken our ideas before, not all of them, and not 100% of the way, but they did have an effect at the gas pump.

It surprises me that only the members speaking up here on affordability are speaking on behalf of constituents. I cannot believe that every MP has not been lobbied on exactly the same issue.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out, though, that the idea of shipping bitumen with diluent to other countries, bypassing Canadian refineries, is primarily because we have not had a Canadian-owned refinery industry. We had 40 refineries in 1960. They were all owned outside of Canada for the most part, and they did not have, as corporations, the incentive to keep them running in Canada. They were already owned in the United States. They did not want to compete with themselves, so they kept running refineries there and shipping our product there.

I just wonder if the hon. friend from Skeena—Bulkley Valley happens to know the one product in Canada for which we do have a strategic reserve, for fun. I will not put him on the spot, but it is maple syrup in Quebec. That is the one resource with a strategic reserve.

Ellis Ross: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear we have a reserve for our maple syrup.

Haisla had the same question. We are just a small native band. We were wondering the same thing about why Canadian investors would not invest in major projects. The simple answer came back that they cannot afford it. Only the largest multinational corporations can afford to do business in Canada. What we are trying to do on this side of the House is to change that, to make life affordable and make it more investable.

Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when a parent stands in the checkout aisle of a local grocery store looking at the total that they can barely afford, they are not thinking about macroeconomics or global supply chain logistics. No, that is not what crosses their mind. Instead, they are looking at the price tag of a carton of milk, a loaf of bread or a bag of apples, the things that sustain their families day to day.

They ask the question, “How did life become so expensive, especially in a place like Canada where we have so many resources at our disposal?” The Prime Minister once told the Canadian public that he should be judged by the prices at the grocery store. Let us do that. In fact, Canadians are judging him every single day they tap their card in order to pay for those essentials that they need, and they are watching as those prices continue to go up.

The cost of everyday life is out of control, and Canadians are recognizing that. They do not need me to tell them, they do not need their member of Parliament to tell them and they do not need

an economist to tell them. They experience it each and every day. Every single meal on a family's dinner table starts on a farm. That is what needs to be understood in this conversation. It travels down a highway and then eventually makes its way to a grocery store. All of this is done on the back of a transportation truck, which of course requires fuel. That fuel is diesel. When the government drives up the price of diesel, it drives up the cost of living for every single mother, father, senior and young person across this country, no matter where they live or what type of lifestyle they enjoy.

This is why Conservatives are bringing forward a smart, common-sense plan to save Canadians money. This plan is called the emergency fuel relief plan. While this plan might focus on diesel, it is in fact an affordability measure. It is actually a plan that puts the Canadian people squarely at the centre of it.

A local farmer recently called me in order to express his concern over the increasing cost of diesel, which he relies on in order to put his crop in the ground and then take that crop back off. Now, the Liberal government consistently fails to understand the point he wished to make. It was that when the cost of fuel goes up, the cost of food goes up. It is actually that simple. He is right that this is the harsh reality that we face day in and day out. This is the harsh reality that Canadians face when they go to buy that bag of apples, that loaf of bread or that carton of milk.

Many Canadians do not drive diesel trucks, and they do not sit behind the wheel of a large tractor or a combine. However, they understand the price on a grocery bill, and they understand the transportation that it takes in order to make its way to the shelf. Canadians are paying every step of the way because of domestic policy. Let us consider the direct supply chain that brings food and goods to our Canadian homes. Diesel powers the tractors that prepare the soil, plant the crops and harvest our food. Diesel powers the trucks that transport that fresh produce and livestock to our processing facilities and our grocery stores. Diesel powers the trains and the heavy equipment that move raw materials and keep the gears of our entire national economy moving forward.

When the cost of diesel goes up, the cost of doing business also goes up. When the cost of business goes up, businesses cannot help but pass that on to the consumer, the mom, the dad, the young person who is simply going to buy groceries. Diesel prices in Canada are approximately 24¢ more per litre than in the United States of America and 31¢ a litre higher than the world average. That figure should concern every single Canadian. How can a country as rich in resources as ours be placed at such a severe disadvantage? Canada has the fourth-largest oil reserves in the world, yet our people are paying more for diesel than almost anyone else. How can that be?

Statements by Members

After 11 years of the Liberal government, the answer is clear. Federal policies such as their antidevelopment bills, Bill C-48 and Bill C-69, have systematically delayed major energy projects while piling on costs through the industrial carbon tax, the GST on fuel and other repeated tax hikes.

• (1355)

When Ottawa penalizes domestic energy, it acts as an invisible tax on every single consumer purchase that takes place. This is why the Conservative motion puts forward a concrete four-point plan to deliver immediate savings for Canadians and guarantees that our energy independence only grows.

Our plan is, firstly, to provide emergency prepermitting and tax relief for critical diesel infrastructure because we must fast-track and support the construction of refineries, pipelines, rail and storage capacity so that Canadian workers can refine Canadian oil right here at home. Secondly, we would eliminate all federal taxes on diesel consumption in order to save folks money at the pump. Thirdly, we would permanently eliminate taxes on diesel production because we must permanently scrap those federal taxes, including the industrial carbon tax, in order to take that burden off producers, truckers, farmers and, ultimately, the consumers at the grocery store. Fourthly, we must boost Canadian fuel production to one million barrels per day because we must take care of our own. I understand that this is an ambitious goal, but we must pursue it.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's diversity is our greatest strength, and Canadian values that bring us together, such as mutual respect and inclusion, are our core strength. I am proud to represent Brampton South, one of the most diverse communities in Canada.

The rise in hate-motivated incidents is deeply concerning and is a reminder that we need to do more. Across Canada, we are seeing acts of hate and hate-motivated incidents targeting synagogues, Islamic schools and places of worship. There is a sharp increase of discrimination toward many communities.

This year, in April, there was a hate-motivated attack on an elderly Sikh man in Woodstock, and an incident last week in Peel. Online hate is on the rise. Police-reported hate crimes across Canada have increased, with close to 5,000 incidents reported in the last year. No person should be targeted because of their faith, race or identity. These incidents are not a reflection of Canadian values.

* * *

• (1400)

STEPHENVILLE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reopening of Stephenville International Airport marks an important step toward greater opportunity for the residents of western Newfoundland.

Newfoundland and Labrador has the resources, skilled workers and determination to build a prosperous future. Strong transportation infrastructure serves to transform those advantages into real opportunities for businesses and families. With its 10,000-foot runway and established aviation infrastructure, Stephenville airport has the potential to attract good investments, support resource development and create good-paying jobs.

The airport's history as Ernest Harmon Air Force Base gave Stephenville a strategic role in North Atlantic defence, with the base serving as a vital link between North America and Europe and for transatlantic crossings. This rich and proud aviation legacy is the foundation to build an ambitious and prosperous future, and this reopening is a tremendous opportunity.

I congratulate everyone whose determination made this reopening possible. Their efforts are helping create opportunities for people to work, raise their families and build their futures at home.

* * *

ARTS AND CULTURE

Ginette Lavack (St. Boniface—St. Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, artists and art leaders from across Canada are in Ottawa today for the Canadian Arts Coalition's annual arts day on the Hill.

[Translation]

I am proud to represent St. Boniface—St. Vital, where arts and culture are an integral part of our identity.

[English]

From the 100-year-old Théâtre Cercle Molière to WAG-Qaumajuq, our cultural institutions bring us together, tell our stories and help us understand one another.

[Translation]

This year's theme of building a stronger and more united Canada through arts and culture reminds us that the arts create jobs, sustain our communities and help us share our stories with the world.

[English]

At a time when telling our own stories in our own voices matters more than ever, a strong arts and culture sector is essential to who we are as Canadians.

I thank the Canadian Arts Coalition and all the artists and cultural workers here today for enriching our communities and our country.

INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on September 29, President Trump's ban on Canadian alcohol imports came into effect. This is critically important because there has hardly been a more challenging time for Canada's small wineries, craft breweries and distilleries. These new barriers to trade expose how Canadians cannot access their own national market despite many promises to Canadians from the Liberal government.

Canadians still cannot enjoy direct-to-consumer shipping of Canadian-produced wine, beer and spirits. My bill, Bill C-262, would allow Canada Post and other trusted carriers to ship their products directly to Canadians across provincial boundaries. When I tabled my bill this past March, the minister responsible sounded supportive of the bill and what it sets out to achieve. I have lost track, though, how many times I have heard the Prime Minister say that we are masters of our own destiny and that we must focus on the things we can control.

My bill meets those standards. I am daring the Prime Minister to get off the sidelines, adopt my bill and let producers sell their made-in-Canada products directly to consumers. It is time to allow this market to grow in Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

CHICOUTIMI—LE FJORD

Daniel Gobeil (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment today to sincerely thank the people of Chicoutimi—Le Fjord for placing their trust in me in the by-election held on August 31. Representing them in Ottawa is a privilege that I take on with humility and conviction, a conviction that regions like ours have a place at the decision-making table to build strong communities.

I could not meet this new challenge without the unwavering support of my wife, Patricia Boivin, my family, my friends and my team of dedicated and determined volunteers. I also want to acknowledge and thank our Prime Minister. Under his leadership, our government will unite Canadians and diversify our economy while making Canada a more affordable place to live.

* * *

• (1405)

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Toronto Star has revealed that the Prime Minister's buy Canadian promise was a complete sham.

After the Prime Minister walked away from trade negotiations with the U.S., he claimed that his government would be Canada's own best customer, yet within the Prime Minister's first 16 months in office, the Liberals increased Canada's reliance on American suppliers. In fact, they awarded \$7.8 billion in contracts to American-owned companies. This represents a 55% increase going to U.S.-controlled companies under the Prime Minister.

Statements by Members

While Canadian workers are suffering from unjustified tariffs, the Prime Minister and his Liberals are shopping south of the border with our tax dollars. Canadians deserve a government that will put Canada first, not one that sends our tax dollars south in the hope that no one will notice. The next time the Prime Minister says he is buying Canadian, do not be fooled.

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[Translation]

FIRST RESPONDERS OF PRESCOTT—RUSSELL—CUMBERLAND

Giovanna Mingarelli (Prescott—Russell—Cumberland, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prescott—Russell—Cumberland we know and love is shaped by the dedication and sense of duty of our first responders. Today, I have the honour of recognizing their courage, professionalism and commitment to our communities.

[English]

Whether they are firefighters, paramedics, police officers, dispatchers or search and rescue volunteers, they stand ready to protect our safety, health and well-being.

[Translation]

In times of crisis and uncertainty, their grace under pressure, compassion and sense of duty make all the difference.

I am sincerely grateful to all first responders across Canada for their outstanding commitment.

[English]

I would also like to recognize the dedication of my little brother, Michelangelo Mingarelli, who serves his community in British Columbia with the Golden fire rescue squad.

[Translation]

First responders embody all the best values of public service and are a true source of pride for all our communities.

* * *

QUEBEC ELECTION

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by congratulating Paul St-Pierre Plamondon, the new Premier of Quebec, as well as all the new members of the National Assembly.

I would also like to highlight a historic moment for the Conservative movement in Quebec. For the first time in more than 90 years, members elected under the Conservative banner will sit in the National Assembly. Under the leadership of Éric Duhaime, the Conservative Party of Quebec made a major breakthrough by getting 19 members elected. Now Conservatives will have a voice in Quebec City. I want to congratulate Mr. Duhaime and his team for a job well done.

Statements by Members

As the Leader of the Opposition said, the federal Conservatives will work with all members of the National Assembly to lower the cost of living, protect jobs, keep our communities safe, reform our immigration system and put Canada first.

I wish all the newly elected members an excellent term serving Quebecers.

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QUEBEC ELECTION

Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec democracy has spoken, and now more than ever, the future belongs to us. Paul St-Pierre Plamondon, leader of the Parti Québécois, has been elected the 34th Premier of Quebec, backed by a delegation of 59 outstanding members of the National Assembly.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to offer my friend Paul my most sincere congratulations. I would also like to offer the new Quebec government the full and dedicated co-operation of the Bloc Québécois team. Quebec will have a trustworthy ally in the federal Parliament.

I want to congratulate everyone who won their race last night, and I thank all the people from every political party whose sense of public duty motivated them to run for office.

As our new Premier said last night, a new political cycle is beginning. A new chapter in our nation's history will unfold over the next few years. The Bloc Québécois will make sure it has a say in this chapter and sees it through to the end.

* * *

[English]

CRICKET

Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, cricket returns to the Hill for the fourth year, and we are going beyond the boundary.

Cricket is the fastest-growing sport in the world, with more than two billion fans. It has been an official sport for Canada since before Confederation. Across the Commonwealth and beyond, cricket is a tool for diplomacy, bringing rivals to the same pitch. Here in Canada, over 300,000 players are already breaking boundaries on and off the field.

Cricketers from all walks of life are building bridges through sport. To support them in their efforts, we need to build infrastructure, programs for growth and accountability in organizations. We need to think beyond the boundary and find common ground here at home and across the world for a stronger Canada.

* * *

• (1410)

DIESEL PRICES

Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, across Canada, farmers are bringing in the harvest. The work that began months ago is coming down to these critical weeks where the weather, the crop and the clock all come together. There is no postponing the harvest because conditions are not perfect or the eco-

nomics are unfavourable. When the crop is ready, farmers have to get it off the field. Tractors and trucks, combines and harvesters, a swath of machinery has to run to bring in the crop. For the vast majority of that equipment, that means diesel.

My brother, a farmer, is paying 84% more for diesel this September versus last. That is 24¢ per litre more than the American average. The Conservative emergency fuel relief plan proposes eliminating federal taxes on diesel until at least Canada Day 2027 and the removal of the industrial carbon tax and clean fuel standard. Longer term, it proposes emergency permitting for diesel refineries, production and distribution, and a strategic refined petroleum reserve.

Will the government support our motion today to address these high diesel prices?

* * *

LIFETIME OF ACHIEVEMENT

Hon. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, it gives me great pleasure to pay tribute to a truly remarkable individual in our community, Dr. Arsalan Mohajer. Dr. Mohajer is that rare amalgam who has demonstrated a unique capacity for achievement as a scientist and educator, as well as a civic leader and philanthropist.

This past weekend, hundreds of individuals gathered in Toronto at a special ceremony to praise him for his lifetime of achievement. Among the many attendees was the founder of the association of professional geoscientists of Ontario, the president and CEO of the North York General Foundation, the chief development officer of the University Health Network and the leaders of the widest array of Iranian Canadian civic organizations.

I was present to offer the Prime Minister's congratulatory letter. A lifetime of dedication, leadership and service to a multitude of organizations is certainly worthy of celebration. In aspiring to excellence in his own life and contributing to the success of others, Dr. Mohajer has certainly inspired legions.

* * *

DIESEL PRICES

Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, farmers across Canada are now harvesting the crops they worked all year to grow, but as harvest begins, farmers are facing a major challenge: the skyrocketing cost of diesel.

Diesel powers the combines and tractors working in our fields. It powers the trains that move our grain and the trucks that deliver it. When the cost of fuel goes up, the farmer's revenue goes down. A single combine can use more than 1,100 dollars' worth of diesel in one day of harvest. Farmers should be focusing on harvesting their crops, not on how they are going to pay their diesel bills.

The Liberal government needs to act. Our emergency fuel relief plan would cut diesel taxes and get more fuel produced here at home. Canadians need affordable fuel to get through the harvest and keep our economy moving. It is time for the government to put Canadians first.

* * *

[Translation]

MICHEL SOUCY

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Restigouche is in mourning following the sudden passing of Michel Soucy, mayor of the Campbellton Regional Community.

We have lost a man who wore his love for his town and his region on his sleeve. Mr. Soucy devoted more than 20 years of his life to municipal politics, in addition to being involved with a wide range of organizations. He was a passionate, thoughtful man who was always smiling and had a knack for drawing people in. Mr. Soucy believed in the potential of our region and devoted all his energy to helping it prosper. The day before he passed away, I was with him at an event, where he spoke about how proud he was that our region would be hosting the next Acadian World Congress in 2029. I had tremendous respect for Mr. Soucy, and I will miss our conversations. His unexpected passing has left us all in shock, but his legacy will live on in Campbellton, Restigouche and our province at large.

I offer my condolences to his wife Ginette, his children and his grandchildren.

I am so grateful to my dear friend Michel for everything.

* * *

• (1415)

[English]

DIESEL PRICES

James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, diesel is the lifeblood of Canada's agriculture and transportation industries, but today, with prices in Manitoba now reaching \$2.40 a litre, Canada faces a diesel price emergency. Farmers cannot farm without diesel. Truckers cannot move goods without diesel. Trains cannot haul commodities without diesel. When diesel costs more, producing food costs more and Canadians pay more.

Conservatives are calling on the government to eliminate all tax on diesel until at least Canada Day, remove the GST on fuel, permanently scrap the 19¢ per litre industrial carbon tax and secure our diesel supply.

Sadly, Liberal policies add costs to the production of diesel today and discourage investments into refineries tomorrow. Canadians

cannot keep paying the price for these Liberal failures. The Liberals must cut all taxes on diesel and give farmers, businesses and families the relief they deserve.

* * *

BREAST CANCER

Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, representatives of Breast Cancer Canada are on Parliament Hill today for the organization's awareness month. There were 31,000 Canadians diagnosed this year alone. One in eight women faces this battle. We all know many who have survived and many who have not.

Most impressive in my world is my friend Kim MacDonald, also here today for the awareness advocacy. Kim is now 10 years cancer-free. She recovered, but Kim has never stopped speaking up for everyone else affected by breast cancer. She uses her platform as a popular Weather Network personality to talk about her journey. She travels to conferences to cover various breakthroughs, and she raises money for more research.

There is progress, but we know there are still gaps in cancer care across this country. We need a national approach. We should wear the pink ribbon this month, donate, and support the bill I will sponsor when it passes in the Senate, an act to establish a national framework for women's health in Canada.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, their styles may differ, but this Liberal Prime Minister has the same obsession with grand theatrical announcements as his predecessor. This is just like the solemn promise to buy and build in Canada. It was all just hot air, because he has done exactly the opposite ever since making that promise. Government procurement from American companies has increased by 50%, and \$8 billion of our money—money that belongs to workers, mothers and the unemployed—is boosting the American economy. It is like watching the same play against a different backdrop.

When will he stop grandstanding and actually invest in Canada?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is astounding to hear the opposition member talk about grand theatrical announcements. He should go talk to the 5,000 Davie shipyard workers who will be working on the construction of six icebreakers. He should go and talk about grand theatrical announcements to the 400 workers in Saint-Bruno and La Pocatière who will be building train cars for VIA Rail.

Oral Questions

I am left completely perplexed every time they attack investments like this one under our buy Canadian policy, which is working and which relies on Canadian content and the expertise of our workers.

We will keep going.

Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lothbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of this government's ministers are following the Liberal Prime Minister's lead. They are giving us words, slogans, announcements and theatrics but never any results or real answers for Canadians. On August 22, the Prime Minister said that Canada was at war with the United States. When we asked him why, he simply said that it was because the Americans had attacked us.

Is it because 90% of the Prime Minister's personal investments are in the United States that he is sending \$8 billion of our money to help the United States government wage war against us?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would urge my colleague to do his research, and if he wants a briefing, we would be happy to give him one. With regard to the \$8 billion he is talking about, I will give him a few examples. We are talking about \$2 billion for General Dynamics, which represents 1,700 jobs in London and 600 Canadian suppliers. That is the buy Canadian policy in action.

Part of the investment he mentioned is going to IBM Canada, which provides 5,000 jobs across the country, including 1,000 jobs in Bromont, and another is going to Microsoft Canada, which provides 5,300 jobs.

We made the deliberate choice to adopt a policy that gives priority to Canadian content to attract investment to Canada and create jobs in Canada.

[English]

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been in a trade war, and everyone knows this, with America, and there have been real consequences because of that: The Stellantis plant in Brampton closed, Paccar had major layoffs, Stelco now has layoffs, and hundreds of business across this country are laying off workers.

The Liberals had a solution: Buy Canadian. What were the results? They bought American. They have increased the buying from American companies by a whopping 50%, in the middle of a trade war, to \$7.8 billion. Why is that?

• (1420)

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives need to get their facts straight. Of the \$8 billion the member is talking about, there is \$2 billion for General Dynamics to build 190 light armoured vehicles for the Canadian Armed Forces. There are 1,700 jobs that depend on it in London. That is 600 suppliers.

The Conservatives' own member for London—Fanshawe was asking for these investments in Canadian content and Canadian workers. It is a little rich to hear them now complain about these investments that are building Canada strong.

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals must have a different definition of what buy Canada means than what we think buy Canada means. If we are buying Canadian, we do not actually increase the amount of money we are sending to America. It is a pretty simple economic lesson.

Why did the Liberals do this? It is because their buy Canada is all illusions. They are all talk, no results. If we are in the middle of a trade war, as we all know, we should be buying less from America.

Will someone explain why we are not buying less from America in the middle of a trade war?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will happily explain. It is because we made a deliberate decision to favour Canadian content and attract investment in Canada.

If the member is suggesting that we should stop investing in General Dynamics, for instance, to build these LAVs for the Canadian Armed Forces, he should tell that to his colleague, the member for London—Fanshawe. He should say that to our colleagues from across the country who depend on these jobs in their ridings. We are talking about 5,000 jobs for IBM and 5,300 jobs for Microsoft Canada. This was a deliberate choice to increase Canadian content, and our policy is working.

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government, since the Prime Minister took office, has given \$7.8 billion to American corporations. This is the same Prime Minister who made a big, grand show of theatre in promoting a government policy to buy Canadian, yet since then his government has increased government contracts to American companies. They now make up one-third of what the Canadian government is buying. The out-of-touch Prime Minister is ignoring what Canadians want and what he promised to Canadians.

I have a very simple question: Was “Buy Canadian” just another empty Liberal slogan?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we were to follow the Conservatives' flawed logic, we would tell DP World to go away and to take the 8,000 jobs that are at the port of Montreal with it. They would tell Shell and Petronas to go away and to take the 6,000 jobs at LNG Canada away. They would tell—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: It is getting a little noisy.

The hon. member may continue.

Hon. Tim Hodgson: Mr. Speaker, they would tell BHP to take the thousands of jobs away it is building in Saskatchewan.

The Conservatives do not seem to understand the difference between someone who is invested in Canada and someone who is crapping on Canada.

The Speaker: I am not sure I would have used that language.

The hon. member for Elgin—St. Thomas—London South has the floor.

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the minister wants someone invested in Canada, why has the Prime Minister put 91% of his assets in the United States? This is a very real problem. Canadian businesses in my community and across this country are laying people off because the government has turned its back on them through 10 years of high taxes, high regulations and an inability to get a deal and support businesses.

When the Prime Minister told them that they should buy Canadian, they expected him to follow the example and not increase government contracts to the U.S. Was it buy Canadian or sell out Canadians?

Hon. Stephen Fuhr (Secretary of State (Defence Procurement), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to remind the House that foreign direct investment in Canada is very important. It is at a 23-year high. These companies that do direct work in Canada employ tens of thousands of Canadians. They have IP. They have headquarters. They retain talent. They do many things here. We will support them, as we will support Canadian industries, as long as they continue to build out their presence in Canada.

* * *

• (1425)

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister defended Bill C-39 on the grounds that it does not repeal any laws. This is true. The problem is that it allows developers to circumvent laws when they have the Prime Minister's backing, as in the case of Pacific link. The laws still exist. They simply do not apply to projects selected by the Prime Minister, whose proponents can bypass impact assessments, disregard environmental laws, and proceed without first consulting experts, the provinces and indigenous peoples.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister called it “efficiency”, but is it actually a Liberal two-tiered system?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, making decisions faster does not mean we are lowering our standards. I am a little perplexed by the Bloc Québécois's line of questioning. We are here in this democratic chamber debating a government bill designed to build and strengthen our country. Why is the member calling that undemocratic?

She should participate in the debate, express her views and take a position. Then we can vote.

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-39 is part of a pattern of serious abuse of authority by the Prime Minister. He is giving himself the power to suspend whatever laws

Oral Questions

he wants. He is giving himself the power to approve projects without consulting any experts, provinces or indigenous peoples. In addition to Bill C-39, the Prime Minister is creating more and more new agencies to do his bidding in order to circumvent the public service. He is flouting the parliamentary process and snubbing journalists, except for the American media. In short, he is disregarding all checks and balances so that he can govern unilaterally, by decree.

Is he telling us that he is the law?

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, with all due respect to our colleague, just because she repeats overblown remarks or says things that might make a good clip for tonight's TVA news does not mean they are true.

As she is well aware, and as my colleague the House leader just said, this democratically elected Parliament is currently seized with a bill that is important to Canada's economy, including Quebec's economy. Its purpose is to build new major projects in the right way, with respect for environmental standards and in consultation with indigenous peoples. That is exactly what we are doing.

Mario Simard (Jonquière—Hébertville—Pays-des-Bleuets, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says that Bill C-39 is simply about efficiency. Allowing dirty oil pipelines to avoid impact assessments is not efficiency. Allowing oil companies to lay pipe without waiting for the results of studies is not efficiency. Allowing proponents to circumvent environmental laws is not efficiency. Allowing pipelines to jeopardize endangered species and their habitat is not efficiency. It is irresponsibility.

How can the Liberals support their leader's abuse of authority?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we need to double the capacity of our electricity grid. We need to do this to advance the electrification of our economy. That is how Canada will get to net zero. Thanks to this bill, we can move forward on electricity and clean energy projects, such as the Churchill Falls project and wind energy projects. We need these projects in order to become a net-zero economy.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, potato farmers in P.E.I. have told me that they are bracing themselves for the impact that high diesel prices are going to have on their farms. Nathan told me that fuel prices have already doubled to \$14,000 for harvest this year. Skyview Farms told me that their fuel price was \$19,000 in one month. Ike said that when diesel prices in P.E.I. go up, the price of everything goes up.

Oral Questions

High diesel prices are driving up costs on farmers and grocery prices for every single Canadian. Will the out-of-touch Liberals support our Conservative plan to reduce taxes on diesel, or will they turn their backs on farmers at harvest?

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party of Canada is not turning its back on farmers. We are making all kinds of investments alongside farmers. We are working alongside them, and we will continue to work alongside them.

We announced more than \$370 million in new biofuels production incentive programs to support Canadian producers and biodiesel. With the Imperial Strathcona project, which we heard of yesterday, 2.5 million tonnes of canola are being used to produce about a billion litres of biodiesel fuel. We are going to continue to invest alongside farmers.

• (1430)

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the consequences of bad Liberal policy. Stephen, a grain farmer, told me that high diesel prices are costing him \$5,000 a day. During harvest, they are going 24-7. The bill is going to be more than \$100,000 just in additional fuel prices for one farm.

Farmers, truckers and manufacturers are all paying soaring diesel prices, and now Canadian families have to brace themselves for even higher grocery prices. Will the Prime Minister support our plan for diesel price relief to give farmers a break today?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is how the member opposite can help his concerned member: vote for Bill C-38 and extend the exemption on the diesel tax. Why do they not do something that will actually make a difference?

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how out of touch was that?

Diesel in Deer Lake has reached \$2.77 a litre. Michelle, a farmer in Cormack, expects her diesel bill to reach a staggering \$135,000 this year, up nearly 56% since 2024. Diesel costs for farmers, fishermen and truckers mean higher grocery bills for Newfoundland and Labrador families.

Will the energy minister support our Conservative emergency fuel relief plan, which would eliminate federal taxes on diesel until at least Canada Day 2027 and provide real relief for Canadians and farmers like Michelle?

Hon. Joanne Thompson (Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite would like to do something tangible for the residents of her riding, she needs to speak to them about the benefits they received through the food and essentials benefit yesterday, and also—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I really could not hear, so we have to start from the beginning.

The hon. Minister of Fisheries.

Hon. Joanne Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I will go from the top.

If the member opposite would like to support her constituents—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I do not know why everyone is oohing and aahing. I asked the minister to go from the very beginning, so she can go from the beginning again.

Hon. Joanne Thompson: Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite wants to do something tangible for the residents of her riding, the first thing she can do is speak to them about how important it was to receive the food and essentials benefit yesterday. Second to that, she could support Bill C-38, which will see the extension of the excise tax relief on diesel. These are tangible benefits for Canadians, not rhetoric.

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if those programs were working, residents from her constituency would not be reaching out to me asking me—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Carol Anstey: Mr. Speaker, Canadians are paying roughly 24¢ per litre more for diesel than Americans and 31¢ more than the global average. The government cannot control conflicts overseas, but it can certainly control taxes and barriers that it imposes here at home.

Will the members opposite support our Conservative plan to cut diesel taxes and remove the barriers preventing Canada from producing, refining and transporting more of its own fuel?

Hon. Joanne Thompson (Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, off the top I will say to the member to support Bill C-38. I will remind her that I speak with residents in her riding and across Newfoundland and Labrador on a regular basis, and they support the \$1 million for small craft harbours. They support the \$81 million for wild Atlantic salmon, which is going to see real benefits in our province. They support Churchill Falls and what it is going to mean for our economy. They support 5 Wing Goose Bay and the millions of dollars that are going to move into that community and the province.

These are tangible results. She needs to speak to more of her residents.

Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week I met with Kelly, a grain farmer from back home. His diesel bill jumped over \$26,000 this year from last year. That is \$26,000 that he cannot use to buy groceries for his family or put toward next year's crops. He has no choice but to absorb this cost because grain farmers cannot pass it on, and he has to plant and harvest his crops no matter the price.

The Liberals could offer real relief on his fuel bill for next growing season by voting for a motion to remove all federal taxes on diesel. Will the Liberals do the right thing and support our emergency fuel relief plan to save Canadians like Kelly some money?

• (1435)

Hon. Buckley Belanger (Secretary of State (Rural Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things we are not going to do is take advice from the Conservatives. We will never take advice from them because, while they talk about this plan, they do not have a plan. They simply do not.

I will point out to my colleague from Saskatchewan that not only have they not done anything for 11 years, but today we delivered the groceries and essentials benefit, which helps families right across Saskatchewan and Canada.

[Translation]

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the Liberals, it is all talk and no results. A farmer in Lanaudière told us that the skyrocketing cost of diesel is costing him \$2,000 more a day. According to the Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec, the rising cost of diesel could cost Quebec farmers more than \$200 million a year.

When will the Liberal government finally confront the skyrocketing cost of energy and give our farmers a break?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question. I have been watching him for years. Why does he not do something for once? Instead of asking a question, he could convince his colleagues to vote in favour of Bill C-38. The best way to provide immediate relief is to extend the suspension.

The Conservatives have a chance to do something to help people for once. They can vote in favour of Bill C-38. Will they do that?

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after farmers, consumers will be the next to bear the brunt of rising food prices. We have the fourth-largest oil reserves in the world, so there is no reason Canadians should be paying so much more for diesel. The Liberals have placed us in a vulnerable position.

Will they commit to adopting our Conservative plan to eliminate taxes on diesel until July 2027 and establish a strategic reserve to ensure a stable supply? Will the Liberals vote in favour of our motion?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals will vote for action.

All we see from the opposition are motions. They have an opportunity to do something for regular folks for once. They can vote for Bill C-38. I invite all farmers watching us today to call their Conservative MPs and ask them to vote in favour of Bill C-38. It will provide immediate, instant relief to farmers across the country. I hope the Conservatives will do the right thing for once.

Oral Questions

PENSIONS

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 33,000 people are still having trouble receiving their old age security benefits because of the Cúram software, and the federal government is telling us that every effort is being made to fix the problem.

The public servants' union warned of issues with the Cúram system as early as March. I am not talking about March 2026; I am talking about March 2025. That was over a year and a half ago, yet 33,000 people are still having issues receiving their pensions.

At this point, how can the Liberals keep saying that they are taking the problem seriously?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the modernized system delivers essential affordability measures to ensure that millions of Canadians receive the support they rely on every month. Choosing modernization means choosing a stable and reliable system, a system that delivers benefits on time and without mistakes.

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after all this time, it is mind-boggling to hear the Liberals boasting about the Cúram system when there are still 33,000 people who are not receiving the old age pension they are owed. The Liberals treat these people like a statistical aberration, but so many retirees have been deprived of their money that they could fill one and a half Bell Centres to capacity.

It is appalling that so many seniors have been abandoned for so long. The time for excuses ended months ago. Now is the time for solutions. When will the Liberals finally get that into their heads?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure my colleague. She is right. The backlogs we are seeing need to be reduced. They keep going down, month after month, because every effort is being made to respond to these errors and ensure that all seniors who are entitled to old age security receive accurate payments.

However, there are 7.7 million seniors in Canada who have been receiving their benefits since the system was implemented in March 2025. It is important to note that the alternative was an outdated system that jeopardized the benefits seniors rely on. Switching to a new system was essential. We will keep working to reduce the backlog, as we have been doing for months.

Oral Questions

● (1440)

*[English]***TAXATION**

Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for 11 years, Liberal taxes and red tape blocked pipelines and new refineries from moving and producing Canadian fuel. Canada is the world's fourth-largest oil producer, but diesel hit \$2.63 a litre last month, up 71% from a year ago. When diesel costs more, farmers, truckers, builders and families all pay more for everything.

Canadians need lower taxes, not more excuses. Will the Prime Minister support our emergency fuel relief plan and scrap all federal taxes on diesel to save Canadians money?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that war has driven up fuel prices around the world. That is why we suspended the federal carbon price and the federal excise tax on diesel. Since last September, we have taken 25¢ off a litre of diesel. We continue to respond by making Canada more energy-secure and less beholden to global energy price volatility by building the energy infrastructure we need. We would really like the Conservatives to help us do that as well.

Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he can tell that to the Canadians paying up to \$240 more each time they fill up. That is the cost of Liberal failure.

The Prime Minister cannot blame wars abroad for taxes at home. Liberals can scrap the industrial carbon tax, the fuel standard tax and the GST on diesel today, but instead of relief, Canadians get Liberal talk and no results.

Farmers cannot fuel tractors with Liberal excuses, and families cannot eat announcements. When will the out-of-touch Liberals cut diesel taxes so Canadians can afford to drive and feed themselves?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member opposite to join us in voting for Bill C-38 to extend the excise tax reduction.

Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, farmers in Haldimand—Norfolk grow the food that Canadians depend on, but that food must be planted, it must be transported and it must be harvested. Every step of the way depends on fuel. When diesel prices rise, farmers and truckers pay more, and those costs are transferred to consumers at the grocery store checkout line.

Our Conservative motion would provide emergency fuel relief and bring those costs down. Will the government support our motion and give farmers—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everybody is familiar with the story of the Strait of Hormuz and what it is doing to the world, including global market prices on diesel. This is not just a Canadian problem. It is a world problem.

We suspended the excise tax. We also cut the carbon tax when we were first elected, a promise we made to Canadians across this country and to farmers. We will continue working hard for farmers as we go forward.

Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are all talk and no results. Our Conservative motion would save families money. After 10 years, Canadians need relief, not another Liberal promise. Families cannot put a press release on the dinner table. In Haldimand—Norfolk, I represent farmers who produce the food and families who can no longer afford to buy it.

Will the government support our motion for emergency fuel relief, or will it keep Canadians lining up at food banks just to survive?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we are going to continue to focus on affordability. We cut taxes for 22 million Canadians. We just paused the federal fuel excise tax, saving Canadians 10¢ a litre when they fill up. If we combine that with the consumer carbon tax, it is 28¢ in savings.

Yesterday, Canadians received their groceries and essentials benefit. That benefit will lift 77,000 Canadians out of poverty.

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, higher fuel prices are official Liberal Party policy. Higher diesel prices mean that everything that moves by truck, train or cargo ship costs more. Canadians are suffering due to Liberal inaction. They cannot feed their kids press releases. Just like with the carbon tax and the gas tax, the Liberals will not do anything for Canadians until the polls shift.

Will the Liberals stop wasting time and join us in passing the emergency fuel relief plan?

• (1445)

Hon. Kody Blois (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, respectfully, I reject the entire premise of the question. We have been taking action on supporting affordability across this country. We have before the House right now the ability to extend the federal fuel excise tax removal on gasoline and diesel. The hon. member and her party have the opportunity to support the government's initiative in that matter. Yesterday, the groceries and essentials benefit, which is providing recipients somewhere between \$200 and \$300 per family, found its way to Canadian families.

We know there are challenges happening around the world. The government is taking the initiatives it can to be able to support Canadians. We would certainly like the Conservatives to join that effort.

The member is from Pembroke. There are lots of farmers in Pembroke. We have a lot to say for farmers. The member ran on a platform in April 2025 with not a single thing to say for Canadian farmers. That is the record of the Conservative Party.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Chris Malette (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament representing CFB Trenton, Canada's largest air force base, I regularly hear from the women and men who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces about the importance of getting the capabilities they need when they need them. Our government has made a significant investment in our armed forces, including raising salaries and equipping future generations with the kit and capabilities they need to serve our country.

Can the Secretary of State for Defence Procurement please explain what Bill C-40 would do to continue this work and further improve and modernize our defence procurement?

Hon. Stephen Fuhr (Secretary of State (Defence Procurement), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Bay of Quinte for his question and his excellent support for CFB Trenton.

Bill C-40 would establish the Defence Investment Agency as a Crown corporation with the authorities, flexibility and access to commercial expertise it needs to deliver. It would unite production, procurement and investment to meet the needs of the military and industry, with the government accountability and parliamentary oversight it needs. It would build on the agency's success with a permanent structure to meet Canada's future defence needs.

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Jasraj Hallan (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, any Canadian calling in to the CRA can feel the Liberal failures. Last year, the Liberals came up with a phony 100-day plan to fix the CRA issues that they created, and as usual, it was all talk and no results. Since then, the taxpayers' ombudsman has had to launch two new investigations into the failures of the Liberal government at the CRA with delays and processing times. The Liberals had their 100 days.

Oral Questions

How many more hundreds of days do Canadian taxpayers have to wait before the incompetent Liberal government finally fixes the mess it created at the CRA?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gold standard public servants of the CRA for delivering outstanding service and benefits to Canadians. The member may talk about the 100-day plan. The 100-day plan was a huge success. We improved service times and quality of delivery of service.

We are going to continue to improve CRA service for Canadians.

Jasraj Hallan (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like a typical Liberal, he thinks answered calls being accurate only 17% of the time is a huge success.

This is the guy who said the buck stops with him when it comes to CRA problems. Now the taxpayers' ombudsman has a 27% increase in complaints about the incompetent Liberal government. Liberals will fleece Canadians for every single dollar, but Liberal-connected insiders who are part of the green slush fund get a cushy \$34-million tax break.

Why are Liberals so ruthless with taxpayers and toothless when it comes to their own scandals?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank the public servants of CRA for the gold-level quality of service they deliver for Canadians. They deliver benefits. We are moving toward automatic federal benefits. The 100-day plan was a huge success. We improved call times and call service standards.

We are going to continue to lean in. CRA is going to be the gold standard revenue collection agency in the G7.

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SMALL BUSINESS

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the women's entrepreneurship loan fund was supposed to help women entrepreneurs access capital. After a three-year ATIP process, I found that one federally funded administrator received only 27 applications despite a federal target of 1,200, and another issued only 23 loans despite a target of 815. With over \$7 billion in the program, Canadians should get better results.

Oral Questions

Why is the government measuring success by dollars spent and announcements made versus real results for our entrepreneurs who really need the support of the government?

• (1450)

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since it is Women's History Month, I want to thank my hon. colleague for the question.

What I will say is, that is false. Our women entrepreneurship strategy has helped empower well over 600,000 women entrepreneurs across this amazing country to start, scale and grow their businesses. We have also attracted \$7 billion to help women entrepreneurs across this country. This summer alone, I also announced our replenishment of funding toward the women entrepreneurship strategy. That is more money, \$173.3 million, to help uplift women across the country.

We are going to do everything we can to lift and empower them as well.

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not a fair answer, because I have the documents from the minister's department, which states what I just said in this House.

Canada's productivity continuing to lag its peers, and access to capital for women entrepreneurs, and all entrepreneurs, remains a top concern. In addition, we still do not have internal trade, key supply chains in western Canada are compromised, and there are no major tax reforms to meaningfully support existing small businesses in Canada, yet the government continues to shovel more money out the door without results or accountability. We can just think of the green slush fund.

Will the minister stop the theatrics and actually deliver for our small businesses—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State for Small Business.

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, supporting women entrepreneurs is not theatrics. I want to give a big shout-out to WeBC, which is a Kelowna-based organization that has received \$5.6 million in helping women entrepreneurs with mentorship, business training, export support and growing their finances. Through our women entrepreneurship strategy, we are supporting women across the country and investing \$173.3 million to help women entrepreneurs start, scale and grow their businesses.

We are going to do everything we can to support them.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our farmers are struggling. When their operating costs skyrocket, it is families who end up footing the bill at the grocery store. This morning, I was talking to egg farmer Bruno Gosselin from Ceuvs d'Orléans. He told me that his diesel bill has gone up

62% this year. Mr. Gosselin told me that nothing was really being done to improve their lives and that the governments were washing their hands of the matter.

When will the Prime Minister stop jet-setting and start adopting our Conservative plan to reduce diesel taxes and lower operating costs for farmers like Mr. Gosselin?

Hon. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the cost of living remains a major concern for many Canadians, and we are taking action.

Yesterday, 12 million Canadians received a direct payment as part of the Canada groceries and essentials benefit. That amounts to about \$1,900 for a family of four over the course of the year. That makes a difference. We are also laying the groundwork to get the economy back on track. Economic growth is on the rise, jobs are on the rise, foreign investment is on the rise, and wages are rising for Canadian workers across the country.

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, where are the results for taxpayers? Every week, the Liberals stand up to tell us how proud they are of their program. They are running a deficit. They are mailing out cheques to Canadians that just add more money to the debt. Canada has the fourth-largest oil reserves in the world. We should not have to pay more for a product that we have in greater quantities than elsewhere. The taxes and bureaucracy imposed by the Liberals are holding back project development, and that means we are not becoming collectively wealthier.

Will the Liberals vote with us tomorrow and then get out of the way so that major projects can finally get going in Canada?

Hon. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is interesting, because the Conservatives like to talk about affordability in the House. They even like to talk about projects of national significance.

However, every time we introduce bills in the House, the Conservatives oppose them. If they really want to help Canadians, they should get on board.

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister made a flashy announcement about promising to buy and build Canadian, yet we have learned this was all talk and no results. It was just a big political stunt. The Toronto Star confirms that since he made that promise, government purchases from American companies have actually increased by 50%, to nearly \$8 billion. The Liberals are completely out of touch, and Canadians are rightfully shocked by this.

Why is the Prime Minister choosing to send billions of Canadian tax dollars to the United States in the middle of an unjust trade war?

• (1455)

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the buy Canadian policy that we announced in December. It now applies to procurements above \$5 million.

When we look at the numbers the member is referring to, we have made a choice to encourage investment in Canada and to prioritize Canadian content. This means contracts like the one to General Dynamics in London, with 1,700 employees in London, workers in London, and 600 suppliers. That is the kind of contract the member says our government should not do, one that is supporting Canadian industry and Canadian workers here at home and incentivizing Canadian content.

Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we always have to dig deeper to get the truth when it comes to the Liberals' big announcements and promises. The Liberals claim they are buying Canadian, but that is not the case in two multi-billion-dollar examples. The reannounced LNG phase two project will be using Chinese steel instead of supporting laid-off Canadian steelworkers, and shockingly, the Liberals are handing out billions in federal contracts and work to American companies. So much for buy Canadian. The Prime Minister pretends to stand up to President Trump while giving out \$8 billion to the United States in contracts.

The question is simple. When will the Liberals stop sending Canadian jobs and money to Beijing and Washington?

Hon. Stephen Fuhr (Secretary of State (Defence Procurement), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I will raise with the opposition that foreign direct investment is a very important part of our economy. It employs tens of thousands of people. These companies design, engineer, retain IP and have headquarters. All this matters. It matters as much as Canadian companies. We can do two things at a time. We can support both. Companies like L3Harris, Safran and Airbus are big companies in Canada. We will continue to support them as long as they continue to invest here at home.

Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has told Canadians time and time again how during a generational trade war, the Liberals plan on strengthening the Canadian economy. However, the data suggests otherwise. According to the Toronto Star, the Prime Minister has increased Canadian contracts to the

Oral Questions

U.S. by over 50%. Canadian industry needs support from the Prime Minister, not inconsistency and more political grandstanding.

Our Conservative plan would save Canadian jobs, not send them down south.

When will the government prioritize the Canadian economy and spend Canadian dollars on Canadian goods?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleagues have given a number of examples of how we are supporting Canadian jobs, Canadian materials and Canadians throughout our procurement process. If the Conservatives want to support perhaps the most quintessential of Canadian investments, they could get out of the way of Alto high-speed rail going from Quebec City to Toronto and now also studying very closely the possibility of high-speed rail between Edmonton and Calgary. Will the Conservatives stand up for—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

* * *

[Translation]

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, October 1 is the start of Women's History Month. It is an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come.

There was a time when women were not even allowed—

The Speaker: There is too much noise. I cannot hear what is being said.

The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles can start over.

Linda Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, October 1 is the start of Women's History Month. It is an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come.

There was a time when women were not even allowed in the House of Commons. Today, we have the largest women's caucus in Canadian history, with 71 female members of Parliament who are passionate advocates for their communities. We have come a long way, but there is still much work to be done.

Can the minister explain how our government is building on this progress for the next generation of women and girls?

Oral Questions

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. Across Canada, women are making history. They are entrepreneurs, public servants and community leaders. Our government is working to break down barriers and open more doors. Over the past year, we have invested about \$1 billion to create more opportunities for women and girls across the country. When women succeed, Canada succeeds.

* * *

• (1500)
[English]

HEALTH

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cost of the \$300-million PrescribeIT scandal just went up again. Conservatives have obtained the termination letter sent to Michael Green, the disgraced CEO in charge of the Liberals' PrescribeIT failure. According to the letter, Mr. Green was awarded a million-dollar severance package, including another massive performance bonus. The million-dollar package was approved by Canada Health Infoway. The health minister's official is a member of Canada Health Infoway's board.

Did the minister's official vote to reward Michael Green with more tax dollars after he already wasted \$300 million?

Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as this matter is before the courts, we have no comment. More broadly, we look forward to seeing the outcome of the Infoway third party audit and organizational review. We will base our next steps on those results.

Matt Strauss (Kitchener South—Hespeler, CPC): Mr. Speaker, she has parliamentary privilege, so she can answer questions like that, no matter what court they are in front of. This is Canadians' money. Canada Health Infoway has blown \$300 million on its failed PrescribeIT program. Taxpayers got nothing—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: This time, it is this side.

The hon. member may begin from the top.

Matt Strauss: Mr. Speaker, they spent \$300 million on PrescribeIT. In response to my question on June 8, she announced she would halt the \$50 million she planned to give Canada Health Infoway this year. On June 18, her spokesman, Alexandre Bergeron, told The Globe and Mail that they actually are going to give the \$50 million away to this totally incompetent organization after all. Which is it and why?

Why will she not permanently save Canadians this money?

Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we remain committed to ensuring value for taxpayer money. Infoway has received no funding this year. Health Canada is currently examining the next steps. As I said, more broadly, we look forward to seeing the outcome of the Infoway third party audit and organizational review before considering the next steps.

Matt Strauss (Kitchener South—Hespeler, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Health Infoway CEO who oversaw this disaster,

Michael Green, was paid \$1 million a year to do nothing of value. Conservatives have obtained his termination letter. It says that Canada Health Infoway plans to give him another year's worth of salary and \$200,000 in performance pay, and continue his car allowance for this year. Michael Green now claims that he was fired in order to prevent him from testifying at the health committee.

Is this why she is still thinking of giving Canada Health Infoway another \$50 million? Is it to buy silence from this incompetent CEO?

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Braeden Caley (North Vancouver—Capilano, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the recent by-elections, Canadians made clear that we must rapidly diversify our exports. To do that, our government is working to make Canada a clean and conventional energy superpower to new markets while protecting the nature we treasure.

In North Vancouver—Capilano, home to the largest port in Canada and across B.C., we keenly feel the opportunity to create good jobs and investment for our communities. Last week, the Prime Minister was in B.C. We saw the largest private sector investment in our province's history.

Can the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources update this House on what the government has done to achieve that goal?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by welcoming the member to the House. The people of Vancouver are fortunate to have this member.

Last week, I was with the member, first nations chiefs, project proponents and the Prime Minister to announce that LNG Canada phase two now has shovels in the ground. This \$33-billion investment will be the second-largest LNG facility in the world. It will use 15,000 tonnes of new Canadian steel. It will generate 6,100 new jobs, and we are just getting started.

• (1505)

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is all talk and no results.

The Liberals announced that they are eliminating seed research at the Indian Head research farm, jeopardizing local jobs. Many groups, like the Grain Growers of Canada and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, have all condemned this decision.

Now, the minister will claim that this work will continue at another site, but here is the problem. The site at Indian Head has over 100 years of data, unique soil conditions and local staff with decades of expertise and knowledge. This research is worth hundreds of millions of dollars for the Canadian ag industry. In the meantime, the government found millions of dollars for foreign aid for projects, like gender-just rice farming, that deliver no benefits for Canadians.

Why is the government sacrificing Canadian research and jobs for Liberal waste?

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been doing research in this country for 140 years through the federal government, and we are going to continue. There are 17 sites right across the country, with one in every province.

Let me inform the hon. member that I am pleased to say that the operations of the seed increase unit will be continuing at the Indian Head research centre for the 2027 growing season, including forage and wheat.

We are not doing less research. We are doing more precise research. We are doing more sustainable research. We are doing research with academia right across the country, and we are going to continue to do research for agriculture.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, several first nations have not consented to the Liberals' fast-track of the Pacific link pipeline, but when asked about indigenous opposition, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations said it was not an either-or between pipelines or indigenous rights. Well, constitutional rights are not optional.

If the Liberals are planning to bulldoze this pipeline through without the free, prior and informed consent of impacted indigenous peoples, will this just be another pipeline to the courts?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the Building Canada Act, there are two parts to the consultation. First, there is the consultation around listing, which has been extensive. The second part will be around the project. The member will be welcome to participate in the public inquiry at the Canadian Energy Regulator, if she would like.

Oral Questions

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has a responsibility to protect Canadians' democracy and sovereignty. We now know that Republican operatives are working with Alberta separatists to break up our country. Albertans have also had their personal data stolen and are being targeted by extremist foreign actors from the U.S. and Russia. This is threatening public trust in our democratic institutions.

What exactly is the government doing to stop foreign actors from interfering in our democratic processes and to protect Albertans and Canadians from these threats?

Hon. Eleanor Olszewski (Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience and Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I, too, am deeply disturbed by this reporting and I am concerned about the future of democracy as well.

Alberta's future belongs to Albertans, and so to Albertans watching, that is why it is so important to make our voices heard, to vote on October 19 and to vote decisively to remain in Canada.

[Translation]

The Speaker: That brings question period to an end.

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé on a point of order.

Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to urge everyone to be mindful of something. Several times during question period, the interpreters said that they would have to stop interpreting because there was too much background noise. Perhaps you could issue a reminder at the start of question period tomorrow. We need to be mindful of this because it is important to protect the hearing health of our interpreters and ensure that francophones are able to follow the debates in the House.

The Speaker: Duly noted. We will be mindful and pay attention to that.

• (1510)

[English]

Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to seek unanimous consent in the House to table the ATIP documents from the minister—

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, my point of order picks up from where the member for Berthier—Maskinongé left off. There was so much noise during question period.

I particularly noted and want to object to the fact that when the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona was trying to ask her question, there appeared to be a coordinated Liberal effort, because the same heckle was being used while she was trying to get her question in.

Please listen to the tapes and see if we can remind our colleagues that they are not supposed to interrupt a member when they are speaking.

Business of Supply

The Speaker: That is a good reminder, and it is one I endorse.

The hon. member for Elgin—St. Thomas—London South.

Andrew Lawton: Mr. Speaker, during Oral Questions, the topic of the 91% of assets the Prime Minister has in the U.S. came up. I would like to table his ethics disclosure and seek unanimous—

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: It is sufficiently calm at the moment that we may continue with the orders of the day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—DIESEL PRICES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, energy policy is not an abstract debate for academic journals or Ottawa boardrooms. In fact, it directly dictates whether a working family can afford their monthly bills. The Liberal government treats domestic energy developments as something to penalize, suppress or hold back. This is, at least, in action, because we know that with talk, it likes to promise a good game. Nevertheless, energy is the lifeblood of our supply chain, and penalizing energy does not reduce consumption. In fact, it simply drives up costs for the people who can least afford it, who are working families in this country.

Our emergency fuel relief plan is designed to address this exact bottleneck. This is what we have put forward in the House today. By offering immediate tax relief on diesel and removing red tape for domestic energy infrastructure, we would directly attack the root cause of transportation costs and food inflation. We would take the burden off the back of Canadian producers, Canadian transporters and Canadian consumers, who ultimately end up paying that additional amount.

This motion is about restoring economic common sense to our federal policies. It is about recognizing that we cannot tax the producer without punishing the consumer. We cannot drive up the cost of transportation without also driving up the price of bread, meat and potatoes at the supermarket.

At its core, the motion the Conservatives have brought forward today has to do with everyday working people here in this great country. It is about the local farmer who reached out to my office because he sees the writing on the wall and the link between the cost of the fuel he is using to produce his crop, take it off the field and send it to market and the cost of food. There is a strong link. It is about the truck driver working gruelling hours to deliver essentials to our communities. It is about every single Canadian household struggling to make ends meet under 11 years of compounding Liberal policies that have mis-served this country. This includes the millions of Canadians, many of them working Canadians, who have had to line up at food banks in order to feed their families because the government has put policies in place that are punitive in nature.

Canadians were told to judge the government by the prices at the grocery store. This is what the Prime Minister invited them to do when he was running for election. The judgment is in. The current system is failing working families. The cost at grocery stores is only going up, not down.

It is time to bring down fuel prices. It is time to lower the cost of doing business. It is time to give Canadian families the relief they so desperately need and deserve.

The Conservatives have put forward a legitimate, common-sense plan that will serve Canada well by tackling the root problems Canadians face. I urge every member in the House to vote yes to the motion that has been presented to them today. Stand on the side of Canadians. Vote with us.

• (1515)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member said the core of the motion today is, in essence, about people and the issue of affordability, and I believe she used the term “cost of food”. It made me flash back to the number of things the government is doing, including the tax levy exemption. The other thing that came to my mind was the national school food program. It delivers food to hundreds of thousands of children in every region of our country, yet the Conservative Party has determined that it is a garbage program and it is going to get rid of it.

I wonder if the member believes the Conservative Party should flip-flop on that position and support the national school food program.

Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, Canadians are very concerned about affordability. They are very concerned about the cost of goods at the grocery store. They are not asking for a government program that would dole out cash in order to assist them for a short period of time.

What Canadians are asking for is systemic. It is in that very structure that holds up our economy where they want to see change brought, because it is those types of policy changes that would help get infrastructure built. It is those types of changes that would help create jobs and increase people's paycheques. When people are able to exist in that type of space, they are able to afford a life for themselves.

They do not want another government program. They do not want to struggle to pay their mortgage while the government feeds their kids at school. That is not what they are asking for. They are asking for the government to put policies in place that allow them to stand on their own two feet and take care of their family.

Business of Supply

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have seen the Prime Minister play the blame game when it comes to rising fuel prices. He likes to blame external factors. Last week, he blamed the provinces. However, at the end of the day, there is a lot he can do to bring down costs, including lifting all federal taxes on fuel. I would submit that the Prime Minister ought to control what he can control and lift those taxes, instead of playing this blame game. If he did so, he could save the average family \$1,200.

I wonder if my colleague could elaborate on some steps the Prime Minister could take.

Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is correct. Right now, we know that in Canada, we are paying approximately 24¢ more per litre than people are paying in the United States of America. We know it is 31¢ more than the world average.

That being the case, it is a proof point that would suggest that this is not due to world economic factors, but rather domestic policy. Those domestic policies can be impacted and should be impacted by the government. It is its responsibility to act in the interest of the Canadian people and greater affordability.

To that end, it would be like taking off the industrial carbon tax, the fuel surcharge tax and the so-called clean standard tax that is applied to fuel, and making sure that we have reserves. There is so much that can be done domestically to assist.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, a Conservative member asked a question about the federal government playing the blame game, which is just not true. Let me pose it in a different way.

Can the Conservatives explain to Canadians, on the issue of affordability, what they actually support among the multitude of programs the federal government has put in place? Is it the tax break for 22 million Canadians, the groceries benefit program for Canadians, the dental program, pharmacare, the national school food program for children, or the tax break we are giving them—

The Speaker: We want to leave some time for the hon. member for Lethbridge to answer that question.

Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, if I may, let me reframe that for the Canadians who may not be following along with the names of each and every one of these handouts the hon. member is outlining.

Essentially, what he is saying is the government doled out this cash, this cash and this cash, and should therefore be thanked. In fact, he is saying the government failed. That is why Canadians are struggling. That is why the government feels the need to step up and dole out that cash.

● (1520)

[Translation]

Abdelhaq Sari (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore.

I am grateful for this opportunity to talk about the official opposition's motion, which addresses the reality of the cost of living. High prices are a daily reality in my riding of Bourassa and in many Montreal neighbourhoods.

In Montreal North, families are counting every dollar at the grocery store every day. Workers are wondering whether they will be able to fill up their tank before their next paycheck. Retailers are absorbing price increases they never chose. These people do not want slogans like the ones we are hearing from the opposition. They want initiatives and results.

We live in an unstable world. Wars on the other side of the world, trade tensions and weakened supply chains have impacts that trickle down to our kitchens and gas pumps. Canada did not trigger these crises, but it has a duty to respond, and our government is responding. We chose to act here and now. We chose to take action with Bill C-38.

Bill C-38, the Canadian fuel affordability act, extends the suspension of the federal excise tax on gasoline, diesel and aviation fuel until January 31, 2027. Zero, not a penny, as we say back home in Quebec. This suspension has been in effect since April 20. Members opposite surely remember that. From day one, the price at the pump fell by an average of 11¢ a litre. In practical terms, that means savings of about \$5 on a 50-litre fill-up.

We are doing this responsibly. We are doing it, of course, because we are thinking about Canadian families. The tax will be gradually reintroduced in February and March 2027 at half the regular rate: five cents per litre for gasoline and two cents for diesel. There will be no shock and no surprises.

The impact goes far beyond the family vehicle. From truck drivers and farmers to delivery companies and grocery stores, the entire supply chain that feeds the country will benefit.

Yes, diesel prices have risen around the world, but let us set the record straight and correct a few points that have been raised by the other side of the House. Diesel costs less in Canada than in most G7 countries. Since the end of February, prices have increased less here than in the United States, and the provincial diesel taxes, which range from roughly nine cents to more than 20¢ per litre, are not necessarily up to Ottawa.

Let us talk about affordability. That has to do with more than just the price per litre. The opposition wants to talk about fuel, so let us talk about it, but affordability is not just about fuel. It does not come down to just the price per litre. It is measured in a number of ways. I will quickly list them off and go through them in more detail afterward. Affordability also comes down to groceries, home ownership, pay and our children's lunch boxes. It is also measured in equity.

Let us talk about groceries. The new Canada groceries and essentials benefit provides 25% more than the old GST credit. It is tax-free, and it benefits more than 12 million low- and modest-income Canadians. A payment is coming up this week. With this summer's supplement, a family of four will receive up to \$1,890 this year and about \$1,400 a year for the next four years. The amount for a single person is \$950 this year and about \$700 for the next four years.

Business of Supply

Affordability is measured in home ownership. For first-time homebuyers, there is no GST on homes up to \$1 million, and it is reduced for homes between \$1 million and \$1.5 million. That means up to \$50,000 in the pockets of our young dreamers who really want to make their dream of owning a home and getting on the property ladder a reality.

• (1525)

It is also measured in terms of pay, as I said earlier. We cut the tax rate for the first bracket of personal income from 15% to 14%. This has benefited 22 million Canadians. It puts \$420 per year per person in their pockets, or \$840 for a dual-income household.

It is reflected in a child's lunch box. Allow me to make a quick aside: It is a shame to hear people on the other side of the House say that this measure, which helps many young people and schoolchildren, is garbage. Canada's national school food program, which is now permanent, provides meals for approximately 400,000 children each year. It saves a family with two children nearly \$800 a year on groceries.

It is also measured by our work and actions in the area of equity. Thanks to the automation of federal benefits, 5.5 million low-income Canadians will automatically receive the support to which they are entitled, such as the Canada groceries and essentials benefit and the Canada child benefit. A benefit that is not claimed because of a lack of information is, unfortunately, a benefit that is lost.

In closing, we have no control over the global forces driving up prices, but we do have control over the measures we must put in place here and now and over our government's initiatives, which must be just, fair, sincere, and, above all, responsible. This responsibility aspect is exactly I am so uncomfortable with the motion that has been introduced by the party across the way.

Our response is to take meaningful, measured action and, as I just said, to act responsibly. The opposition is proposing long-term solutions to a problem we are facing today. We are delivering results today while building a stronger economy for tomorrow. Making life affordable and strengthening our economy is not a choice between two goals. It is a single, unified commitment to families in Bourassa and across the country.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about acting responsibly. I would like him to explain to me whether he feels that it is responsible to provide billions of dollars in subsidies to the only industry or one of the few economic sectors that is not subject to tariffs, when some industries and economic sectors are currently suffering as a result of the tariff war.

Is it responsible to send billions of dollars, whether via Trans Mountain and Pacific link or through tax credits to the tune of \$100 billion, which we all pay for as a society, to an economic sector that is making record profits? I would remind the House that the oil and gas industry will make an estimated \$90 billion in profits in 2026.

This is all for an industry that is 60% American-owned and sells 90% of its products to Americans. Once again, this is an economic sector that is not affected by tariffs. The projects will be not be

ready for another 12, 13, 14 or 15 years, so they will have no impact on the tariff war.

Does he think these are responsible initiatives that will have an impact right now?

Abdelhaq Sari: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his eloquence, but I would like to stay on topic.

So as not to mislead anyone, it is very important to note that Bill C-38 does not affect Quebec's jurisdictions or its carbon market. It does not affect any portfolio. It is also important to point out that our government is not reneging on its environmental commitments; far from it.

[English]

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 can provide some additional thoughts in regard to the larger issue of affordability. The gas tax levy break that is being provided to Canadians is significant. It will help out greatly. However, it is part of a broader package, as the government understands the issue of affordability and is doing what it can by bringing in a number of different measures.

I wonder if the member can provide his thoughts on how important it is, as we continue to try to grow the economy and make a stronger and healthier economy overall, that we address the issue of affordability by having the types of measures we have brought in.

• (1530)

[Translation]

Abdelhaq Sari: Madam Speaker, first of all, I thank my colleague for the question. I think it is relevant because the watchword here is resilience. We need a resilient economy. A resilient economy must have clear, concrete solutions that go beyond today's topic. As I mentioned earlier, beyond the affordability of gas prices, we have put measures in place to help with groceries, to support access to home ownership, to address pay, to help 400,000 young people with school meals, and, of course, to promote equity and access to information regarding government assistance.

With these actions, we are building a resilient, balanced and, above all, responsible economy.

[English]

Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is important to remember the record of the government on fuel taxes. On three separate occasions, Conservatives brought forward opposition day motions proposing relief for Canadians at the pumps, including reductions to the federal excise tax and other federal taxes on fuel. Each time, every member of the government voted against those measures.

The record is clear: Conservatives have repeatedly proposed lowering the tax burden on fuel, and on three separate occasions, the Liberal government voted against it. I believe in my heart and soul that the farmers and families of this country need relief now, and we are asking the Liberals to support our motion.

[Translation]

Abdelhaq Sari: Madam Speaker, I noted several points, but the most important one was when she asked for measures to be taken now. That is just what we are doing: taking measures now. Prices fell by 11¢ per litre on day one. That is for the mom who wants to fill up her car. That really makes a big difference to her wallet. That is for someone who uses their car for their company, for their own small or medium-sized business. That has a real impact here and now. What the members on the other side of the House are asking for is not measurable in terms of the impact it can have on taxpayers, and, above all, it is not responsible.

With that, I will say it again: We are going to have an economy that is resilient but, above all, responsible.

[English]

Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the recent surge in diesel prices has indeed created real challenges for Canadians. Farmers bringing in this year's harvest are facing higher costs. Trucking companies moving goods across the country are facing higher costs. Businesses that rely on diesel power and equipment are also facing higher costs. When transportation costs rise, Canadians often see those costs reflected in the prices they pay for food and everyday goods.

Diesel prices matter to Canadians. They affect household budgets, businesses, farmers and industries across the country. Understanding what is driving those prices is essential if we want to identify solutions that can make a meaningful difference. That is because we oftentimes misunderstand the problem, and if we do, we end up chasing the wrong solutions.

One of the challenges in this debate is that many different factors affect the price of diesel. Some of those factors are within Canada's influence and others are not. A responsible energy policy begins by understanding the difference. Let us begin with what Canadians can influence. Governments can act to provide relief when Canadians are facing higher costs. That is exactly what the government did.

Earlier this year, the Government of Canada temporarily suspended the federal fuel excise tax on diesel and gasoline. When global pressures persisted, the government extended that relief. That support is expected to provide billions of dollars in relief to Canadians. Members opposite may argue that the relief should go further, and that is a legitimate debate.

One of the central proposals in today's motion is tax relief on diesel. On that point, the government has already acted, but the discussion cannot stop there. That is why the government is collaborating with industry, provinces and territories to identify opportunities for Canada to strengthen the resilience of its fuel system, including for transportation networks, storage capacity and other types of infrastructure.

By working in lockstep with provinces and territories, we can create the conditions to attract investment in the critical energy sys-

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tems and infrastructure Canadians rely upon every day. Fuel security is not determined solely by how much fuel is produced. It also depends on whether that fuel can reach the communities, farms and businesses that depend upon it. That requires ensuring that pipelines, rail, storage, and strong distribution networks are always in place to ensure access to the energy that Canadians need. This motion recognizes that fuel security is about more than refining capacity alone. The debate is about how best to strengthen those systems and how quickly Canadians can expect to see results.

Now let us consider what Canada cannot control. Canada does not set the global price of crude oil. Canada does not determine global refinery margins. Canada does not control international diesel shortages. Canada does not control wars and geopolitical instability, nor disruptions affecting energy markets around the world. In fact, G7 leaders met virtually on Friday because these challenges are affecting countries around the world, not just Canada, and they agreed to coordinate the release of strategic fuel reserves and diesel in response to pressures affecting global fuel markets.

That is a reminder that many of the forces affecting diesel prices extend well beyond the reach of any single government. All of those events can affect the price that Canadians pay. Of course, recognizing that reality is not an excuse. It is simply an acknowledgment of the facts. The fact is that no federal government, regardless of political stripe, can legislate away global energy price volatility. No government can pass a motion in the House of Commons and eliminate geopolitical risk, and no government can guarantee that international supply disruptions will never occur again. What governments can do is strengthen resilience, reduce vulnerabilities and help Canadians weather disruptions when they occur. That is exactly what the government is focused on doing.

One aspect of today's motion deserves particular attention. The motion proposes expanding diesel production and building additional fuel infrastructure, including refining capacity, transport networks, and storage. I agree. The government agrees that adequate refining capacity remains important to Canada's long-term energy security.

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● (1535)

However, it is important to note that Canada already produces more diesel than it consumes. The challenge is not simply how much fuel Canada produces but also ensuring that fuel can move relatively easily and reliably through the systems Canadians depend upon.

If market demand supports additional refining capacity, our government should carefully consider proposals to expand its production, but Canadians also deserve a realistic discussion about what refining capacity can and cannot accomplish. A new refinery cannot be planned, financed, approved and constructed in a matter of months. Projects of that scale take years. Even under optimistic assumptions, they cannot address the affordability challenges Canadians are facing right now.

That does not make them unimportant. It simply means they solve a different problem. They are not primarily about lowering diesel prices this month. They are about making Canada more resilient in the future. Diesel prices are ultimately linked to North American and global fuel markets, so simply adding refining capacity in Canada would not necessarily translate into significantly lower prices for Canadian consumers.

A responsible energy strategy requires both immediate action and long-term planning, not one or the other, and that is exactly the approach the government is taking. First, the government provided relief that Canadians can feel today. Second, it is strengthening the system that will help Canada respond to future disruptions tomorrow.

That broader work is already under way. Global instability and associated volatility in diesel prices reinforces the importance of strengthening resilience of our energy systems. Canada already produces significant amounts of energy, but we should also be looking for ways to move that energy more efficiently across the country. That is why the government has focused on strengthening transportation networks and improving market reliance.

Recent approvals, including the Wolf Midstream project, the Sunrise expansion project and the Taylor to Gordondale project, will strengthen the infrastructure that moves energy and fuels where Canadians need them most. The Pacific link is another recent example of that work. The Government of Canada recently designated the project as one of national interests under the Building Canada Act. It has the potential to strengthen Canada's energy security and diversify our export opportunities.

A resilient country is a better-prepared country. A better-prepared country with energy security is about more than any single project and about more than any single type of fuel. Canada's energy security depends on having reliable conventional fuels, strong transportation networks, adequate storage and, increasingly, abundant clean fuels and clean energy. These are not competing objectives; they strengthen one another.

Reliable diesel remains essential for farmers, truckers, construction workers, mining operations and countless businesses across the country, but Canada's energy security is also strengthened when we produce more reliable alternatives to diesel, such as more clean fuels such as renewable diesel and biodiesel. More supply makes en-

ergy systems more resilient, and more options make it more reliable. That is why the Government of Canada has also supported the growth of Canada's biofuel sector.

The goal is to strengthen Canada's domestic production of renewable alternatives to protect Canadians, to build energy security and to add fuel to the market. They complement conventional fuels rather than replace them. More fuel supply strengthens market resilience and reduces pressure on prices. Energy security is strengthened when Canada produces more energy of all kinds. That means more conventional security, more conventional energy, more clean fuels, more clean energy and more resilience. That is how any country can be prepared for uncertainty.

Canadians need relief today. They also need confidence in the future. That means taking action where governments can make a difference and strengthening Canada's energy security over the long term. Our government is doing both. That is the approach Canadians deserve and the approach we will continue to pursue.

● (1540)

Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned the Pacific link pipeline and some of the other projects that the federal government has undertaken, but I want to read a quote from the environment minister's website, which says that she has "taken a strong stance against oil sands expansion, and has promoted the critical need for a transition from fossil fuels to a low-carbon economy" and that "She has shared the priorities of local environmental groups with her colleagues in Ottawa."

With the environment minister's actively telling people that she is against oil sands expansion, how can the member actually stand up and support a pipeline that increases oil production in the oil sands to get out to the west coast?

Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, the question is whether we can do both. Can we walk and chew gum? We need to do both. The fact is that we need to provide clean alternatives within the system as we proceed. There is a demand. We have the resources. Canada's prosperity is dependent upon its ability to provide some of our critical minerals, including fuel and energy from the tar sands.

We are already a huge producer of energy around the world. We will continue to be, and we will continue to provide alternates, including clean energy alternatives.

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Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, here is the thing. All the statements being made by Liberal members about these projects' being so wonderful are premised on the idea that we do not ask questions such as how a particular project diversifies markets. So far, we have wasted \$34 billion. The previous government, under Justin Trudeau and former finance minister Bill Morneau, spent \$34 billion to build a pipeline, which still has massive objections, across the landscape, but it still has not made enough money in any given year to pay the interest on the debt Canadians took on to build it.

Now, as we are proposing a second one, also built with public money, experts in financial markets are saying there really is not a market for bitumen in other countries, though we are presuming there is one when we do not have any evidence for it.

• (1545)

Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the fact that we are asking questions. We should always ask questions, and the government should be held accountable to the investments it is making for the future benefit of Canadians.

I will argue, though, that demand does exist. The prosperity and legacy of that demand over a longer period of time of time may dwindle, which is all the more reason we have to look at alternative forms of energy, but Canada has what the world wants. We have heard that many times. The world needs Canada to be at the table to provide some of the resources and trust. Canada is a trusted partner in these endeavours. We are trusted to provide environmental protection as we proceed. We can continue doing both, and we will.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on the point of short-term and long-term relief. The short-term relief is in Bill C-38, providing the tax break. In the long term, looking at the major projects and recent announcements about Pacific link and LNG phase two, we see that there are projects that can help us into the future.

I am wondering if my colleague can provide his thoughts on why it is important for us to have a balance of both short-term and long-term thinking when it comes to the issue of our natural resources.

Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, the point is well taken. The government has a responsibility, a duty and an obligation to Canadians to think beyond election cycles. Short-sightedness is not what is going to make what the Canadian future requires. We have to look long-term. We need to make these investments for the benefit of Canadians and our prosperity. At the same time, we can provide relief in transition to that resilience and reliability that is being invested in these major projects.

It is important that Canadians work together with all provinces and all parties to look at the long term and invest for our future.

[Translation]

Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my speaking time with the member for York—South Simcoe.

The price of diesel is still extremely high in Quebec this week. For farmers, truck drivers and all the businesses that depend on fuel

to survive, this means having to pay hundreds, even thousands of dollars more every day just to be able to keep on working.

Where does every price hike at the pump end up? It ends up as part of their expenses. It ends up making transportation and production costs higher. Eventually, it ends up taking money from families' pockets. We know that diesel, which is what we are talking about today, powers the tractors used to grow our food. It powers the trucks used to transport our purchases far and wide because we do not live next door to the factories. It is also essential for manufacturing. In short, diesel is everywhere in our lives, even if we do not put a single drop into our own vehicles.

When farmers and truck drivers pay more, who ends up footing the bill? It is always Canadians. That is precisely why we, the Conservatives, decided to take action. With the motion we are moving today, we want to introduce and offer an emergency relief plan to bring prices down at the pump for Canadians and Quebecers right now. We want to produce more fuel here in Canada. We want to better protect our country from future energy crises.

Our plan is simple and has two parts. First, we will save Canadians money by reducing the taxes that are driving up diesel costs. Second, we will increase supply at home by accelerating refining, storage and transportation, while encouraging investment in those areas.

The truth is that the current situation makes no sense. Not many people know this, but Canada has the fourth-biggest oil reserves in the world. We have the resources, we have the workers and we have the know-how.

Unfortunately, after 11 years of Liberal government, Canadians and Quebecers continue to pay far more for their fuel than they should. A country with such abundant oil resources should be better shielded from energy shocks. We should be increasing production when markets are under pressure, refining more of our own oil, and helping to boost supply so that we can become a true energy power.

However, the opposite has been happening over the past 11 years. Liberal taxes have multiplied, Liberal delays have multiplied, and Liberal bureaucracy has multiplied. As a result, refining, storage and transportation projects still take years to obtain the necessary approvals. Neither Bill C-5, nor Bill C-38, nor Bill C-39, nor any other bill the government may introduce will change the speed at which projects are actually delivered, because these are Liberal bills. Unfortunately, it is all hot air and political theatre, while nothing is really happening.

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The Liberals will point to wars, geopolitical tensions and market volatility to explain increases in diesel prices, and they are not wrong. Yes, it is true that these events have an impact on prices, but there is one thing they do not explain: Why are Canadians paying more than Americans? Why are Canadians paying more than the global average price of oil? As far as I know, Americans, along with everyone else in the world, are facing the same wars and the same price volatility. That is the question we should be asking ourselves. Why do we continue to pay more here in Canada, when we have the fourth-biggest oil reserve in the world? Meanwhile, other countries are looking at us and saying that they will not invest in our country.

I agree that the Liberals cannot control what happens abroad. They are having a hard enough time controlling what is going on at home. However, there is something they can do. They can control the taxes they impose on Canadians. They can also remove the barriers, the bureaucracy and the red tape they created here. They had 11 years to strengthen our refining capacity, improve our infrastructure and make Canada less vulnerable. They did not do so.

• (1550)

Who pays for all those wasted years? It is Quebeckers, Canadians, families, the unemployed, people waiting in line at food banks, and young people who have lost hope of ever owning their own home because housing prices have become unaffordable. That is the reality.

Our plan aims to improve the lives of Canadians, young Canadians, and Canadian families. The first part of the plan is to help Canadians save money, as I mentioned.

We propose eliminating all taxes on diesel sales, at least until July 1, 2027. That means extending the excise tax reduction until that date and eliminating the GST on fuel purchases. When Canadians are already paying so much for gas, the government should not keep taking even more from them every time they fill up. It should leave more money in their pockets.

As we saw, it was pressure from the Conservatives that forced the Liberals to suspend the federal fuel excise tax. We asked for this many times, and the Liberals laughed at us. Suddenly, they decide to adopt a Conservative idea. There were even two motions in the House, but they voted against them. In the end, they did it anyway. Recently, they announced that they would keep this measure in place a little longer, but they also officially announced that fuel prices will go up in February and will go up even more in March.

They had already anticipated both increases, and they decided against a 10¢ hike in favour of two five-cent hikes. They figured that it would be less obvious and that Canadians would not notice. However, Canadians are not fooled, especially when they get to the grocery store checkout and see the total.

Today, we are asking the Liberals to go further. We want them to get rid of the taxes that increase the cost of producing diesel, including the industrial carbon tax and the clean fuel regulations. They say they want to make life more affordable. The Prime Minister even said that affordability in Canada is the best it has been in a decade. I have not heard that from anyone in my riding.

I asked my constituents if they felt that life was cheaper than it had been in a decade. I asked them if they felt that they had saved money across the board this year. Everyone said no and that it was the opposite.

The Prime Minister is literally out of touch. I assume he is going to tell his people not to vote in favour of our motion this week, because he does not know just how much families are struggling to make ends meet. That is the reality of an out-of-touch Prime Minister who spends more time flying around burning gas than down here seeing how every family is living and is struggling to pay their bills at the end of the month.

Canadians do not need another explanation or another theatrical announcement. They want their bills reduced, period. We want the price gap with the United States to shrink, and we want to get that done in the next five years. Canada is going to have to increase its diesel production. Its production of other refined fuels is going to have to be ramped up to about a million barrels a day. That is a lot, but we can do it. In fact, we have the capacity to do it: We have the oil, the workers and the know-how. There is no reason to put up with the United States buying our oil at a discount and then selling us diesel at a higher price.

The second part of our plan is to source more domestically. Projects take a long time, and the government slept through the past 11 years. Now it is time to get projects into production faster, cut red tape and avoid supporting bills that stand in the way of these projects.

We were presented with Bill C-5, which was supposed to fast-track projects at a speed never seen before. However, there has been an 18-month delay, because the Liberals have had to bring in a second bill to do the same thing. They changed one word in the title, but that does not produce more results.

We want to fast-track projects and establish Canada as an energy powerhouse. We want Canadians to be able to save money and have more money in their pockets. That is why we are calling on the House to support our emergency plan to reduce prices at the pump, lower costs for Canadians and Quebeckers, accelerate investments and strengthen our energy security. It is simple: We want to save families money, develop our resources, produce more energy and better protect our country from the next crisis. That is the emergency plan, and we urge the Liberals to support it. I challenge them to do this for Canadians.

• (1555)

Hon. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Madam Speaker, no one can predict what the price of gas will be one month, three months or six months from now. When the conflict in Iran ends, the expectation is that gas prices will go down.

Why does my colleague not want to help Canadians now, when they really need it, instead of proposing a longer-term measure that will cost taxpayers a lot of money?

Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, can my colleague predict when the conflict in Iran will end? Can she do that? The answer is no. What the Liberals are telling us is that they will wait and see what happens later. For months and months, they are going to keep taking money out of the pockets of Canadians, and then maybe, when the price of gas and diesel comes down enough, they will decide to do something about it.

We Conservatives are calling for immediate action by maintaining the suspension of the excise tax and eliminating the industrial carbon tax, the clean fuel tax and the GST. These are measures that can be implemented immediately to save Canadians money right away. This is not about predicting the future; it is about the immediate reality that Canadians are actually facing.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my highly esteemed colleague.

The Bloc Québécois proposed a more targeted mechanism in which the excise tax on diesel would be credited for people who use it as an input when the price of diesel in a given quarter exceeds the price from the same quarter of the previous year by a certain number of percentage points. If the rate is set at 20%, for example, a 20% increase in prices compared with the same period in the previous year would automatically result in a refund for businesses and entrepreneurs affected by higher operating costs. This mechanism could be permanent, and it would be extremely easy to fund.

In fact, my friend's leader has always said that he is against corporate welfare. The biggest example of corporate welfare in this country is the oil and gas industry. Hundreds of billions of dollars of taxpayers' money are being used to subsidize it. If we got rid of just those subsidies, everyone would be happy, and the Bloc Québécois proposal would lower the price of diesel.

Would my friend support such a proposal?

Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I support any proposal that leaves more money in consumers' pockets, but there is one aspect that troubles me. The problem with the approach proposed by my colleague is that it creates more bureaucracy, because people are needed to do the counting and the calculations.

We Conservatives say that all taxes should be suspended quickly, immediately, until Canada Day next July. I understand that it will not be presented that way, but I believe that is the simplest and fastest solution and the one that would require the least paperwork while putting money back into people's pockets right away, especially for those at home who are struggling to pay for groceries.

• (1600)

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I heard something quite surprising from my colleague. He said that the government had implemented a measure to help with the cost of living because of pressure from the Conservatives. If we were to wait for the Conservatives before helping Canadians, there would not have been much help for the past 10 years. Yes, this time, they supported us in suspending the excise tax on gasoline. However, when it came time to vote for the Canada child benefit, to create a national school food program or to offer affordable child care, what did they do? They voted no every time.

Business of Supply

My colleague said that he is in favour of putting money back in Canadians' pockets. However, when we look at his voting record, it is quite the opposite. I have a question for him. Since when has he been in favour of implementing measures to help Canadians cope with the cost of living?

Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I would like to welcome my colleague. He is fairly new here in the House. I hope he is enjoying his current seat.

That said, he should bear in mind the changes that have taken place over the last few months. They tried to make us believe that the Liberal Party had changed, but it is still the same Liberal Party. It is a party that prefers taxes over leaving more money in people's pockets so that they can make their own choices. It is a party that takes a paternalistic approach. Instead of leaving more money in people's pockets so they can manage it themselves, the Liberal Party would rather tell them what to do. That is the problem with the Liberal Party. It thinks it is just a bit better than everyone else at managing people's money.

We Conservatives believe that if we leave more money in people's pockets, they will be able to pay their grocery bill at the end of the month. That is what is best.

As for the various measures we did not support, I could draw up a list of all the measures that the Prime Minister has decided to swipe from our election platform. I want my colleague to know that I believe we have done far more than he has over the past 10 years to help Canadians.

[English]

Scot Davidson (York—South Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, “fill her up”. When is the last time we heard that? After all, with diesel prices at record highs, everyday Canadians who drive a truck for work or for personal use are running on fumes and whispering a prayer when they finally pull up to the pump. As a consequence of Liberal economic failures over the past 11 years, Canadians are paying 41¢ more per litre on diesel than the world average price and 32¢ more per litre than Americans. This is driving up the cost for farmers, businesses and families in my communities in York—South Simcoe and right across our great country, especially in rural and remote areas, which make up such a pivotal part of our Canadian way of life.

This does not just affect Canadians who drive a truck. Diesel powers farm equipment that grows our food, machinery that powers our industries and tractor-trailers that deliver goods across the country and beyond. This is why Canada's Conservatives, as the official opposition, have brought forward this motion calling on the government to adopt our emergency fuel relief plan to provide immediate relief to Canadians struggling to afford fuel and faster energy infrastructure approvals for the future.

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It has been almost two years to the day since we were in the same place debating a different motion on fuel affordability. At that time, the former Liberal minister for natural resources stood outside these very doors here and said, "They have no view on how to build an economy of the future. Oil and gas will peak this decade. In fact, oil is probably peaking this year, and the economic plan of the Conservative Party of Canada is simply to produce more oil and gas into a market that inevitably, if we are going to fight climate change, will begin to decline."

The minister went on to say, "That is a ridiculous economic plan for the future of this country. It will leave Canada uncompetitive and poorer on a go-forward basis.... I encourage...the folks who sit on the Conservative benches to at least try to tell the truth."

The truth hurts. The Liberal government spent 11 years calling Conservatives and Canadians who supported pipeline projects climate deniers. The Liberal members, and I can see the Liberal member for Whitby across there, used the term 67 times in the last Parliament. They spent 11 years telling anyone who wanted to build an energy project that they were on the wrong side of history. It was not about economic viability or the merits of each project. It was all ideological.

While the Liberals were dishing out insults and lecturing Canadians about a net-zero future, they also brought in devastating anti-development laws for our country. Conservatives warned that these laws would stop projects from being built, but the Liberals pushed them through anyway. As a result, critical energy investments sorely needed in the country died: 16 major projects worth over \$176 billion. Canadians are paying for those failures at the pumps today. Two years ago, the Liberals said that oil was peaking, that the market was headed for decline and that Conservatives who wanted to produce more were ridiculous.

• (1605)

Well, let us look at the market today. The G7 is releasing 100 million barrels from emergency stocks. Diesel is at an all-time record high. The market is not in a decline. This is a market the world actually needed Canada to supply, and the government spent a decade telling us not to build.

Now the Liberals will tell Canadians that the price of diesel is out of their hands and that it is all due to global factors. There is no doubt that the wars in the Middle East and Ukraine have contributed, but why is it that a trucker in America faces those same factors and headlines, yet pays 32¢ a litre less than a trucker in Canada? A big part of that is the projects the Liberals blocked and the taxes they impose on Canadian fuel. They were wrong about the market then, and they are wrong to absolve themselves of responsibility now. They need to reflect on their failures and their ideological vendetta against Canadian energy production, which have led to this situation today.

This is felt across Canada, including in the communities I represent. Just yesterday, I spoke to Garret, a local farmer. He told me that fuel surcharges are showing up everywhere now: on his custom work bills, on harvesting and on every single incoming shipment that he has. Every time costs go up, it comes out of the farmer's pocket, money that would otherwise go to equipment payments and barn repairs. He warned me that this is not just a problem for this

season. Next year, it will show up in cropping, in the grain market and in what it costs to move milk and cattle.

We know that when farmers' costs rise, the price of food rises with them. Garret paid \$1.10 this same time last year, and just yesterday, he paid \$2.28. That is why Conservatives are proposing the emergency relief fuel plan today, not just for our farmers, but for all Canadians.

Canadians need relief now when filling up, and they need the infrastructure that brings costs down for good. We need to eliminate all taxes on diesel sales until at least Canada Day by extending the full excise tax cut until July 1, 2027, and removing the GST from fuel. We would permanently scrap the federal industrial carbon tax and the clean fuel standard, which increases the cost of producing diesel today and discourages the creation of new refineries for tomorrow, and we would close the price gap with the United States within five years by raising Canadian diesel and refined fuel production to one million barrels a day and supplying every region with Canadian refined diesel.

Canadian workers should be turning Canadian oil into Canadian fuel. Under our plan, shovel-ready zones would prepermit areas for refineries, storage and transportation, so firms could build without even applying, as long as they follow all safety and environmental rules. That is cutting red tape and getting things done. They would also get a 100% one-year deduction, which would back new refineries, expansion, storage and pipelines.

The Liberals were elected promising that they would move at speeds Canadians have never seen before. The problem is that Canadians are going broke at speeds Canadians have never seen before. No one has a monopoly on a good idea. We know the Liberals failed on energy production for over a decade, but today, they have an opportunity to do the right thing and support the Conservative emergency fuel relief plan today. I urge every member in the House to do the same.

• (1610)

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is great to be in this House and great to hear the member's speech. Although we often disagree on numerous matters, we can agree on one thing, which is that suspending and extending the suspension on the fuel excise tax is an important measure the government put forward.

We heard from an economist yesterday at the finance committee who said that prices on gas and diesel could normalize from the Strait of Hormuz opening again, as early as 14 weeks from now. Although the member opposite has often talked about fiscal prudence in this House, I wonder if he is advocating to extend the relief for Canadians well beyond prices normalizing and coming down.

Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, any tax relief right now is welcomed by Canadians. The number one expense of every Canadian across this great country is taxes. This is one lever the government can pull right now to give people more relief. Government members should vote for our emergency diesel relief plan.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member for York—South Simcoe and I are not going to agree. I will let him know that right away. The issue for me is that the Liberals are following the Conservative platform and playbook on climate.

While the hon. member dismisses what the Liberals have done as purely ideological, I want to put on the record that as far as the Green Party is concerned, when one takes action to reduce greenhouse gases to stabilize what is happening and avoid tipping points in the atmosphere, it is based on science and evidence. Every party in this House should be willing to agree to sit around a table, listen to the scientists and take the steps that are necessary before we lose human civilization and the options for our grandchildren.

Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, the last decade was Canada's time to step up to supply the world with LNG and supply the world with clean oil and gas. The government missed the ball.

Nothing is happening. After 18 months, it is still all talk and no action from the government.

• (1615)

[Translation]

Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have been a member of the House of Commons for some time now, and I have to say that, at times, I get the impression that my Conservative colleagues are lobbying for the oil industry. At the same time, they frequently condemn waste. Like me, they also stand up for people who are struggling. However, they never denounce the humongous subsidies to the oil industry, which rakes in eye-watering profits every year. They would like us to throw even more money at this industry, even though 66% of the oil companies in western Canada are American and we are in a tariff dispute.

The Bloc Québécois proposed something at one point. Every tax expert and finance minister I have spoken to in my life told me that the best thing to do was not to lower the price at the pump. The best

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thing for the government to do in the event of an increase or inflation was to hold on to that money and redistribute it in a targeted way to the sectors that actually need that oil and diesel to be able to continue production in the supply chain, for example.

Why does my colleague not support this type of measure when we know full well that there has been a drop in the price at the pump recently?

Can he tell me whether this trickled down to taxpayers?

[English]

Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, what I will say is that I am a lobbyist for my constituents. That is what I am. This party, my colleagues here, fought to remove the carbon tax. We were shamed by the Liberals for 10 years, as I said, for being climate deniers. I represent Honda, which has been in my riding for 40 years. The EV mandate maimed that company, but I am an advocate for—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is great to be here to participate in the debate this afternoon. I will be sharing my time with the member for Pickering—Brooklin, my wonderful colleague.

I am honoured to participate in today's debate. The world is changing rapidly. The United States is imposing new tariffs on Canada. At the same time, conflicts in Europe and the Middle East are driving up prices around the world.

Conservatives may want to blame Canada and Canadians for these global trends, as they tend to do in this House regularly, every single day. They seem to blame the government for factors out of our control or blame Canadians and try to use their hardships for political gain. However, the fact is that these higher costs are felt right here at home and all around the world, from Canadians driving to work and running errands to businesses transporting food, building materials and other essential goods across the country.

In response, our government is focused on what we can control: strengthening our economic resilience, building a stronger and more independent country and making life more affordable for Canadians. Economic uncertainty and rising costs have made affordability a top concern for families and businesses across our country. That is why one of our government's priorities is to help Canadians keep more of their hard-earned money.

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As we strengthen Canada for the long term, we are also providing immediate support to help Canadians bridge the gap to a brighter future. Our government is taking action by diversifying Canada's trade relationships. We have signed over 20 new trade and security agreements in under a year. We are maintaining responsible fiscal management. We have found \$60 billion in savings from government operational improvements, and we are supporting Canadians facing pressure from everyday expenses.

I want to begin by highlighting how Bill C-38, the Canadian fuel affordability act, is a key part of that effort. First, allow me to recall the support our government delivered last spring to help Canadians cope with elevated fuel costs. In the spring of this year, we introduced a temporary suspension of the federal fuel excise tax on gasoline, aviation gasoline, both leaded and unleaded, diesel fuel and aviation fuel in general. This pause reduced federal fuel excise tax rates to zero cents per litre. The measure quickly translated into lower fuel prices for Canadians, with tax savings of 10¢ per litre on gasoline and four cents per litre on diesel. The positive effects of that measure were felt immediately. The morning after the suspension took effect, gasoline prices fell by 11¢ per litre on the very first day, demonstrating that the savings were quickly passed on to consumers.

The suspension had been set to end after September 7 on Labour Day; however, this program was kept flexible by design. Like many of my colleagues, I spent the summer hearing from families and businesses in my riding of Whitby that were thankful for the relief that the spring announcement provided, but curious if it would remain in place amid stubbornly high prices. That is why, before the September 7 deadline, our government chose to announce its intention to extend the suspension of the federal fuel excise tax until January 31, 2027. That was for an additional five months, and then it would be stepped back by 50% through the next two months, to March 31, when it would go back to the full rate.

This measure has already brought down everyday costs for Canadians, including those in the trucking, food, agriculture, housing, construction and delivery sectors. The support provided to Canadians is substantial. The estimated additional fiscal impact of extending the suspension of the federal fuel excise tax is approximately \$2.9 billion. As a result, Canadians are expected to receive an estimated \$5.3 billion in total tax relief in 2026-27.

By extending the federal fuel excise tax suspension, Canadians will save approximately five dollars on a typical 50-litre tank fill-up at the gas pump. As members can see, this measure would make a noticeable difference for Canadians and has done so. We are grateful that we have the fiscal capacity to extend it further. By lowering costs at the pump and across Canadian supply chains, the government is actually helping Canadians keep more of their hard-earned money while protecting the economy from the pressures that mount beyond our borders. We must not listen to those who tell us that Canada is broken. The fact is that Canada's economy has remained incredibly resilient in the face of global challenges.

• (1620)

In fact, the International Monetary Fund projects that Canada will have the second-fastest economic growth in the G7 this year and next. This strong fiscal performance has reinforced our posi-

tion. As noted earlier this year in the spring economic update, Canada's projected deficit is now more than \$11 billion lower than forecasted in budget 2025, giving us greater capacity to build a stronger and fairer country for all.

Over the past year, we have used part of the increase in revenues to fund measures that make life more affordable and support Canadians. These investments are delivering meaningful results for Canadians in a time of need. At the same time, we are lowering costs today, while investing in a stronger, more resilient and more independent economy for the future. For example, we will work with provinces and territories to double Canada's electricity supply by 2050 to deliver clean, reliable and affordable energy produced at home. Over the last year, we have also signed more than 20 new trade and security deals across five continents.

Our government has already taken significant action to lower costs for Canadians. As of July 1, 2025, we cut income tax for 22 million Canadians by lowering their first personal income tax rate from 15% to 14%. This measure provides up to \$420 in annual tax relief per person, or up to \$840 for a dual-income family. We also eliminated the goods and services tax on new homes priced up to \$1 million for first-time homebuyers, and reduced it on new homes priced between \$1 million and \$1.5 million.

In Ontario, our government signed an agreement to waive the full 13% GST on new home purchases under \$1 million, which will save the average family \$130,000 on a \$1-million home in Ontario. This is really good news for Canadians who want to enter the housing market. This relief has brought home ownership within reach for more Canadians, especially young families who have struggled or been locked out of the housing market.

Effective April 1, 2025, we eliminated the federal consumer carbon price, delivering direct savings at the pump. That same day, we removed the requirement for provinces and territories to impose the consumer carbon price and delivered additional support for more than 12 million Canadians. We also launched the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit. It provides a family of four 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 each year for the following four years.

Let us just remember that cheques for the third instalment of that groceries and essentials benefit went out yesterday to approximately 12 million Canadians who benefit from this measure, this enhancement to the GST rebate, which is now called the groceries and essentials benefit, with an average of \$340 for a family of four. This is significant support right before Thanksgiving to make life just a little easier for families who are struggling with the elevated costs of many goods and essentials.

We also introduced automated federal benefits starting in the 2026 tax year to ensure up to 5.5 million low-income Canadians automatically receive the benefits they qualify for by the 2028 tax year. We also made the national school food program permanent. While Conservative MPs might like to call that program garbage or make absurd claims in the House regularly that there is no food in a food program, on this side of the House, we believe that 400,000 more kids getting fed at school is a good thing, and we would not deprive them and their families of the approximate \$800 of savings on groceries. We feel like that is worth fighting for.

In conclusion, I could go on and on, but the fact is that Canada is well positioned to withstand the external pressures arising from an increasingly fragmented and uncertain world. We certainly cannot control global forces. The Strait of Hormuz is not within our control to reopen, but we can control how we respond here at home. This is why we are lowering costs for Canadians. We are supporting families and workers. We are strengthening Canada's economic resilience and independence. We will continue to build the strongest economy in the G7, one that creates prosperity and opportunities for future generations.

I look forward to the questions that I know are coming from the opposition members.

• (1625)

Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think my hon. colleague from Whitby got confused; I think he read a 2024 speech that he read a couple of years ago. I remember in this House when the now finance minister promised that grocery prices would be down by Thanksgiving and that was in 2024. Members will remember he called all the grocery CEOs together and said, "That is it. We are going to have lower grocery prices by Thanksgiving."

I am wondering if there are any updates to the member's speech on whether grocery prices have lowered since 2024.

Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, I am glad to get the member opposite's question, which I always appreciate. Our government has done a lot of things to make life more affordable for Canadians. We have, as I said in my speech, launched the Canada groceries and essentials benefit. The third instalment of those cheques went out just yesterday. That is \$1,890 for a family of four to help make life a bit more affordable.

We also just moved forward with announcing the productivity mega deduction, which is a measure that I am sure the Conservatives would support because of its immediate expensing. It is really generous tax deductions for new business investment that will enhance productivity in Canada and will support every one of our industries, including our agriculture and manufacturing industries, all

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across the country. We also suspended the fuel excise tax and are now extending it. I hope the members opposite will support this.

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, all day, we hear the Conservatives and Liberals fight over who brought down the prices in terms of taxes on fuel. However, we are not hearing about the record profits from big oil and gas companies. They are posting record profits. There is literally no threshold on how much money these companies can make before the Liberals bring in an excess profit tax.

When will the Liberals bring in an excess profit tax on big oil and gas?

Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, I can say we are supporting a stronger country and a more resilient economy for all Canadians. We are focused on the affordability measures that every Canadian can take advantage of. That could be by helping to afford groceries and essentials on a monthly basis, where we know Canadian households are cash-strapped, or creating jobs all across Canada by boosting productivity and ensuring that we have the generational investments in housing, defence and infrastructure that the country needs, so we can serve the foreign markets that we are developing quite quickly.

• (1630)

[Translation]

Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am really pleased that my colleague talked about Canada's national school food program, because, as he may recall, I introduced a bill for that in the House, and, in the end, the government went ahead and created this program, which is now permanent.

When I visit schools in my riding, I see free breakfasts and free or discounted lunches. However, as my colleague said, the Conservatives voted against a program that is so important for families and for children who go to school.

I would also like my colleague to tell me how this kind of program has helped many children and probably many families in his riding make ends meet.

[English]

Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague's work in this area. We shared many conversations and had many meetings about the national school food program and the importance of getting the federal government to invest in it because of how essential it is for the growth and development of our young people. The program ensures that they have the nourishment they need to grow, develop, retain information and learn at school. Having that program in place as a federal investment has allowed us to reach 400,000 more children per year right across Canada. That is essential.

Privilege

I have three daughters, and if any one of them were struggling to meet their daily intake of nutrition, I would want to solve that gap. I cannot believe the Conservatives voted against a national school food program. They actually chose to deprive 400,000 kids of the nourishment they need to develop and grow into responsible, contributing members of our society.

I cannot fathom how shameful it is to see the Conservatives stand up in this House every day and try to lecture us about Canadians' affordability challenges and woes, which are quite real. The fact that they are standing up and saying we need to do something about food and the cost of food, while voting against the interests of children across this country, is abhorrent at the very least.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION CONCERNING BILL C-39

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak in response to the question of privilege raised on October 5 by the member for Saint-Jean concerning briefings for members on Bill C-39, the building Canada strong act.

As members will recall, this bill was introduced on September 21 during Routine Proceedings. I can confirm that technical briefings on the bill were offered to all parties after the bill was introduced. Having read the member's remarks carefully, I suspect that her main concern is not the technical briefing on Bill C-39, but rather the government's update on the west coast pipeline on October 1.

If that is the member's issue, I can assure members that there are still clear precedents supporting the view that the government may announce policies and provide updates on non-legislative matters outside the House. The precedent the member cited in her remarks has no bearing on the issue that was raised. This briefing did not concern a legislative measure that was to be presented to the House during the notice period. Rather, this was an update on a policy matter. That distinction is very important.

Our government is committed to working constructively with all parties in the House. The Prime Minister has stated that the government will work with other parties to advance our strategic and legislative agenda. In fact, we have offered technical briefings to all members of Parliament on legislative proposals once they have been introduced in the House. We are doing this not only because it is the right thing to do, but also to help inform and elevate the substantive debate on legislative proposals before the House.

I now want to turn to the precedents that support this view. On April 11, 1997, Speaker Parent delivered his ruling on a matter concerning a technical briefing, which the media was invited to attend, given by officials from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration prior to a press conference by the minister regarding the department's immigrant investor program. In his decision, he reviewed a number of precedents and concluded that the matter did not constitute a *prima facie* question of privilege. The Speaker stated:

On December 1, 1992 when a member complained that the media had been given information by the government concerning financial assistance to Canadian Air-

lines when the same information was denied to members of Parliament, Speaker Fraser ruled [at] page 14360 of the Debates there was no question of privilege. He also reminded the House that:

Privilege is properly raised only when something has happened that makes it impossible or nearly impossible to carry out the obligations that a member has as a member of this House.

On December 15, 1987, a member objected to the fact that the government had established a press lock-up and briefing regarding a proposed agricultural program and that members were denied access to the information. Speaker Fraser's ruling which can be found at page 11788 of the Debates, stated that this was not a *prima facie* question of privilege because it did not impinge on the member's ability to carry on his duties as a member of Parliament.

In the matter submitted by the member for Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, the Chair cannot find that she has been obstructed in the performance of her parliamentary duties. The question raised did not involve access to parliamentary proceedings, either in the Chamber or in a committee meeting room. Ultimately, as the hon. member pointed out in her presentation, the officials offered to give her the same briefing after question period.

On the issue of contempt, I would refer again to Speaker Fraser. In a ruling given on October 10, 1989, Speaker Fraser said: "Broadly speaking, contempts are offences against the authority or the dignity of the House of Commons".

Does the fact that the media was given information before it was going to be made available to the member constitute a contempt of the House of Commons? At page 125 of the 21st edition of *Erskine May*, in chapter 9 dealing with contempts, it is stated:

The House will proceed against those who obstruct members in the discharge of their responsibilities to the House or in their participation in its proceedings.

It seems to me that members of Parliament were not denied information or obstructed in their duties in the House. There was, after all, a press conference scheduled for that same morning and it was broadcast on the closed circuit television system of the House, making it accessible to all members. The Chair finds it difficult to conclude that the actions in question were an affront to the authority and dignity of the House.

For the reasons previously stated and in light of the precedents dealing with similar matters, I do not consider that this is a *prima facie* case of privilege.

The Speaker has no control and should have no control over such events, whether it be the manner in which they are organized or how access to them is managed.

● (1635)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I thank the hon. deputy House leader of the government. This matter will be taken under advisement.

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 Peace River—Westlock, The Economy; the hon. member for Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, National Defence; the hon. member for Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, Taxation.

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—DIESEL PRICES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Juanita Nathan (Pickering—Brooklin, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise and speak about this subject today, which is of crucial importance to all Canadians.

We are all aware that recent changes on the global stage have made life more unpredictable, more complex and, for too many people, more costly. Our largest trading partner has imposed tariffs on our imports, significantly impacting Canadian workers and businesses from coast to coast to coast. Conservatives may not want to call these tariffs what they are, but on this side of the House, we understand the impacts they are having on Canadian families, businesses, exports and workers.

Conflict and instability in the Middle East have led to an increase in fuel prices around the globe. Conservatives may want to blame Canada and Canadians for the challenges we face, but on this side of the House, we are positioning Canada to thrive within a rapidly changing world.

Facing these circumstances, Canadians do not need slogans, and they do not need social media influences. They need relief, and relief is what our government has delivered. Through carefully considered measures, we are strengthening our country's sovereignty and economic resilience while supporting Canadians through these challenges.

Since day one in March 2025, we have worked to save Canadians hard-earned money. On July 1 of last year, 22 million Canadians, more than half the country, had their income taxes lowered when we cut the first income tax bracket from 15% to 14%. This represents an annual tax savings of \$420 for individuals or up to \$840 for two-income families. To help support Canada's most vulnerable people, we introduced automatic federal benefits filings, starting with the 2026 tax year. This change will automatically give up to 5.5 million low-income Canadians the benefits they qualify for by the 2028 tax year.

We also removed the goods and services tax on new homes costing up to \$1 million for first-time homebuyers, and we lowered it on new homes priced between \$1 million and \$1.5 million. This move gives more Canadians, especially young families, the chance to live the Canadian dream of owning a home. Speaking of young families, they know the importance of good food during school days. We made permanent the national school food program, a program derided by Conservatives as “garbage”, to provide meals for up to 400,000 children across Canada. This program saves participating families with two school-age children approximately \$800 annually on groceries.

Food is essential, but it has grown more costly. To help more than 12 million Canadians manage their grocery budget, we introduced the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit, which provides a family of four with up to \$1,890 this year and about \$1,400 annually for the next four years. Single Canadians will have a benefit of up to \$950 this year and about \$700 for the next four years.

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Food is fuel for learning minds and working bodies, but groceries do not make their way into stores on their own. Canada is a vast nation, and moving people and products is a necessity that requires fuel of a different kind. We know that consumers are facing higher gas and diesel prices at the pump, and businesses have their profitability impacted by the increased cost of getting goods to market. I know that in my riding of Pickering—Brooklin, this is true.

Although the factors that led to these high fuel prices are not within Canada's control, Canadians expect a strong response. We are focused on what we can control. That is why we introduced Bill C-38, the Canadian fuel affordability act, which is currently being studied. Bill C-39 is being debated in the House and will be debated later on today as well.

Bill C-38 would build on the temporary suspension of the federal fuel excise tax that we introduced earlier this year, bringing the tax on gasoline, aviation gasoline, diesel and aviation fuel to zero cents per litre. For Canadians filling up their cars, it means a tax cut of 10¢ per litre on gasoline, a savings of about five dollars on a typical 50-litre fill-up, and four cents per litre on diesel fuel. While this cut was originally set to expire last month, Bill C-38, if passed, would extend that suspension of the federal fuel excise tax until January 31, 2027, after the holiday season. Regular rates would then be reduced by 50% through March 31, 2027, inclusive.

● (1640)

Higher energy prices are a concern not just here at home but in every part of the planet. We are fortunate to be rich in many natural resources and to be the fourth-largest exporter of crude oil in the world. This is why the Prime Minister has said, “Canada has what the world wants.”

This summer, the executive director of the International Energy Agency said that Canada has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to become a global energy exporting superpower. The leaders of our G7 peer nations are asking us to step up and supply the world with the sustainable, reliable energy they need to power their economies. This is an opportunity we are leaning into and seizing with intention.

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That is why we recently announced that Pacific link, an oil pipeline that will bring Albertan oil to ports in British Columbia, will be listed as a project of national interest under the Building Canada Act. Designating the Pacific link pipeline as a project of national interest means it will get built faster, reducing Canada's dependency on U.S. markets as buyers for our oil by giving us a new ability to export to Asian customers. Once completed, the Pacific link will allow us to ship an additional one million barrels of oil each day across the Pacific.

While we are prioritizing measures to help Canadians during this difficult time and working to create the right climate to grow the economy and foster investment, we have never wavered in our focus on fiscal responsibility. The International Monetary Fund forecasts that our country will be the second-fastest growing economy in the G7 groups of nations this year and in 2027. Canada's sovereign debt continues to command the highest rating, a AAA credit rating, from Fitch, from Standard & Poor's and from Moody's, the three main debt rating agencies. As we know, this exemplary credit rating allows Canada to issue debt to investors on the best possible terms.

As well, as noted in April's spring economic update, Canada is on track to reduce its deficit in 2025-26 by \$11 billion more than originally forecasted in the last federal budget. This gives us an advantage when it comes to investing in the supports and services that matter to Canadians.

Canadians are strong and resourceful, and in times of adversity, they expect a strong, resourceful response from their government. The measures I have mentioned are just some of the actions we have taken to protect and promote Canadian interests while positioning the country for future growth and prosperity.

● (1645)

Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have heard this talking point over and over from the Liberals' side: There are world factors on the oil prices that are increasing diesel prices in Canada. However, Canada paid roughly 24¢ a litre more for diesel than Americans did last month and paid 31¢ more than the global average last month. If global conflicts are doing this, why are we paying 24¢ more than Americans and 31¢ more than the global average? It does not make any sense.

Juanita Nathan: Madam Speaker, the reason we are speaking about this over and over is that we hear questions about diesel over and over during QP. I wanted to caution my colleague across the aisle that international comparisons on average diesel prices should be interpreted with caution. Diesel prices in many countries are influenced by government subsidies, administrative pricing regimes or other forms of state interventions. As a result, global averages that combine both market-based and non-market prices are not a like-for-like benchmark for assessing Canadian diesel prices. A more meaningful comparison—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, again, right now, big oil in this country is posting record profits. It is looking to make over \$50 billion in excess profit tax this year, but we never hear the Conservatives or the Liberals talk about that.

In Norway, they have a sovereign wealth fund. I would not call it a tax. They took part of those finite resources and invested them. They have over \$1.7 trillion U.S. right now, earning over \$200 billion a year, that can help people in Norway alleviate pressures in situations like this. They can provide relief for their citizens. They can invest in clean energy. They can do their part.

In this place, what is the threshold? How much money will it take for the Liberals to bring in an excess profit tax on these big oil and gas companies?

● (1650)

Juanita Nathan: Madam Speaker, as Canada continues to build a stronger, more resilient and more independent economy, the government is taking practical steps to reduce costs today while investing in long-term prosperity. We are extending the fuel tax relief on one of the measures, helping families, workers and businesses navigate the global economic uncertainty.

The sovereign fund we have created will be invested where people can benefit from the interest on it and make money.

With respect to the question my colleague is asking, I have no answer at this point.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with respect to the Conservative member's question, I wish they would take a look at Germany and the United Kingdom. They could take a look at the G7 countries and then maybe come back and pose a question.

The member for Pickering—Brooklin has often advocated for affordability. I know she has a lot more that she would like to share with the House on the issue of affordability. It is a holistic approach that the Government of Canada is taking to try to support Canadians. The gas levy tax is one of the measures.

Juanita Nathan: Madam Speaker, as I said before, as our government makes these large-scale structural transformations to create a stronger, more resilient Canadian economy, we are also taking more immediate actions to make life more affordable for Canadians.

There are a few measures that we have taken since this new government formed in 2025. One of them is cancelling the federal consumer carbon tax, which was effective on April 1 and has directly helped Canadians save money at the pump. We have cut taxes for 22 million people, as I have already mentioned, by lowering the first marginal personal income tax rate from 15% to 14%. We have eliminated the goods and services tax for first-time homebuyers on new homes up to \$1 million. We have reduced the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Tobique—Mactaquac. It is a pleasure to share my time with him. He always gives great speeches, so I hope to live up to one of his good speeches as well.

It is so interesting that we are talking about this motion. I am going to read out the motion so that all of the viewers around Canada know what we are talking about.

It is our Conservative opposition motion that:

the House, in the interest of saving Canadians money and fuelling our country at home, call on the government to adopt the Emergency Fuel Relief Plan that:

- (a) provides for emergency pre-permitting and tax relief for the construction of diesel infrastructure, such as refineries, pipelines, rail and storage;
- (b) eliminates all taxes on diesel consumption until at least Canada Day; and
- (c) permanently eliminates taxes on diesel production; and

call on the government to set the goal of boosting Canadian diesel production to one million barrels per day, allowing every Canadian business and consumer access to Canadian diesel.

I am not sure how everyone in the House could not get behind a motion like this. We know affordability is an issue from coast to coast. I believe there are not any Liberal members of Parliament, or Conservative or Bloc members of Parliament, who do not hear about affordability every day, because I hear about it in my riding in Regina—Lewvan.

We all know that if we tax the farmer who plants the food, the truck that delivers the food and the grocery stores that sell the food, we tax the consumer who buys the food. We have said this many times in the House, and the Liberals are slowly dragging their feet to get to where we have been for years and years in trying to save Canadians money.

First of all, the previous member, who is a new member, just got up and said they got rid of the consumer carbon tax. We have been talking about that on this side for a decade, and now the Liberals want to take credit for getting rid of the consumer carbon tax. It was their flagship program. Justin Trudeau could not say enough good things about how if we taxed people, the climate would change. How idiotic is it that? Are they kidding me? If people pay more in taxes, we are going to have better weather.

Now, each and every one of those Liberals gets up, beats their chest and pretends getting rid of the consumer carbon tax is their idea. It is hogwash. They got dragged, kicking and screaming, and got rid of that consumer carbon tax. It was unpopular, it never worked in the first place and it was taking Canadians' money out of

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their pockets each and every day. The Liberals said they were going to rebate it back, and we proved through the PBO that the rebates never covered how much Canadians were paying in the first place, so I will take no lessons from a Liberal saying they scrapped the carbon tax, when we fought for that in this very chamber for 10 years.

I remember the former health minister, Mark Holland, in one of his epic rants during question period, talking about a family holiday in a car. He went over the top and said, “let the planet burn.” Mark Holland was very good at being over the top in question period. He thought they needed that carbon tax so badly or the world would burn.

Now the member for Winnipeg North jumps up like Skippy and says they got rid of the carbon tax. He voted in favour of the carbon tax dozens and dozens of times and went back to the good people in Winnipeg. I am not a Blue Bombers fan, but there are some good people in Winnipeg. The member said they needed to pay the carbon tax to make sure that the climate gets better, and now, with the flip of a switch, he goes back and says to the good people of Winnipeg he got rid of the carbon tax for them, they never needed it and it was costing them way too much money. How does he go back and flip that fast on a policy that was the flagship for Justin Trudeau and all of his climate crusaders?

I remember all of the climate crusaders, and there are still a bunch in the front row, saying we needed this carbon tax. Now we are having the exact same debate on the industrial carbon tax, the GST and all of the taxes on diesel fuel. They want to scrap them. They want to get credit now. We said to scrap the tax on diesel fuel months ago and years ago, and now they want to once again jump up and beat their chests, saying they are going to scrap the tax on diesel fuel until January 2027 like it is a novel idea. They are going to say they are heroes. This is not to mention that they are the ones who put the taxes in in the first place. They want to be heroes.

The Liberals are going to go to their ridings and say they are going to scrap this tax until January 2027, and Canadians should thank them. Never mind that they were the ones to put the tax on them in the first place. Never mind that they were the ones who drove up the cost of food and everything farmers need to grow food. That was all them, but now Canadians should think they are heroes because they are going to scrap the tax they implemented in the first place. How hypocritical. They have literally taken good idea after good idea.

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● (1655)

The housing minister jumps up in question period and says they are going to take the GST off new homes. Where do the Liberals think they got that idea? It was from the Conservative platform in 2025, except that, once again, they have not gone far enough. They did a half measure, just as they are doing with the tax rebate on diesel. They are going halfway again because they just do not have, I would say, the ability to tell Canadians the truth and say they made a mistake. They should have done that with the carbon tax. Instead of beating their chests, they should have told Canadians they were sorry, they got it wrong and the carbon tax is a stupid policy, and apologized for foisting it upon the Canadian population for 10 years.

If they had any credibility with their constituents, they would go back to their ridings this Thanksgiving and say they got it wrong and they never should have put taxes on diesel fuel, because it costs Canadians more money to purchase what gets trucked in this country, which is almost everything.

The people in northern Saskatchewan should be the maddest at their members of Parliament, because everything in northern Saskatchewan gets trucked there. They truck in food and milk. Why does milk cost so much more in northern Saskatchewan? It is because it gets trucked so far, and the people there are paying the price of the Liberal government's taxes on diesel fuel each and every day. They know that. I think those members are going to get a bit of a surprise when they go home for Thanksgiving.

Speaking about Thanksgiving, the member for Whitby gave an average speech. It was from 2024, I believe. He talked about lowering grocery prices. This is the exact same thing the Minister of Finance, then the minister of industry, committed to in 2024. He said grocery prices were going to drop by 2024. He brought in all of the CEOs of the big grocery companies, made a big to-do, had a wonderful photo op, which is the thing the government can do best, and said he was going to make sure that grocery prices drop. I asked the member for Whitby how much lower grocery prices are now after that photo op, and he never answered the question. He never said a word about grocery prices in Canada being the highest in the G7 again, because the Liberals did not fulfill any of those commitments.

The most frustrating thing as I sit here each and every day is listening to outrageous Liberal speeches. They beat their chests and say they will take no lessons from the Conservatives. I am not going to take lessons from a government that put 2.2 million people in the food bank line. They never talk about that. I am not going to take lessons from a Liberal government that says it is going to help parents feed their kids. Why can parents not feed their kids? It is because the Liberals have taxed them to death. That is why they cannot afford groceries. The Liberals taxed the diesel that gets the groceries to the grocery stores. That is why parents cannot feed their kids.

The Liberals jump up each and every day, talking about a school food program and a groceries benefit. The Liberal government is proud that it makes 12 million people use food stamps because they do not have good jobs. They cannot afford groceries because of the policies the Liberal government has put in place for the last 10

years. The Liberals should be ashamed that they have to give food stamps to Canadians, not brag about it each and every question period. If that was my record in government, I would be embarrassed to stand up and talk about a program because Canadians cannot afford food under my watch. Those are the policies each and every one of these Liberals put in place, and now they are bragging about Canadians needing to use food stamps to feed their families and kids.

On this side, the Conservatives are going to work as hard as we can to save Canadians money and put more money back into their pockets so that they can feed their families and get good-paying jobs. That is what this motion is about. It is about getting diesel production and good jobs back in our country so that families can afford to feed themselves and not have to rely on the government.

● (1700)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, those were interesting comments, that is for sure.

There was a time when the Conservatives were in favour of a carbon tax, and then they were against the carbon tax. Then Erin O'Toole put the Conservatives back in favour of the carbon tax. Their most recent leader is the one who has said the Conservatives are against the carbon tax.

Canada elected a brand new Prime Minister, and what was his first action? It was to get rid of the carbon tax. I, for one, am glad the Prime Minister got rid of the carbon tax.

We can take a look at the Conservative idea farm, if we want to call it that. Wab Kinew, Premier of Manitoba, gave Manitobans a break on the excise tax on gasoline. Did the NDP in Manitoba steal the Conservative idea? Maybe if there are good ideas out there, our Prime Minister and this government are not shy to look at them and put them in place because they will help Canadians. Is that not what all this should be about?

Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister is definitely not new, because he was the economic adviser to Justin Trudeau, who started the downfall of the economy in the first place.

For the Liberals to say that they are taking good ideas, that would be a novel idea. I would like them to steal more of our ideas. I would like the Liberal government to steal more good Conservative policies and just implement them properly. They always do half measures. The GST rebate is on new houses, but why not on all houses? On the rebate on diesel that they are talking about with Bill C-38, why not do it for longer and save people more money?

There is nothing new about the Prime Minister. He is following the terrible policies of Justin Trudeau that he helped implement, and he is making life less affordable for all Canadians each and every day.

• (1705)

Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really appreciated my colleague's speech. One thing we both do is represent Saskatchewan and people who live in rural areas. A lot of people from rural communities drive into the city of Regina, and they support the rural economy that exists in Saskatchewan.

Could the member explain to the Liberal government, and particularly the member for Winnipeg North, how important it is to pass this motion to support the rural economy in Saskatchewan?

Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I just got off the phone with a friend of mine who lives in Regina—Lewvan and has a farm. We talked about fuel costs. He said that he paid \$10 an acre for fuel costs last year, and this year he is paying \$20 an acre for fuel costs. His fuel bill on his farm this year is going to be \$400,000.

I would love for a Liberal to try to explain to me how the price of fuel, when it is being doubled for our farmers across the country, does not affect the price of food at the grocery store.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, in another aspect of the member's speech, he downplayed the importance of the national school food program. I was first elected in 1988 when Sharon Carstairs was the leader of the Liberal Party in Manitoba. She advocated that a child cannot learn on an empty stomach. For generations, there have been many children in society who have not been able to learn on a full stomach or who have not had food in their tummy during the school day. The need is very real. It is there. It has been there for decades. However, the Conservatives are saying that they do not care about that aspect of education, that those children do not deserve to have food in their tummy when it comes to education.

To try to give the false impression that this issue has only been generated in the last 10 or 15 years is just wrong. Will the member admit he is wrong and maybe reverse the Conservative policy?

Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, here comes the lie of the left that we do not care. There were many school food programs across Regina and across the country, some brought in by Mosaic and private companies that helped do this. There was Chili for Children in Regina. I could go on and on.

The one thing the Liberals have never realized is that there were people doing this good work. There were private companies that stepped up to make sure kids were fed, but the Liberals wanted to come in on their white horses and say, "No, the government can look after kids better." Parents wanted to feed their own kids, and when that could not happen, there were private companies doing it. The Liberal government took that away, and it should be ashamed.

Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the people's House and share some thoughts on the motion that we brought forward and are asking this House to consider, which is our plan for emergency relief for all Canadians, in particular those who are feeling the effects,

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Canadians from coast to coast to coast, of the devastating hike in fuel costs and the cost of diesel and all types of fuels.

Sometimes what happens is there is a disconnect, which people pick up on from coast to coast, between those in this House and people's lived reality back home. Their concern is whether anyone here in Ottawa, in the nation's capital, is really listening to them and what they are going through. I want to tell members how real this is. It is hitting home for Canadians from coast to coast, and it is important that government responds with the urgency the situation demands.

First off, here are some relevant statistics for us to consider: 5.6% of Canadian households are considered energy poor, 12% of Atlantic Canadian households, on average, are energy poor, and what New Brunswick is spending on gasoline has increased 85% between the years 2021 and 2023. Can members imagine how much it is going up again right now under current prices? My province of New Brunswick has the largest increase in Canada.

Of New Brunswick families, 22% have experienced food insecurity. In Newfoundland and Labrador, it is 23%. In Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, it is 21%. A week's worth of diesel on a lobster boat or crab vessel can now cost upward of \$6,000. That is coming right out of the back pockets of the producers and fish harvesters on our waters. Our current prices are affecting some of the large farms, which are having to spend as much as \$5,000 per day in fuel costs alone. There is no way those costs are not going to be transmitted back to every Canadian from coast to coast through the increased cost of food and groceries on the shelf. Why is that? It is because input costs are soaring.

Our plan is a practical plan that addresses one of the root causes of the soaring costs and prices, which is the cost of fuel. Diesel fuel affects every Canadian who buys, purchases and receives the goods off our shelves that are trucked or shipped. In Atlantic Canada, everything we get on our shelves, as in most of Canada, has arrived by means of transport. Thankfully, we have great transport drivers and an amazing transportation sector, but their costs are going through the roof. If it comes by ship, those costs are only going up. We have to address this, and we have laid out a concrete plan to do so.

What does our plan do? It provides for emergency prepermitting and tax relief for the construction of diesel infrastructure, such as refineries, pipelines, rail and storage. It also eliminates all taxes on diesel consumption until at least Canada Day of next year, 2027. It permanently eliminates taxes on diesel production, and it calls on the government to set the goal of boosting Canadian diesel production to one million barrels per day. These are practical steps that the government can take right away that would provide immediate relief for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

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I could not help but be drawn to a story as I was reflecting on and preparing for the remarks I would give today. It is an ancient story of a wise young man who was put in a position of great responsibility.

This young man was entrusted with coming up with a plan. How did he get that position for the nation that he was second in command over? It was because the ruler at that time was facing a great dilemma. He was disturbed by some things that he was seeing and sensing, but he did not know the path forward and was seeking wisdom and insight. He brought in all the normal people he would confer and consult with. They would just further diagnose, leave perplexed and really not provide clarity, certainty or practical answers for this ruler's dilemma. There was a young man named Joseph who had amazing insight into the dilemma they were facing. In fact, he understood and was able to interpret the instinct and feeling the ruler had.

• (1710)

What was that? He said that they were in a time of great blessing and great favour, that they were having bountiful crops, that their GDP was tremendous and that they were producing great wealth. He said they needed to, for the next seven years, take a portion of that and set it aside and plan for the future perils they were going to face, because it looked like, from what he was understanding, there would be seven years of prosperity followed by seven years of famine. He said they had to understand and enact the principle of using their years of favour and years of plenty to set aside some wealth so they could combat the years of famine and years of peril.

I cannot help but think of a tremendous parallel to where we are today. The country has been blessed with amazing resources and incredible goods under our feet, in our soil, on our lands and in our people, yet we have not properly allocated those resources, properly unleashed and utilized those resources, and planned for the future out of those resources. In fact, we have done the opposite. For 10 or 11 years straight, we talked about dirty oil, dirty gas and keeping it in the ground, and said we were going to burn the planet, we were not going to utilize it, we were going to shut it down and we were getting away from it. Instead of using what could bring us the most wealth and potential and prepare us for the headwinds that we are currently facing, we shut it down, turned it off and spoke ill of it.

Now that we are in the time of peril, challenge and uncertainty, we have instant fans of oil and gas on the other side. That is wonderful. I am thankful for the backflip to reality and the inverted suplex of policy. I think it is wonderful that they have seen the light and are now going to say that we need pipelines, that we need to develop oil and gas and that they are champions of energy from coast to coast. It is refreshing and it is wonderful, and I am thrilled and enthralled at the enlightenment that has come, but Canadians also recognize that it is the same government that has had this opportunity since 2015 and chose the exact opposite approach. Instead of storing up in the years of plenty, the Liberals spent the cupboards bare, rammed up debt and increased our deficits at astronomical rates.

Now, after the fact, 11 or 12 years later, they are stepping in and saying that we have to do this, but there are still no real shovels in

the ground. There are lots of grand proclamations and many great announcements about many projects. In fact, I think that no less than 500 have been announced, but I do not believe there has yet been one approval of the 500 that have been announced. I think Canadians are saying that we need action and need it now and we need relief now. As much as the announcement sounds great, we have to move beyond the announcement and beyond the diagnosis and somehow get to a place of practical solutions and real relief for our people.

The lesson that we hear from Joseph and this wonderful story is to use the years of plenty to fight the years of peril. We must plan now for the times when we are going to be under duress, release the potential that is within our own economy and get off the backs of our own people so they can do what they do best, which is work, produce, innovate, grow, dream and develop. We must stop standing in their way and release the pressure that is on their backs. When we do that, we unleash the potential that is Canada.

The time for action is now, and the Liberals can take that wonderful first step. They have already inverted themselves beautifully, saying that they are for oil and gas and the development of those resources. Let us take that to the next step and provide real tax relief on the fuels that Canadians consume by supporting our motion.

• (1715)

Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when I was listening to my colleague from New Brunswick, he said that he wants to help his constituents and wants to help New Brunswickers, but he also said that families are experiencing food insecurity. He voted against the school food program. He voted against the groceries and essentials benefit. He voted against the Canada child benefit.

Imagine saying that families are experiencing some difficulty and then voting against all those programs. Every time it was time to help New Brunswickers and his constituents, he voted against. He talks about the crab fishermen and lobster fishermen in my riding. He voted against the Atlantic fisheries fund, the top-up for small craft harbours and the \$1 billion that we just announced. He voted against everything. What is he going to vote against the next time?

Richard Bragdon: Madam Speaker, I will say this. It is interesting that in the estimation of the government, there are no new programs, no new taxes and no new levels of spending that will ever harm a Canadian or their future.

Instead of lightening the load and the burden on Canadians, the government has created a further load on the backs of Canadians by keeping taxes high and continuously spending without ever doing things to attract capital investment into our country and produce real jobs and real wealth. In fact, according to RBC, the Royal Bank of Canada, between 2015 and 2024, more than \$1 trillion in net capital investment fled this country for other jurisdictions. That was terrible policy, overspending and a lack of really addressing the real problem of attracting real dollars into our economy to produce good-paying jobs. That is what we need to do.

Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon South, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is good to have you in the chair here this afternoon.

To my hon. member from New Brunswick, it is interesting because the Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre set a record in August: 26,000 people went through its doors. Let us think about this. I come from Saskatchewan where we feed the world. Twenty-six thousand people in a city of 310,000 have gone to the food bank each and every month, starting in August. I believe it was the policies set by the Liberal government in 2015 that caused the increase of, let us say, 16,000. From when I started being an MP in 2015, we have had over 10,000 more people going to the food bank, thanks to this Liberal policy.

• (1720)

Richard Bragdon: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague was absolutely right about what he said the government has done. The Liberals say they are helping people by continuing these grand programs and growing the level of dependency upon an ever-expanding government. We on this side of the House believe that the best program in the world and the best social program in the world is a job, a job that can help pay the bills, put food on tables and give people a good paycheck.

It is time we get back to that philosophy and say what can we do as a government for the people of Canada, and create an atmosphere where the rest of the world wants to come and put their capital, rather than the current approach which has driven up to 42% of Canadian manufacturers to consider taking their wealth elsewhere and invest it in our neighbouring jurisdiction rather than here. We can blame everyone else, but the bottom line is that this problem has grown right here at home.

We need to address those problems here at home and start fixing the house from within.

Braedon Clark (Sackville—Bedford—Preston, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked about capital outflow between 2015 and 2024, but I think he stopped a bit early. I wonder if he would respond to the fact that this year we have had the highest level of foreign direct investment in close to 20 years and just last month at the investment summit, Canada received almost half a trillion dollars in investments. I wonder how he would respond to that.

Richard Bragdon: Madam Speaker, I will say once again that we have had more announcements. We have had proclamations. We are talking about purchasing government bonds, doing some of this. It is out somewhere into the future, on something that we hope will come someday.

Do not worry. Just hang on, Canadians. We need to bide our time because no matter how despairing the situation is, the government is going to rush in with an immediate fresh announcement of an announcement that it may—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford.

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise at the end of this incredible debate that has been going on in the people's House of democracy: the House of Commons.

The government has, before this House, Bill C-39. About a year ago, we voted on Bill C-5. A year ago, we were promised and we

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were told by the Prime Minister that the bill before this House would be instrumental in breaking down barriers, would lead to new investment and would unleash the Canadian economy like we had never seen before. One year later, we are not that much further ahead. Canadians, frankly, expected more announcements, bigger announcements and more things through the Major Projects Office, which was established in that legislation.

My big worry, and the point I would like to raise today in my limited time, is that what we are seeing with the government is a policy of workarounds and build-arounds. For 10 years under Justin Trudeau, it was wrong for Liberals to speak about building energy infrastructure. They were chastised for it. They were not allowed to speak about Canada's benefits. The former member for North Vancouver, Jonathan Wilkinson, said there was no business case for building energy projects in Canada. Justin Trudeau, in some of his last acts as Prime Minister, said to Europe that there was no business case for us to sell our oil and gas, our resources, in a responsible way to our European allies.

I am very happy today that the Prime Minister has changed his tone and has started to do some positive things for Canada by acknowledging that we have to use our resources for the betterment of Canada and for what this country can be. That is positive. However, unfortunately, despite the workarounds and the build-arounds that he is putting in place, because of the political pressure of the extremist left in the Liberal Party, we are not seeing the real transformations we need to see from a regulatory perspective in Canada to unleash the entirety of Canada's economy.

Why do I mention this? Under Bill C-39 and Bill C-5, so much of the power rests with the governor in council, the Prime Minister's Office. It is not in the hands of small businesses. It is not in the hands of investors. It is in the hands of the Prime Minister. I do not want to create a command economy. That is not a long-term solution to the challenges Canada is facing today.

The only way for Canada to succeed long term is to complete the erasure of Justin Trudeau's march to socialism and give Canadian businesses the certainty they need and the assurances they need. The framework for doing business in Canada is not one path over here, one through the Major Projects Office and one through a cabinet minister's office. We need one way for any project to move forward, not the chosen projects of the Government of Canada. That is not a safe approach and that is not a sustainable approach.

Private Members' Business

Today, the Conservatives have put forward a motion asking for taxes on diesel to be removed. One of my best friends, Anthony Geertsma, called me the other day. Anthony is one of the smartest guys I know. He can fix literally anything and he makes a living doing just that. However, he said, as a business owner, his costs are skyrocketing because he is driving between Langley, Abbotsford and Chilliwack every single day, and diesel prices have more than doubled. He can remember when he was paying half of what he is paying today just to do business. That is not sustainable.

The Conservatives are putting forward this motion because we need to get back to basics. We need to empower our small business owners who already are in Canada with tax changes that would allow them to flourish. This is one small step that is part of a bigger project for energy independence and for broad-based reform that would help our small business owners. These are changes that Canadians want to see and that will trickle down to grocery stores.

• (1725)

To conclude my remarks today, we cannot simply rely on big projects, workarounds and build-arounds. We need to focus on structural reforms that complete the erasure of Justin Trudeau's socialist policies, which put our country so far back. We have to be responsible, and we have to work together.

Conservatives are asking the Liberals to put aside their partisanship and to work with us for the betterment of our country. We have to stand up for Canada. They are not doing enough to stand up for Canada. Here, on this side, we are going to stand up for Canada. We are going to stand up for Canada, because we cannot entrust the well-being of Canada's economy to one man.

Again, we ask the Liberals to please work with Conservatives. Stand up for Canada. If they believe their words about being at economic war with the United States and the need for energy independence, please work with us. Protect our sovereignty. Their approach is not doing that. They should listen to the ideas from this side of the House. We have good ideas, and they are going to make measurable changes in the lives of Canadians.

Please, put aside partisanship. Stop the internal battles between the blue Liberals and the red Liberals, and just stand for Canada with the Conservative Party of Canada.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): It being 5.30 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Monday, October 5, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

• (1730)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): 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.

Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 7, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

YOUTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-231, An Act to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lothbinière, CPC) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in at report stage.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): 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: Mr. Speaker, I request that the motion be agreed to.

(Motion agreed to)

Luc Berthold: moved that the bill be now read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues.

It is always emotional to rise in the House to introduce a private member's bill. In 11 years, this is the first time I have had the opportunity to introduce a bill. It is a special occasion because there are so many of us in the House and so few of us get a chance to present our bills.

I was given this opportunity at a rather special time in my life, when I really wanted to do something. Life has given me a reason to bring forward a private member's bill that affects so many people, especially young people. That is why, last year, my wife Caro, my entire family and I thought about how we could use this opportunity to make a difference.

Private Members' Business

This opportunity surfaced following discussions with officers at the Library of Parliament, who gave us their unwavering support from the outset, along with the law clerks of the House, about introducing a bill to help young people. That was the genesis of the friends of David bill, Bill C-231. As I said earlier, I am speaking on my own behalf, but also on behalf of my son David, who is no longer with us, my wife Caro, my daughters Marie-Soleil and Justine, and our big, beautiful family, who are supporting me with this bill. I would even go so far as to say that they are supporting me and all members of this House with this bill.

I want to remind the House that the main purpose of Bill C-231, the friends of David bill, is to help young people struggling with drug addictions or mental health-related consequences. This aspect is a bit new, and I will talk about it more later on. The bill was amended in committee, and we just adopted a new version. I will come back to that a little later.

Bill C-231 comes into play when young people appear before the courts for offences committed as a result of their addiction. Since the cases involve minors, justice system actors, whether they are police officers, prosecutors or judges, should have the ability to refer them to a treatment centre rather than punishing them immediately, as would occur in all other circumstances. The objective is to help rather than punish, at a moment when the actions of adults can still have a meaningful influence on these young people's lives. That is the purpose of Bill C-231.

I would also like to thank all my colleagues in the House. That is precisely what all members chose to do on April 15: They chose to try to influence young people, while there is still time to intervene, by voting unanimously in favour of Bill C-231. A total of 327 members voted for its passage. No one opposed it. As for the members who were absent, they were "paired", in parliamentary terminology, and therefore could not vote that day. Many of them nevertheless expressed their support to me afterward. Had they been able to cast a vote, they too would have voted in favour of the bill.

Many people have already had the opportunity to see it, but not everyone has. I want everyone to know exactly what this bill will change: the youth criminal justice system. The bill sets out three main points. I think it is worth reading them this evening so that we all understand what this bill seeks to change, how we can help young people more and how we can ensure that they end up with a system that will help them to get back on the path to a better life rather than going down one that will lead them nowhere and that may cause them many problems throughout their life.

The bill will, and I quote:

(b) enable, in some cases, the youth justice court that finds a young person guilty of an offence to delay sentencing to enable the young person to participate in a problematic substance use treatment program or any other treatment program;

We are talking about drugs. I will come back to that a bit later.

It will also, and I quote:

(c) enable the youth justice court to include in certain orders the condition of attending a problematic substance use treatment program or any other treatment program; and

(d) provide that the youth justice court may include in an order for conditional supervision a condition that the young person attend a problematic substance use treatment program or any other treatment program.

• (1735)

This could even allow a judge to require a young person to undergo treatment. As we know, when a young person is in that kind of situation, they will not always agree to participate in a treatment program. What we especially wanted to avoid was having a young person punished simply because they refused treatment. The bill specifically states that a refusal to participate in treatment cannot be held against the young person. Someone who attends a treatment program against their will is unlikely to benefit much from it. However, the bill would still allow a judge to tell the young person that they are being given an opportunity to participate and that, if they do so, the judge will not sentence them immediately. If things go well and the young person comes to understand the path they are on, they may be able to turn their life around more easily. Above all, it will give them a better start as they enter adulthood.

Those who have been following my speeches from the beginning will notice that the bill has evolved somewhat. I would like to thank Minister of Justice, the staffers from his office, and officials from the Department of Justice, who suggested significant improvements to the bill when the committee was considering it.

Now, orders will not be limited to just problematic substance use treatment programs. They could also apply to any other type of treatment program.

I would never have dared go that far when I introduced my bill. I told myself that if we wanted to have the support of as many people as possible in the House and if we wanted to be able to truly change the lives of young people, we should really focus on a specific target, to keep people from challenging it or saying that it made no sense.

The House gave unanimous support. When I saw the government's proposals, asking why this should not be extended to other forms of treatment, like for mental health issues, I thought it was an excellent idea. We would have even liked it to be much broader than that. That said, this will now allow even more young people to be able to access this unique opportunity to get help rather than being punished by the justice system if they commit a first offence, if they have a first conviction for problematic substance use or drug use.

This is excellent news for young people who are struggling, perhaps without knowing the cause or even being aware of it, but whose struggles may have been noticed by those around them or by judges, prosecutors or police officers. These measures will enable them to become aware of the issue and perhaps help them overcome it without having to go through all the negative consequences that such problems can entail.

By broadening the scope of Bill C-231, as we did in committee thanks to the support of all members, we are ensuring that no young person will be left behind. I think this is great news. We will be able to help even more people.

Private Members' Business

In a moment, I will speak about the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, but first I would like to thank every member of that committee for unanimously supporting the friends of David bill, as well as all the amendments that were proposed.

Things got quite emotional in committee. We heard testimony from people from the office, but we also heard from members of my family. I learned things from some of my family members, things that we had not really talked about before. It was quite emotional. Being in front of an audience, talking about personal matters and learning things from my daughter was such a special moment. I learned some things from my colleagues as well. Some of my colleagues shared things that really moved me. I will share some of them.

My wife reminded us that we have to stay united in our efforts to help young Canadians. She told the committee something that really stuck with me: "Inaction has serious consequences, profound and irreversible consequences. In our family, those consequences have a story, a face and a name, David." That is why it is called the friends of David bill.

My daughter Justine surprised me. She said a lot, but there is one thing she said that I wanted to read this evening to show how important it is that we act quickly. She said, "The more time goes by, the more substance use takes hold, and the more substance use takes hold, the harder it is to overcome."

• (1740)

Put that way, it sounds simple. Put that way, it sounds logical. However, when those words are said by my daughter, who lived with us and experienced those moments with David for a long time, who was both a witness and sometimes even a victim of the consequences of his decisions, it tells me that we are on the right track. What we want to do is, in fact, act more quickly. What we want to do is give young people a way to avoid going through that, as long as they realize it, of course. That is what the bill seeks to do: empower young people to realize what they are going through.

Angy Riendeau is a criminologist who came to testify, at my request, and who set the record straight. In parliamentary committee, we are used to hearing from witnesses who come to say the same things as us, but Angy came to tell us the truth. I will quote her so that I get the words right. She set the record straight by pointing out that legislative changes cannot have the intended effects if the resources are unavailable. She said:

We can add as many provisions as we like to a law, but if the resources aren't there, if specialized assessments aren't accessible, if families are left on their own for months, and if community stakeholders don't feel supported to intervene quickly, our mission today will not be achieved.

She even emphasized how important it is for parents to act at the first sign because, "at the first warning sign, a young person can truly access specialized assessment, concrete resources and adults capable of supporting them before the situation deteriorates". When warning signs appear, people are available to help young folks, provided the resources are in place. Finally, Angy Riendeau, whom I thank for her participation, summed up what can truly change the course of a young person's life: "Beyond legislation, a rapid response, the quality of human connection and real access to services are often what alter a trajectory".

She used to be a police officer and has now decided to devote her life to helping young people. I am very grateful to her for coming to tell us this, because up here in Parliament, we think we are doing a good job and that we have solutions for everything, but if the necessary resources are not actually provided on the ground, what we do here will not make any difference at all in the lives of young people. This is something my wife and I, along with anyone else who would like to help us in this effort, want to continue working on.

My Bloc Québécois colleague from Rivière-du-Nord said, "I won't speak for everyone around the table, but I think we're practically all in agreement on the bill introduced by our colleague". He went on to say:

As a parent, I have always asked myself the following questions about my children: If I am too strict, will they run away, and if I am not strict enough, will they become delinquents? It's true that we don't know. No one has a crystal ball. I, too...would have liked to have someone like Ms. Riendeau with me.

This shows how difficult it can be for parents to understand what is happening with their kids. Rhéal showed that. I am sorry, I should have said the member for Rivière-du-Nord. I thank my colleague because this is, indeed, a reality parents face, and we have been through it often.

There were also some touching personal stories, like the story told by a Conservative member. I will not name him, because I did not ask his permission and because I do not necessarily want to tell his story, but he himself nearly took his own life 16 years ago and has known people who have struggled with addiction. He said in committee, "Some overcame these challenges, and others did not", adding, "I believe that your work on this bill and your willingness to speak about the tragedy your family experienced will save lives". He also said, "Justice and compassion both play a key role in our efforts and work".

The fact that this person had the courage to come and tell us this in a committee meeting—and that he is one of my colleagues—well, that was touching, and that is indeed the message we want to convey. My colleagues in the Liberal Party also emphasized how important it is to take action to help young people.

Once my wife Caro and I decided to go public about our personal lives by tabling the friends of David bill, we found out that we are not the only ones who have gone through a tragedy like this, and we realized how many other families go through similar experiences. That is exactly why we must act now. I encourage members to take a look at the many comments made on social media after the bill was first tabled.

• (1745)

People opened their hearts and shared some touching stories. If these people got a chance to express themselves and perhaps these young people got to experience something different because we dared to talk about it and the members dared to support my bill, the friends of David bill, I think we will have done something good.

*Private Members' Business**[English]*

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated to the member across the way, I applaud him and give him a tremendous amount of credit for having the courage to present his personal family situation. It takes a great deal of courage to do so. I think it is a great tribute to David, quite frankly, in recognizing that all lives do matter.

I want to go back to the issue of the principle, because I think that is critically important here. This can happen to anyone. Young people can cross a road, and it can be very difficult as a direct result. This why it is important that, as legislators, we take that into consideration when we talk about the Criminal Code or budgetary measures.

Could the member provide his thoughts on that?

• (1750)

Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I will try to answer in English. This bill could change the lives of a lot of kids and young people in this country. By principle, I think all of us are here to make life better for every Canadian. We do not always agree on the way to do it, but on this particular file, I am really proud that everyone is supporting the fact that we have a role to play. We can help if we just change some little words in the legislative agenda or in bills. Yes, I think we will act on principle to help people if we put partisanship aside and do something really good for our young people.

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this bill, and the story and circumstances surrounding it, are moving. There is something special about it. My colleague is right to point that out. It is not often that everyone in this House can agree on something. It does happen, though not often enough for my liking, that we are all able to agree on doing what needs to be done for the benefit of the community as a whole.

I will, of course, be giving a speech shortly. Unfortunately, it will probably be to repeat what I have already said. For now, however, I would like to ask my colleague a question. In his opinion, is this something that could happen again, at least in the coming weeks? Could we all set aside considerations that are sometimes a little too partisan and work together to do what is best for all our communities across Quebec and across Canada?

Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his contribution in committee. I want him to know that the sooner we get to work, the sooner we will be able to really change things.

However, things are already going well, because everyone in the House agrees that we should pass the bill quickly. Everyone in the House agrees with the principle. The bill has to go to the other place now. I hope our friends at the other place will move as quickly as we are. I wish we could be unanimous and take a *Kumbaya* approach to all bills. Unfortunately, that is not possible.

There are certain situations where we are able to do the right thing together, and I think this example illustrates that well. I am glad we can do this for David's friends.

[English]

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a consensus. Everybody is onside with this passing the final stage, which is remarkable to hear.

What I would like to do is just give my colleague a moment to say a few words about David so it is in Hansard forever.

Luc Berthold: How much time do I have, Mr. Speaker?

I just read some comments on my social media, and everybody said that David was very polite. He was a good worker. He was respectful of everyone. He was the one who always took the time to give us a hug, me and his mother. He was a guy who was always taking care of his sisters. He was kind of a brilliant man. He had a great future until he met this bad friend. This bad friend just changed him, not his heart, because he was always that kind of guy, a polite, respectful hugger, but his mind was obsessed by drugs, and that changed him.

I want the House to know that just a few years before, we had been talking about this. He had a great period of time. He had two children. We were talking about how we could help others who were facing his problem. We were supposed to do it together. We were supposed to do some speeches, some keynotes, together to help other children at a young age not to follow this road. I will do it alone, or not really alone but with my wife and my daughters, in his memory and to help others to not use those substances, which can really break the lives of a lot of people.

• (1755)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must say to my friend that he was very inspirational in the manner he presented the debate, not only today but even at second reading. He has been exceptionally respectful and very reflective of what has taken place and of the motivation that is there. It is appropriate to share it with his wife because of the impact it has on the family unit. One can have a great deal of sympathy for it. It is another thing to have empathy when living through it. I do applaud him, as I indicated in my question, for having the courage to share this in such a public way. It is a wonderful tribute to David, who had a wonderful life. I wanted to say that to my friend at the outset.

Private Members' Business

I talk about the principle of the legislation because I think there is a great deal of sympathy from a vast majority of people when we talk about young people. We all recognize that being a young person today can be a challenge. It is a much different society we live in today and over the last decade than we had when I was growing up, whether regarding the availability of drugs, addictions issues or the Internet and the impact it is having on individuals and socializing. There are a great deal of bad characters in society; there always have been, but think of the degree to which they have become accessible. This is not a partisan issue. We need to have initiatives like this that give us a bit of a wake-up call as a collective of parliamentarians at both the federal level and the provincial level.

One of the presenters commented on resources. We can pass wonderful laws, but if we do not have the resources and the will at different levels, we will not be anywhere near as successful as we could potentially be. I look to the provinces, because many of the courts, for example, are provincial courts. The role that law enforcement officers play is absolutely critical. There are the communities and stakeholders. Often, many of the stakeholders have outreach programs that try to keep in touch with the individuals who are feeling challenged with a wide spectrum of addictions. It is very real and very tangible. I suspect the bill will pass, hopefully very quickly out of the Senate chamber, because it is a good thing for the Parliament of Canada, both houses, to send this very strong message in a relatively short period of time through a strong, powerful, personal story and articulation on an issue that can have a positive outcome for not hundreds but thousands of young people.

If we were to canvass parents as a whole, we would hear that every parent thinks about the raising of their child and the direction they are going to go in. We all hope they will make good decisions. Quite often, unfortunately, it is others who get involved in a certain life who get someone going in the wrong direction, or they get too deep, as the member's daughter referred to. The deeper they get, the more difficult the challenge is.

My experience comes in two forms. One is as a concerned parent and the other is because of a role I played when I was in the Manitoba legislature. There are a lot of hard, tough feelings with regard to young people who fall on the wrong side.

● (1800)

What I did was get engaged with a youth justice committee. It provided a young person who made a mistake with the opportunity to go before a quasi-judicial group, a justice committee, where we would sit, listen and then come up with a disposition. If that young person fulfilled the disposition, there was no need for them to go to court and there was no criminal record, so if they wanted to go down to the States, for example, they could do that. It gave that young person a chance.

When I look at what the member is proposing in Bill C-231, I see a lot of similarities. When I reflect on the years I spent on that justice committee, I know there is a great deal of support for a system that recognizes that at times we need a discretionary authority to do something good by giving someone a break. Providing youth justice courts, in whatever form they might be, and that leadership coming from the Parliament of Canada I believe sends a very powerful message. Hopefully we will see provincial legislatures look at

what has been happening. I suspect provincial parliamentarians will take an interest. My daughter is an MLA. I will pass the idea of what is being talked about this evening on to her, and I suspect there will be other parliamentarians at the provincial level.

When we look at the amendment brought forward that factors in mental health issues, we need to put more supports into the issue of mental health and well-being. We need to see more resources, and outcomes too, I must say, that deal with the issue of addictions. We can think of the damage it causes to the individual versus the family unit or the community from a social perspective. There is also a significant economic cost. I believe all of this makes a very strong argument that governments and stakeholders need to do a better job. When we are provided the opportunity through, in this case, our court system, I think we should take advantage of that. I hope that the judges, prosecutors and even defence lawyers out there will listen to the type of support the member opposite has generated.

As the member pointed out, no one voted against the legislation. Three hundred-plus members of Parliament voted in favour of it. Some of those who did not vote in favour of it approached the member opposite. It then went to the committee stage, where, because of the manner in which it is being presented, the support being brought forward and the co-operation within the department, it was ultimately made into better legislation, as the member himself indicated, by incorporating mental health.

First and foremost, I thank the member, his wife and his daughter for their contributions to making our communities better by bringing forward the legislation. I would also give thanks to anyone who was involved in making it to this stage. I look forward to it getting royal assent, before Christmas I trust.

● (1805)

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am probably going to repeat some of the things I said in the spring. The reality of legislative life is that we come back to the same bill, work on it and approve it again.

As my colleague said earlier, I already spoke to this bill in committee, as well as in the House at second reading. I will now speak to it at third reading. I look forward to passing it. I think we all want it to be passed quickly, but David deserves for us to pass it quickly.

Drug addictions are not a legal issue. These are medical issues, especially when it comes to our teenagers. Of course, drug addictions are not fun. We would not wish for anyone to have to deal with addictions of this nature, neither colleagues of the same age or the same generation, nor our parents or children. Drug use is bad. Drug trafficking must be stopped.

It is vital to combat it in every way possible. This is being done. There are always attempts to balance more restrictive measures with preventative, corrective and rehabilitative measures. It is not always easy. Colleagues from different parties often have heated arguments and fierce debates on these issues.

Private Members' Business

When it comes to our teenagers, I am pleased to see that we are all on the same page, even members from other parties who generally tend to disagree with our point of view. As members know, rehabilitation is part of the Bloc Québécois's DNA. We are perhaps a little too naive. Likely so. Perhaps we would be better off being less naive. It all depends on one's point of view, but we believe in rehabilitation.

The society that we want to build, the one that we want to live in and that we want our children to live in, is a caring society. We want it to be a society that we will be happy to live in and that will accept us despite our shortcomings, our mistakes, our faults and our flaws, a society that will help us to get back on the straight and narrow, help us to see the light and help us to better understand what is best for us and for the rest of society. The Bloc Québécois adopted this way of thinking and this way of doing things a long time ago, when the party was founded and possibly even well before that. I cannot speak for members of other parliaments, but I would be surprised if Quebec thought differently. I believe that, historically, in Quebec, we have always favoured rehabilitation over punishment.

There must be punishment. I am not saying that we do not need any. We must take firm action. We need to be fair, equitable and rigorous in how we treat our young people in particular. They need limits. They need guidelines to determine what is right and wrong. Often, even sometimes as parents, we are amazed at the impact or influence we can have on them because they do not show us and they will not tell us. However, in the long term, we find out that they have learned something from what we have been able to tell them in the past, and that is great.

Yes, we believe in interventions, including those of a criminal nature, but above all, we believe in rehabilitation. We need to help people understand, those around us who have strayed—I do not like to use the expression “strayed” because I myself tend to stray from time to time—or those who have bent the societal rules that we have set for ourselves and who try to do things differently. We need to help them see things clearly.

Addiction is a serious problem that must be addressed, but when it comes to teenagers in particular, we need to focus on rehabilitation and recovery. It really needs to be viewed as a dependence issue, a health problem, rather than a criminal problem.

• (1810)

I was listening to my colleague on the government side earlier, and I agreed with him. I was even pleased to hear him say the following. I will quote him word for word, because I wrote it down.

[*English*]

The words I wrote down are these: “to give someone a break.”

[*Translation*]

However, I think he should have said:

[*English*]

“to give society a break.” It is not just “someone”.

[*Translation*]

These young folks who have strayed from the straight and narrow, who have taken drugs, who have struggled with addiction, and who are having a hard time turning things around would possibly, if not probably, make valuable contributions to society under different circumstances. Our society needs them. We need people like David today. He could have become an incredible social worker, maybe a lawyer or a member of Parliament. Who knows? He could have made a contribution to our society. We need David and other young people in the same situation.

When someone gets a second chance, society as a whole gets a second chance. Society can then benefit from the important contributions these young folks can make. To me, that is important. It is our duty as parliamentarians to fix what needs to be fixed, but to do so in the right way, by investing in our future.

Earlier, I asked my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière a question. I asked him if it were possible, if we could imagine a scenario where all members of the House, regardless of their party, could also agree, under different circumstances, on meaningful bills. These bills might not be perfect, and we might want to make some changes to them, but we could still agree to pass them quickly. I am not talking about rushing to adopt them by saying that it is in the national interest and that they will take effect as early as next week. That is a different matter. We will discuss that another time. Rather, I am talking about reaching an agreement to adopt them in a reasonable manner.

In my opinion, there are too many bills that get carried over from one Parliament to the next. It is counterproductive. The amount of money, time and effort that is needlessly invested in bills that never come to fruition is unbelievable, and I would say incalculable. I have not even tried to calculate it. It disappoints me. I am disappointed all the time.

As for David's bill, which we are considering today, it gives me confidence in the humanity of my colleagues in this House, and that is something I truly appreciate. I want to say this not only to our colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, but to all members of the House: When a bill is worthwhile, even if it is not perfect, can we make a greater effort to discuss it before it reaches committee and comes to a vote? Can we work together to find ways to move it forward? Can we ensure that when a bill is introduced, it is passed, if not within a few months, then at least within a year? That is my hope, and though it may be somewhat naive, I hope my colleagues will allow me the occasional moment of naivety. I would love to see bills like this advance more quickly.

Let me close by returning to what I said earlier about David's law. I will share what I have learned from all this and from the handful of years I have spent on this earth. I do not consider myself old; I often say that no one is truly old until they reach three digits. Even so, I have gained a bit of life experience. I would say that our young people need love, not prison bars.

Private Members' Business

● (1815)

[English]

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to start today by asking everyone in this room to think of a teenager in their life. It could be their son, daughter, grandchild, niece, nephew or even a neighbour. Imagine that teenager is going through a rough patch. They got caught up in substance abuse or addiction, which is something that happens in all our communities day in and day out. Now imagine that the rough patch leads them to make a mistake. They commit a petty crime or make a poor decision that brings them into contact with our justice system.

What do members want to happen to the teenager in that moment? Do they want them to be locked away in a cell, surrounded by influence, where their addiction could continue, or do they want them to recover, to get into counselling and get the help they need to turn their life around? I think most of us would choose care. We would choose to give that young person a second chance at a different life, which is a choice that brings us here today to Bill C-231.

Bill C-231 is about updating the laws we have around youth justice to focus on health, recovery and healing. The first big change it would bring is to create a path to recovery for a young person who broke the law, instead of sending them straight to jail. It would give them that second chance to get clean, get healthy and rebuild their life before a continued life of addiction truly takes hold.

I think that second chance is something we can all understand. None of us would ever want our worst decision at 17 years old to dictate the rest of our life. We understand that a young person can change, because we have seen it. We have seen young people graduate, get jobs, rebuild relationships with their families and become leaders in their community. The question is whether our justice system is going to help them make that possible or whether it will make that journey even harder.

We all know that recovery is not a straight line. It is a climb. Sometimes we stumble, and that is okay, as long as we get ourselves back up again. This bill would make sure that if a young person stumbles on their first try, the judge cannot throw them back into prison for failing treatment. Why is this important? It is because fear cannot shut down recovery. If a teenager thinks that admitting they have slipped up will land them in jail, they will likely hide their struggles, lie to those around them or even run away. By removing that threat of time in prison, we would give them a safe environment to keep trying until recovery sticks.

To understand why this change is necessary, we have to take a look at how our system works today. For a long time, our system has operated like a hammer: If a person breaks a rule, the hammer comes down. However, addiction is not something we can hammer away. We cannot punish trauma, or dependence on a substance, out of a human being.

When we lock up a young person who is addicted to drugs or alcohol, two things usually happen. First, they will not get access to recovery and the care they need to beat the addiction. Second, they are isolated from their family. We remove them from their school or learning program and connect them with deeper criminal behaviours. When they eventually get released, often as young adults,

their addiction is still there, but now they have lost their support system, or it is broken, and their future opportunities are limited.

Creating a cycle where people reoffend time after time does not make our community safer. This is where I believe we need to think beyond punishment with respect to addiction. We need to start thinking about outcomes, and at the end of the day, the goal in our justice system should not be simply to punish someone but to create a path to breaking cycles and building a different life.

We have to ask ourselves what a true, safe community looks like. Is the neighbourhood safer when a young person is locked away for six months, only to come back angrier, more disconnected and still addicted, or is the neighbourhood safer when that same teenager is guided through healing and education, and can build a stable life and become a happy, healed, productive neighbour?

Bill C-231 would step into that cycle and break it at the beginning. It recognizes that teenagers' brains are still developing. Their decision-making skills are still being formed. Teenagers are wired to make mistakes, test boundaries and sometimes fall into bad situations, but their brains are remarkably adaptable. At that age, with the right structure, the right rehabilitation plan and proper guidance, a young person can turn their entire life around before adulthood.

● (1820)

This is why early intervention is so incredibly important. The earlier we can interrupt addiction, the earlier we can reconnect young people with their family, with education and with their community. This is not about letting people off the hook or ignoring accountability. Recovery is hard work. One has to show up every day, take accountability for one's past and do the heavy emotional lifting it takes to heal and become truly addiction-free. This is real accountability. It requires far more effort and leads to far better results than just sitting in a jail cell.

Think about what this means for families. When a young person falls into addiction, it is not their personal crisis. It pulls in their entire family. Parents spend sleepless nights worrying about their child, whether they will come home and whether they are still alive. They look for treatment beds, navigate confusing and expensive health care systems and try desperately to keep their children safe. When legal trouble hits, many parents feel isolated, as if they have hit a dead end. They fear that the court will take their child away and lock them up, leaving the underlying issue untreated.

Bill C-231 offers families hope. It would turn the feeling of being stuck into a doorway for help. It would allow everyone to work together to guide our young people back on the right track. It says to parents that their child has made a mistake but that we are going to focus on getting them well so they can rebuild their future. That future matters.

If we help even one young person recover, we are helping not only that individual but also their parents, their siblings, their classmates, their future co-workers and even the communities that they will eventually be a part of. Every young person we help get back on their feet is one more person who has the opportunity to contribute instead of being trapped in a cycle of addiction and the justice system.

To wrap things up, I want to leave us with one simple thought. A society should not be judged by how strictly it punishes its young people when they fail. It should be judged by how effectively we help them stand back up. Bill C-231 is practical, compassionate and a necessary update to our youth justice system. It would choose rehabilitation, and, most importantly, it would give young people who have lost their way a realistic path toward recovery.

We all want safer communities. We all want our young people to grow up healthy and educated and to have a wonderful life that they build on their own. Bill C-231 would give us the ability to make that a reality. In the name, memory and honour of David, I look forward to the bill's passing the final stage.

Juanita Nathan (Pickering—Brooklin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today at the third reading to speak in support of the private member's bill, Bill C-231, a bill that has benefited from thoughtful consideration and study at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. I am proud to speak in support of Bill C-231, which proposes specific amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act, YCJA.

Bill C-231 proposes to amend the YCJA to help youth with substance use disorders who come in contact with the criminal justice system to access treatment programs that will assist them in meaningfully rehabilitating and reintegrating into their community. More specifically, the bill proposes to clarify the instances when a young person in contact with the youth criminal justice system can be referred or ordered to participate in a treatment program and to enable, in certain cases, a youth justice court to defer sentencing to allow the young person to participate in a treatment program. In addition, the bill proposes to amend the YCJA to enable the youth justice court to include, in certain orders, the condition of attending a treatment program.

The objectives of this bill align well with the objectives of the YCJA and the overall youth criminal justice system. The preamble to the YCJA calls on communities, families, parents and others concerned with the development of young persons to be active participants in the youth criminal justice system. The YCJA invites their involvement to prevent youth crime by addressing its underlying causes, to respond to the needs of young persons, and to provide guidance and support to those at risk of committing crimes.

Bill C-231 enhances the YCJA's multipronged approach to problematic substance use and seeks to improve outcomes for young

people with substance use disorders who come in contact with the criminal justice system.

At second reading of the bill, some members shared personal stories, as well as stories from constituents in their ridings. These stories remind us that problematic substance use and mental health issues affect all of us, whether directly or indirectly.

These heartfelt and informative discussions continued during the committee's study of Bill C-231. I want to thank committee members for their interest and active participation during the study of Bill C-231. Their candid and at times personal interventions helped nourish the committee's discussions regarding potential amendments. I want to thank the witnesses who came forward and shared touching stories as well as insightful views on topics related to problematic substance use.

We had the privilege to hear from family members of the member for Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, who tragically lost his son, David last year. We heard from Caroline Levesque, who is David's mother and an early childhood educator, and Justine Berthold, who is David's younger sister and a nurse.

During their testimony, they mentioned that too often the youth criminal justice system focuses on offences and punishments without looking into the underlying cause of a young person's offending behaviour. They spoke about the importance for the youth criminal justice system of having the right tools and said that enabling decision-makers to use these tools at the right time would improve the YCJA's ability to support meaningful rehabilitation and reintegration.

The committee also heard from Angy Riendeau, a criminologist who highlighted the importance of early interventions when it came to preventing and addressing the risk factors that can eventually lead to persistent criminality in adulthood. She noted that the amendments in Bill C-231 would add to the intervention mechanisms already available under the YCJA to better help young people access treatment, specialized assessments, care and appropriate resources in a timely manner.

The amendments that were made during the clause-by-clause study of Bill C-231 are consistent with the views that were shared during the witness testimonies. All the amendments proposed were adopted unanimously by committee members. This showcases the close co-operation that this bill has cultivated among members.

To further the bill's objective of improving the YCJA's public health approaches to problematic substance use, many of the amendments that were made to Bill C-231 at committee relate to the language used in the bill.

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● (1825)

For example, the term “addiction” was replaced by “problematic substance use” to align with the more modern, less stigmatizing language used in the Controlled Drug and Substances Act. Certain clauses of the bill were also amended to refer to problematic substance use treatment programs or any other treatment programs. This is to avoid unintended interpretations that may restrict access to other types of treatment programs, including programs focused on mental health or on behaviour modification and skills development.

This broader terminology would also allow the YCJA to remain flexible and relevant, should types of treatment available to young people evolve over time.

Furthermore, multiple amendments were made to Bill C-231 at committee, seeking to clarify, and at times broaden, the instances where decision-makers under the YCJA can refer or order youth to participate in a treatment program. For example, a coordinating amendment was added to ensure that prosecutors, in addition to police officers, must consider whether it would be appropriate to refer a young person to a problematic substance use treatment program before starting or continuing judicial proceedings against the young person.

Moreover, amendments were made to clarify the situations when attendance at a problematic substance use treatment program or any other treatment program may be ordered as a sentence or as a condition to an order. For example, an amendment was made to explicitly mention that attendance at such treatment programs can be ordered as a condition of probation and continual supervision.

These amendments would ensure greater consistency in the YCJA sentencing framework when it comes to problematic substance use, especially in the context of the Canada overdose crisis and the toxic illegal drug supply. The federal government is committed to a comprehensive public health and safety approach that focuses on connecting people to vital services, destigmatization and supporting prevention, treatment and recovery.

In closing, I believe significant improvements were made to Bill C-231 during its clause-by-clause study and that it is ready for passing in the chamber. I urge all members to support it at third reading.

● (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member will have about two and a half minutes left, if she so chooses, the next time the House considers this matter.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS*[English]***BUILDING CANADA STRONG ACT**

The House resumed from October 5 consideration of the motion that Bill C-39, An Act respecting certain measures to strengthen the economy, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to join the debate this evening on the building Canada strong act because Canada, at this moment, needs to build. In the interest of my limited time, I am only going to be talking about one of the three parts in this bill: build Canada now.

We need clean energy and transmission. We need critical minerals. We need expanded port, rail and trade corridors. We need the infrastructure that will connect Canadian products to new markets and make our economy more resilient. However, there is an important question we need to ask: Can we build faster without lowering the bar? I believe the answer is yes. I believe the key is to build a better, more coordinated system.

Today, projects can involve multiple federal processes, sometimes requiring similar information, with assessments, consultations and permitting decisions occurring at different stages. That creates uncertainty. It can delay investment, increase costs and make it harder for Canada to compete. Duplicative processes do not necessarily lead to better environmental outcomes.

Bill C-39 is designed to address that problem by coordinating federal assessment, permitting and consultation processes so they can happen together rather than one after another. We should be finding speed by doing the necessary work at the same time, not by making the same work happen twice. That, in my view, is the most important principle behind this legislation.

The same is true for how it approaches indigenous consultation. This bill would establish a more coordinated federal approach to consultation through a Crown consultation hub. Having worked with first nations, I know how some smaller first nations with more limited capacity can be overwhelmed by the number of referrals from government and the private sector.

Indigenous communities should be able to engage with the federal government through a coordinated process, rather than having to navigate multiple departments and overlapping requests about the same project. That is a meaningful opportunity to make the system work better. However, getting the coordination right would depend on getting the details of this overall bill right as well.

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One of the issues I want to highlight is the meaning of a “comprehensive application”. That is important because the one-year timeline for project reviews and decisions under this act would begin once the proponent submits the comprehensive application and the required studies and information. That is important because the one-year period would be intended to cover the federal government's assessment, consultation, consideration of impacts and mitigation, and final decision-making.

If we are going to make that timeline meaningful, proponents and communities need clarity about what is required before this clock starts. If the threshold is too low, the clock begins before the science is ready. Regulators would not have all the information they need. They would be playing catch-up. First nations and the public may lose confidence in the system. If it is vague or impossibly high, years of delay may simply move to the period before the clock begins. The principle here is that predictability should come from clarity about what is required, not on cutting corners on what is required.

The second issue I would like to bring up is on public participation. This bill is intended to coordinate federal processes, but coordination also means that more information may be presented to communities at the same time. That can be challenging because large proponents can have teams of consultants, scientists, engineers and lawyers, while smaller communities, local organizations and first nations may not have that same capacity.

If we want a more efficient process, we also need to make sure that people have a fair opportunity to participate in it. That could mean making sure that we have adequate participant funding, access to technical expertise, clear and accessible information, properly staffed federal review teams, and meaningful opportunities for public and first nations input at the points where that input can inform decisions. A faster process should be a more coordinated process, not a process where the people affected would have less ability to participate.

The third issue I would like to bring up is on preparatory work. This bill would allow the environment minister to permit some preparatory work on a project before a decision on that project has been rendered, where it is found to be in the public interest. There is a very good practical reason to allow certain work to proceed while a broader assessment is under way. Surveys, geotechnical investigations, archaeological work and other preparatory activities can provide information that helps a project move through the review process. However, Parliament should be clear on what work can and cannot be done. It should not be irreversible, it should not prejudice the final decision or replace the assessment itself, and it should continue to respect indigenous consultation and environmental requirements.

Another important issue to consider is the authority to change project conditions where the minister determines that doing so is in the public interest. This is another new power that is proposed by this bill.

• (1835)

There are very legitimate reasons why conditions may need to evolve over the life of a project. Technology changes, project design changes, better mitigation becomes available or additional

consultation identifies a better approach to a project. There is value in having that appropriate flexibility, but that flexibility should also come with transparency. I believe Parliament should look carefully at how that discretion is exercised so we understand the criteria that are going to be looked at and make sure that we have notice when changes are going to be proposed and have transparency about those reasons for those changes. If the government is going to be given this new power to change legally binding conditions, Canadians should have the transparency to understand why those changes are being made.

We should also look carefully at economic feasibility, because it is reasonable to ask whether a condition can actually be implemented. In fact, this is already common practice in project reviews, but there is an important distinction between asking how an environmental objective can best be achieved and deciding that the objective is too costly. The economic feasibility should help determine how an environmental obligation is achieved. It should not become a substitute for achieving the environmental outcome. That distinction matters, because building faster and protecting the environment are not competing objectives. They can and should reinforce each other.

One of the other areas I see significant opportunity in is regional assessments. Too often, project decisions are considered after a site has already been selected and significant investment has already been made. Regional assessments allow us to take a step back and ask some of the bigger questions, such as where development makes the most sense, where the most sensitive ecosystems are, what the cumulative impacts of multiple projects are, what infrastructure a region needs and what environmental limits need to be respected. This gives us a chance to think about development at the scale of the ecosystem, rather than looking at small projects in isolation. This helps us make better decisions about where and how development makes sense in the first place, which makes good environmental policy and good investment policy.

Finally, I want to address fish habitat compensation and third party habitat banking, because I see considerable potential in this approach. A mining company, a road builder or a port authority is not necessarily the organization that is best equipped to design and deliver habitat restoration. Specialized conservation organizations, indigenous organizations and restoration providers may be able to undertake larger and more ecologically coherent restoration projects. Having a system of third party habitat credits would allow that work to happen strategically in advance and get proponents better predictability when compensation is required.

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We should also recognize an important ecological reality. Restoring habitat is not simply a matter of replacing one hectare with another. Ecosystems are complex, and there is uncertainty in how successfully restored habitat will function over time. This is why compensation should always remain at the end of the mitigation hierarchy. We should avoid impacts first, minimize them where they cannot be avoided, restore where possible and compensate for residual impacts that remain. Where that compensation is required, we should aim for outcomes that are genuinely nature-positive.

Overall, I support the direction of this legislation, because Canada needs to demonstrate that we can build, and we need a federal approval system that gives investors, communities and indigenous peoples greater confidence about how those decisions will be made. The speed should come from better coordination, better planning and better execution. It should come from federal processes happening together rather than one after another, from clear information requirements and from properly resourced consultation and participation. It should come from making decisions on time when the evidence is ready.

Given that the powers in this bill would be permanent, it is important that where new flexibility or discretion is created, Parliament instills clear and transparent processes. This means getting the definition of comprehensive application right, ensuring that public and indigenous participation remains meaningful, being clear about what preparatory work is, using ministerial discretion transparently, applying economic feasibility appropriately, using regional assessments to understand both development opportunities and ecological limits and ensuring that habitat compensation produces the strongest ecological outcomes possible.

Canada should not have to choose between building quickly and building responsibly. We can do both. We can have a project review system that is faster because it is better organized, we can give investors greater certainty without sacrificing rigorous assessment and we can build the infrastructure Canada needs while maintaining the environmental protections and public confidence the projects depend on.

• (1840)

This is the opportunity before us with Bill C-39.

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was a very comprehensive speech. It actually related to everything I have learned over the last 20 years.

I will not say “rights and title” but “indigenous interests”. In relation to indigenous interests, the Prime Minister said the content of UNDRIP would not be affected by a pipeline going to the Pacific coast. However, with the original Trans Mountain pipeline, there were first nations that did not give their consent to the pipeline, yet the project was still approved.

Are we expecting something similar with the Pacific link pipeline as proposed?

Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, what we saw with the Trans Mountain pipeline was the original approval of the pipeline being challenged in court and overturned for the consultations' not meeting the standard of section 35. What this means in practice is that where a project is going to impact a proven or claimed aboriginal

right, there needs to be consultation or accommodation based on the level of impact. That is what the law states and that is what would be appropriate for any other project.

It is very important. Some of the changes made here would facilitate consultation, happening both before a project site is chosen and throughout the process, through the new Crown consultation hub. This is critically important. It is not something we can legislate away. This is a constitutional obligation that we have toward first nations. The processes that have been proposed today would very much help produce a better process for that.

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about the importance of building projects faster. Maybe he could expand a bit on the one-year review timeline that the government intends to implement in Bill C-39. What would that mean for the communities and businesses that are waiting for the implementation and would be able to have these investments in their communities?

• (1845)

Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, this one-year review timeline is critically important. We know we need to build fast and we need to build at scale.

I want to give an example of a project in my riding that faced some significant delays. There is a big housing development where just the process of getting the habitat compensation project approved ended up taking three years. This is holding up getting thousands of new homes built. Rather than having to go through a multi-year process for habitat restoration work, this would allow for the purchasing of credits in a bigger habitat compensation project that could make a much bigger difference. This is instead of having to wait years for each individual project.

This is one of the many efficiencies that would be created by this legislation that are both good for the environment and good for getting meaningful projects built in all of our communities.

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite was very vocal not too long ago about imposing an oil and gas cap on Canada. I wonder if he still supports that and if he supports the planned pipeline through B.C. to the B.C. coast.

Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, this government has made a commitment to make Canada a clean and conventional energy superpower. That means doing what we can to grow our economy right now, and it makes sure that we are diversifying our export markets.

This bill would allow us to be more competitive in a global market and get our products to market. It would allow us to be competitive in terms of seeking investment and creating those opportunities right across the country. Those opportunities are there in every sector of our economy.

Canada has what the world wants. We have amazing opportunities. Particularly in my province of British Columbia, we are the gateway to Asia. This is where a lot of this development is going to happen, and the measures that are in this bill would allow us to fully take advantage of that.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF BILL C-40

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker. I am rising this evening on a question of privilege concerning the leak of key details of Bill C-40, an act respecting production, procurement and investment in relation to national defence and national security, which was tabled in the House earlier today.

Yesterday afternoon, the Globe and Mail published a report entitled “Ottawa to turn defence procurement agency into Crown corporation, sources say”, which cited three sources for its revelations. According to this report, “The three sources said legislation being tabled this week by Procurement Minister...includes measures to make the DIA a Crown corporation.”

A few hours later, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation published its own reporting on the matter, advising that the public works minister “plans on introducing new, separate legislation taking the DIA one step further into independent Crown corporation status. The title of the proposed bill has appeared in House of Commons documents.”

The entire thrust of part 1 of Bill C-40, something which could not be gleaned from the long title of the bill, is to establish something called the Canadian corporation for defence investment. Given the proposals to stand up the Defence Investment Agency found in Bill C-31, which is currently before the Standing Committee on Finance, Steven Chase's and Marieke Walsh's sources could not be said to have simply triangulated publicly available information to deduce the government's plans.

However, the revelations did not stop there. The Toronto newspaper also indicated that the government “announced in April that it planned to create a cabinet position, the minister of defence procurement, to steer purchasing”, and, “Three sources said the legislation being tabled Tuesday also will lay out the duties of this new minister.”

As for these ministerial arrangements, the CBC's Murray Brewster reported, “the Crown corporation would report to an associate minister of defence for public accountability purposes.” That associate minister role is exactly what clauses 13 and 14 of Bill C-40 would establish.

Again, this is not something discernible from the long title, nor were these specifics telegraphed as such in any previous public statements by the government. What we are looking at here is a

Privilege

leak of the provisions of Bill C-40 while it was on notice for introduction.

Paragraph 3.14 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, fourth edition, explains that:

The premature disclosure of bills which have not yet been read in the House may be a breach of privilege. There is a well-established convention of parliamentary practice whereby members must be the first to be informed of the substance of legislative measures. This is because the House plays an essential role in the legislative process. The rule governing the confidentiality of bills ensures that members, as lawmakers, are aware of the details of a bill before they are made public. It is therefore forbidden to disclose specific provisions of a bill from the time notice is given to first reading. Only the title is made public when the Notice Paper is published.

Mr. Speaker Milliken put it more succinctly on March 19, 2001, at page 1840 of the Debates. He said, “it is clear that information concerning legislation, although denied to members, was given to members of the media without any effective measures to secure the rights of the House”, and, “I have concluded that this constitutes a prima facie contempt of the House”.

The report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs that followed that 2001 leak, concluded, “This case should serve as a warning that our House will insist on the full recognition of its constitutional function and historic privileges across the full spectrum of government.”

Sadly, the warning has had to be sounded multiple times since, following rulings by your predecessors finding similar prima facie contempt on October 15, 2001, April 19, 2016 and March 10, 2020. That is not to mention several other close call rulings that fell short of the necessary threshold yet saw the Chair sound cautionary notes for future reference. Most of those close calls occurred under the present Liberal government, which would often answer questions of privilege with claims that no one could be certain who had leaked the bill or even when it had been leaked, citing advance policy consultations with stakeholders. In fact, both news reports yesterday specifically tied the information shared by sources to the bill placed on the Notice Paper.

What is more is that no such defence can be offered about stakeholders being naive to parliamentary conventions talking about the consultations they participated in. In both reports, the news outlets granted their “federal sources”, according to the CBC, anonymity because they were “not authorized to discuss the matter publicly” and “not authorized to speak publicly”.

The fact that we cannot say for sure exactly which Liberals leaked the content of the bill is, however, no impediment to the Speaker finding a prima facie case of privilege. When confronted with a similar case, Mr. Speaker Milliken said on October 15, 2001, at page 6085 of the Debates:

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● (1850)

The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona in his remarks tried to assist the Chair by suggesting that it was for the Chair to investigate the matter and come up with the name of the culprit and so on. I respect his opinion of course in all matters, but in this matter I think his view is perhaps wrong. There is a body that is well equipped to commit acts of inquisition, and that is the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which has a fearsome chairman, quite able to extract information from witnesses who appear before the committee, with the aid of the capable members who form that committee of the House.

Moreover, after anonymity had been sought by the sources cited in *The Canadian Press* on the former Bill C-7 respecting medical assistance in dying, Mr. Speaker Rota said, in finding a *prima facie* contempt on March 10, 2020, at page 1892 of the Debates, “Everything indicates that the act was deliberate. It is difficult to posit a misunderstanding or ignorance of the rules in this case.” Just as in 2020, the leakers knew what they were doing, they knew it was wrong and they knew why it was wrong.

What is more troubling is that this is just one action of many taken by a Liberal government that increasingly disrespects and disregards Parliament. This is not the first such complaint the Chair has entertained about MPs getting information after the media. It is not even the first such complaint this week.

We have a Prime Minister whose question period participation rate is setting records, but the bad kind, I should clarify. After the Liberal Prime Minister declared a trade war this summer, his first address to parliamentarians was in Strasbourg, to Europe's Parliament, not here in Ottawa to Canada's own Parliament. I could go on.

The House must stand up for its rights, especially against a government that appears happy to see Parliament as nothing but a distraction or, worse, just a mere speed bump. If the Speaker agrees with me that there is a *prima facie* contempt, I am prepared to move an appropriate motion.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I thank the hon. member for his intervention. The Chair will take it under advisement.

* * *

BUILDING CANADA STRONG ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-39, An Act respecting certain measures to strengthen the economy, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise on Bill C-39, another cynical Liberal bill. Do members remember years back when the Liberal government campaigned to end all government practice of using omnibus bills to reduce scrutiny of legislative measures? This was part of their campaign for a “real change” plan for restoring democracy. What do we have here? We have another massive omnibus bill, one of many introduced by a Liberal government that promised to do away with omnibus bills. It is the same Liberal government that promised to increase transparency, and it has done the opposite. It is the same Liberal government that said there would be more accountability for its legislation, yet we have the opposite.

We have the same Liberal government creating side departments to circumvent Parliament and accountability, such as the Defence Investment Agency, which is called the DIA. It is actually more like the DOA because it is still being debated. It was created as part of the budget implementation act, but before it has even been officially created, the Liberals are already killing it off and trying to turn it into a Crown corporation, which would allow even less scrutiny and accountability. However, I digress.

As I mentioned, here we go again with another omnibus bill from the Liberals. I am sure when they were putting this bill together, the Liberal PMO and other advisers were chortling about what a great wedge bill this is, because while it has legislation in it to increase economic growth, at the same time, there is a bit of a poison pill around labour so that if the Conservatives oppose the bill, they can say the Conservatives are opposing growth. If we support the bill, they will turn around and say the Conservatives are stabbing labour in the back. It is the same thing they are doing to my NDP colleagues. If the NDP does not support it, we know full well it is going to be a Liberal talking point to say the NDP is antidevelopment. If the NDP does support it, we know full well they will be saying the NDP supported all of their back-to-work legislation. It is a cynical wedge bill that could only be put forward by the government. It is unfortunate, but here we have it.

Why, I have to ask, another piece of legislation? Over a year ago in this House, the Conservatives supported the Liberals in passing Bill C-5 and gave unprecedented powers to the government to push through projects at speeds we have never seen before, of course. What happened? Nothing. Nothing has been done or approved, except that the Major Projects Office and the DIA were created, but they have not moved at the speed of anything.

The finance minister, when Bill C-5 was introduced, stated it was aimed at “accelerating transformative projects of national interest”. Where have we heard that? We have heard a lot lately about needing Bill C-39 to push through items of national interest. The Minister of Energy and Natural Resources said that Bill C-5 would remove barriers, leverage resources and help Canada become an energy superpower. That was for Bill C-5, so why is it repeated for Bill C-39?

Government Orders

In this House, we gave the Liberals unprecedented powers to get projects built, to build the economy, to perhaps get a pipeline built, to develop the energy industry and to develop the mining industry, and nothing was done. They brought in the Major Projects Office to sidestep their own regulations. The question I have is, why does the government not just fix its broken regulatory regime? Why do we have all these bills and regulations on the books? Why do the Liberals have to create legislation such as Bill C-5 to get around their own bad laws and regulations, Bill C-39 to do the same thing and the Major Projects Office to do the same thing? With defence procurement, there is the DIA, which they are now killing off to create a Crown corporation. Why do we need cabinet or bureaucrats deciding what is deemed worthy of special treatment?

That is what this is. It is the government picking winners and losers. It is no different from what the Liberals did a couple of years ago with piling taxpayers' money into EV battery projects around the country for billions and billions of dollars.

● (1855)

We saw it with Brampton. The Liberals gave Stellantis hundreds of millions of dollars. When we tried to investigate the money given to it, the deputy minister said that it was Stellantis that was refusing to release the documents about what happened with the money for Brampton. Stellantis came forward and said that this was not true, gave the documents and said the deputy minister was lying.

Again, it goes back to the question of why the government is picking winners and losers. Why not clear up the regulatory regime, the 300,000 some-odd regulations that are on the books, so that private capital can decide what is a winner and what is a loser? How is it that we have a pipeline to the Lower Mainland, for which taxpayers are going to pay the bill of probably \$50 billion, and \$10 billion, give or take, to dredge up Roberts Bank, with more public money probably going into bailing out carbon capture? How is that in the public interest, with all the public money going into it, when we could just change our rules and allow the private sector to get that work done, as with northern gateway, originally proposed to a deepwater port, which did not need taxpayers' money to dredge out? We did not need taxpayers' money to build the pipeline.

I support pipelines. We certainly need them. We saw today the gap between West Texas Intermediate and WCS, which is \$25 a barrel because of the constrictions of exports caused by the government killing off northern gateway and killing off energy east. How is it in the public interest to spend billions and billions to do the pipeline when private capital could be doing it? Why not create a regulatory environment that is welcoming to capital and investment?

The International Energy Agency calls the current energy crisis “the largest supply disruption in history”. Canada has the fourth-largest oil reserves. We are the only one in the top four that is a democracy, the only one that follows the rule of law. We would think people would be begging to develop our oil and gas and begging to get pipelines built to get oil. Instead, because of the Liberals and the regulatory regime, we have to have public money doing it. Why is the government doing this instead of just getting out of the way?

According to a recent study, Canada has fallen from ninth to 18th on economic freedom. The factors in deciding this ranking include sound money, size of government and regulations. Under “Size of Government”, a thing that reads into our drop from ninth to 18th on freedom, is “Government consumption without interest payments”, which is very high under the government. “Government consumption with interest payments” is, again, very high. As for “Top marginal income tax rate and the threshold at which it applies”, the first thing the government did upon getting elected in 2015 was jack up the top marginal tax rate, followed by Premier Eby, it seems, right now.

On “State ownership of assets”, having too much state ownership of assets causes us to drop lower in the ranking. What are we seeing? The government is going to be owning Pacific link on top of TransCanada because the Liberals have created a regulatory environment where no one is investing in Canada.

Under “Sound Money” is “Money growth”. We saw the government printing hundreds of billions of dollars, with inflation. Under “Regulation” is “Regulatory burden”, which adds to our low ranking. There is “Bureaucracy costs” and “Impartial public administration”. It goes on and on.

The government needs to get out of the way of private capital. It needs to get out of the way of business. It needs to reduce the regulatory burden. It needs to stop coming forward with all this legislation that is supposed to do so much but does nothing. The government just needs to get out of the way.

● (1900)

Vince Gasparro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that I have a great deal of respect for him. I listened intently to his comments. He spent a great deal of time talking about process. I have to be clear. Canada's government views this very clearly. Process is not the objective. Results and getting things done are the objective.

Does the hon. member not agree that having a one-year time frame to approve major projects through a clear and predictable system that benefits the private sector and benefits labour, while respecting indigenous rights and the environment, is a good thing?

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• (1905)

Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I quite enjoy working with my hon. colleague on the operations committee. I think we have a mutual respect for each other.

The legislation clearly proposes a one-year approval period, but it would not be one year as, perhaps, the government is pretending or creating propaganda about. It would be one year after the approval process gets through, and the minister could still step in and extend that one-year period. It is kind of a fake one year that the government is pushing out.

Before the member spoke, we were debating with the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, who was pushing for an oil and gas cap and could not even answer the question of whether he supported the very pipeline the government wants to build at taxpayers' expense. This is the issue. There is the paperwork, but members of his own government are opposing the oil and gas that Bill C-39 is supposed to be helping.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the previous question, the member opposite lamented the fact that process holds up these bills. I wonder if my colleague, whose speech was excellent, could speak about the importance of process in making sure Canadians are able to comprehend what their government is doing so that they can have confidence that it is working for them.

Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I do not have a lot of faith in this process the government is creating. There would be too much power in the hands of the minister and too much power with the bureaucrats.

Part of the bill, and I wish I had more time to get to it, is changes to the Labour Code, wherein an adjudicator appointed by the government would decide or help to decide whether to end a labour issue, not the House, as has been done traditionally. We would perhaps have a conflicted facilitator advising the government, and the minister alone deciding whether to order a stoppage. There would be no accountability to the House or to Canadians.

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I heard my hon. colleague talk about this. I think it is easy to say government needs to get out of the way, or we need less government, without really putting into words what that actually means to real people.

The bill is a proposal to put in a one-year review timeline. What would the member propose to make things move forward so these investments can actually make it to the communities and the businesses who need them, other than just slogans or getting government out of the way?

Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, there is a very simple solution: get rid of Bill C-69, the “no new pipelines” bill, and get rid of Bill C-48, which bans Alberta oil off the northern B.C. coast. These two pieces of government legislation are responsible for the killing of more investment in this country than anything else Trudeau or anyone else in the government could have thought of.

[Translation]

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba (Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past few years, Canadians have seen

how events that are happening far from home can have a very real effect on our economy. A conflict on the other side of the world can disrupt the energy market. A lack of shipping capacity can drive up costs for our businesses. A disruption on a railway, on a highway or at a port can affect producers and consumers at both ends of the supply chain.

In light of these circumstances, our government was elected on a clear commitment to strengthen Canada's economic sovereignty. Our country must have the means to build bigger, stronger and faster. Our supply chains are the backbone of our economy. They rely not only on our ports, our railways and our roads, but also on the workers who keep them running every day. Strong supply chains are therefore critical to our government's plan, a plan that seeks to double our exports to markets other than the United States, to build major projects and to attract more investors to Canada. Basically, Bill C-39 seeks to do one thing and that is strengthen our supply chains. It proposes a more holistic view of our transportation system. Today, we sometimes tend to look at the various components separately, whether it be a port, a railway, a highway or a border crossing. Bill C-39 would instead enable us to look at these infrastructure as different parts of a single trade network. The government could thus officially designate national trade corridors and establish performance measures for those corridors. In practical terms, that means tracking the movement of goods, identifying where delays are occurring, identifying capacity issues and measuring the performance of the entire network.

Bill C-39 would also create a national trade corridors council. Its role would be to monitor the movement of goods, analyze disruptions, identify areas where the system can be improved and make recommendations to the Minister of Transport.

Why does this matter?

This matters because when we invest in our infrastructure, we want to invest in the right place. We want every investment to have the greatest possible impact. The reliability of our trade corridors has a very real impact. A congested port can mean additional costs for businesses. A lack of rail capacity can mean grain sitting in elevators rather than moving to markets. That is why the second major element of Bill C-39 has to do with our ports. Canadian port authorities are critical to our supply chains. The bill would modernize their governance. It would also give them more trade and financial flexibility. This flexibility would allow them to invest, generate revenue and develop the infrastructure needed for trade. Bill C-39 also creates new indigenous advisory councils, since indigenous communities are essential partners in the development and operation of our transportation infrastructure. Bill C-39 maintains the role of ports as non-profit organizations. It simply provides them with more opportunities for partnerships and capital projects.

However, infrastructure is only part of the challenge. The other part is the regulatory system around it. Today, a business may have to provide similar information to several departments or agencies. That means a lot more forms, a lot more duplication and much higher administrative costs. Bill C-39 would allow for better information sharing between authorized public government institutions. Our goal is simple: to reduce the administrative burden and make our processes more efficient.

• (1910)

The bill would also promote paperless trade. It would recognize electronic transferable documents that meet international standards. This means simpler information sharing, less duplication and less paperwork.

We need to build faster. Bill C-39 also addresses project approval timelines. Bill C-39 would create a transportation project office within Transport Canada. Its role would be to better coordinate federal authorizations and consultations for transportation projects. The goal is to provide a clearer federal pathway for priority infrastructure and to get projects from the application phase to the decision phase more efficiently.

However, I want to be clear on this point. It is not about eliminating standards. It is about reducing duplication. It is not about removing consultation. Rather, it is about making the process more consistent and predictable, while upholding the standards that we are proud of as Canadians. Canada needs to be able to build faster while continuing to build responsibly.

Lastly, Bill C-39 recognizes an incontrovertible reality: The resilience of our supply chains also depends on security. This bill would modernize Canada's transportation security clearance framework. It would expand the roles to which these clearances can apply, improve risk assessment, strengthen information sharing and provide better tools for granting, denying, suspending or cancelling a clearance. The goal is simple: We need to respond more effectively to complex and ever-changing threats because security is essential to the resilience of our supply chains.

Taken together, these measures offer a practical, coordinated approach to strengthening the economy and making it work better. We need to be able to move goods from farms to silos, from mines to ports, from factories to markets and from our communities to cus-

tomers around the world. We need a transportation system that can keep pace with our investments and with the opportunities available to us. That means building our capacity, but also making better use of the capacity we already have. It means having the information we need to understand how our corridors work. It also means ensuring that our ports have the necessary tools and flexibility to grow. This means making sure that when we approve and build major transportation projects, we do so with the coordination and predictability that Canadians expect.

That is why strengthening our supply chains is fundamentally about strengthening Canada's economy. It is about building transportation capacity, improving coordination, strengthening our resilience and preparing Canada for the economy of today and the economy of tomorrow.

That is how we are building Canada strong.

• (1915)

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague's speech. I found it very interesting. It seems to be a continuation of what we wanted to do in 2015 after the election when Mr. Trudeau took office and tried to undo all the work we had done.

Why wait 11 years to get this done?

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: Mr. Speaker, I would ask him why he would not vote for this bill now to move Canada forward.

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his contribution to this debate.

I am having a hard time reconciling what my colleague and his Prime Minister are saying, namely that Bill C-39 does not lower standards. That seems completely wrong to me.

Bill C-39 will make it possible to designate areas of national interest, and within those areas, about a dozen laws and seven regulations will not apply. This will allow for projects that destroy fish habitats without having to seek authorization under the Fisheries Act.

How can my colleague say that we are upholding environmental standards when, for all projects in regions of national interest, we are going to set aside some 20 laws and get the required authorizations even if it means destroying the environment?

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer this response to my colleague. As I said in my speech, this is not about eliminating standards, but about reducing duplication. It is also about making processes more consistent and predictable. Our approach is to make Canada stronger and better equipped.

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Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, my colleague spoke at length about the fact that the aim of the bill was to move projects along more quickly. I note that he, too, shares this desire; no doubt the people he represents are asking for this as well.

Can my colleague tell us in concrete terms how his community, the workers in his community and those across Canada will be impacted by the bill?

• (1920)

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-39 will truly modernize, strengthen and speed up processes. Earlier, I spoke about standardizing e-document transfers, which would reduce red tape. There is the Contrecoeur port project on Montreal's south shore. This is a major project that will bring significant innovation and generate many new jobs in the region. Thanks to Bill C-39, projects like this will move forward more quickly, as we bring our regulations into line with international standards.

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we know, Bill C-39 means that environmental assessments will be conducted much more quickly. Approvals should be made much faster. We also know that, over the past 10 years, there have been a number of people in the Liberal caucus who really liked environmental studies because they delayed certain projects.

Is the caucus now unanimous, including the people who really wanted to delay projects?

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: Mr. Speaker, Canadians elected a new government, and they have a majority government. I think we are in good stead with Canadians.

Alexis Deschênes: Mr. Speaker, I have a specific question for my colleague. Why does he agree that a project in an area deemed of national interest can move forward, even if it is contributing to the disappearance of a species at risk?

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba: Mr. Speaker, as I said, Bill C-39 does not eliminate standards. Instead, it reduces duplication. This bill addresses a need. Canada needs it now to diversify on the global stage.

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-39, which addresses an issue that is fundamental to the future of our country, namely Canada's ability to build the infrastructure we need, develop our resources, attract investment and make decisions within a time frame that corresponds to the economic reality we are living in.

I believe it is necessary to take action to ensure prosperity and to support all initiatives that are good for Canada and that strengthen our resilience. It is hard to be against virtue. It is crucial to make Canada stronger at a time when it may never have been so weak.

That is the task we set for ourselves during the mandate of Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper. Our mission was to build a strong Canada, proud and free. We were able to do that. I truly believe that Canada would have reached new heights if we had been able to stay in the driver's seat. Unfortunately, things turned out differently, and the Liberal era has been one of decline in almost every aspect of society.

However, in Bill C-39, the Liberals finally acknowledge that they have gone too far with regulation and red tape and that it has hurt investment. Where Bill C-39 is commendable is in its adoption of Conservative positions that we have been hammering home for 10 years in the House of Commons. We need to simplify overly complex federal processes, reduce excessively long approval times and eliminate regulatory overlaps between the different levels of government.

Among other things, the bill proposes to better coordinate the process and target federal decisions within one year of a complete application. That is exactly what our Conservative leader has been hammering home in every forum available to him over the past few years.

Let us be honest: For too long in Canada, we have talked about building so much more than we have actually built.

I will say it simply: If the government is serious, we will consider the legislation that will truly speed up construction in Canada.

When a measure can get a project built faster, get a worker a job faster or allow a company to invest in Canada instead of investing elsewhere, we have a duty to take a serious look at it. However, there is one condition: It has to work. That is where we are going to be very vigilant. Canadians have heard a lot of promises in recent years. They heard governments announce new ways of doing things, but it was often just new red tape, new bureaucracy.

Since the new Prime Minister took office, the government has increasingly embraced Conservative themes. It speaks in terms of productivity, competitiveness, major projects, economic security and resource development. It now recognizes that Canada needs to build and cannot afford to stand still in a world where our partners and competitors are engaged in an investment race.

Again, I will give the government the benefit of the doubt when it puts forward measures that can actually make a difference. However, it is important to understand one thing: Changing one's language is not the same as changing reality.

Let us look at the energy sector. Canada sits on extraordinary energy resources. We have oil, natural gas, hydroelectricity, uranium and energy expertise that is recognized worldwide. We also have critical minerals that our international partners rely on to keep their economies going.

However, at times we have appeared unable to reach consensus on a basic principle: that Canada's natural resources should be developed responsibly to generate prosperity, create jobs and strengthen economic security for all Canadians.

What we cannot do is have all these resources, the workers, the entrepreneurs, the capital and the potential markets, yet be unable to make a decision when a project is put forward. When that happens, investment goes elsewhere, and once investment goes elsewhere, it does not always come back.

Meanwhile, the United States is investing heavily in its infrastructure and industrial capacity, European countries are seeking to strengthen their energy security, and Asian economies are seeking to secure their supply chains. Governments around the world understand that the ability to produce, transport and export goods has become a matter of economic security.

● (1925)

While Canada has all the resources it needs to play a major role on the international stage, and even possesses numerous competitive advantages over the United States, it is lagging behind. According to the Montreal Economic Institute, business investment per worker has fallen from \$20,900 in 2014 to \$17,600 in 2024. That is a 16% drop over 10 years. Over the same period, the United States increased its investment per worker by 26%. The question, then, is whether we will finally seize the opportunity to set ourselves apart.

This is where I want to come back to what should be the guiding principle of our approach to Bill C-39. The Liberals' intentions are not what matter here; results are. The government can tell us it wants to reduce delays. We will look at the delays. It can tell us it wants to attract investment. We will look at investments. It can tell us it wants to develop natural resources. We will look at the projects that are actually being built. It can tell us it wants to diversify Canada's markets. We will look at new infrastructure and new exports.

At some point, we have to move from talk to action, from words to deeds. I think that is precisely what Canadians expect from their representatives. We are going to ask tough questions, demand assurances, demand accountability, demand timelines, and demand results because the Liberals have gotten us used to plenty of announcements, but results that are slow in coming. If the Liberal government truly wants to turn the page on this way of doing things, then today is its chance to prove it.

I believe that is the real challenge of Bill C-39. This bill could mark a change in direction, and we must ensure that this new direction leads to a Canada that builds more, produces more, exports more, and provides more opportunities for its workers and businesses. If next year we are still here talking about the same delays, the same obstacles, and the same projects that are still awaiting approval, we will have to be honest and admit that the change will have been nothing more than a change in rhetoric, and that will be a failure.

We have the natural resources, the workers, the entrepreneurs, the expertise, and the business partnerships around the world. What we need to regain is the confidence to invest, the predictability to plan, and the political courage to make decisions and that is what we will be looking for in Bill C-39. Will it truly help speed up projects? Will it truly reduce duplication? Will it truly give investors clarity on what to expect? If the answer is yes, then the government may earn our trust to support it. If the answer is no, then

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we will have to ask the government to go much further, because Canada cannot afford to wait.

We will not judge this government by its intentions. We will judge it by what it builds. We will judge it by the investments it succeeds in attracting. We will judge it by the jobs it helps create. We will judge it by the infrastructure that is being built, because Canada has everything it needs to succeed. If the government truly wants to turn the page on the legacy of the Trudeau era, if it truly wants to demonstrate that Canada is back in the business of major investments, it should not do so merely through speeches, press releases, or bills, but on the ground, in our regions, our ports, our railways, our industries and our businesses. That is where the success of Bill C-39 will be measured.

● (1930)

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and his contribution. In his speech he said that the environmental assessments were used to hold up projects. I find that fascinating and I would like him to elaborate on that. Is that what he really thinks?

Does he think that environmental assessment processes were put in place to calculate the environmental impact of projects such as pipelines, not with the aim of getting answers and trying to ensure that projects are improved or that bad projects are blocked, but with the aim of slowing down projects? Is that really what he thinks?

Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, everything I have seen in Bill C-39 aims to significantly shorten the timelines for the environmental assessment and approval process. We are talking about time frames that could be as short as one year.

At one point in time, it took eight years. The government is now proposing a time frame of one year. As early as 2007, I said on LCN that the goal should be to complete the process within one to two years. Ultimately, projects must be allowed to proceed. We will review this issue at committee and see what we can do about it.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is moving forward. Bill C-39 is all about speeding up a process and providing assurances that Canada wants to build. Let us look at what took place in Toronto last month, when the Prime Minister hosted world investors with literally historic amounts of money brought to the table, half a trillion dollars. Whether it is that particular special event or the amount of collaboration between Ottawa and the provinces in developing major projects, it is all part of a bigger picture to build a stronger and healthier Canada for all.

Would the member not agree that a holistic approach is the best way of moving forward and doing what I just said?

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, it is music to my ears to hear my colleague, who has been a member of this House for the past 10 years all the while advocating for lengthy environmental studies and processes.

The previous government, under Trudeau, undermined investor confidence. This government is now playing catch-up, trying to attract foreign investment so that investors come to Canada. The Liberals should have been doing that work sooner. They should have continued what we were doing prior to 2015. Investors from all over the world wanted to invest in Canada. They shattered investor confidence and now we have to start all over again.

At least, hearing that sort of talk is music to my ears.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague gave an excellent speech. I share his cautious approach. We need to see how this bill will be applied in practice. I would like to ask him what he is hearing from his constituents about Bill C-39.

• (1935)

Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. It is very relevant. People want approvals to be done faster. They want less paperwork and less bureaucracy. Our entrepreneurs want a better Canada, a richer Canada and they want to ensure their employees have good jobs. They want prosperity for everyone.

However, when we hit a wall in terms of government paperwork at the federal and other levels, it makes no sense. A bill that would allow us to move faster and restore Canada's great entrepreneurial pride would be wonderful.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would like to get a clear indication of the position of the Conservatives on the legislation itself. Is it their intent to vote in favour of the legislation so it can go to committee? Does the member know how the Conservative members will vote on the legislation?

[Translation]

Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, we really want the 240 pages of this bill to be studied properly, line by line, to ensure that Canada's future will be more prosperous. I look forward to taking part in that.

[English]

Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre—Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak to Bill C-39, the building Canada strong act. Last year, we asked Canadians for a mandate to build a stronger, more resilient and more prosperous Canada. This legislation is the latest step in our work to turn that promise into action.

It is important to consider the legislation in the context of the time in which we live right now and where Canada finds itself as a country. These are challenging times for Canada. For generations, our economy has been built on a north-south axis. Canada and the United States are long-time friends, neighbours and allies. We have the world's longest undefended border. We fought side by side in two wars. We share language and culture, comedians and hockey players. We vacation in each other's countries. We pop across the

border for groceries or to fill up the gas tank. We have built highly interconnected joint shared economies. More trade flows north-south than east-west. In Detroit and Windsor, car components will go back and forth several times before rolling off the assembly line. Lumber will leave British Columbia, harvested from our vast forests, and come back to Vancouver as furniture.

This relationship has worked because of shared values, principles and interests; because of stability; and because of the shared belief that we need each other and that disputes between friends, when they arise, can be resolved amicably.

However, those days are over. We see an administration in the United States that no longer shares our values and principles and no longer sees Canada as in its national interest. It values chaos over stability and is unpredictable. Even if we accept that the current relationship is an aberration and not the new status quo, the fact is that this administration and the trade war it has foolishly launched have made one stark truth painfully clear: An economy built on one trading partner, one critical relationship, with all our eggs in one basket, is an economy built on a foundation of sand. Even if we see a return in the United States to a predictable and principled relationship built on shared principles and shared values, we still cannot, and must not, go back to the way things were.

The United States will always be our most important trading partner and an important ally. We share too much geography and too much culture. As President Kennedy famously said when addressing this House of Commons in 1961:

Geography has made us neighbors. History has made us friends. Economics has made us partners. And necessity has made us allies.

However, this does not mean we cannot build a more resilient economy, one that does not just sell to one partner. As the Prime Minister has said, Canada has what the world needs. Building Canada strong means building a more confident Canada, a more robust Canada and a Canada that looks to global markets with confidence in who we are and what we bring to the table. A stronger Canada is a more resilient Canada that does not rely on just one trading partner.

As former prime minister Pierre Trudeau said at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., in 1969, about America:

Living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant. No matter how friendly and even-tempered the beast, one is affected by every twitch and grunt.

It will not be easy. America is right there. Building new supply chains, entering new markets and learning new regulatory environments is not easy. It takes time and investment. That is how we build Canada strong, and that is what this bill is all about: how we can accelerate project approvals while upholding indigenous rights and the highest environmental standards, how we can build and strengthen economic resilience through stronger supply chains, and how we can modernize and protect labour rights for the workforce that will build Canada strong.

Let us start with project approvals. We have spoken about setting the goal of one year, one decision. Bill C-39 would establish the framework necessary to ensure that the federal government can get to a yes, or a no, on major project evaluations within one year of a complete project submission.

● (1940)

How does that happen? It happens by running the necessary project evaluations and assessments concurrently rather than consecutively. That just makes sense. It does not mean lowering standards at all, which is important to note. It means doing the same rigorous evaluations and holding projects to the same high standards, just making the process more efficient. The bill would also ensure that indigenous consultation is embedded in the process, because indigenous free and informed consent is not just another box to tick. It is our obligation.

Let us turn to reinforcing economic resilience. How can we keep Canada moving? With this bill, Canada would create strategic trade corridors and establish a dedicated transportation project office to keep the trade flowing. It seeks to modernize our ports with new digital trade strategies and updated port governance so that our ports would be better positioned to compete with the world. It seeks to provide clear and predictable rules to attract long-term capital investment. We want partners to invest in Canada not just for today but for future generations. Businesses have choices about where they invest their capital. They want jurisdictions that offer predictable processes, transparent regulation and a level of certainty. That is what these changes seek to support.

Finally, let us turn to labour rights. I believe firmly in the collective bargaining process. Unions have fought for many of the rights that today's workers take for granted, like the 40-hour workweek and paid sick leave. I believe the best deals between management and labour are made at the table. Bill C-39 seeks to strengthen protections for unionized and federally regulated workers. This bill seeks to empower collective bargaining by making Labour Code amendments that would help parties address workplace issues earlier and reach negotiated agreements faster, while protecting the fundamental right to withhold labour through job action.

We are boosting federal enforcement capacity by funding 100 new health and safety officers, which will increase inspection capacity by 70%. The legislation also aims to clear backlogs at the Canada Industrial Relations Board through the hiring of 26 new staff.

This legislation would establish transparency and guardrails around the government's use of section 107 to end a labour disruption, by making it a requirement for the minister to consider independent mediator reports and national interest impacts before any

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decision to intervene. Intervention in a labour dispute should be the rare exception, the last resort. As I have said, the best, most durable and longest-lasting agreements are made at the table with management and labour negotiating fairly and in good faith. However, if intervention is deemed necessary, the process and the reasons must be transparent so that Canadians can decide whether the action was truly necessary.

Building Canada strong is not easy, and it is not glamorous. It will not be done by the government. It is Canadians who will build Canada strong. It is the Canadian household that chooses to eat saskatoon berries with their breakfast, grill Alberta beef for dinner and have Ontario peaches for dessert. It is the Canadian business that decides to sell into a new market or procure raw materials from a supplier in a new country. The role of the government is to create the environment that makes it easier, predictable and more profitable to choose Canada. That is what this bill seeks to do, and by supporting it, we are helping Canadians to build Canada strong.

● (1945)

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague referred to the ability to have ingredients from multiple provinces for breakfast, lunch and dinner and talked about building Canada strong. I am wondering if she could update us on the progress of eliminating interprovincial trade barriers.

Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, our mandate is to build Canada strong and to build right now. We have approved projects of national interest, and those projects are shovel-ready.

It is really more than important, in the era we are living in, to make sure of these projects, and also that interprovincial trade barriers are eliminated, so that we can have one approval process. Nation-building projects have to be built faster.

[Translation]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her contribution.

I have a very simple question for her: What is a region of national interest?

Can she define it? That is one of the major changes that Bill C-39 makes. When a region is determined to be of national interest, all projects in that area will be exempt from complying with 20 or so laws and obtaining authorizations.

What is a region of national interest?

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Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, this bill, the building Canada strong act, has been introduced to transform how Canada builds. It would bring greater speed, certainty and predictability to project reviews so that Canada can build projects faster. The world is changing rapidly, and Canada is focused on what we can control: building within Canada a stronger economy and a stronger one Canada.

Hon. Kody Blois (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague talked about the importance of building quickly. She mentioned, of course, lots of products. I would encourage her to buy Nova Scotia lobster too. We will add that to her list of great Canadian products from across the country.

When I am at home in Nova Scotia, my business community talks about the need to move quicker. The hon. member is from Scarborough Centre—Don Valley East. Maybe she could give the House a bit of a reflection on the conversations she is having with her business community about why this bill is so important.

Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, of course, we have to add lobster to our menus also.

It is important to remember the context in which the government is bringing this bill forward. We are in a trade war with our largest trade partner, which we did not see, but we cannot back away from it. We need to diversify our economy with new investments and trading partners. I heard from the businesses in my riding in the summer that we need to diversify our trade, and having all our eggs in one basket is not how we build a stronger Canada for future generations. That is why it is really important that we build faster and make sure that projects of national interest get built quicker.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, so many of these large projects actually benefit U.S. companies and continue to send Canadian products to the U.S. I am wondering if there is any screen or filter of which the member is aware within government that ensures that before projects of national interest are announced, there is an analysis of this in advance.

• (1950)

Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, projects will be analyzed, and it is important that we use Canadian materials to build, because that is what is going to help build a stronger Canada. We must build faster and build with Canadian products. That is of the utmost importance, and we will make sure that these projects involve Canadian products.

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-39 is a 231-page omnibus bill. It is legislation that claims to build Canada faster, but beneath the language are serious questions about who gets power, who gets certainty and who bears the risk. The government says this bill respects indigenous rights, protects workers and maintains environmental standards, but the details tell a different story.

On indigenous rights, consultation is being compressed into a process designed to meet the government's one-year timeline, as though section 35 rights and treaty obligations can simply be fit into a project management schedule. On the environment, economic development is being prioritized in the name of speed, while safeguards are being weakened. On workers' rights, the bill preserves

significant federal power to unfairly intervene in labour disputes after workers have exercised their constitutionally protected right to strike.

We have to ask ourselves a simple question: For whom is it faster, and who benefits from that speed? This legislation is about much more than construction timelines. It is about power: power for corporations, power for investors, power for government ministers and increasingly power over workers.

Let me begin with workers. The government says this bill would provide greater protection for workers, yet section 107 of the Labour Code preserves a significant federal power to intervene in labour disputes after workers have exercised their right to strike. The government describes the changes in Bill C-39 as putting guardrails around that power, but organized labour condemns the legislation and has described it as trampling on the rights of workers.

CUPE national president Mark Hancock put it plainly: Gutting hard-won rights and protections for workers will not create certainty; it will do the opposite. Workers are not an obstacle to building Canada. Workers are team Canada. The people who operate our ports are team Canada. The people who move our railways are team Canada. Flight attendants, pilots, mechanics, telecommunications workers, postal workers and countless others are team Canada. They are the people who make our economy possible.

The right to strike exists because workers need leverage. An individual worker cannot negotiate with a multinational corporation on equal terms. Collective bargaining changes that balance, and the right to strike gives collective bargaining real economic force. Most workers do not strike because it is convenient. They lose wages. They put pressure on their families. They take real economic risks. A strike is generally a last resort, and that is precisely why it is effective.

The government's own briefing says that approximately 95% of labour disputes in federally regulated sectors are resolved without a work stoppage. If the system already resolves the overwhelming majority of disputes without strikes, why should the answer be to expand extraordinary government intervention for the remaining 5%? The government has already used section 107 in disputes involving Air Canada, WestJet, ports, rail and postal workers.

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This bill risks turning exceptional government intervention into an increasingly normalized part of collective bargaining, and that changes the bargaining relationship. If an employer knows that the government may intervene when a strike creates significant economic pressure, the employer has less incentive to reach a deal at the bargaining table. That weakens workers' leverage, and it raises a fundamental question about the phrase "national interest".

A strike at a port disrupts cargo. A railway strike may disrupt supply chains. An airline strike may disrupt travel. Economic disruption is also the mechanism through which workers gain bargaining leverage. If economic disruption becomes the basis for the government's intervention, then the more effective a strike is, the greater the pressure to intervene. That is precisely why this provision would remove the incentive for management to bargain fairly at the negotiating table. This supposed safeguard would not eliminate the underlying power.

● (1955)

This is not simply a labour issue. It is a question about democracy, because democracy does not stop at the door of the workplace. Workers deserve rights and meaningful power at the bargaining table. They deserve safe workplaces, protection from misclassification and wage theft, strong labour standards and a properly resourced Canada Industrial Relations Board. They also deserve a right to strike that is meaningful in practice, not simply protected in principle.

No union leader called for this. In fact, they are demanding that the government repeal section 107. Instead of moving forward with this, the government should support the member for Winnipeg Centre's private member's bill, Bill C-247, to repeal section 107.

Let me now turn to the environment. The government says Canada needs to build faster. We agree. Canada needs housing, renewable energy, transmission and grid infrastructure, public transit and clean manufacturing, but environmental laws are not red tape. They are the safeguards that allow governments to determine whether a project is actually in the public interest before irreversible damage occurs. An impact assessment asks basic questions: What happens to the water? What happens to wildlife? What happens to communities? What happens to indigenous rights? What happens to human health? What happens to the climate? Those are not bureaucratic obstacles. They are the due diligence of a responsible government.

Bill C-39 would impose a one-year timeline on major project approvals, create regions of national interest, shift responsibility for pipeline assessments to the Canada Energy Regulator, allow certain preparatory construction activities before final approval and give ministers a greater ability to amend project conditions. The government says environmental standards would remain in place, but a complex project does not become less complex because the government puts a 12-month deadline on it, and an environmental risk does not disappear because the approval process has been pushed through a 12-month deadline. The government cannot make nature move faster. It cannot make a damaged ecosystem recover faster, and it cannot reverse ecological destruction once it happens. There is no undo button for extinction, contaminated water or a destroyed ecosystem. That is why the precautionary principle matters.

Consider the Roberts Bank terminal 2 example. The project went through a federal review with conditions intended to mitigate impacts on the southern resident killer whale. Environmental organizations have raised concerns that the new framework could permit conditions on projects of national interest to be modified or removed. That should make every member of the House ask this: If a condition was imposed to protect an endangered population, under what circumstances should a minister be able to remove it after approval? Who bears the risk if that protection is weakened? It would not be the minister or the corporation sitting in the boardroom. The risk would be borne by ecosystems, communities and future generations. This is not responsible nation building. It is transferring risk from powerful economic actors to the public. The same concern applies to allowing certain preparatory work before the final project decision.

Why begin altering the landscape before we have determined whether the project should proceed? Once construction begins, the political and economic pressure to finish becomes enormous. An assessment that is supposed to determine whether a project should proceed risks becoming an exercise in managing a project that has already begun. That is not simply speeding up decision-making. It risks changing the nature of the decision itself.

Then there are indigenous rights. The government says consultation requirements remain in place and that a Crown consultation hub would coordinate the process, but there is an enormous difference between streamlining administration and compressing rights. Indigenous rights cannot be reduced to another item on a project management timeline. Free, prior and informed consent cannot mean that we have 12 months, so please get on with it. Consultation must be meaningful, must be informed and must happen before decisions are locked in. Indigenous nations must have a meaningful role in decisions affecting their lands, rights and territories. This is not an obstacle to building Canada. It is part of building Canada properly. If the government is serious about reconciliation, indigenous consultation cannot be treated as another regulatory hurdle that gets in the way and is called red tape.

● (2000)

Hon. Kody Blois (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Madam Speaker, obviously, there would be areas where my hon. colleague and I would disagree, and that is part of a democracy. The member talked about the importance, which the NDP recognized, that we have to move faster, yet she really did not identify any elements of the bill that she thought might actually be helpful in doing that in this really important moment for the country.

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The member talked a lot about labour. I see elements that I think are important: allowing collective bargaining, and really requiring it under the Labour Code, to start after six months, as opposed to four months, where parties could not have an agreement, and additional federal resources.

I understand that broadly she does not seem to be supportive on this bill. Is there something she can identify objectively, to tell Canadians and her own constituents, that she does agree with in this bill? Is there anything that she can actually point to and say she thinks is a good idea?

Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, what I said was that Canada does need to build infrastructure, and what I said was that we need to build infrastructure that benefits the people. I asked a question about who has the power, who benefits and who takes the risks. This bill would put all the risks on the community, on the environment and on indigenous people, and at the expense of the government saying that it wants to build faster. However, we cannot undo extinction. When we take away labour rights, constitutionally protected rights in our charter, and when the government wields its power under this bill to override people's right to strike, it tells employers everything they need to know, which is that they do not need to bargain fairly at the negotiating table, and that is wrong.

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the member for Vancouver East for her presentation today, being from British Columbia. She is always a thoughtful member.

The Minister of Justice and the justice department have a mandatory requirement to table a charter statement on every piece of government legislation. We have seen it with other major bills, and obviously this touches on freedom of association and workers' rights. Does the member believe that, before the special legislative committee is formed for Bill C-39, the Minister of Justice must ensure that there is tabled in the House a charter statement so we can see what the justice department believes in terms of the balance of Bill C-39, particularly when it comes to section 107?

Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, indeed the government should be tabling that important information pertaining to Bill C-39, but not just to Bill C-39. There have been many occasions when parliamentarians and Canadians have the right to know what sorts of legal assessments have been undertaken. With section 107, when the government puts a provision in Bill C-39 that is basically to override workers' constitutional right to strike, what does that mean in the courts? What is the government's legal analysis? In the same vein, has there been legal analysis done with respect to indigenous rights?

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, we can understand the need to sometimes conduct multiple simultaneous reviews to speed up projects, as long as the reviews are being done. However, that is not what we are seeing with this bill. Instead, the government can pre-approve a project, and the project can move forward while the reviews are being carried out, which means that a pipeline can be built even though the reviews have not been completed. That is crazy.

How can the government tell us that it is important for reviews to be done more efficiently, while at the same time pre-approving projects that will cause significant harm to health, human safety and the environment, and allowing the project to go ahead without a review?

● (2005)

[*English*]

Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, that is exactly the point that I had raised in my speech. The government is saying that it is building faster, that this is all in the national interest and that somehow magically it will protect the environment, yet it would do pre-emptive approvals before the work is done. As indicated, we cannot actually undo the damage. The ecosystem will not fix itself. Extinction will not disappear, because the government violated that provision in safeguarding the environment.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Madam Speaker, as fall sets in here in the House of Commons, one bill is set to authorize the destruction of the environment in Quebec and Canada, at the whim of 28 people, namely, the Carney government's cabinet. Bill C-39 does a lot of things, but I will focus on what I think is the most dangerous one: From now on, authorization will be given to destroy the environment not only for projects of national interest, but also for entire regions, regions of national interest.

Some might say that I am exaggerating, but I am not. I will give some examples of what Bill C-39 will do. Let us say that the government wants to launch a nickel mining project, a project that will destroy fish habitat. Destroying fish habitat is prohibited under section 35 of the Fisheries Act. However, if the government decides that the nickel mining project is in a region of national interest, there will be no problem, and the nickel mining project can proceed. Authorization under section 35 of the Fisheries Act will no longer be required. That is what Bill C-39 proposes.

I will give another example. Let us say that there is a proposal to launch an electricity transmission line project. The problem is that the line will jeopardize species that are already at risk. Take, for example, the Gaspé caribou, the warbler, the red knot, the lark and the plover. All of these species are currently on the list of species at risk set out in the Species at Risk Act. Well, if the electricity transmission line is located in a region of national interest, as determined by the 28 members of the Carney government's cabinet, then there is no problem. Normally, a proponent would not be permitted to move forward with such a project under the Species at Risk Act—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I would remind the member that he cannot refer to members, including the Prime Minister, by name.

Alexis Deschênes: Madam Speaker, thank you for calling me to order. You were quite right to do so.

If the current government decides that this electricity transmission line project is located in a region of national interest, then it can go ahead under Bill C-39, even if the project will jeopardize a species at risk or lead to that species' extinction and would have normally been prohibited.

Let us look at another example. Let us say that someone wants to build a liquefied gas terminal, but the construction plans involve dumping waste into the ocean. Normally, that would be prohibited under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, part of which prohibits the disposal of certain substances at sea. However, if the government of the day decides that this liquefied gas terminal is located in a region of national interest, then there is no problem. The proponent would not need to get any authorization and would be exempt from these environmental protection laws.

I have one last example to illustrate my point. Let us consider a pipeline project. Unfortunately, the construction of the pipeline would release substances that are harmful to migratory birds. Normally, this is prohibited under the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994. That act prohibits the release of substances harmful to migratory birds, but if the pipeline is in a region of national interest, as defined by the current government, there will be no problem. Before, there were projects of national interest, and now regions of national interest have been added. Anything inside these regions will be exempt from obtaining authorizations under the Migratory Birds Convention Act. That is a radical departure.

That is why I am saying today that Bill C-39 seeks to authorize the destruction of the environment in Quebec and Canada, at cabinet's discretion. The next question is about what constitutes a region of national interest. I have read Bill C-39, and I saw that clause 96(2) defines a region of national interest as "a region named in Schedule 3". I found Schedule 3. It exists, but there is nothing about that in it. There is nothing in Schedule 3. There is just the heading "Regions of National Interest". The regions have not been identified yet because the government, meaning cabinet, will decide later which regions are of national interest. Twenty-eight people will decide that in Canada, and especially in Quebec in my case, there are sectors where people will be able to do all the things I just criticized.

Some people will tell me that they have to base it on something. That is sort of true, because there are some factors in the bill. The government's ability to allow itself flexibility and discretion on a scale bigger than this chamber is admirable. The bill says that to establish whether a region is a region of national interest, the government may consider any factor it deems relevant. I want to emphasize the word "may". It is not even required to do that. That is a loophole as big as the Earth. Still, the government is kind enough to give us certain guidelines and include certain criteria in the bill, including the one I am going to talk about because it is unbelievably broad. It is the condition requiring the project to provide economic or other benefits.

The discretion this government is getting, allowing it to authorize the destruction of the environment, is mind-boggling. It is mind-boggling and disturbing.

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● (2010)

What will happen when the government decides that a region is a region of national interest? I want to point out that it is not clear what criteria the government plans to use. I also look forward to hearing government members explain why their region should be a region of national interest.

I want to come back to the fact that several laws no longer apply. I mentioned the Fisheries Act, the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994, and the Canada Transportation Act, for example. It used to be that an application for authorization was necessary to build a railway, but that will no longer be the case. I talked about the Canada Marine Act, which governs public ports and the St. Lawrence Seaway. It will no longer be necessary in regions of national interest. Part 7, Division 3 of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which deals with disposal at sea, is being set aside. The Species at Risk Act is being disregarded because development is the priority. The Impact Assessment Act and relevant regulations, like the migratory bird sanctuary regulations, the wildlife area regulations and the marine mammal regulations, are also being shoved aside. Clearly, these laws must have been completely useless. That is what Bill C-39 does.

We do not know what constitutes a region of national interest. What we do know is that, once a region is designated as being of national interest, all of those laws, and several others I have not mentioned, cease to apply. The bill effectively assumes that all necessary approvals and authorizations are already in place for projects located in such regions.

I will conclude by saying that the irony is that 28 people will define what constitutes the national interest of Quebec and Canada, even though it will result in the destruction of the environment. I believe that Quebec's national interest lies in ensuring that economic development does not come at the expense of the environment. We can grow our economy without compromising our habitats, fish habitats and endangered species. We can develop our economy while keeping future generations in mind. Unfortunately, Bill C-39 deviates from that. We are heading towards destructive economic development. That is why we will be voting against the bill.

● (2015)

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Madam Chair, my colleague is painting a rather alarmist picture. Looking at the bill, we see that the designation of regions of national interest will not be as broad as he says. When a new region of national interest is to be established, a study has to be conducted under the Impact Assessment Act. This study will be used to clearly delineate the geographic area and determine what types of projects can be pre-approved.

There is a duty to consult with indigenous communities. There are environmental impact assessments. Once the region is identified, pre-approved projects can be rolled out. If new projects that could have an impact on the environment are proposed, they will have to go through an assessment process. I think the existing process shows that we can do two things at once: develop the economy and continue to conduct thorough assessments.

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I would like to ask my colleague whether he read the clause that clearly states that additional projects not addressed in the initial assessment must undergo environmental impact assessments.

Alexis Deschênes: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, who represents a riding next to mine, for his well-researched question.

Environmental assessments will have to be done beforehand, but it is up to cabinet to designate a region as being of national interest. The legislation says it may do so based on whatever factors it considers useful or relevant. A token assessment will be done beforehand, but ultimately, cabinet will act as it sees fit in determining what is in the national interest and what a region of national interest is. What is likely to happen is that projects, perhaps situated between our two ridings in our magnificent Chaleur Bay, could move forward with no consideration of the impact on fish habitat. As everyone knows, industrial development projects are in the works for Belledune. There are fishers in my riding, and I want to protect them.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I completely agree with the speech from the member for Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Listuguj.

Bill C-39, and also part of the first Bill C-5, destroyed environmental laws and indigenous rights. There is currently no definition of what constitutes a region of national interest or a project of national interest.

Does my colleague have any comment about that?

Alexis Deschênes: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that excellent question. I have no comment. I am simply overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of this discretionary power.

Section 4.1 of Bill C-5 states that cabinet will, by order, define what is in the national interest. Those 28 cabinet ministers were going to tell us that. However, that order was never issued. Before even defining what the national interest is, the government is going even further by telling us, in Bill C-39, that it used to be projects of national interest, but now it will be regions of national interest.

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague's speech made it clear what is happening. The government is going to select a project. Evidently, the project will create a lot of pollution, exceeding the levels set out in environmental laws. The government will then decide to designate a region around it to exempt that project from environmental laws.

I think my colleague is being very kind to the government. I think he is being magnanimous toward the government. He is talking about a 28-person cabinet. Since the arrival of the new Prime Minister, we have seen that this government is a one-man show. We are talking about 28 ministers whom the Prime Minister can fire at will.

Does my colleague really think that 28 ministers will be consulted, or does he think that, at the end of the day, it will be the private interests that have a voice in the Prime Minister's Office that will ultimately get projects approved?

• (2020)

Alexis Deschênes: Madam Speaker, I believe my colleague has a lot of political experience, and his comment is informed by his observations of what is going on.

The Prime Minister will define what is in the national interest and what constitutes a region of national interest. Those that gain his favour, if I may put it that way, will enjoy a special legislative regime that requires relatively few approvals. Meanwhile—and this is something the Conservatives do not talk about much—all other individuals and businesses in Canada will have to continue to undergo assessments that, in my opinion, are justified, though not without room for improvement.

[English]

Colin Reynolds (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is with great honour that I rise in the House today to speak on behalf of the hard-working people of Elmwood—Transcona. Before I was elected as a member of Parliament, I was a construction electrician for 20 years. I hung up my tools a few days before the election, but I have not left that world behind. To this day, I am proud to serve as the sitting vice-president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 2085 in Manitoba. As I speak in the House today, I bring the perspective of someone who has spent my life putting on my boots and picking up my tools every day to earn a living and support my family.

Bill C-39, the building Canada strong act, is a large, omnibus-style bill. The Liberal government says the goal is to speed up projects in major infrastructure, natural resources and transportation, but buried inside this large bill are proposed major changes to the Canada Labour Code. The Liberal government has brought together many policy updates and put them all into one bill that would affect the relationship among workers, employers and the federal government.

Canada needs to build. We need more infrastructure, more investments and more well-paying jobs, but how we treat the people who are actually behind building this country matters a lot and should be a priority.

Bill C-39 would make many changes to the federal labour law. The Liberal government says these changes are meant to modernize the Canada Labour Code, strengthen collective bargaining and help employers and employees find solutions to disagreements before they become major labour conflicts.

The changes that are part of the bill include proposing a new position for a special mediator who would step in during hard negotiations and report directly to the minister, which would create more opportunities for the government to become involved earlier in difficult bargaining relationships instead of letting employees and employers work out their disagreements together. This would open up another opportunity for the government to become involved in the bargaining process. The bill would add more access to federal involvement when workers and employers are trying to negotiate their first agreement.

There would also be changes dealing with multi-employer bargaining and expedited grievances. This would add more processes and responsibility to the Canada Industrial Relations Board. The bill also proposes a modification to paid medical leave, adding 100 health and safety officers and increasing the CIRB capacity by adding 26 staff members.

These would be significant changes. However, proposed alterations in the bill to section 107 of the Canada Labour Code, and what effect these would have on employee and employer relationships, deserve special attention. Section 107 is not new. It has been part of the Canada Labour Code for decades, since 1984. Right now, section 107 gives the minister very broad authority in decision-making. It lets the minister, when they consider it necessary, take steps to maintain or secure industrial peace and promote conditions to help solve disagreements. The minister can also direct the CIRB to take the measures the minister considers necessary. The new proposed changes continue to make vague statements about the situations and power the minister holds.

With the proposed implementation of Bill C-39, these are the steps that would have to take place when a disagreement happens between employees and employers. A special mediator would have to be appointed and complete their work within 21 days. The mediator would write a report to the minister. The minister would then have to give an opinion on whether a strike or a work stoppage would be a significant worry to the national interest. The minister could then direct the CIRB to order workers back to work, extend an existing collective agreement or establish a binding dispute resolution.

However, the minister would still be the one deciding what the national interest is. The minister should not be given any more power to intervene in a lawful dispute. This is because the power would affect and change collective bargaining directly. The right to strike is one of the main forms of leverage that workers have during negotiations and it is a constitutional right. If this is taken away, the balance of bargaining changes. The “What We Heard—Building Canada Strong for All” report explains that collective bargaining works in most cases, saying that 95% of the time, “collective agreements are reached without a work stoppage.”

The Conservative Party supports workers' rights to organize democratically by bargaining collectively and peacefully withdrawing their services if necessary. Section 107, with and without the changes proposed by Bill C-39, allows the government to step in and stop lawful strikes. This directly affects workers' right to strike and to negotiate a fair agreement.

• (2025)

The Liberal government claims that section 107 would only be used in exceptional circumstances. While section 107 of the Canada Labour Code has been implemented for over 40 years, it was not normally used as a mechanism for ending lawful strikes. Since 2024, the Liberal government has used section 107 routinely to end major strikes and impose arbitration. The Liberals have involved themselves with WestJet, the Canadian National Railway, CPKC, the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference, west coast ports, the Port of Montreal, the Port of Quebec, Canada Post, the Canadian Union of

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Postal Workers and most recently Air Canada. Many of these interventions were challenged by unions in court.

The Canadian Labour Congress and other organizations have argued that the recent use of section 107 undermines the workers' right to strike and weakens collective bargaining in good faith. Many unions and organizations have spoken about the restrictions on the right to strike and wanting these restrictions removed. The Canadian Union of Public Employees recently made a claim against the Liberal government's Bill C-39, highlighting that the right to strike is protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The bill would attack Canadian workers' ability to negotiate by taking away the right to fair collective bargaining.

Section 107 causes issues in the bargaining and negotiation process. Without a proper collective bargaining process, employers do not take bargaining seriously because they know the government will step in during a work stoppage. Government intervention can remove the leverage workers have at the bargaining table and encourage employers to wait for the government to intervene instead of reaching an agreement fairly. These are serious consequences that are possible with implementing this bill. Continuing to make significant Labour Code changes in a large bill without properly considering the negative impacts would have a negative effect on Canadian workers and their rights. The government should create conditions for workers to negotiate, not become the negotiator.

Bill C-39 is not just about labour. It would also make substantial changes to Canada's project approval and environmental framework. Bill C-39 would change how environmental decisions are made under federal law. The bill proposes one single federal project decision where there are currently separate federal decisions. It would create a one-year federal review timeline. It would give certain agencies, like the Canada Energy Regulator and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, a larger role in leading reviews for projects in their field. It would also give the environment minister new authority to allow prep work to begin before a final decision if the minister considers it in the public interest and follows certain conditions. The Liberal government does not have the best track record of picking winners and losers.

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Additionally, there would be changes to the Species at Risk Act, the Fisheries Act and the Canadian Navigable Waters Act. The Liberal government argues that environmental assessment requirements would remain in place and would respect indigenous rights. However, environmental organizations have raised concerns. World Wildlife Fund Canada, Canada's largest international conservation organization, explains that faster approvals must still be able to provide safeguards for species and ecosystems, and that the proposed changes could weaken environmental protections.

Bill C-39 contains many objectives that Canadians understand. We do need a labour relations system that lets employers and employees reach sustainable agreements. The government should create a system that encourages bargaining instead of encouraging the parties to depend on the government when negotiations become difficult. The government should propose a national interest test that is objective and should listen to workers and employers who are actually living under these rules. Collective bargaining is not the enemy of economic growth. It is part of a working labour market. Workers have a right to bargain and employers have a right to negotiate. The government's role should be to establish fair rules.

I leave members with this question: Is an omnibus bill really the right tool we want to use to make so many significant changes without proper consideration and consultation?

• (2030)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a couple of points, followed by a question.

If we take a look at my home province of Manitoba, the Government of Manitoba, through the Manitoba Labour Board, has instructed health care workers to go back to work. That is happening because Manitoba deemed those workers as essential services.

If we take a look at section 107, which the member made reference to, what I do not fully understand is what in section 107 has changed that would prevent the minister from doing something now. When I look at it, it seems to me that there is more accountability with the changes in the legislation, because the minister can do the things through section 107 today that the member is making reference to.

Can the member provide some clarification on why he feels more threatened now under section 107? What has changed?

Colin Reynolds: Madam Speaker, I do not think it is more of a threat. It is about the Liberals' use of section 107, which has been in place for 40 years. It was not used by previous governments, but over the last two years, it has been used seven or eight times.

The issue is not about being more accountable. The issue is that one person gets to decide, and it is not an act of Parliament that would put workers back to work. I think most Canadians respect that process, but that process has not been used by the government in the last several years.

[Translation]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to take a brief step back and remind my colleague that Conservative prime minister Brian

Mulroney, who was considered one of the most pro-environment prime ministers, signed the Convention on Biological Diversity on Canada's behalf.

What does my colleague think of Bill C-39, which will allow projects located in regions of national interest to move forward even if they put species at risk?

[English]

Colin Reynolds: Madam Speaker, I think the biggest issue we are discussing is the fact that the major changes in approving national interest projects are all going to be made at the hands of a minister and at one person's discretion. I think having all of these major changes coming forward in an omnibus bill is not the right approach to making such critical changes to our country's legislation.

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member's intervention here today. He has brought a perspective that is rather refreshing.

The other member from Winnipeg, on the Liberal side, was talking about section 107. In particular, he was asking what Conservatives might take issue with, saying there are lots of limiting factors. In that provision, essentially, the government gets to decide what is in the national interest without actually defining what it is.

The issue I wanted to bring up is under section 4.2 of the Department of Justice Act. The Minister of Justice is legally required to table a charter statement for every single government bill. I have looked on the website, and it is not there. Does the member believe the government should table it before the special legislative committee begins its work on Bill C-39 so that all Canadians can see what the justice department thinks of the changes proposed in Bill C-39 when it comes to labour?

Colin Reynolds: Madam Speaker, I absolutely agree with my colleague.

• (2035)

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member touched on the omnibus nature of the bill, so the breadth of the bill. He touched on the extensive transfer of powers to the government into cabinet. I wonder if he would also like to comment on the speed at which this bill is being brought into the House.

Colin Reynolds: Madam Speaker, it is very concerning that this is all being brought forward, major environmental changes and labour changes, in the form of an omnibus bill that cannot be debated properly and considered properly.

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[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, with this bill, this government is once again trying to expedite projects by circumventing many laws passed by the House of Commons. I think that is the wrong approach. First, let us be clear on the principle: All of my colleagues who are here would like projects to move forward more quickly. We all agree with the one project, one assessment principle, but that assessment must be done right. It must respect the will of the provinces and Quebec, particularly when it comes to the environment. We must also not forget the principle of social licence. That is what makes the difference between a successful project and one that will face a lot of opposition.

I come from a mining region. For over 100 years, we have seen mining in Abitibi—Témiscamingue change and evolve. At one time, the environmental laws were not what they are today. That is why there are over 90 abandoned mines in my region. In Quebec, there are over 335 abandoned mines, and it will cost over \$1.35 billion to clean them up. That is just one example among many that shows the importance of complying with strict environmental laws. If we do not, then we will just be creating new problems that will cost even more money a few years down the road. The first nations are saying that we need to plan projects with the next seven generations in mind. We will have to deal with the environmental impacts eventually, even if we do not want to think about them today.

Another example of a project that went ahead too quickly is the Malartic mine. This project, which now has some degree of social licence after more than 20 years of existence, did not get off to a very good start in the early 2000s. This mine, the largest open-pit mine in Canada, displaced homes before the mining company even had a permit to operate. What would have happened if the operating permit had been refused? This is exactly the kind of issue that could arise today as a result of Bill C-39, because the government can approve a project before its environmental assessment has been completed.

It is for that very reason that we must hold consultations and comply with the law. People are counting on us to do a job: to protect our environment, our living environments and our quality of life. Basically, the key question is this: What is the national interest? If I ask the government that question, I will get an answer that focuses on economic development and the development of energy projects, mainly involving oil and gas. If I ask my Conservative opposition colleagues the same question, I will likely get the same answer. Meanwhile, an environmentalist party could decide that the fight against climate change is in the national interest and use Bill C-39 to force the closure of a pipeline for the sake of national interest.

In short, the national interest is a variable and, from what the Prime Minister is proposing here, it seems to boil down to oil, gas and nuclear interests, which are at the heart of his policy and his personal economic interests related to Brookfield. The government is forgetting that our planet is in bad shape and that what it is proposing here is just going to lead us further down that path. That is dangerous.

This government is using the tariff crisis with the United States as an excuse to push projects through more quickly at the discretion

of the Privy Council, and that creates a major problem for democracy.

The Liberals pride themselves on being the defenders of the charter. They oppose Quebec's laws because Quebec is using the notwithstanding clause to sidestep certain legal challenges. However, these same Liberals are now in the process of voting for a notwithstanding clause for all laws passed by the House of Commons. In fact, with Bill C-39, the government will have the power to override, circumvent or suspend the laws passed right here. What the Liberals are doing is exactly what they are speaking out against and challenging at the Supreme Court. That is without taking into account the fact that this government is creating two different systems. One system for those who are chosen by the government, which will override various laws because these people have the right connections—a buddy is a buddy, as they say—and a system for everyone else, who will have to comply with all the laws.

• (2040)

Depending on its mining regime, a mine in Abitibi-Témiscamingue will end up with a regime that could damage its social acceptability among the public and turn even more people against it, if it is recognized to be in the national interests. On the other hand, it is important to complete the proper steps, engage in consultations and ensure that public concerns are addressed, despite the paperwork involved.

That, however, is what should be encouraged.

Returning to Malartic, the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue has worked with the mining industry and the public to improve the coexistence guide. Thanks to that experience and work done by researchers, best practices in consulting and in working with communities were developed in Abitibi-Témiscamingue and are now proving their worth. Mine development is much more orderly and socially acceptable.

I would like to point out that, if laws unsuited to modern realities are the problem, a much more acceptable solution exists: improve the laws. All parliamentarians are going to work on changing and improving these laws. Circumventing them is not the way to move things forward.

However, personally, as the transportation, infrastructure and communities critic, I would say that there are some positive aspects. Sometimes we have to be constructive. Digital trade modernization is one example, since some documents are still required on paper. Canada drew on a model law on electronic transferrable records in drafting Bill C-39. This will facilitate international trade while bringing us into the 21st century.

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Today, I met with the St. Lawrence Shipowners. They emphasized that Quebec is at the forefront of marine transportation development. The industry requires significant investment, which should be seen as a catalyst for development. Quebec has a strategy to develop its marine industry, and a sense of coherence and a vision have emerged around the St. Lawrence River as a result.

The marine aspects raised in the bill are interesting. We must acknowledge that there is a certain vision. However, unlike Quebec, Canada is still taking a piecemeal approach. This is yet another example of how Canada could draw inspiration from Quebec. It is possible for the federal government to provide better funding for Quebec's strategy and to add funds to ensure that not only the major ports, but also our medium-sized ports and regional ports can develop, renovate their infrastructure and continue to meet the needs of the various stakeholders working on the river. As we know, many of them are at the end of their service life.

However, amending the Coasting Trade Act is a problem with this bill. It is thanks to this act that Quebec has high-quality local marine transportation. We need only look at Australia, where local transportation is virtually non-existent because of the lack of a coasting trade act.

Instead of ensuring that Transport Canada addresses its urgent needs with shipowners, it is recommending that foreign-flagged vessels be given access to the river.

Furthermore, the notion of an emergency situation, a matter of utmost importance, like the concept of national interest, is left undefined, potentially opening the door to interpretations that favour foreign ships over our domestic carriers.

Let us have the courage to support our local marine industry, instead of opening the door to foreign players.

Is that not precisely why the Liberals keep telling us we need to support local businesses?

I would be remiss if I did not talk about another key issue in this bill, specifically the attack on workers.

The balance of power is under direct attack because Bill C-39 allows employers to sit back and do nothing while waiting for the government to act, or rather for the Canada Industrial Relations Board, which is not accountable to the House of Commons for its decisions, to act.

This could be called a denial of democracy, not to mention that the new criteria relating to the national interest, such as severe social disruption, are designed to encourage a return to work.

A strike is a social disruption. It is workers making their voices heard. They are people just like us who are simply asking for better pay and better working conditions.

In the last labour dispute in which the government intervened, the employer wasted time negotiating at every opportunity while waiting for the government to force workers back to work, all without special legislation. Once again, this is a roundabout way for the government to bypass parliamentarians.

This bill is an attack on workers. We see the government giving itself an override provision to avoid labour disputes and to circumvent, override, or suspend laws.

There is a lot of talk about the U.S. President signing executive orders, but this administration is following the same path. To get around a law, all it will take is a big black Sharpie and a signature.

That, in my view, is what Bill C-39 is all about. That is what this government is proposing: to use underhanded tactics to push through more oil and gas projects, more nuclear projects, including a nuclear waste site located less than one kilometre from the Ottawa River, 200 kilometres from here.

• (2045)

All of this is to maintain the way our resources are exploited. In fact, Canada currently chooses to sell its natural resources to the highest bidder without maximizing the significant returns. We are—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The member's time is up.

The hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our colleague delivered a rousing speech. It is always interesting to hear such speeches in the House, but there was a hint of exaggeration in some of his points.

I would like to point out that Bill C-39 makes it very clear that we are able to move forward more quickly with projects of interest—projects that can contribute to the Canadian economy—while complying with rigorous environmental standards.

The two can go hand in hand, and those standards must always be met. He mentioned the list of projects. I am thinking specifically of Churchill Falls, which is the largest investment in renewable energy in North American history. I am thinking of the offshore wind projects off the coast of Halifax, in Atlantic Canada.

I would like to hear my colleague's views on the potential these projects have in terms of clean energy and on why it is important to move quickly to develop them.

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder whether it is appropriate, from a parliamentary point of view and in the light of the Standing Orders, to describe a colleague's analysis of a bill as an exaggeration. I wonder whether such remarks do not go beyond what should be considered acceptable standards of civility here in the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): It is not up to me to judge that. It is up to the member to decide whether it is acceptable or not, or whether it causes a problem. That is not a bad word in itself.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, do not worry, I stand by what I said. I am very worried when I see Bill C-39. It came after Bill C-5 and Bill C-15. It is now Bill C-39's turn. What is left of our democracy? I am very concerned.

At the end of the day, who is the Privy Council? They are probably buddies of the Prime Minister or his privy councillors. Take Michael Sabia, for example.

Michael Sabia knows all the secrets of Hydro-Québec and the Caisse de dépôt. He is now working for Canadian interests. What about Quebec's interests? I am very concerned about this agreement and the impact it could have. Honestly, I am very wary of that, because Quebec's national interest has been based on its hydroelectricity for decades. We have the cleanest energy in the world. It is a source of great pride, but it could be threatened because Canada is developing oil, gas and nuclear energy.

That is one of my main concerns.

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am concerned because under Bill C-39, the government is getting set to privatize our airports. That includes the Mirabel airport. The Mirabel airport was built on land that was expropriated, desecrated and stolen. That came as a result of crimes committed by the federal government, as recognized in a motion recently adopted by the House. This asset should serve the community, remain public and be a tool for economic development.

I wonder if my colleague shares my concerns, particularly with regard to the Mirabel airport.

Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, allow me to express my sincere thoughts for the people of Mirabel, whom I met last week. There was a public meeting attended by my hon. colleague, the member for Mirabel. At that meeting, there were people who were concerned. They were concerned about a government that wants to rush through projects of national interest, such as a high-speed rail line, like the Alto project, for which there is no social acceptability, but which the government intends to impose through legislation that would sacrifice farmland by cutting it in half and split communities in two.

The people of Mirabel know the drill, and what happened has, quite simply, destroyed a once great community spirit. The scars are still fresh. We need to talk to the people of Mirabel. However, the situation that Mirabel experienced will repeat itself in Berthier—Maskinongé and in Rigaud, where we were just two weeks ago to hear the concerns of all stakeholders. Members will recall that no realistic cost estimate is available at this time for these projects. Is that what the national interest is all about, recklessly throwing our money out the window?

I am very concerned.

● (2050)

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Madam Speaker, earlier, I used the word “exaggerated”, which made some colleagues uncomfortable. Perhaps I could have used a more common expression, like “he went a bit too far” in his speech. In short, my question was about renewable energy.

Bill C-39 will help speed up the construction of major projects. I am thinking of hydroelectricity projects and wind energy projects.

Does my colleague see a potential in Bill C-39 for developing renewable energy projects, and why is it important to do so?

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Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Madawaska—Restigouche should know that I will keep going a bit too far until our voices are heard outside the House because Quebecers' fundamental rights, the right to live in a healthy environment, are on the line. It seems that a project of national interest is grounds for violating laws of interest to Quebec, the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement et les lois environnementales, and social acceptability laws.

I will give an example. I campaigned alongside the Kebaowek community to protect their ancestral lands, because they had a right to be consulted. The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission had failed to do so.

I am very proud to have been able to help secure the passage of an amendment and to have helped bring about change in this regard, and I thank the Conservatives for agreeing to remove the Indian Act from Bill C-5. However, the Liberals came back with Bill C-15, and Bill C-39. Now, they no longer see any point in consulting first nations. They are disregarding that and they do not care. That sets a dangerous precedent. All of this is to introduce nuclear power and store its waste near drinking water sources, near 80% of Quebec's population. If that is the case, then yes, I will keep going a bit too far.

Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are once again in the House to talk about a bill that builds on an existing bill. First, there was Bill C-5, which was unprecedented in terms of the environment. It trampled 12 laws and seven regulations and was passed here in the House, I repeat, with the support of my Conservative colleagues, because they obviously saw their national interest as being the interests of oil companies.

That is exactly what we are seeing again today. There is nothing national about this bill. It is a bill that aims to fast-track this government's oil and gas policy agenda, using the excuse that the legislative framework that has been built over decades needs to be improved. It took decades to develop a legislative framework that protects the environment and the health of our communities. Now the government is telling us that we need to set it aside because we need to act quickly, because that is in our national interest.

One of the arguments being put forward by the Liberals is that we need to develop renewable energy. In their view, developing renewable energy means setting aside regulatory frameworks. We fully support efforts to accelerate the development of renewable energy. Quebec is already doing just that, while also complying with laws and regulations.

Is there room to improve certain aspects of environmental assessments for renewable energy projects? Absolutely. Should that be done by disregarding laws and regulations? No, and that is not how we do things in Quebec. Should it be done by ignoring public consultations? No, and that is not how we do things in Quebec. Should it be done without proper environmental assessments? No, yet that is what the government is proposing. It is proposing to override the views of local communities, sideline public consultations, weaken environmental assessments and set aside laws under the guise of national interest.

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We are entirely in favour of developing Quebec in a responsible manner, but the government is seeking to grant itself powers that are virtually unprecedented in scope. Bill C-39 is being put forward under the guise of national interest, and it goes even further. This bill allows laws and regulations to be suspended indefinitely. That means forever, if the government so wishes.

The Liberals are not only going to such extremes in their oil and gas mania, but they also want to designate so-called “regions of national interest”. Who decides which regions are of national interest, and on whose behalf? It is this government, led by the Prime Minister, who, as we know all too well, is in cahoots with the oil and gas companies. The proof is that the Liberals have just approved a massive oil sands pipeline project with a capacity of one million barrels per day, under the pretext that it is in the national interest. They tell us that they followed the law, of course, and that it is clear they considered the relevant criteria.

Bill C-39 follows the same logic: They set criteria for themselves that they are not required to follow. They may even decide that they will consider any factor of interest to be in the national interest, which means that, if it is of interest to them, it is in the national interest, and they can throw all the laws and regulations out the window. This is extremely concerning.

When we talk about a pipeline, such as the one that was announced, the Liberals tell us that it will help fight the climate crisis. Environment Canada itself estimates that this oil sands pipeline that will produce one million barrels a day will increase greenhouse gas emissions by 27.7 million tonnes in Canada just to produce the oil that will flow through the pipeline. Those 27.7 million tonnes of greenhouse gases account for more than one-third of Quebec's emissions. How can a government claim that increasing emissions on this scale—from Canada's most polluting sector, oil sands production—is consistent with the fight against the climate crisis? Clearly, it is not.

We can already see that all the criteria used by the government are phony. There is no environmental protection in this bill, despite the government's claims that environmental laws will be complied with. If we take a closer look, every single environmental group in Canada has spoken out against this bill. They say that it is bulldozing nature, that it is a historic setback and that it is unprecedented in terms of environmental backsliding.

● (2055)

All the environmental rights groups and environmental lawyers are saying that this bill is a serious setback for the environment.

How can the government grant itself extraordinary powers to set aside 12 laws and seven regulations, including a number of environmental laws, and claim that this will protect the environment? The government may end up respecting environmental laws, but that is certainly not what it intends to do.

Why does the government need this tool that the Prime Minister can use as he sees fit? It is because the government wants to get around environmental laws. Otherwise, it would not be doing that. That much is clear.

These “regions of national interest” that appear in Bill C-39 and that we have been talking about are entire regions where projects such as pipelines, for example, would be pre-approved even before an environmental assessment has taken place. Take the project of national interest involving the much-vaunted one-million-barrels-a-day pipeline, for example. Under this bill, the government would effectively pre-approve the project. The company would be able to start building its pipeline even before the project has been assessed. This could mean that, if a somewhat credible assessment were to later conclude that it is not a worthwhile project, the company may have already started work, building its pipeline and investing money. In this example, the company is actually the government. The government is prepared to invest \$20 billion in federal funding, as part of a total public investment of \$43 billion, in a project that it will champion for lack of private sector investment.

Does anyone think the government will decide, after the project assessment, not to go ahead? That is not going to happen.

If it is a private company and the government pre-approves a project and allows it to proceed with construction, the company will sue the government, arguing that it cannot stop the work. Clearly, this is literally about bulldozing their way to approving projects.

When it comes to pre-approved projects, the government says it may conduct an environmental assessment. That may be the case, but what it is actually doing is dismantling the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada. The agency that specializes in project assessments is being dismantled. It will no longer even be responsible for assessing pipeline projects. That responsibility will fall to the Canadian Energy Regulator, which is widely recognized as a haven for oil and gas industry lobbyists. It is a machine for approving pipeline, gas, and oil projects. I do not think the board has ever rejected an oil project in its entire history. This is part of a pattern of sidestepping laws, rushing through environmental assessments and pretending they are environmental assessments when in fact they are literally carried out by those who want these projects to move forward and have a vested interest in their development.

Bill C-39 not only makes no sense from an environmental standpoint, in terms of the logic of environmental assessments, or with regard to respect for communities, but it goes even further because, within its 250 pages, it also targets workers. It was not enough to try to scrap environmental protections. Now they say they are going to scrap the right to strike as well. That means the minister will have the right to decide whether workers can go on strike or not. The minister will decide, based on his own judgment, whether a strike is in the national interest. If this is not one of the biggest setbacks in the history of workers' rights, I do not know what is. According to the Fédération des travailleurs et des travailleuses du Québec, this is a serious setback, a serious violation of workers' rights.

We are not here to debate whether developing pipelines makes sense. We already know it does not. We are here to debate respect for democracy and respect for a regulatory and legislative framework that took decades to build and that this government is literally going to scrap in a few months.

The troubling part is that we are dealing with a government acting in authoritarian ways, with power centred in the Prime Minister's Office. It claims to want to fight against Donald Trump, and yet, to do so, it is engaging in Trumpism and developing Canada's oil and gas interests, the majority of which are held by Americans.

How does that help fight Mr. Trump? It does not help at all.

What interests us in Quebec is to develop the strengths that we already possess and can build on. It is called renewable energy. It is called public transit. It is called the electrification of transportation.

• (2100)

We can fast-track these projects, obey the law and respect people without trashing our citizens, our health and our environment for oil companies.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that Bill C-39 is part of a broader context, specifically all the efforts our government has been making over the past year and a half to strengthen the Canadian economy and, of course, the Quebec economy. It builds on the projects we are trying to fast-track, such as the Contrecoeur container terminal project. It also builds on the major investments we are attracting, including with Churchill Falls, the largest investment in renewable energy in the history of North America. It also builds on the summit in Toronto, which unleashed over \$500 billion in new investment commitments in Canada, including some in Québec.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on something. Does he recognize that Bill C-39 is a part of these ongoing efforts to strengthen the Canadian economy and, by extension, Quebec's economy as well?

Patrick Bonin: Madam Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, that is ridiculous. It is ridiculous to say that we need to pass Bill C-39, which is a giant setback for the environment, workers' rights and democracy, in order to develop renewable energy projects. We are already doing that. Projects like the one in Churchill Falls are already under way in Quebec. We have been doing that for decades. We do not need superpowers.

What the Liberals want to do with Bill C-39 is essentially develop oil and gas companies and pipelines, undermine the fight against climate change and fast-track these projects. Who are they trying to please? They want to please Alberta using Quebecers' money. We are talking about billions of dollars to develop projects that will accomplish nothing. In fact, we are going to pay for them three times over: first, for the pipeline, which will cost \$43 billion, second, for the carbon capture and storage project, which will cost \$10 billion in public funds, and third, for all the costs associated with the climate impacts we are already experiencing, like droughts, heat waves and floods, not to mention the issues of rising grocery prices—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I must interrupt the member so that other questions can be asked.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Repentigny for his excel-

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lent speech. Now, for the other Liberal MPs who may have forgotten, it is not just a question of Bill C-39. There is also Bill C-5 from 2025, which currently suspends certain Canadian laws and gives cabinet the power to repeal other laws that get in the way. Bill C-5 remains unchanged, then we have Bill C-39 and, now, they add in regions of national interest. Obviously that is not the only provision in Bill C-39. There are other areas for improvement, because they render Canada's other laws weak and ineffective.

I simply want to ask my colleague whether it is possible to envisage improving anything in Bill C-39 while, at the same time, addressing the disaster that is Bill C-5.

• (2105)

Patrick Bonin: Madam Speaker, Bill C-39 is such a disaster from start to finish that I really cannot see how it could be improved to make it acceptable. To be perfectly honest, it should be scrapped entirely. The government should go back to the drawing board and reaffirm that, in Canada, we respect statutes and regulations. Yes, we will speed up projects, but that will include consulting local communities, protecting the environment and, above all, safeguarding our children's health as well. That is not what the Liberals are doing. They are doing exactly the opposite.

In my view, this bill should simply be sent to the shredder.

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, let us be honest, we have a Prime Minister who loves oil, who always wants more oil, and who wants to produce more oil. I wonder if he takes his cereal with oil for breakfast. That is what Bill C-39 is for: to facilitate projects like these and circumvent the law.

We heard the member for Madawaska—Restigouche tell us we are mistaken and that the goal is to generate clean electricity. He says that is what it is for.

I would like my colleague to explain how we in Quebec managed to build the La Grande-1 projects, namely the James Bay and La Romaine hydroelectric complexes and the wind farms. How did we build Quebec's economy around renewable energy without legislation such as Bills C-5, C-15 and C-39?

Did members know that when we heat our homes in Quebec, we use renewable energy? How come we have been able to do this, but our oil-loving Prime Minister has not?

Patrick Bonin: Madam Speaker, doing things right is possible. Quebec is one example. It may not be perfect, but it is getting better. Major wind energy projects are being developed in collaboration with first nations and communities in a way that respects the environment. That is the future, not oil and gas unfettered by the law, the way the government is proposing.

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[English]

Juanita Nathan (Pickering—Brooklin, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada is making headway in the world as it is, not passively waiting for the world we wish it to be. We are focused on what we can control. We are building a stronger, more independent and more sustainable economy. We are leveraging our strengths and moving quickly to open new markets, strengthen supply chains and accelerate projects across the country. We are also making sure that workers have the security and opportunities they need to succeed during these times.

This success requires a modern labour framework that protects and supports Canadian workers and workplaces. This is particularly important in the federally regulated sectors. These are the sectors that underpin Canada's economic growth, trade, supply chains and major projects. Bill C-39 features a suite of new measures to support the workers who will build them and help them thrive in the future.

Canadian workers are at the heart of Canada's economic strength, but the increased demand on critical infrastructure requires stronger worker protections. Bill C-39 is heavily informed by consultations with unions, employers and indigenous partners across Canada, and they all confirmed the need for increased workplace protections that keep up with our rapidly changing economy and workplaces. Unions and employers may not always see eye to eye, but worker protection was a subject upon which they could all agree.

Bill C-39 features a slew of worker supports that have been proposed through both legislative amendments and non-legislative investments. I will take a moment to outline each of these measures, starting with the ones that address health and safety.

Workplace safety is and will always be a top priority for the Government of Canada because there is nothing more important than returning home safely after a day's work. We know workplace injuries, including psychological ones, are costly for workers and their families, and also for the employer. We are also aware that our core workplace safety precautions in federally regulated workplaces are not perfect and that there are still gaps in enforcement. That is why we sought input from both employee and employer groups to strengthen these protections. Their input was invaluable and helped shape our way forward.

Bill C-39 is backed by targeted investments to hire new health and safety officers. That means more inspections, more prevention and more protective enforcement to ensure that workers return home safely from work, because we know safe and modern workplaces benefit employees and businesses alike.

I would like to talk now about driver misclassification in the road transport sector. Under the so-called Driver Inc. model, some carriers push drivers to incorporate. These drivers are treated as independent businesses, even though they drive the carrier's truck on the carrier's schedule and are, in every way that matters, an employee. The problem is that these drivers can then lose access to important protections they would be entitled to as employees. These include minimum wage, paid leave, employment insurance, the Canada pension plan and health protections. Unfortunately, it is often the most vulnerable workers who are hit the hardest, including newcomers to Canada.

The code already makes it clear that this is an illegal practice and it needs to stop. It hurts drivers and it puts honest employers that follow the rules at an unfair disadvantage. The Canadian Trucking Alliance, the national voice of the trucking industry, has been calling for stronger action for years. It has welcomed Bill C-39 as an opportunity to give the government better tools to recover the wages workers are owed.

The bill builds on work already well under way. Prevention has always been at the core of the labour program's approach. A dedicated team of labour program officers meet directly with employers and drivers to explain their responsibilities and rights under the code. They also work proactively with partners, including the provinces and territories, to crack down on driver misclassification.

• (2110)

This is done through proactive and targeted inspections, outreach and education. In the road transportation sector, this has included inspection blitzes in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area and in Montreal. Since 2023, more than 1,800 inspections and outreach and awareness activities have been conducted in the sector.

Drivers deserve fair treatment, and employers who follow the rules deserve a fair chance to compete. That is why Bill C-39 builds on previous measures with additional support and more inspectors to continue this important work.

I would like to switch gears, from trucking to the airline industry. Our airports connect Canadian businesses and travellers to the world, but today, when an airport service contract is retendered, workers who continue doing the same job lose their union certification and their collective agreement.

Bill C-39 changes that. This legislation will extend successor rights in cases of contract retendering in the air transportation industry at airports. These protections will apply to all Canadian airports. This means airport workers will keep both their union representation and their collective agreements when their contract changes from one contractor to another.

This measure was strongly supported by unions during our consultations, and it was not opposed in principle by employers. That certainly means stability for workers and for the airport that depends on them. This will go a long way in helping to strengthen protections for workers and promoting worker stability and fairness.

Protecting workers' wages has always been a cornerstone of the Government of Canada's labour framework. Our wage earner protection program already provides financial support to Canadian workers who have lost their jobs and are owed wages by their insolvent employers. Since its creation in 2008, it has paid almost \$750 million in unpaid wages to more than 210,000 Canadians. Behind every payment is a worker who lost a job but did not get paid.

Bill C-39 will strengthen the integrity and stewardship of this program. This will be accomplished by addressing gaps to ensure more predictable payments while preventing the misuse of insolvency mechanisms. This will help ensure that payments happen the way they should, when they should. Eligible workers deserve no less.

I would like to talk about paid medical leave and the measures in Bill C-39 to address an issue that has posed challenges of late. Since December 2022, employees in the federally regulated private sector have been entitled to earn and take up to 10 days of medical leave with pay per year. However, there have been concerns about stacking of benefits with negotiated or employer-provided leave regimes that are equivalent or greater.

We have addressed this issue in Bill C-39, more clearly explaining how the paid leave provisions work. The bill clarifies that employees who are entitled to more favourable paid sick leave benefits in their collective agreement are not also eligible to the code's medical leave provisions on top of it. In this way, Bill C-39 will maintain access to up to 10 days of paid medical leave for all employees, while providing much needed clarity on an important yet sometimes misunderstood topic in federally regulated sectors.

Canadians are counting on us to work together to support them and secure Canada's long-term prosperity, and Bill C-39 does just that. The worker support items in Bill C-39 will help Canada build more, build efficiently and build stronger, so I encourage all members of the House of Commons to support this landmark legislation and help stabilize our labour landscape, because it takes all of us pulling in the same direction to build Canada strong.

• (2115)

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member's comments regarding the CTA. It does excellent work, and I agree that we should be supporting our workers.

One of the things we can do is support workers by showing that the government has the balance right. Under section 4.2 of the Department of Justice Act, the Minister of Justice is legally required to table a charter statement for every single government bill. The Liberals like to say that they are the party of the charter.

Does the member support everyone pulling together and asking the Minister of Justice to table a simple charter statement, so that

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the committee that is charged with studying Bill C-39 can do its work properly?

Juanita Nathan: Madam Speaker, I certainly do understand, and I am sure that when the bill is at committee, the committee can recommend changes to the bill. This might be one of the recommendations the member may want to put forward at committee.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, this summer, the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement said that Quebec's legislation should take precedence over federal legislation where duplication exists. In projects of national interest, such as mines, especially in my region, this can prevent any duplication.

The federal government asks for a thing, the proponent adjusts and, in the end, Quebec asks for something else that is consistent with environmental concepts but that is not the same. That is why it takes 15, 10 or seven years to build a mine, and that is a little too long.

With that in mind, does my colleague agree with her colleague that Quebec's laws should take precedence and be the only environmental law applicable? Alternatively, is the government essentially implementing what Bill C-39 contains, without the least consideration for provincial laws, environmental acceptability or the rights of first nations to be heard and to have their ancestral rights respected?

What is happening now? Can the government respect the will of local communities?

[*English*]

Juanita Nathan: Madam Speaker, I agree that we, as the Canadian government, through Bill C-5, removed all the red tape with respect to the federal government. It is now the provincial government's duty to work with the federal government and comply with that.

As far as the one project, one review framework to reduce existing duplication between federal and provincial assessments, seven provinces have come on board with this agreement. I am not sure whether Quebec is one of the provinces. If it is not, then I am sure the government would keep working with it until it gets on board.

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• (2120)

Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked about Bill C-39's effect on labour negotiations, but it seems to me that section 107 of the Labour Code protects the greater economy as a whole as well. The act would create new conditions the minister must consider. Before using section 107, the minister must consider a mediator's report but also must consider what is in the national interest. It goes on to further define the national interest as taking into account "whether the strike or lockout has...significant impact on the Canadian economy" or "may cause...serious social disruption". I would have thought this would be of benefit to the greater Canadian economy as a whole. Am I right?

Juanita Nathan: Madam Speaker, the member is right. The strong for all act would introduce clear guardrails around the use of section 107, require the minister to consider an independent special mediator's report, assess the national interest impact and bring greater transparency and accountability for this.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Madam Speaker, like many Canadians, I keep going back to the Prime Minister's Davos speech.

The mark of a good debater is the ability to argue both sides of an issue, and so I wondered, if the Prime Minister was on this side of the House, what would he say about Bill C-39, given those remarks?

The Prime Minister's Davos speech channelled a metaphor made famous by Václav Havel, a Czech statesman, author, poet, playwright and dissident. Havel served as the last president of Czechoslovakia and the first president of the Czech Republic during a time of global upheaval. Havel first rose to prominence as a playwright, using his plays to criticize the Communist system.

Havel's metaphorical greengrocer is an ordinary shopkeeper who places a political sign in his window every morning, not because he believes it, but because he is participating in a ritual, conforming as required by his government, without question and despite his doubts.

The Prime Minister told the world that we should not be the greengrocer, that we should take those signs down. I agree with him, and I think he would do well to heed his own advice.

I take the Prime Minister at his word that Bill C-39 is a response to real Canadian problems. Conservatives have been saying for a decade that it takes far too long to approve infrastructure: overlapping reviews, paperwork, different departments that ask proponents for the same information in different forms abound.

Accelerated timelines, better federal coordination, electronic trade documents and serious attention to ports and trade corridors are all welcome initiatives, and yet the government claims to have held briefings on Bill C-39, but when it holds briefings before providing the text of the bill to parliamentarians or the media, it is not asking for feedback, but asking us all to put a sign in the window.

However, Canadians have doubts. My constituents want answers to their environmental concerns. First nations want to know how the government's plans impact them. I met with union leaders in my community this weekend who are outraged that the government is

undermining what they describe as their ability to avoid labour unrest. As a representative, these are not my questions to answer. They are mine to ask, in this place that we created precisely for that purpose.

One of my colleagues pointed out earlier that no charter statement has been provided for this bill, as required by section 4.2 of the Department of Justice Act. Maybe the Prime Minister does not want to know if this bill is constitutional, but Canadians want to know, and investors will want to know too.

The government claims it wants to create one economy out of 13. It claims it wants to build Canada strong. It preaches unity. By using a narrow majority to ram bill after bill through the House with time limits, dilatory motions that cut off debate and allegations that anyone who asks questions is disloyal to Canada, it is demanding that we all put a sign in the window.

When I rose in this chamber in June to speak to Bill C-30, I noted that the government was asking us to legislate first and understand later. Four months later, I am still getting a dozen emails a week or more from community members deeply concerned and troubled by the amendments Bill C-30 made to the Pest Control Products Act, requesting me to figure out how to repeal it. What do I tell them? Should I tell them to just put a sign in their window?

I was in committee when the first vote happened after the government received its majority. It is all on tape. I sat there and said, "We're going to go upstairs, and when we come back down here, the government is going to use its majority to end the conversation in this committee." That is exactly what it did.

This is not a government that is starting conversations. It is a government that is ending conversations. When the government does not reserve real time to hear from experts, parliamentarians and Canadians and really listen to them, when it does not give us the resources, like charter statements, to allay the concerns of our communities on issue after issue, when the Prime Minister rules by fiat from 40,000 feet and when he forgets that the magic of Canada is in our diversity of opinion, when he asks us yet again to vote first and understand later, then he is demanding that we put a sign in the window.

● (2125)

The Prime Minister has a choice. He could choose to take the sign down and consider the possibility that everyday Canadians might just have something to contribute to this conversation. This happens through debate in this chamber. It happens through town halls, meaningful consultations, showing up at community events and responding in a genuine way to Canadians who express concerns about the environment, labour implications and the impact this legislation would have on their communities, regardless of our personal views. It happens when we respect the fact that Canadians have different values and a rich variety of opinions. It happens when the government is honest about what it is really doing. It does not happen with special committees and quickie, 250-page bills.

Havel's warning was about the gap between institutional language and institutional reality. The one project, one decision, one year promise of Bill C-39 is a good example of that gap, because the one-year clock does not start when a project first enters the federal process. Once it is running, the clock can be paused for prescribed activities, extended to coordinate with other jurisdictions and suspended further by the cabinet. If the government does not make a decision within the promised year, all the minister has to do is publish the reasons for the delay and provide a new timeline.

That one-year clock is remarkably flexible. If the opposition exposes that, asks about it in question period or even remarks on it, we are immediately hit with a predictable ritual of accusations. In this case, it is for not putting the one-year sign up in our window.

We need to have honest conversations in this country. We need to close the distance between Canadians' beliefs in what the government can do, what it says it will do and what it actually does. A regulatory process has integrity only when the people designing it are honest about how it is going to work. Ministers are supposed to be accountable to Parliament. Governments are supposed to be accountable to voters.

Bill C-39 is 243 pages long. The Prime Minister says it is the most significant piece of legislation in a generation. If so, it deserves meaningful debate in the House and genuine study at committee so that we in Nanaimo—Ladysmith and across Canada can truly understand what it will do to benefit our communities. We know the difference between getting something done and pretending a process occurred.

The Prime Minister told the world that democracy is not performative. I agree. I only wish he had done so here in the House of Commons, in the seat of our democracy, and not at the European Union and with international media. Canada does not need more procedural theatre. We need debate where we can come together, confident that the best ideas have in fact risen to the top in a way everyone can understand.

I say to our Prime Minister he should take down the signs, ask Canadians what they think and listen to them. He should give them time to catch up with him and let them be part of the process. Canadians need speed, investment, infrastructure, trade corridors and energy security. They also need leaders who actually mean what they say.

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In the spring, I cautioned the government. Just because it can do something, it does not mean it should. I find myself reaching for those words again with this bill.

● (2130)

The government still has a choice. It can explain itself to Canadians in advance in the House, in committee, in non-performative, non-rushed ways, and in our communities. Having read the words of the people who have written to me, and hearing the concerns of the other parties in this House, I predict that if the government does not do that, it will run the real risk of having to explain itself to the courts or to people on the picket lines.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I too, like the member opposite, listened to the inspirational speech that the Prime Minister gave back in January to the world. I think Canadians as a whole were very proud of that particular speech. However, to try to draw a comparison, as the member is trying to do, to ridicule the government and its actions is ridiculous, quite frankly. I think it does a disservice.

At the end of the day, the member can say whatever she wants and be as critical as she wants, but I can assure her that when I sat in opposition and listened to Stephen Harper bring through legislation, the Conservatives would actually introduce legislation along with a motion for time allocation. What a gross exaggeration is taking place on the other end, when we have a Prime Minister and a government that have been working collaboratively with provinces and jurisdictions and stakeholders to build Canada strong through major projects and so much more.

I think the member needs to reflect on her speech. It was far from what took place last January in Switzerland.

Tamara Kronis: Madam Speaker, I believe the member has made my point.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her contribution to this debate.

I want to ask a question about something that is planned or proposed in Bill C-39 that is, in my opinion, absolutely mind-boggling, and that is the government's ability to pre-approve development projects. In other words, it could allow a development project to go ahead without even doing an environmental assessment. The assessment would come afterward and then we would see what happens.

What do my colleague and her party think of that part of Bill C-39?

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[English]

Tamara Kronis: Madam Speaker, I think there are a lot of provisions in this bill that are quite flabbergasting and that do exactly the kinds of things the member is talking about in terms of transferring an immense amount of power to cabinet. Again, it may be that that is what Canadians want at this time.

I would like to see us get the opportunity to really hear from Canadians and give them the chance to reflect on this bill, understanding what it actually says, so that we can represent them appropriately instead of trying to respond to something that is being rammed through the House, again.

• (2135)

Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her excellent speech. I know she reviews legislation very carefully.

Bill C-39 purports that it would build things at speeds that generations have not seen. Obviously, that would require the repeal of Bill C-69 and Bill C-48. Is that in part 1, part 2 or part 3? I could not find it. In what part of this massive bill is the repeal of that legislation? Where is it contained?

Tamara Kronis: Madam Speaker, I cannot find the provisions that the member is looking for. What I can find are immense transfers of discretion to cabinet, which would allow it to define a number of vaguely defined words and do, really, whatever it deems appropriate.

[Translation]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Bill C-39 is part of a broader context, namely the leadership that our Prime Minister and our government have shown over the past 18 months to strengthen the Canadian economy. Just a few weeks ago, in Toronto, it was announced that more than \$500 billion in investments will be injected into Canada, which will help strengthen our economy. Bill C-39 will make it possible to unlock the full potential of these investments.

Does my colleague intend to support Bill C-39 to ensure that we truly see the full potential of the investments that were announced in Toronto? These investments will continue to pour into the country over the coming year to strengthen our economy.

[English]

Tamara Kronis: Madam Speaker, the member opposite is right that this is part of a series of bills. I believe there were nine or 10 of them, or something like that, in June. I am hoping to get the chance to spend enough time with this legislation to be able to judge exactly what it would do. Once I have that opportunity, I would be pleased to have a conversation with the member about what he thinks it would do.

Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House this evening to speak in support of Bill C-39.

Over the past several years, Canadians have witnessed how quickly events beyond our borders can affect our economy at home. A conflict on the other side of the world can disrupt energy markets. A shortage of shipping capacity can increase costs for Cana-

an businesses. A disruption to a rail line, highway or port can affect producers and consumers on both ends of the supply chain. In the face of these global realities, our government was elected on a firm commitment to reinforcing Canada's economic sovereignty and empowering our country to build bigger, stronger and faster.

Our supply chains, built on ports, railways, roads and the great workers who keep them moving, are the backbone of our economy. By extension, strong supply chains are imperative to our government's ambitious plan to double non-U.S. exports, build major projects and attract record investment.

At its core, the building Canada strong act is all about strengthening our supply chains. This ambitious piece of legislation would create stronger supply chains by taking steps toward treating Canada's transportation system as an integrated national trade network rather than as a collection of separate pieces. The bill would enable the federal government to formally designate national trade corridors and establish performance measures for them. That means looking at the movement of goods across an entire corridor, identifying where delays and capacity constraints occur and measuring how the system is performing.

The bill would also create the national trade corridors council. Its role would be to monitor the movement of goods, analyze disruptions affecting trade corridors, identify areas around the system where the system is not performing as it should and provide recommendations to the Minister of Transport. As we invest in our trade infrastructure, these measures would ensure that those investments are directed toward the places where they would have the greatest impact.

This is about moving from a fragmented approach to an integrated transportation system, and the reliability of our trade corridors has a real impact. A congested port can mean additional storage costs. A lack of rail capacity can mean grain sitting in elevators rather than moving to market. Our government's objective is straightforward: streamlining our trade corridors to eliminate bottlenecks and ensure Canadians and Canadian products can get to their destination.

The second major piece is our ports. Canadian port authorities sit at some of the most important gateways in our economy. Bill C-39 would modernize their governance and give them greater commercial and financial flexibility to invest, generate revenue and expand the infrastructure needed to support trade. It would create new indigenous advisory councils, recognizing that indigenous communities are important partners in the development and operation of Canada's transportation infrastructure. Importantly, this bill would uphold the role of ports as non-profit organizations and would create more opportunities for partnerships and capital projects through enhanced flexibility.

However, infrastructure is only part of the challenge. The other part is the regulatory system surrounding it. Today, businesses can be required to provide similar information to multiple federal departments and agencies. That means more forms, more duplication and more administrative costs. Bill C-39 would create authorities to enable greater information sharing across authorized government institutions to reduce administrative burden and streamline our process. The bill would also support paperless trade by recognizing electronic transferable records in line with international standards. That means more efficient information sharing, less duplication and a streamlined approach to documentation.

Bill C-39 also targets approvals themselves. The legislation would establish a transportation project office within Transport Canada to coordinate federal authorizations and consultations for transportation projects. The objective is to provide a clearer pathway for priority transportation infrastructure and support the government's broader goal of getting projects from application to decision more efficiently. On this point, the bill is clear.

● (2140)

I want to go back to the objective of providing a clear federal pathway for priority transportation infrastructure. This brings me back to the time when there was a discussion around the Confederation Bridge connecting Prince Edward Island to the mainland. I was the minister responsible for that megaproject. At the time, it was one of the largest projects in the history of the country. That particular project, started in 1993, was completed ahead of schedule and under budget in 1997.

I am unsure if 30 years later, that project would have gotten through the approval process in a timely fashion. It stands as an example of how we do things right and at the same time protect the environment and protect the various interests involved. Looking at Bill C-39, I view it as providing the legislative pathway for ensuring that the projects this country desperately needs, like the Confederation Bridge in 1993, get to the point where they can be approved.

The point is not to eliminate reviews. It is to coordinate them. It is not to eliminate standards. It is to reduce duplication. It is not to remove consultation. It is to make federal processes more coherent and predictable while upholding the same standards we are proud to maintain. Canada needs to be able to build faster while continuing to build responsibly. Again, I think back to the Confederation Bridge project.

Finally, Bill C-39 recognizes that supply chain resilience depends on security. The bill would modernize Canada's transportation security clearance framework. It would broaden the roles and functions to which transportation security clearances can apply, enhance risk assessments, improve information sharing and strengthen authorities around granting, refusing, suspending or cancelling clearances. The purpose is to better address complex and evolving threats, because security is a crucial part of supply chain resilience.

Taken together, these measures represent a practical and coordinated approach to strengthening the infrastructure and systems that allow Canada's economy to function. On a micro-scale, allowing Canada's economy to function is the same as allowing Prince Ed-

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ward Island's economy to grow and function, as the Confederation Bridge did in 1997, and it still delivers today.

We need to move goods from farms to elevators, from mines to ports, from factories to markets and from our communities to customers around the world. We need transportation networks that can keep pace with the investments we are making and the opportunities in front of us. That means building capacity, but it also means making better use of the capacity we already have. It means having the information necessary to understand how our trade corridors are performing. It means ensuring that our ports have the tools and flexibility needed to grow, and it means ensuring that when we approve and build major transportation projects like the Confederation Bridge, we do so with the coordination and predictability that Canadians expect.

That is why strengthening supply chains is fundamentally about strengthening the Canadian economy. It is about building the transportation capacity, coordination and resilience that Canada needs for the economy we are building today and ultimately for the economy we intend to build tomorrow. This is how we build Canada strong.

● (2145)

Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have appreciated serving with the member at times on FOPO, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. I usually come from a freshwater perspective, and he is often a little saltier, I think from his surrounding water.

He mentioned in his speech the port overhauls and the St. Lawrence authority overhauls. Did the transport minister consult with the local port authorities and municipal leaders before giving Ottawa expanded intervention powers over their operations? If he did not consult, why not?

Robert Morrissey: Madam Speaker, all situations require the government to reflect, with a thoughtful approach, to arrive at a decision that meets the needs of the country and the Canadian economy at all levels. The government takes that into consideration when making those decisions and when proposing new legislative changes as well.

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was listening to my colleague's speech, but at one point I lost focus. I wonder whether he really believes what he is saying, particularly when he mentioned that the government is going to set up an indigenous council to tell us whether the first nations deem projects to be socially acceptable. That was not the spirit of the archaic Indian Act. We do not like the name, but it did grant the right to consult with first nations.

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What happened with the nuclear waste storage project at Chalk River? That is an example of a recent project that has been put on hold after being challenged in the Supreme Court by first nations, including the Kebaowek First Nation in my region. They argued that they were not consulted and that the project threatened species at risk.

What happened to that project? When it was built, first nations had to be consulted. The Algonquins of Ontario were consulted, but that association is not even recognized by first nations themselves. The Algonquins or Anishinabe do not recognize this association. It is associated with “pretendians”, people who identify as indigenous because they are of mixed heritage. There are no formally recognized Métis. Furthermore, Bill C-53 was dropped by the House.

Is that the sort of indigenous organization that will be given the power to override first nations' right to be consulted? This sets a dangerous precedent, and if it means that projects like the one at Chalk River get approved, I am out.

[English]

Robert Morrissey: Madam Speaker, the government has a responsibility to ensure that the economy of the country performs at a level that Canadians expect, to support the many social programs we have in place that Canadians cherish. That is the role of governing. I prefer the government to govern. Some simply complain.

• (2150)

Pauline Rochefort (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Rural Development), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed hearing the member describe the Confederation Bridge project. I am wondering if he could touch upon a few of the elements that delivered that project on time and on budget.

Robert Morrissey: Madam Speaker, it was interesting. The project was a megaproject advanced at the time by a Progressive Conservative government that at the time was building interest in building the country during a recessionary period. It was innovative. It was private-public partnering, one of the first major megaprojects in the country that was privately and publicly funded.

The key points of the project stand the test today. The latest engineering on it shows that the bridge is still in almost 100% condition like the day it was built. It was built ahead of schedule. It was built on time. It shows what we can do in this country when all levels of government choose to work together and put the interests of the nation ahead of the requirements that it takes to deliver those particular projects.

Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to bring the voices of Chatham-Kent—Leamington to this chamber. Tonight, I am speaking to Bill C-39.

It is certainly not a small piece of legislation before us. Bill C-39, the building Canada strong act, is a substantial omnibus bill covering major project approvals, transportation, trade and labour. At roughly 250 pages, it is legislation that deserves a great deal of careful review.

Madam Speaker, I know I can speak with a piece of paper in my hand, but if I hold the bill, is it considered a prop?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): No.

Dave Epp: It is not. It is fairly weighty and substantive, so I wanted to clarify that before I carry on.

Some 15 months ago, the government brought forward Bill C-5, the Building Canada Act. It was an omnibus bill that established a framework intended to accelerate major projects and reduce duplication in federal reviews. The government said Canada needed to build “at speeds not seen in generations”. Does that sound familiar? Now, just over a year later, the government is back before the House with another major omnibus bill, once again promising greater speed, certainty and investment.

The government says Bill C-39 would establish a one-year federal decision timeline, and this is important, once proponents have submitted a comprehensive application. It is not one year from entering into the system to a decision, but supposedly one year once all of the requirements have been submitted. That timeline does not include the additional pauses included at ministerial discretion, which are peppered throughout the legislation.

The question Parliament should be asking is a very simple one. What has actually changed since Bill C-5 and what evidence do we have that Bill C-39 would deliver the results that Canadians can see? There has been progress from Bill C-5 to Bill C-39. I would not have said that last week. Only one project now has been approved of the 500 that sat on the Prime Minister's desk. That is 0.2%, or one-fifth of 1% of the projects, and that is in two years. However, the Liberals have succeeded in increasing one thing by 33%, and that is the title. They have added the word “strong”. The bill now reads, “the Building Canada Strong Act.” It is 33% longer than “building Canada strong”.

The government describes this legislation as a major effort to accelerate projects, strengthen transportation corridors, modernize labour relations and create greater certainty for investment. The government says Bill C-39 would create a one project, one decision approach. Those are important objectives, and Canadians want Canada to build. We need infrastructure, investment and reliable transportation networks, and we need to develop our natural resources and get Canadian products to Canadian and international markets, but Canadians have heard these promises about faster approvals before. That is why the appropriate question is not simply whether Canada says this bill would accelerate projects. The question is whether the legislation would remove the barriers that have prevented projects from moving forward in the first place.

Nowhere, as I referenced in the previous question, do I see where Bill C-69 and Bill C-48 are being repealed. If the government believes its approach will make Canada more competitive, Parliament should be able to examine the evidence behind that claim. Canadians should know which delays are being eliminated, how they are being proposed and what the expected economic benefits are. If a policy makes life cheaper, Canadians deserve to know how. If it makes life more expensive, Canadians deserve to know why.

Therefore, I would ask the government if it has conducted an independent assessment of the economic impact of Bill C-39 on Canadian families, workers, farmers and businesses. What would this legislation mean for the cost of getting goods to market? What would it mean for investment? What would it mean for jobs? What would it mean for the cost of energy and transportation? These are reasonable questions for a government that is asking Canadians to trust another major omnibus bill.

Agriculture provides an excellent example of why these questions matter. Bill C-39 proposes to continue extended rail inter-switching for four years in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Extended inter-switching allows a shipper to access a competing railway over longer regulated distances than the ordinary 30 kilometres. For western agriculture, rail transportation is part of the economic infrastructure that determines whether Canadian grain and other commodities reach domestic and international markets efficiently. Farmers need certainty. They make decisions months and years in advance. They purchase land and equipment, choose what to plant, enter contracts and make investments based on the expectation that they will have reliable access to transportation and markets.

Why should we have another pilot? If extended inter-switching is intended to improve competition and help Canadian goods move to market, Parliament should understand the government's evidence for limiting it geographically, first of all, and also for making it another four-year measure, rather than making it permanent.

• (2155)

Why is the measure temporary, and why is it limited to the three prairie provinces? Agriculture needs certainty with longevity, and four years may or may not provide the certainty that the agri-food industry requires. That is precisely the kind of question that should be answered before Parliament passes this legislation.

This issue brings us to a larger concern about how the government approaches consultation. We have seen significant concern from farmers and rural communities regarding the Alto high-speed rail project. On September 19, farmers and others from numerous political stripes gathered in Rigaud to protest the project and raise concerns about its impact on agricultural land and rural communities. On Friday, I attended the Transport Futures summit in Toronto, where speaker after speaker raised concerns about the lack of a business case for the Alto high-speed project. We talked about that again at the ag committee today.

The government claims that it has consulted the public for this project, yet these farmers and municipalities in rural Canada in the proposed path are out there fighting to stop Alto. This does not sound like a government that is listening. The point is that consulta-

tion has to mean more than government officials meeting with people and proceeding exactly how they originally planned.

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I have another example. We have already seen what happens when Canadians and the agricultural industry come forward, provide evidence and ask the government to reconsider its decisions. The ag committee studied the planned closures of seven federal research stations and experimental farms. It heard from 27 witnesses and received 15 written briefs. The committee ultimately unanimously, all of us, recommended that the government reconsider the closures and conduct proper site-specific cost-benefit analyses before proceeding.

The economic case for agricultural research is significant. Witnesses told the committee that agricultural research drives productivity, innovation and long-term economic growth. It is the foundation of a sector worth \$150 billion in 2024 that supports 2.3 million jobs and is exporting more than \$100 billion in products. Here is the question: If the government is serious about building a stronger Canadian economy, why would it close research capacity in a sector that contributes so significantly to our economy and our food security?

This brings us back to consultation. The National Farmers Union and the Agricultural Union have now publicly criticized the government's response, saying that the committee's unanimous recommendations to reconsider the closures have not been acted upon. To industry leaders, it is as though the concerns of Canadian agriculture fell on deaf ears to a government that never intended to listen.

That raises a very serious, reasonable question about Bill C-39 as well: When the government says it has consulted Canadians and stakeholders, what happens when the consultation provides recommendations that the government does not want to hear? That matters for Bill C-39 because the government is asking Parliament to consider major changes in several areas at the same time.

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This brings me to part 3 of the legislation. Part 3 proposes to change the Canada Labour Code involving collective bargaining, geographic certification, first collective agreements and the government's role in certain labour disputes. The substantial labour changes proposed in this bill deserve detailed examination. Canadians should not have to choose among infrastructure, public policy, transportation policy and labour policy as though they were a single question. They are three different issues that would affect Canadians in different ways. They require different witnesses, different expertise and different evidence. If the government is confident that every part of the bill is good public policy, then there should be no reason to fear giving each part the time and scrutiny it deserves.

Canadians do not need another headline promising that everything is about to get better. They need evidence that government policy is actually improving their economic circumstances. Canadians need a government that listens when farmers speak and takes parliamentary considerations seriously. They need a government that can explain the costs and benefits of its legislation. They need Parliament to have enough time to examine legislation before it becomes law. Canadians deserve evidence and a Parliament of accountability. Canadians deserve a government whose actions match its promises. If not, we will be back here in another year debating another new act: the building Canada very strong act.

● (2200)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to take a look at the legislation and what has taken place since the last federal election when Canadians chose a new Prime Minister. We can take a holistic approach to what it means to build Canada strong. Let us take a look at the building of projects. There are not 500. There are over 24 going through the Major Projects Office in Calgary, one of which has been approved, with a value of billions of dollars.

Let us take a look at what took place in Toronto just last month. Literally half a trillion dollars of potential investment is coming to Canada because of the Prime Minister's relationships and the aggressive nature of our ministers in going out and seeking investments for Canada. This legislation is there to complement building a stronger and healthier economy. Is taking a holistic approach not the best way to look at this?

Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg North for his always thoughtful, probing comments and questions.

Half a trillion dollars is the net amount of capital that has fled this country in the last 10 years. A promise and a summit is what we have had. No one has ever criticized the government's ability to hold summits, make promises or have photo ops, and I am sure glossy brochures come with those promises.

However, what is needed is execution. The Prime Minister promised execution at speeds unseen in a generation. Is the member saying that approving one project in two years is at a speed that has not been seen in generations? I think not. I would challenge that.

We want to build things. Canada wants it. Canadians need these infrastructure projects. Where is the action behind all of the glossy brochures, all of the photo ops and all of the fancy announcements? That is what Canadians are looking for. That is what we are looking

for. We need to scrutinize the legislation properly and then get going, and not just with announcements.

Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke quite eloquently about the rhetoric versus the reality of the Prime Minister. I am just wondering if he wants to expand on that.

The Liberals have had almost two years with the Prime Minister. He is nearly halfway through his mandate and still no new projects have been approved. Could the member speak to that difference, from the rhetoric of the Prime Minister to the reality that Canadians are facing?

Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, witnessing the government, the old one and the new one, has actually made me appreciate our health care system and its ability to treat whiplash. This government, on the rhetoric side, has gone from supporting carbon taxes, environmental considerations above all others and cancelling seven LNG projects that are on the books, to stating that it is going to move at speeds unheard of. The rhetoric has caused whiplash. The Liberals have actually taken some of our policies and implemented them in half measures.

What has not come forward yet is the evidence. We have one project in two years that has been announced, with Chinese steel by the way. Missouri is the show-me state, and as it would say, "Show me the evidence", after we have properly scrutinized this legislation.

● (2205)

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my Conservative colleague makes it sound like nothing good ever happens. It is high time he recognized all the efforts that have been made and all the results achieved over the past year and a half to strengthen the Canadian economy.

He wants concrete examples. The Toronto summit attracted a total of \$500 billion in investment in Canada that will go towards projects in our communities, that will support our workers and that will boost our economy. These are concrete examples. The 24 projects that the office is currently considering, all the projects already under construction, the port expansions and the various projects where work has already begun are all concrete examples linked to our government's leadership since we were elected last year.

I would like to know whether my colleague will finally recognize the work we are doing to strengthen the Canadian economy and support us on Bill C-39.

[English]

Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, I am going to remind the member opposite that Bill C-5, the omnibus Building Canada Act, was passed in this chamber with our support.

We are the ones that said, “Let us get going.” We are the ones that said, “We really need to get Canada moving.” The evidence has not been there. Now here we are, one year later, with the building Canada strong act.

Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-39, the building Canada strong act, would put forward important legislative changes that build on our government's efforts to protect Canada's economic future by reducing the regulatory burden faced by the Canadian transportation sector.

Last year, the House passed the Building Canada Act, which focused on accelerating the development of projects of national interest and removing barriers to international trade and labour mobility. Today, I am pleased to say that we have worked diligently in the past months on new projects and streamlining processes.

For much of our history, Canadians were able to count on favourable trade connections and conditions, including a stable relationship with the United States. That has shifted. The decades-long economic integration is over. Tariffs are being treated as leverage and supply chains as vulnerabilities.

In a rapidly changing world, Canada's new government is focused on what it can control. We are building strength at home and diversifying our partnerships abroad. We are on track. Transportation is the vital link. We cannot diversify trade, build the strongest economy in the G7 and strengthen Canada's competitiveness without a transportation system that works. Canada's trade corridors connect Canadian business to markets and supply chains both at home and around the world.

We heard directly from Canadians about what is needed to build stronger, more efficient and more resilient supply chains. As such, we are taking action to reduce red tape, strengthen supply chains, accelerate infrastructure development and attract investment to grow Canada's economy and create new jobs.

For too long, red tape and underinvestment hindered innovation and productivity in Canadian companies. We often heard that we are not modern, that we are too bureaucratic, that we have not invested enough in our infrastructure and that other countries were finding us to be unreliable. These issues have to be addressed. That is why we are providing regulatory certainty to modernize the rules that govern how we build and invest to compete, while protecting the health and security of Canadians and the environment and respecting indigenous rights.

To support our commitment to lower costs and build a stronger economy, this government launched a red tape review in July 2025. Federal departments and agencies identified approximately 500 actions to reduce regulatory red tape. This bill would begin the implementation of some of these forward-looking actions, showing how the government will deliver on its commitment to address barriers that limit trade and restrict competition.

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Canada is and needs to be seen as a reliable and beneficial place to invest and do business. Inefficiencies in our trade processes and supply chains are costly and hurt our reputation as a reliable trading partner. To maximize the full value of our budget 2025 investments, we must address long-standing constraints in the system that limit investment and productivity. This will support a more modern, responsive transportation system that can handle economic pressures, improve performance and unlock new capacity across our supply chains.

A critical piece of the bill addresses coordinated reviews and securing timely approvals. Delays deter investment in our nation-building projects. The bill includes measures to reduce red tape and regulatory burden through a new transportation project office. This would complement efforts being led by the Major Projects Office and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada.

We need to expedite permits. Our government's commitment of one project, one review, within one year of receiving all necessary information from a proponent, is key. These changes would enable industry to advance large-scale projects more efficiently and with greater certainty, and would help attract investment. The transportation project office would work to reduce bottlenecks, improve coordination and offer a one-window approach for proponents. All the while, this improved approach would maintain existing safeguards to ensure the integrity of those project reviews. The objective is to unlock greater efficiency, not more risk.

● (2210)

Equally important is our government's commitment to having indigenous partnerships that shape how projects are developed and carried out. We also remain committed to upholding those indigenous rights, including rights stemming from section 35 of the Constitution, to work with indigenous peoples during the implementation phase.

The bill would also give Canada tools to rapidly align with international standards and strengthen how we collect, use and protect our industry data to better protect critical Canadian assets. Following the “tell us once” principle, government efforts on trade digitization would make it simple for Canadian business to submit the information. I want to specifically highlight this last point.

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Today, industries fulfilling regulatory requirements are routinely required to submit the same or similar data to multiple departments in various formats and on different timelines. This imposes real costs and administrative burdens on businesses. Canadian businesses expect clear communication, faster turnaround times and the ability to track the status of their requests. By reducing duplication and streamlining reporting, our trade digitization initiative, once implemented, would lower costs, save time and let businesses focus on what they want: growth and innovation.

For example, in the marine sector, vessels arriving at Canadian ports must file 12 distinct forms with five different federal departments and agencies, often in duplicate. Approximately 90% of Canada's trade with non-U.S. countries is carried by marine vessels. Making it easier to file the data once and have it shared securely across departments would meaningfully cut red tape as we diversify trade.

The bill would also align with trusted international standards, giving industry the certainty it needs to plan and invest with confidence, especially as Canada seeks to grow its trade. When rules and regulations move at the same pace as international partners, Canadian innovation and productivity are unleashed, and Canadian companies can compete on a level playing field with their international competitors.

I am looking forward to the discussion and the debate on this consequential bill.

Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to exhibit the member as a great representative of our party, because here he is, the former Ontario minister of finance, sitting on our backbench. I know that, over the years, he has been involved in a lot of different government programs and a lot of different projects. He has probably seen the best and worst of governments.

What does the member like best from an economic perspective in Bill C-39? I know there is a lot of good out there. What does he think would have the greatest impact from an economic perspective?

Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question, and I also appreciate what most Canadians are appreciating, which is the fact that we are looking for results, we are looking at outcomes, we are working closely together with other nations, we are diversifying our trade, we are broadening our reach and we are protecting our sovereignty by becoming more resilient. These economic efforts are for the benefit of our future in Canada. I am very encouraged that all of us recognize how important the bill is to achieving those results.

• (2215)

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's weighing in on this important topic. I just would point out to the member from Thunder Bay, though, that the greatest thing about the bill is actually the nice packaging. It has a nice cardboard outside, and it does not fall apart when I open it. Usually the bills we get are just photocopies.

Proposed section 19 would essentially allow an authority, whether it be the Impact Assessment Agency, the Canadian Energy

Regulator or the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, to actually tell a proponent to get another study, to the point where there could be no decision made on starting the one-year clock that the government purports to support. Why would the government give an unlimited amount of time, in proposed section 19, for that completeness to happen? Is the member concerned that could be abused?

Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I have the bill before me, and I am going to read something within it verbatim:

The purpose of this Act is to enhance Canada's prosperity, national security, economic security, national defence and national autonomy by ensuring that projects that are in the national interest and projects of an eligible type within a region of national interest are advanced through an accelerated process that enhances regulatory certainty and investor confidence, while protecting the environment and respecting the rights of Indigenous peoples.

That is item 4 on page 71.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past 18 months, we have been focused on strengthening the Canadian economy. Our Prime Minister and our government have shown leadership in this regard. We have signed treaties with over 20 countries. We have supported major projects of national interest and attracted hundreds of billions of dollars in investment to Canada.

I would like to hear from my colleague about how he sees Bill C-39 fitting within our government's broader approach to build Canada strong.

Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, my colleague brings up a very important fact. Canada is sought-after around the world. We have negotiated over 20 trade agreements, and we are the top foreign direct investment jurisdiction in the world because of those initiatives and because Canada is seen as a trusted partner. Other countries want to deal with those that abide by the rule of law and that ensure social justice as well as security in trade agreements. I am very excited about where we are heading.

Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, in his previous answer to me, the member bypassed the question and pulled out his bill. I hope he would agree that the cover makes it quite nice to hold, but I would like him to actually answer the question. He talks about an accelerated one-year review, but it literally says that an agency, or in this case the regulatory authority, must view it as complete for the process to begin. Does he not believe this would be abused?

Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I agree that we need to enact certain legislation to speed up the process. We have had too much interference by the bureaucracy to enable some of these projects to take place. The system will always abide by and have safeguards, and so it must, but we need to expedite that more quickly—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kenora—Kiiwetinoong.

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Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise and join the debate this evening.

I will start by simply saying that we must be able to build in Canada. It should go without saying, but after 11 years of Liberal policies, I feel it necessary to say so, because Liberal taxes, regulations and inflationary spending, which drive up the cost of living, have chased investment away from Canada for too long. It is why, for years, Conservatives have urged the Liberals to get out of the way by approving projects within six months, repealing antidevelopment Bill C-69 and Bill C-48, removing the industrial carbon tax and adopting one project, one review.

The debate we have been having here for some time is a bit like déjà vu. We all know that a year ago we essentially had the same debate. We, as Parliament, passed Bill C-5 to allow the government the unprecedented ability to move projects ahead. The Prime Minister at that time effectively said that we were facing an existential threat from the United States and that we must move quickly to approve major projects, which would support our economy, create good jobs for Canadians and, of course, protect our sovereignty in a more roundabout sense. He said that he was the guy to get it done, and that Bill C-5 would be the tool in his tool box to allow that to happen with the Major Projects Office. That is what was said about a year and a half ago, that Bill C-5 would allow the government to move at speeds not seen in generations, and now here we are, all this time later, and the result is absolutely nothing. No new projects have been approved. There have only been more speeches and more announcements from the Prime Minister.

This lack of action has left 500 projects on the table for approval, such as projects that could grow our economy, create jobs and, as I mentioned, protect our sovereignty. When I think of these projects, I think of my home in northwestern Ontario. Of course, we have the Ring of Fire, which we see some progress on with the federal government, with the Liberals agreeing to one project, one review for that particular project with the Province of Ontario. However, they are nowhere to be seen on the road to construction and still it is not designated in the national interest.

There is also the Great Bear Gold project near Red Lake and Ear Falls, which would help the region grow and strengthen our economy. As an aside, folks in the chamber might not know that Red Lake really punches above its weight. There are some 4,000 residents in the community. All of the gold exploration nearby has contributed \$4.2 billion to our economy over nine years, resulting from mining operations. Great Bear would also be an incredible opportunity, and Ear Falls as well, to help grow, especially in the face of the sawmill closure that has recently happened.

I look as well to the Nuclear Waste Management Organization, which has the deep geological repository project. I will add, it is mandated by the government through the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act. The project is supported by 77% of voters in Ignace and supported by residents of Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation. This was referred to the Major Projects Office, but still no action and no clear designation that this project, mandated by the federal government, is in the national interest.

As I go further down the list of projects, I would be remiss if I did not mention the Trans-Canada Highway going through north-

western Ontario. I have spoken about it a lot in this place. I cannot think of anything that is a better nation-building project than the only east-west corridor connecting our country. Improving the highway through northwestern Ontario, which is just a single lane in each direction, is critical for the safety of travellers and for our economic efficiency. It is why I brought forward a petition in the last session of Parliament, which was signed by thousands of Canadians from every single province, recognizing the need for improving the highways, specifically through northwestern Ontario. The petitioners called on the government to support the twinning project that has begun with support of the Province of Ontario, but the federal government, the Liberals, are nowhere to be seen.

There are projects out there. There is lots of opportunity for nation building, and there is lots of opportunity for growth and for supporting Canadian jobs. The examples I just listed certainly do not form an exhaustive list, but they show the stark contrast between the Prime Minister's rhetoric and the reality facing Canadians.

● (2220)

The Prime Minister said he would build “at speeds not seen in generations”, and he has built nothing nearly two years in. Nearly halfway through his mandate, no new projects have been approved. He said that Canada would have the fastest-growing economy in the G7, and we are now fourth. He said he would secure a new trade deal with the United States by July of last year, and he has failed to do so. He said he would be judged by prices at the grocery store, and they continue to rise. In fact, inflation is outpacing wage growth, meaning Canadians are getting poorer. Canadian households are the most indebted in the G7 as well. Very simply put, with the Prime Minister, it has been all talk with no results.

That is why Conservatives have been advocating for our plan and encouraging the government to work with us to implement it. Our Conservative plan to save Canadian jobs and money is to repeal the antidevelopment laws Bill C-69 and Bill C-48, approve the 500 projects currently stuck waiting for approval on the Prime Minister's desk, scrap the industrial carbon tax, remove the capital gains tax on reinvestments in Canada and cut taxes on food, fuel and work. We will continue fighting for Canadian jobs and Canadian livelihoods while making life affordable by cutting taxes and stopping the inflationary spending that is driving up costs on Canadians.

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• (2225)

Pauline Rochefort (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Rural Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in particular, I am interested in my colleague's views on highways 11 and 17. I am a northerner, like he is. I would simply like to point out first, to maybe help him remember, that our minister from Thunder Bay announced funding for highways in the north, in northwestern Ontario. Certainly that history is there.

More specifically tonight, I am interested in your views, because I believe there is—

The Deputy Speaker: I know it is a late hour, but members cannot use “you” to refer directly to a member. They must speak through the Chair.

I invite the parliamentary secretary to finish her comment.

Pauline Rochefort: Mr. Speaker, I would be interested in the member's views on the national trade corridors council.

Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, as to the first part of the question about highways, it is noteworthy that the federal government, the Liberal government, has allocated support to certain sections of the Trans-Canada Highway across the country, but none to Highway 17 through northwestern Ontario between Thunder Bay and the Manitoba border. The construction that has started for the first few kilometres is solely funded and supported by the Province of Ontario, working in partnership with local first nations and municipalities as well.

That is a critical area of the country for travel. I am sure the member would agree that it is of critical importance not just for the safety of travellers, as there are frequent accidents, but for our economic efficiency as well. Every time there are closures and accidents, it stops goods from flowing east to west. I hope the Liberals get on board and recognize how important the Trans-Canada Highway through northwest Ontario is.

[Translation]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his contribution to this debate. I want to hear his thoughts on a subject that really troubles me. I am talking about this step forward in Bill C-39, or rather this major step backward, to identify regions of national interest in which several laws will not apply when the projects move forward.

What is a region of national interest? That fundamental principle is not defined in Bill C-39. There is a schedule that should list the regions, but no regions are mentioned. Does my colleague agree with that approach?

[English]

Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, the member raised a very noteworthy point. That is why it is so important that this bill, which is quite lengthy and has many components to it, is debated thoroughly, not just in this chamber, but also through the committee process, where it can be examined and understood and where amendments can be brought forward from various political parties. This is certainly a large piece of legislation with many moving factors to it. I appreciate the question from the member.

[Translation]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to hear my colleagues, it almost seems that nothing good is happening. Over the past 18 months, however, we have made significant progress toward building a stronger and more prosperous economy. It shows in the investment summit, which attracted over \$500 billion to be injected into our economy; it shows in the 24 projects being studied by the Major Projects Office; and it shows in the more than 20 trade agreements that we have signed around the world. While we make progress on this side of the House, the Conservatives keep raining on everyone's parade.

I would like to ask my colleague why he cannot acknowledge the potential of Bill C-39 to build a stronger economy, to build a stronger Canada.

[English]

Eric Melillo: Simply, Mr. Speaker, it is because we have been here before. A year and a half ago we passed Bill C-5, which the Prime Minister said would allow the government to move at speeds not seen in generations. Since its passage, nothing has been approved. No new projects have been approved. There are no shovels in the ground. I listed a number of critically important projects that are by no means new. How long have we been talking about the Ring of Fire in this country? It is not a new project. With respect to the highway through northwestern Ontario, former prime minister Harper had initially put supports toward that in 2009.

There are a number of projects that, I would argue, are low-hanging fruit for the Liberal government to move forward on, not just in northwestern Ontario but right across the country, but it is just standing idle and not moving forward on them, so we will believe it when we see it.

• (2230)

Pauline Rochefort (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Rural Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of Bill C-39, the building Canada strong act, and to explain why to the residents of Nipissing—Timiskaming.

Canadians elected this government to protect what matters to them while defending and growing our economy. For me, those responsibilities belong together. I want children to have affordable day care and healthy meals at schools, families to find homes they can afford, and seniors to receive the benefits and services they depend on. Canada must also have the means to defend our sovereignty, protect our freedom and contribute to peace, all while leaving the next generation a strong financial future. That takes a strong economy with good jobs, growing businesses and revenues to sustain our commitments. Day care, housing and retirement security may seem far removed from a railway, a pipeline or a port, but they are connected. The prosperity we help create today pays for the promises we intend to keep in the future.

As a proud Canadian, I like to believe that Canada is among the world's best in so many categories, yet research confirms that we have room to improve when it comes to how quickly we build infrastructure. Certainly, we have long distances, a scattered population and harsh weather to contend with here in Canada, and in northern Ontario, we know all three. Those are the realities that push us to build smarter. Furthermore, we can learn from other democracies and examine overlapping approvals, repeated reviews and unclear responsibilities that have made it harder and slower to get projects built.

Business owners planning a project should know who makes the decision, what information is needed and when to expect an answer. When departments need the same information, they should speak to one another. Canadians have mastered the group chat. Governments should be able to manage one too. As the Prime Minister has said, "high standards do not require slow decisions." Every unnecessary delay holds back a job, a business expansion or infrastructure that a community needs. Bill C-39 would tackle all of these challenges.

The first part of the bill, "Build Canada Now", would make federal reviews more coordinated and predictable: one project, one decision, one year. The proposed one-year timeline would begin once a proponent provides all the information required for federal reviews and decisions: a good application and a thorough assessment that works. Once the information is there, government should have a clear responsibility to reach a decision, so the bill would put a federal assessor in charge of coordinating reviews and bring decisions and permits together where the legislation allows. Our Prime Minister has explained that it is about moving from sequential to parallel decision-making.

Through all of that, environmental protection must remain central. In Nipissing—Timiskaming, our lakes, forests and waterways support jobs, recreation and our quality of life. We take our lakes seriously, and protecting them is important. Better planning can help us eliminate environmental impacts earlier and decide where projects belong and what conditions they must meet.

Indigenous rights and participation deserve absolutely the same care. The bill's proposed Crown consultation hub would help coordinate federal consultation. Indigenous partners must be involved early, with the resources to assess proposals, raise concerns and help shape decisions. This would include opportunities for indigenous jobs, businesses and ownership. Trust takes time and work. Government must organize itself to help build it.

The second part of the bill, "Keep Canada Moving", matters greatly to northern Ontario. Our manufacturers, farmers, forestry operations and mining businesses need dependable transportation. An excellent product still has to reach the customer. Unreliable highways, limited rail capacity, inadequate air carrier networks and crowded ports mean delays and higher costs. Canada must plan the whole journey from where a product is made to where it is sold. That is why I support the proposed national trade corridor framework and the authority to establish a national trade corridors council.

• (2235)

For northern Ontario, this would be an opportunity to bring railways, highways, connections, air service, access to ports and com-

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munity needs into one plan. It would mean working with the Province of Ontario, indigenous partners and municipalities toward safer, more dependable connections along highways 11 and 17. We would also examine expanding fibre optic infrastructure alongside transportation investments. Businesses need reliable connections for their goods and their information. The truck, and the email announcing its arrival, should both arrive at the same time.

The strategy to tell us once and tell us digitally, which is included in the bill, also makes sense. Businesses should submit information once and have it securely shared across government where it is authorized. Filling out the same form five times is certainly an activity, but I think we can all agree that it is not a growth strategy. Less paperwork leaves more time for customers, employees and investment. This work must accompany efforts to reduce trade barriers within Canada. Our roads should connect our regions, and our rules should help Canadians do business across them.

The third part, "Canada strong for all", recognizes the workers who make this economy possible. I support the measures tackling wage theft and the misclassification of employees as contractors, improving safety and helping workers recover wages when an employer becomes insolvent. At airports, preserving union representation and collective agreements when service contracts change would give workers greater stability. The government is also committed to adding 100 health and safety workers and 26 staff at the Canada Industrial Relations Board. Protections need people to enforce them, and complaints need timely answers.

The bill would encourage earlier bargaining in difficult labour relationships, provide more time for conciliation and expand access to additional mediation tools. We all know the best agreements are those that workers and employers negotiate themselves. Changes to section 107 deserve careful attention, as the bill would introduce guardrails that encourage early engagement. Before intervening under the proposed framework, the minister would have to consider a special mediator's report and conclude that a strike or lockout would have a significant adverse national impact.

These are serious powers. Their use must be transparent, carefully justified and respectful of freedom of association, including the protected right to strike, and that is what the bill would deliver.

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[Translation]

These changes require all of us to make an effort. The government must coordinate its work more effectively and be accountable. Businesses must treat their employees fairly and honour their commitments to their communities. We must all ask ourselves whether our current approaches still meet the needs of Canadians.

I understand that change can be unsettling. Workers have fought for their protections. Indigenous peoples have fought for the recognition and respect of their rights. Generations of people have worked to protect the environment and build our social programs. These hard-won achievements must guide our future.

It is often said that compromise is everything. This may be the most controversial point in my speech, but the meaning is simple. Everyone needs to come one step closer, listen, and seek common ground.

We can improve the way we work together while honouring our commitments. That is essentially what Bill C-39 is all about.

[English]

I support this bill, because a stronger economy helps sustain affordable day care, school meals, housing and security for seniors. The bill would help young people find careers worth staying or coming home for. It would give Canada the means to defend its sovereignty, build a strong economy and build a strong future. Northern Ontario and Nipissing—Timiskaming have much to contribute.

Let us measure success in projects completed responsibly, workers coming home safely, businesses reaching new customers and communities gaining opportunities. Let us build this future together.

• (2240)

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talked a lot about the national trade corridor council that would be charged with digital tools and advising the minister, yet the national supply chain office that was created in 2023 by the government essentially has the same mandate to deal with data. I would just like to ask her what new value added the council would have that the national supply chain office does not already have. Are we not just in Groundhog Day, where the government just keeps bringing back the same tired ideas, rolling them out and expecting us to have a different result?

Pauline Rochefort: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. Maybe the other questions that come forward will build on it to some extent.

We can certainly drill down into the weeds, but for me, it is about looking at the overall picture. This is what the bill is about: one project, one decision, one year, moving forward. If it is good for our country, let us move forward. Tonight I explained why I support that direction, and that includes transportation. There will be other opportunities in Parliament to examine further details.

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my riding neighbour for her eloquent speech.

I would like to point out that a growing number of people in our region are saying that the Liberal government is not there for them and that a bill like Bill C-39 is not going to make them feel more included.

I want to give an example. In my neighbour's riding, in Kapuskasing, the department of innovation and industry awarded funding to the paper industry, the forestry industry. My riding got no funding, so 425 jobs were lost at RYAM last weekend. That is bad. The minister, like her colleague at natural resources, is aware of the situation, and yet the government refuses to take action.

There is a project of national interest in a region close to both of us. It is the Crawford nickel project proposed by Canada Nickel Company in Timmins. The federal government has recognized it. Funding has been provided for it. However, a project by Dumont Nickel in northern Abitibi, in my riding, is still waiting for recognition from the federal government.

Another example is a cobalt processing plant in the Cobalt area. The municipality is clearly appropriately named. The Horne smelter in Rouyn-Noranda is still awaiting investment to the tune of \$149 million. That is peanuts for the federal government, which, as we all know, is running a massive deficit. This money is needed to invest in gas capture and modernizing the plant. It would be a game-changer for air quality issues in Rouyn-Noranda.

Where is the federal government, and why does it want to pass laws that will stifle community engagement and override environmental legislation?

Pauline Rochefort: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my neighbour, and I genuinely appreciate him as a neighbour. He is a wonderful MP.

That is a good question. However, we must remember that the bill is based on more than 26,000 responses and 78 consultation sessions that took place this summer. These consultations were important and showed us how to move forward with all the projects he mentioned.

For me, the fundamental question this evening is simple: Does this bill move Canada in the right direction, and does it enable us to carry out the projects my colleague mentioned? The answer is yes.

[English]

Vince Gasparro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Combating Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my hon. colleague. Maybe she could talk about some of the projects our government is helping to get completed, get started and get financed.

Churchill Falls is the largest renewable energy project in North American history, producing enough clean power to heat, cool and power all the homes in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. It will create 22,000 jobs. We have LNG phase two and the refurbishment of Darlington. These are significant power projects and significant infrastructure projects creating tens of thousands of jobs.

Maybe the hon. member could talk about some of the great work that Canada's government is doing to get these projects built.

• (2245)

Pauline Rochefort: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that my colleague has outlined a few of the very important projects that have been announced by our government and that are moving forward. In north-eastern Ontario, a particular project that is critical and that has been designated to the Major Projects Office is the Crawford mine. It will provide 4,000 jobs in northern Ontario. It is a very important example of the types of projects happening in Canada.

Ned Kuruc (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-39, the building Canada strong act, and what it means for the workers, families and businesses in Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. In my community, building Canada is something people do every day. They make the steel that supports our buildings, as we see in the House. They manufacture the parts that keep our industries running. They work in the trades, move goods and operate businesses that employ their neighbours. They know what it takes to get the job done.

They also know the difference between announcing something and actually building it. A business cannot hire workers based on a press conference. A manufacturer cannot order new equipment based on a slogan. A family cannot pay its mortgage with a list of projects the government hopes to build. At some point, announcements have to turn into construction and paycheques.

For Hamilton, that is very urgent. Steelworkers are facing layoffs at Stelco and families are wondering what comes next. Local businesses are dealing with tariffs, rising costs and uncertainty about their future. When a worker loses a job, the impact follows that person home. It affects the mortgage payment, the grocery budget and the plans they made for their children. It also affects the restaurant where they buy lunch, the mechanic who services their vehicle and the local shop their family supports.

These are the real people behind the economic numbers. Building more in Canada would create demand for the products our workers make. New infrastructure, energy projects and industrial facilities need steel, equipment and skilled trades. That means opportunities for Hamilton. I want those projects built. I want Canadian businesses competing for that work and Canadian workers earning a good living doing it, but a good living also depends on having a voice at work. It means being able to raise concerns about safety, negotiating fair wages and standing together when something needs to change.

In Hamilton, we understand what unions mean to working families. They give workers a way to negotiate together over decisions that shape their lives. A parent trying to arrange child care around a changing shift schedule understands why that matters. So does someone worried about getting injured on the job or a young worker trying to turn a first paycheque into a stable future.

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Those concerns belong in this debate because Bill C-39 would do more than change how projects are approved. It would also change the Canada Labour Code, including section 107. That section concerns the federal labour minister's powers to intervene in labour disputes. The federal code applies to workplaces such as airlines, railways and ports. Steelworkers in Hamilton generally bargain under provincial labour law, but the principle matters to every worker. People should have a meaningful say in their work conditions. Unions must be able to represent their members. Workers must be able to bargain collectively, protest peacefully and exercise their lawful right to strike. Those rights help make negotiations meaningful. When an employer knows workers can lawfully withdraw their labour, there is a reason to work toward an agreement both sides can accept.

We need to understand what happens to that balance when the government intervenes. Under the proposed changes to section 107, the minister would have to consider a special mediator's report before directing certain measures to end a lawful strike or lockout. The minister would also have to believe that the dispute harms the national interest. That is very important. Those measures could include ordering work to resume or requiring a binding process to settle a dispute. In simple terms, if the minister believes the strike harms national interest, they can order workers to resume working. I see an issue with this proposed change because what would count as harm to the national interest? The phrase "national interest" is far too vague to be used as a reason to block workers' rights.

The government's national interest changes every couple of months. Last year it was climate change, and now it is pipelines. A couple of months ago, it was trade with America, and now it is deals with China. We cannot let workers' rights be affected by the fleeting priorities of the government. Would the rules encourage a negotiated agreement or leave an employer expecting the government to step in? These are practical questions about whether workers have a fair chance to negotiate. A strike is a serious decision. Workers give up wages, families stretch their budgets and people face uncertainty about when they will return to work. No one should assume they take that decision lightly.

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• (2250)

Disruption also affects other Canadians, and those consequences deserve consideration, but the fact that a strike creates pressure cannot on its own settle the question of whether government should end it. Pressure is part of what brings parties to the bargaining table. We should support mediation and every reasonable effort to reach an agreement. We should also ensure that government intervention has clear limits and respects workers' rights. That requires careful study, hundreds of pages bringing together project approvals, transportation measures and substantial changes to labour law. A worker concerned about the right to strike should not have to search through legislation covering ports, pipelines and environmental approvals to understand what the government is proposing.

I stand in the House representing many workers who would be affected by the proposed changes to the Canada Labour Code. It is my responsibility to examine the bill and evaluate how the proposed changes could affect them. Supporting construction does not answer the question of whether a labour provision is fair. Wanting a stronger economy does not remove our obligation here to the people affected.

Conservatives are not going to let the Liberals ram through a bill that would stomp on workers' rights. Union representatives need the opportunity to explain what the proposals would mean to their members. Employers should explain how they expect the rules to operate. Labour experts should help us assess the consequences. Members need time to question witnesses, consider their evidence and propose amendments. If separate consideration of the labour measures is needed to give them proper scrutiny, the government should be prepared to allow it.

Workers should not lose their opportunity to be heard because the government wants a faster parliamentary timeline. Businesses need clear requirements, coordinated reviews and decisions they can plan around. Communities need investment, and workers need opportunities close to home. We should measure success through investment, jobs and the opportunities available to the next generation.

For Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, that future matters deeply. Our community has helped build this country for generations. Our workers have the skills. Our businesses have the experience. They deserve the opportunity to keep doing it. They also deserve to know that the rights they rely on will receive serious attention in the House.

I want young people in Hamilton to see a future in the trades or in manufacturing. I want a family facing a layoff to have reason to believe that another opportunity is coming. I want the people doing the work to be able to speak up, negotiate fairly and return home safely. That is the standard I will bring to Bill C-39: help get worthwhile projects built and protect collective bargaining and lawful strike rights.

The people who built Canada deserve a voice in its future. We owe them care and respect to get this legislation right. I will say this, and I hope the members on the other side will hear me very clearly: We cannot have a building Canada strong act without protecting the workers who build Canada.

Aslam Rana (Hamilton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member of the opposition about the \$500-billion promises that were made during the Toronto summit. We signed over 23 agreements around the world for those economic projects, which is proof of our great leadership. Bill C-39 is also the next step to build Canada strong. I would like to ask the member of the opposition why he will not work with us and approve the bill.

• (2255)

Ned Kuruc: Mr. Speaker, I will take the question and criticisms from the member for Hamilton Centre with respect.

I have been talking about section 107 of the Labour Code in my speech today. We all, in principle, want this country to move forward. Most of the examples the member gave were MOUs. With respect to the \$500 billion, the projects are all announcements. Currently, the Prime Minister has the problem of all talk and no action. As my colleagues have already explained in the House, we signed Bill C-5 during the first couple of months in. It said it would give unprecedented powers and that we could move at lightning speed. There was all this rhetoric and talk. Here we are, a year and a half later, debating a bill the Liberals claim would do the exact same thing.

Therefore, in order to move this bill forward, again with respect to my colleague, whom I know very well, I say that I am here to work with him. I am here to protect workers' rights, which he understands very well in Hamilton Centre. This is also a very big concern to him. Hopefully we can work together on that and craft that part of the bill so it would achieve the goals of both of us.

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member's contributions on behalf of his community. I understand there have been significant job losses. My heart goes out to his community as they struggle to put food on the table and plan ahead.

The member talked in his speech about those workers deserving care and respect, and they deserve to know that their rights are being taken seriously. Well, one way of doing that is, under subsection 4.2 of the Department of Justice Act, that the Minister of Justice is legally required to table a charter statement for every single government bill. The special legislative committee for Bill C-39 that will examine those rights that the member is concerned with will be starting its work very soon, but without that charter statement, we actually will not know of the evaluation by the Department of Justice on the government's own provisions in Bill C-39 when it comes to section 107.

Does the member believe that the Minister of Justice should, without any more wait, immediately table it so that parliamentarians and his constituents can see what the government has done in the bill when it comes to workers' right to strike?

Ned Kuruc: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his expertise on this and for bringing something very important to the House, which may have been looked over.

Of course, that should be tabled right away. The people in the riding I represent, Hamilton as a whole, and workers all across this country want to see exactly what this brilliant member has just mentioned.

Braedon Clark (Sackville—Bedford—Preston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite touched on the importance of labour issues, and I wonder if he could comment on the importance of the fact that this legislation would hire 100 new health and safety officers and 26 new officials at the Canada Industrial Relations Board to clear out a backlog of cases. I wonder if he would see that as a positive move, particularly affecting unions and organized labour.

Ned Kuruc: Mr. Speaker, this is one of the rare occasions where I stand up in the House to debate a bill where I am not totally at odds with it. I am here with the intention to work with the Liberal government on this. I have outlined what is important to me, but on what the member has outlined, we could definitely get behind that.

Hiring workers is not a bad thing, but the things I have outlined here are specifically on what determines national interest. That is concerning to me, because without mentioning it, in the recent past, things have been called on, which have been found in court, that the Liberals in the former government were not allowed to do, but could be viewed as a national interest. So, we have seen abuse of this.

I just want to protect—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

[*Translation*]

Claude Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to speak to some of the natural resource development aspects of this bill. However, before I address these points, I know that Canadians want to understand why we are proposing these changes.

Earlier this month, we hosted our country's first-ever investment summit. The world came to Toronto to learn that Canada thinks big, and we gave them the opportunity to build with us. Investors from nearly 30 countries liked what they heard. They understand that we are committed to making Canada the most competitive country in the G7 for new investment. The \$500 billion in capital raised in two days is a game-changer. It sends a clear signal to investors around the world that Canada has what the world is looking for. We have clear evidence that the world agrees with us.

Canada did not reach that remarkable position by chance, but through a series of choices that deliver on our commitment to making Canada an energy and natural resource superpower. We implemented many measures to attract those investments, including low-

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ering taxes on income, capital gains and new business investments. We eliminated all federal barriers to internal trade, opened a new Major Projects Office and introduced historic regulatory reforms to streamline the construction of infrastructure that makes us a superpower in clean and conventional energy.

However, we can do more to attract investors while keeping the commitments that are important to Canadians, our commitments and obligations to the environment and indigenous peoples. That is precisely what I will be discussing today. Investors have told us time and time again that they need certainty. Today, we have the opportunity to apply the lessons we learned from the Building Canada Act to all major projects.

The measures I am speaking about today are meant to ensure that two independent federal agencies within the Natural Resources portfolio—the Canada Energy Regulator and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission—complete assessments for projects under their jurisdiction faster and more conclusively. The best projects will advance quickly, without ever compromising our commitment to identifying and addressing environmental, indigenous and socio-economic concerns pertaining to major projects. In other words, we are making the system work better without lowering our standards.

For greater certainty and to maintain robust oversight, the proposed legislation provides for a number of changes. First, it amends the Canadian Energy Regulator Act and the Impact Assessment Act to assign environmental assessments to expert Canadian regulatory agencies for projects under their jurisdiction. These agencies are the Canada Energy Regulator and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. They will also be responsible for coordinating federal permits and Crown consultations, which will promote more constructive dialogue, based on respect for rights. This bill formalizes that coordination role.

The result is a more transparent and predictable process that is easier to understand and that reduces duplication and delays. It is a win-win situation. Investors benefit from greater certainty. Canadians benefit from a transparent and accountable system. Workers benefit from a framework that fosters the creation of thousands of jobs. We are meeting Canadians' expectations with transparency and speed for a specific category of projects overseen by the Canada Energy Regulator, known as the CER.

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The overall objective is clear. Once an application is submitted and deemed complete, the CER will conduct an assessment and co-ordinate permit-related activities, with the goal of reaching a final decision on the environmental assessment and permits within one year. This does not mean cutting any corners. Rather, it is about arriving at a decision more efficiently, after doing the necessary work to identify a project's potential impacts on the environment, indigenous peoples and communities, and to determine whether those impacts can be managed and mitigated appropriately.

● (2300)

[English]

To help get to a faster final decision, the legislation would also establish very specific new timelines. For smaller, more routine projects, particularly those that have been designed to run alongside land that has already been developed for provincial or federally regulated infrastructure, these amendments would create shorter assessment deadlines.

For projects requiring new rights-of-way of 40 kilometres or less, the timelines would be reduced from 300 days to 180 days, or from 10 months to six months. For new rights-of-way longer than 40 kilometres and less than 300 kilometres, the timeline for reaching a final decision would be reduced from 450 days to 300 days, meaning that almost 15 months would become 10 months. The legislation for that particular distance would also eliminate an additional administrative step for projects in that category.

Right now, the Canada Energy Regulator's commission passes on their assessment findings to the Governor in Council for a final say, requiring another 90 days for the Governor in Council to make a decision. These amendments propose that the CER's commission itself would be able to make the final determination, eliminating that further three-month delay. Only projects involving new rights-of-way of more than 300 kilometres would continue to require a Governor in Council decision.

To help reduce delays, we are proposing to allow the Governor in Council to make an early public interest determination on a project, followed by the commission determining the conditions for the project to proceed. Any conditions required to address potential impacts would still need to be developed and applied. What would change is not the rigour of the review. What would change is how quickly people get clarity about a project's future. Whether it is a yes or a no, providing a decision sooner would give investors and project proponents greater certainty.

Certainty is not just about timelines. It is also about having the right expertise involved from the beginning. Today, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, also called the CNSC, is responsible for regulating nuclear and uranium projects under the Nuclear Safety and Control Act. Larger projects require an integrated review panel under the Impact Assessment Act, as well as a licensing decision under the Nuclear Safety and Control Act. Under the proposed change, the CNSC would lead an impact assessment for all larger uranium and nuclear projects under the Impact Assessment Act within one year, followed by a licensing decision under the Nuclear Safety and Control Act within two years.

This approach would provide investors and proponents early confidence that a project will proceed if the impact assessment is positive. Proponents could also choose to align the impact assessment and licensing decisions. These amendments would not only boost investor confidence, but also recognize that the CNSC has decades of technical expertise and experience overseeing these projects throughout their entire life cycle. What would change is that these assessments would be led by a regulator with deep, specialized knowledge of the technology, operation and safety requirements involved.

Members have heard the changes that these amendments are proposing, but let me be equally clear about what the amendments would not change. They would not change environmental assessments and oversight. They would not weaken indigenous rights. They would not remove the Crown's duty to consult indigenous people. In some cases, more time may still be required to understand the impact, fully address concerns, carry out meaningful consultation and respect indigenous rights.

Canada should not have to choose between rigorous assessment and timely decisions. We can do both. We can uphold strong environmental standards. We can respect indigenous rights and carry out meaningful consultation. We can also provide the certainty that workers, communities, indigenous partners and investors are asking for.

● (2305)

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am interested in knowing from the member what the differences are between this bill and Bill C-5. We passed Bill C-5 a year ago, and we were expecting projects to be built with lightning speed. I know there are over 500 projects on the list now that have not been approved. I am wondering what the difference is. I am also wondering if the member has any comments about Bill C-69 and Bill C-48. Those bills had the effect of cancelling 14 LNG projects in the country and nine pipelines.

[Translation]

Claude Guay: Mr. Speaker, this bill is based on the lessons that we learned from Bill C-5, and it provides us with an opportunity to apply those lessons to all investment projects in Canada. This is part of our commitment to reach our full potential and build unwavering resilience. This bill will improve government operations, provide greater clarity and predictability and ensure that decisions on the right projects are made in a timely manner. All this will be done while maintaining the safeguards and transparency that Canadians expect.

● (2310)

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his contribution.

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I get the impression that they are trying to sell us apple pie, but that is not what is on offer in Bill C-39. The government tells us that the bill does not lower standards, but that is not what Bill C-39 says. Bill C-39 says a lot of things, but among other things, it states that regions of national interest are now being established and that, within these regions of national interest, projects will no longer need to get approvals in order to comply with the Fisheries Act or with the Canadian Environmental Protection Act provisions governing the disposal of waste at sea. Several protections are being set aside.

I need to hear my colleague's opinion because I do not understand how the government can tell us that it is maintaining environmental standards when some 20 regulations and laws will no longer apply in regions that have not yet been defined and that will be defined by cabinet following the bill's predictable and unfortunate passage.

Claude Guay: Mr. Speaker, I will help my colleague understand the bill. The fact that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has not been brought up does not mean that it has no say. It simply means that one organization is responsible for coordinating all of our standards and rules across Canada on behalf of the project.

Just because it is not mentioned at the outset and just because it will not be done sequentially by each of these groups does not mean that we are getting rid of responsibilities or that the project proponent does not have to comply with the rules in all cases. That must apply.

Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, critical minerals and mining projects are very important to Canada's economy.

Can my colleague explain how this bill can help advance these projects, which are very important for moving Canada's economy forward?

Claude Guay: Mr. Speaker, I understand why my colleague is asking this question, given the importance of the mining sector in her constituency. Whenever I travel abroad and meet with mining industry investors, I consistently hear the same thing: Canada is the best place in the world to operate a mining project, but we are by no means the best place to secure timely permits to develop resources.

This will be of real benefit to the mining sector, as it will provide greater predictability regarding the timelines for obtaining permits.

[*English*]

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today on behalf of the good people of Peace River—Westlock to discuss Bill C-39. This bill comes on the heels of Bill C-5, which was passed over a year ago and, in my opinion, proposed to do something very similar. I do question why we are here to do this if Bill C-5 was the solution to all of these problems. Why are we back again, passing another piece of legislation around this?

I want to go back a little, back to about 2005, 2006, 2007, when a gentleman named Stephen Harper featured large in Canadian politics. He was making the case back then that we sold 90% of our product to the United States. While this relationship was a good one, it was a major risk to Canada in the event that, should some-

thing happen to that relationship, we would be then held ransom, essentially, by the Americans.

He also pointed out that we often sold our energy products at a dramatic discount to the United States because they were our only customer. We were basically a captive market, so we were stuck selling those products to them for whatever we could get, which was often at a \$10 to \$18 discount per barrel. Stephen Harper pursued an ambitious agenda, which seems to now have been adopted by the Liberals, to turn Canada into an energy superpower. He tried to streamline the approvals of major projects in general across the country. He worked hard to build free trade agreements around the world.

We will often hear the Liberals tell us about the agreements the Prime Minister has now signed with other countries for X, Y or Z products. However, those are essentially just really nice photo ops, because we already have free trade agreements with 60% of the world's GDP because of the work of Stephen Harper, which he started way back in the mid-2000s. He signed 43 free trade agreements, and did that because he said we needed to diversify our markets from only selling to the United States to selling to others around the world. The two notable ones he never got across the finish line were CETA and the TPP, but shortly after Justin Trudeau took power, those two were signed.

Those were not the only things he did. Stephen Harper also worked to solidify our money, to make sure our money was worth something. I remember particularly the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011, when our dollar was actually worth more than the American dollar, because Stephen Harper had worked hard to ensure we worked towards a balanced budget. He was making sure our fiscal house was in order and that we were not robbing our old people and the labourers in this country by making their money worth less and less each year, unlike the current government.

The other thing he did was flatten the taxes. He worked hard to make sure that the harder we worked, the more of our money we got to take home, not the other way around. He worked on the tax rate. The tax rate is fundamental to getting things built in this country. The other thing about our money and making the money worth something was that the interest rate went down. When the interest rate went down, that spurred economic activity.

I have a story about a cousin of mine. He builds houses in Edmonton, and he was telling me about how, during COVID, when the interest rates hit about zero, they built 400 units in Edmonton that year. He said that was entirely a function of the interest rate. He said that this year, they built 75 houses, and that is only because they could not carry any more houses than that because of the interest rate. He said he discovered what his company is capable of building at zero interest rate.

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• (2315)

We have the capacity in terms of manpower, skills and logistics to build 400 houses a year, but because of the higher interest rate, we are only capable of building 75 houses since we cannot carry that amount of debt over the year. An interesting thing to think about is how interest rates affect building things in this country. When builders are building things, they are often paying interest on the materials they put into a product they are building for the period of time between when they build the product, invoice it and get paid for the thing they built. That is an interesting thing.

As to the tax rate, we have been talking about building and Canada becoming an energy superpower. The Liberals have adopted Conservative language on this. They are sounding like the Conservatives, but they are not doing the things it takes to make sure things happen.

One thing that affects the tax rate is around what we have talked a lot about today: the price of diesel fuel. We talked about how we need to make sure we get our products to market, but also about how we need to be able to refine our own product here in Canada. The reality is that no company is going to come to Canada to refine because of the industrial carbon tax.

Fertilizer companies have already complained to me bitterly about the fact that they are paying a tax that no other jurisdiction in the world has to pay. They have to compete with fertilizer coming in from out of the country that does not have these taxes. They said they are under water every month because of the industrial carbon tax. If that is what our fertilizer producers are saying, no companies are going to come to Canada to build refineries, only to lose money. That is why the government needs to incentivize companies to come here by removing the industrial carbon tax.

The Liberals sound like us. We battled against the carbon tax for 10 years, and the Liberals finally came to their senses after the Canadian population was about to punish them severely over the carbon tax. They removed the consumer carbon tax, but we are not going to be an energy superpower, with all the great projects the Liberals keep talking about and insinuating will happen in Canada, without addressing that.

The other thing I want to talk about is Bill C-69 and the approvals process. With Bill C-5 and now this bill, the Liberals are trying to build a workaround to Bill C-69. We have been saying for years that they are not going to get pipeline projects, major energy infrastructure and railways, all of those kinds of things, built. The big projects that everybody thinks they are going to build are not going to get built while Bill C-69 is in place. I have not heard one member of the Liberal Party mention Bill C-69 tonight. They have not said anything about the barriers that have been put in place by the Liberal government. It is super frustrating for me to see the Liberals stand here as if they are the heroes of their own story, as if they are solving the problems of Canada, while they are the ones who created those problems.

Bill C-48 killed the northern gateway pipeline. I remember driving across northern British Columbia and seeing excavators on the ground. The pipe was laying in a field ready to be put in for the northern gateway pipeline. Then the Liberals dropped Bill C-48, saying people could not take petroleum product off the shore of

B.C. and put it on a boat. People could build the pipeline, the Liberals said. People were welcome to build the pipeline, but they were not to take the product that was in that pipeline and put it on a boat. That was what Bill C-48 did, and when the Liberals did that, it ended the pipeline.

Those two bills, Bill C-48 and Bill C-69, have to be repealed. We have to do that to match the rhetoric that we are hearing from the Liberal side. The Liberals need to work on that.

Under Stephen Harper, we built six major pipelines across this country. In 2014, we had 14 LNG projects proposed. I want to remind Canadians that these projects were entirely proposed by private industry. They were going to be tax-generating projects. Canadian public coffers were going to be filled with the revenues generated by these projects. The Canadian taxpayer would not have had to pay for them. The Trans Mountain pipeline was going to be a \$6-billion project. By the time the government was done building it, it was a \$36-billion project.

This bill is, I am afraid, another smoke and mirrors thing. I am looking forward to hearing what the Liberals have to say about it.

• (2320)

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke of Stephen Harper's legacy. I would like to remind him that Canada had significant trade deficits under the Harper government.

We are now working to diversify the Canadian economy. We are signing trade agreements with more than 20 countries and attracting foreign investment. In fact, Mr. Harper attended the summit held in Toronto and praised our government's economic approach. I would say that Bill C-39 is the next step in this approach, which we have been implementing for over 18 months.

I would like to know whether my colleague intends to support Bill C-39. Should this bill be referred to committee so that it can be passed in a timely manner and we can begin work on these major projects?

• (2325)

[*English*]

Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, we hear from the Liberals insinuations of things that are not true. The Prime Minister did not sign any free trade deals because we already have free trade deals. Stephen Harper signed 43 free trade deals, with 60% of the world's GDP. The Prime Minister came back with an MOU saying that we are going to do some things. We would like to see those things get done.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his contribution to the debate. I am interested to hear his thoughts on something that comes up a lot in Bill C-39. I am referring to the message being sent to the minister. The minister is told that he will have the authority to impose conditions determining whether a project moves forward, yet he already has that authority. The new spin with Bill C-39 is that the minister has to consider the feasibility of any conditions he adds on. That comes up in several places. I saw that as a message for the minister that he is expected to facilitate things for the proponents. How does my colleague see that?

[English]

Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I too am concerned about it, but probably for an entirely different reason. The Liberals, over the last 10 years, have made the Canadian government a lobbyist playground rather than having a clear set of outlined rules. The Liberals are basically saying that if someone is going to build a fence, the fence has to be a certain height and colour, and then they can build the fence. No, they have to get approval from the minister. They have to hire a lobbyist, have them work, pay the right people and make things happen. That is what I am more concerned about when I read these bills. People would need to get the approval of the minister, hire the right lobbyist and pay money to the right people, and then the project would be approved.

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, so far on Pacific link, the Liberals have the memorandum of understanding, the agreement in principle, the implementation agreement, the Major Projects Office announcement and now this. How many more announcements does the member think the Prime Minister will make about this pipeline connecting to the Pacific coast before pipe actually gets into the ground?

Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has put her finger exactly on the problem we face in this country. Coming from Alberta, I know that the frustration Albertans are feeling with the rest of the country is not particularly about Ottawa. It is with the fact that the rest of the country thinks that we already have the pipeline. Canadians have heard so much about this pipeline that they figure it is operational.

The fact of the matter is that the pipeline has been announced and announced, but we want to see it built. In fact, we do not want just one pipeline. We want several pipelines going in every direction so that we can get our products to market, because the Germans, the Japanese, the Polish and the Hungarians are all coming here pleading for Canadian energy.

[Translation]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Mr. Speaker, the Major Projects Office, headquartered in Calgary, in my colleague's province, is currently studying more than 20 projects representing \$500 billion in investments. Even the premier of his province said that she was optimistic about the Major Projects Office.

I would like to ask my colleague whether he shares his provincial premier's optimism about the Major Projects Office.

[English]

Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, "The feels are good" is generally the message from the Liberal Party, that it has a lot of good feelings and a lot of goodwill. The fact of the matter is that the Major Projects Office has failed to approve one single new project.

Michael Ma (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-39, the building Canada strong act, puts forward important legislative changes that would build on the government's effort to protect Canada's economic future by reducing the regulatory burden faced by the Canadian transportation sector.

Last year, the government passed the Building Canada Act, which focused on accelerating the development of projects of national interest and removing barriers to internal trade and labour mobility. Today I am pleased to tell members that we have worked diligently in the last months on timely project reviews, streamlining government processes, ensuring that safeguards are in place when expediting project reviews, and reducing costs to Canadians and businesses.

We all know that the global post-Cold War consensus has ruptured. For much of our history, Canadians have been able to count on favourable trade conditions, including a stable relationship with the United States; increasingly open access to the American market; and rules that both countries understood and respected. These conditions have not simply shifted. The decades-long process of steadily increasing integration between our economies is over. Tariffs are being treated as leverage, and supply chains are being treated as vulnerabilities.

In a rapidly changing world, Canada's new government is focused on what we can control. We are building our strength at home and diversifying our partnerships abroad. We have the right plan to build Canada strong. We are on track, and it is working.

Transportation is the vital link connecting every other priority we have. We cannot diversify trade, build the strongest economy in the G7 and strengthen Canada's competitiveness without a transportation system that works. Canada's trade corridors connect Canadian businesses to markets and supply chains at home and around the world. We heard directly from indigenous peoples, the transportation industry and Canadians about what is needed to build stronger, more efficient and more resilient supply chains. We are taking action to reduce red tape, strengthen supply chains, accelerate infrastructure development and attract the investment needed to grow Canada's economy and create good jobs.

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For too long, we have let red tape and underinvestment hinder the innovation and productivity of Canadian companies. We are not modern enough. We are too bureaucratic. We have not invested enough in our infrastructure. Other countries find us unreliable. These are things that we urgently have to address. That is why we would be providing regulatory certainty to modernize the rules that govern how we build and putting real investment behind the infrastructure we need to compete in this new world while protecting the health, safety and security of Canadians and the environment, and respecting indigenous rights.

To support the government's commitment to lower costs for Canadians and build a stronger economy, the government launched a red tape review in July 2025. Federal departments and agencies identified approximately 500 recent achievements and forward-looking actions to reduce regulatory red tape. This bill would begin the implementation of some of these forward-looking actions, showing how the government would deliver on its commitment to address barriers that slow private investment, limit labour mobility and restrict competition.

Canada needs to be seen as a reliable and beneficial place to invest and do business. Inefficiencies in our trade processes and supply chains are costly and can hurt our reputation as a reliable trading partner. To maximize the full value of our budget 2025 investments, we must address long-standing constraints in the transportation system that limit investment, productivity, diversification and growth in key trade-enabling assets. The bill would support a more modern, responsive transportation system that can handle economic pressures, improve transportation performance and unlock new capacity across supply chains.

• (2330)

A critical piece of this bill addresses the urgent need for timely and coordinated project reviews. Securing approvals for project works can take months or even years, creating significant delays in project delivery and limiting opportunities for job creation. These delays deter investment in resource projects, including in mining and oil and gas.

This bill includes measures to reduce red tape and regulatory burden through a new transportation project office, which would complement efforts being led by the Major Projects Office and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada to strengthen federal permitting coordination and Crown consultation for transportation projects to meet the government's commitment of one project, one review within one year of receiving all necessary information from the proponent. These changes would enable industry to advance large-scale projects more efficiently with greater certainty, helping attract investment and facilitate trade-enabling infrastructure. The transportation project office would work to reduce bottlenecks, improve coordination and offer a one-window approach to proponents. This improved approach would maintain existing safeguards that ensure the integrity of project reviews. The objective is to unlock greater efficiency, not more risk.

Similarly, the government is committed to having indigenous views and partnerships shape how projects are developed and carried out. We remain committed to upholding indigenous rights, including rights stemming from section 35 of the Constitution and

from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and to working with indigenous peoples during the implementation phase. The bill would also give Canada the tools to rapidly align with trusted international standards, strengthen how we collect, use and protect industry data, and modernize our marine security framework to better protect critical Canadian assets.

Following the “tell us once” principle, government efforts on trade digitization will make it simpler for Canadian businesses to submit the necessary information to move trade faster and more efficiently across our borders. I want to especially highlight that last point. Today, industries fulfilling regulatory requirements are routinely required to submit the same or similar data to multiple departments in various formats and on different timelines. This imposes real costs and administrative burdens on businesses in meeting their regulatory obligations when engaging in international trade. Canadian businesses expect clear communication, faster turnaround times and the ability to track the status of their requests. By reducing duplication and streamlining reporting, a trade digitization initiative, once implemented, will lower costs and save time, ease the overall administration burden and let businesses focus primarily on growth and innovation.

The bill would also provide authorities to enable Canada to rapidly align with trusted international standards, giving industry the certainty it needs to plan and invest with confidence, especially as Canada seeks to grow. With our rules and regulations moving at the same pace as those of our international partners, Canadian innovation and productivity would be unleashed, and Canadian companies could compete on a level playing field with their international competitors.

• (2335)

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member talked in his speech directly about timely and coordinated reviews. He talked extensively about this applying to the transportation components of Bill C-39. He also conflated those same provisions with one year, one review. However, in Bill C-39, there is no statutory deadline for transportation projects in part 1. Part 2 contains none of that as well. He also talked about the transportation project office as being a fundamental part of the bill.

Maybe the member can say, first of all, why the government did not put in a statutory timeline. Second, why is the Minister of Transport given the discretionary power to create the transportation project office? It is not even mandatory under the law. Lastly, it would have zero approval authority.

What is going on? Why is the member conflating transportation projects being done on time when there is nothing in the bill that would do that?

• (2340)

Michael Ma: Mr. Speaker, as I said in the speech, transportation projects are critical for our supply chain in Canada, in our trade with international partners. The transportation project office is intended to be the lead coordinator for transportation projects not already coordinated by IAAC, CER, CNSC or the Building Canada Act processes. These are all separate streams. Another bureaucracy would have bundled them all together, but we have chosen that the transportation project office would focus specifically on the transportation programs.

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-39, and particularly division 6 on the Species at Risk Act, adds the concept of the feasibility of the terms and conditions in respect of permits for activities that affect habitat and species. The government is weakening the conditions imposed when an activity is authorized by the government, despite the fact that it will have a negative impact on a listed species and its habitat.

Is the member not concerned that endangered species could end up further threatened?

[English]

Michael Ma: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government certainly respects endangered species. In these processes and reviews, those would be taken into consideration to make sure that we protect endangered animals as well as follow international rules.

[Translation]

Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Ontario is a seasoned businessman. He is well aware of the importance of getting quick answers when a final decision needs to be made by a group of investors for a project.

I would like to know whether he believes that Canada can afford to take a long time before reaching a decision. Should we not instead, in the current context, try to make comprehensive and swift decisions?

[English]

Michael Ma: Mr. Speaker, that is a wonderful question. As my colleague mentioned, from a business perspective, and as I mentioned in my speech, speed and efficiency are critical for Canadian businesses to compete in this global market, and all those considerations are certainly in there.

I would like to highlight that in this process, we mentioned efficiencies for transportation. The marine sectors currently have to provide 12 distinct forms, with five federal departments and agencies, in duplicate. Ninety per cent of trade, by volume, with non-U.S. countries is carried out by marine vessels. Therefore, making

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it easier to file that data once and have it shared securely across departments would meaningfully cut red tape as we work to diversify trade. That is just a good example of how, throughout this process, we would be helping Canadians and helping our businesses to conduct business faster, and therefore reducing costs, making us more competitive.

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the enlightened constituents in the knowledge-producing riding of Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke to speak to Bill C-39, a Liberal omnibus bill.

This omnibus bill is over 250 pages and seeks to amend over a dozen acts of Parliament, yet Canadians do not need to read past division 1 in part 1 to find the core problem. This bill does not touch the destructive mandate of the Impact Assessment Agency, and in fact it adds that mandate to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission.

Before I explain why the mandate is so destructive, and how it will continue to ensure nothing gets built, we need to answer one question. Would this law have given the Canadian Nuclear Laboratories the green light to build the near surface disposal facility, NS-DF, at Chalk River? While Parliament has debated this project before, I just want to quickly recap for any Canadians watching at home. Upstream from Parliament Hill is Chalk River Laboratories. Established in 1944, Chalk River was an instrumental part of the Manhattan project to develop the atomic bomb. The first nuclear reactor outside the United States was built and operated at Chalk River, reaching criticality just one month after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

For over 80 years, Chalk River has been producing leading-edge nuclear science in power generation and medical isotopes. It has also been generating low-level radioactive waste products, such as gowns, gloves and booties. All of that waste is still on site and stored following the best standards at that time. The Harper government began the process of dealing with that legacy, and the result was a plan for the near surface disposal facility.

Following years of consultations with all impacted first nations bands, the project received support from the municipality and the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation. That is when the project went before the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. The commission undertook its own consultations with the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council as part of the Crown's study to consult under section 35 of the Constitution.

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The commission also began consultations with the various Algonquin bands that make up the broader nation. These consultations included Kebaowek First Nation, a band located upstream from Chalk River and whose land claim does not include Chalk River. Late in the process, Kebaowek demanded funding from the commission to support a consultation framework agreement.

The band cited Justin Trudeau's hasty adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNDRIP, which meant the commission had to seek free, prior and informed consent. The commission argued that it was not able to go beyond the Nuclear Safety and Control Act to interpret the treaty and how it applied to the framework of the commission.

After the commission approved the construction of the near surface disposal facility, Kebaowek took the company, Canadian Nuclear Laboratories, to court, arguing that the commission had failed to follow UNDRIP when approving the construction. The band was successful before the courts, and the judge ordered new consultations to take place under the free, prior and informed consent framework. Last week, Kebaowek halted engagement with the commission, claiming the money provided by the commission was insufficient. Nothing in this bill addresses the increasing complexity of whether consultations should fall under the duty to consult framework or the free, prior and informed consent framework.

Kebaowek also took the government to court over the decision to grant an environmental permit under the Species at Risk Act. Kebaowek won in Federal Court, and last June saw the ruling upheld after the government appealed. The changes in this bill to the Species at Risk Act seem designed to address some of the issues raised by the Federal Court, yet even if this bill had been law when the proud socialist environment minister issued the permit, there is still no guarantee of success. In fact, the Federal Court had ruled that the permit the minister issued was unreasonable because it did not adequately justify the decision.

The amendment to the Species at Risk Act actually requires an even more robust justification. Should the Liberals appoint another radical far-left former criminal to be the environment minister, there is nothing preventing them from sabotaging the process by failing to provide sufficient justification for their decision.

If the point of this bill is to build Canada even stronger, we need to reduce uncertainty, not increase it by including more politicians in the process.

• (2345)

As we can see from the example of the near surface disposal facility and the ongoing litigation over consultations, the bill fails to address the uncertainty caused by never-ending legal challenges and appeals. In fact, the bill may signal the death of the nuclear industry in Canada, and that is because, rather than repeal the Impact Assessment Act, the bill would incorporate the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission into the mandate of that bill:

The Government of Canada, the Minister, the Agency, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and federal authorities, in the administration of this Act, must exercise their powers in a manner that fosters sustainability, respects the rights of the Indigenous peoples of Canada recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, takes into account Indigenous knowledge, considers the cumulative effects of physical activities, applies the precautionary principle and promotes cooperation among jurisdictions and with the Indigenous peoples of Canada.

The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission has been a world-leading regulator. The commission earned its stellar reputation by applying policies and regulations rooted in science, evidence and risk management. That is the exact opposite of the approach based on the precautionary principle. While the Government of Canada has adopted "A Framework for the Application of Precaution and Science-Based Decision Making About Risk", the document fully admits that "Ultimately, [the precautionary principle] is guided by judgment, based on values and priorities".

Canada's nuclear future cannot be determined by the Liberal Party's priority to be re-elected. Whether Canada develops a fusion power industry cannot be decided by the values of far-left activists and judges.

By incorporating the commission into the mandate of the Impact Assessment Act, this government would open the door to endless litigation, just like we have seen with the near surface disposal facility. Canada's current legal framework allows a single first nations band with no claim to the land that Chalk River Labs sits on, and upstream from the experimental facility, to derail a decade-long process. Kebaowek First Nation, with the help of foreign funding, was able to use UNDRIP and the Species at Risk Act to block Canada from building.

This bill would open the door to any group to take any applicant to court if the commission failed to adequately apply the Impact Assessment Act. This is why no private investor wants to take the risk of building a pipeline. I imagine a gifted entrepreneur who has invented a new type of fusion reactor. Where would they decide to put their fusion company? Could they really have confidence in Canada if, after investing millions of dollars and years of filling out paperwork, their application was approved, only to turn around and have a court freeze their investment because one judge decided the commission had failed to adequately consider the sustainability of hydrogen? Just because 90% of the atoms in the universe are hydrogen, that is not going to stop the far left from claiming fusion power is the next existential threat.

My Albertan colleagues dubbed the Impact Assessment Act the “no more pipelines” bill. By scooping in the nuclear commission, the Liberals are turning this into a “no more build anything” bill. No number of amendments to the act will get Canada building, so long as the mandate requires adopting anti-science ideas such as the precautionary principle. We will never achieve reconciliation if a first nation with a direct interest in a project can be dismissed in favour of a first nation with no real stake in the project. Who would invest in Canada if they can be dragged into court because a socialist minister sabotaged their permit?

The Liberals will use their backdoor majority to send this bill to a special committee. That will be the last chance for these Liberals to prove whether they really do want to build Canada strong or just build bureaucracy strong.

• (2350)

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I could not disagree more with what my colleague just said. Her riding also borders a small part of my riding, because the community of Kebaowek, which she mentions, is part of my riding, and its ancestral territory borders my colleague's riding.

Obviously, indigenous peoples do not share the same understanding of the borders of Quebec and Ontario, and this is particularly true among the Anishinabe, so when my colleague speaks of consultations involving first nations, no, those consultations did not take place, and that is why the Supreme Court ruled in their favour.

What my colleague wants, of course, is to strip first nations of their power to enforce their own conditions. She made a rather fascinating claim that money could buy off the chief of the Kebaowek community. The community supposedly did not have enough money, but if it were given more money, well, obviously, it would sign. On what basis is my colleague so viscerally attacking the very integrity of people who are standing up to protect the planet?

As for the consent of first nations, what happened with the Chalk River project was that Canadian Nuclear Laboratories approached the Algonquins of Ontario, who are “pretendians”, people who claim to be indigenous or Métis, who are not recognized by the House and who nevertheless speak on behalf of first nations and Anishinabe people. That is a fundamental mistake that I cannot support and will never support.

• (2355)

[English]

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I think I just heard the member call the Pikwākanagān and the Anishinabe “pretendians”. I have never heard that before.

The very first people CNL approached when this project first came to light were our first nations people. The member said it outright. This is all about money. It is not about doing the right thing and doing it safely so that the people and the environment are protected. That is what this project would do. It would make the environment and people even safer.

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[Translation]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned a few things in her speech that I think are inaccurate. She said that no projects have seen shovels in the ground, but that is completely false.

I am thinking of the Contrecoeur port project, which began last spring, and the Mackenzie Valley Highway, which began construction this summer. I am also thinking of the electrical transmission project on the north shore, which got under way this year. Those are a few examples.

Building projects of national interest means shovels in the ground. Thanks to Bill C-39, we will continue to build even more. I encourage my colleague to review the list of projects of national interest that are being studied and to follow their progress very closely, because there is a lot of potential there for strengthening our economy.

[English]

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, all I can say is thank God those projects got started before Bill C-39 came into force.

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am truly thankful for my colleague's comments tonight on Bill C-69. We have not heard one Liberal in this place talk about it. It is fundamentally the problem and the reason there are no projects being built in this country.

I want to remind the House that under Stephen Harper, we built nine major pipeline projects. We had 14 LNG projects ready to be built in this country, and after the Liberals came to power, all of those projects disappeared. I wonder what my colleague has to say about that.

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, it is going to take quite a while to make up for the damage the previous prime minister did. The problem is, we still have the same cast of characters here, and all it takes is another left-wing zealot to be in the position of environment minister and everything will shut down again.

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, does my colleague seriously believe that it would be a good idea to set up a nuclear waste dump on a mountain top, knowing that the runoff would fall into the Ottawa River, 200 kilometres from here? The consequences could impact a population centre of 1.6 million here in the Gatineau-Ottawa region. The impact could then extend another 200 kilometres downstream to the Montreal area, affecting 80% or more of Quebec's population. Spent nuclear waste has to be stored somewhere. There may be suitable locations in the Canadian Shield. If Ontario wants to assume those risks, it can manage them within its own borders, but they should not be imposed on Quebec.

[English]

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, my dear colleague has mischaracterized what this project is. Those used booties, gloves and gowns are already in the ground.

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The plan is to take those away from the outdated science that put it in the ground and put it into something safer. This is not Carp mountain, the hill of garbage. I would invite him to go to Cobourg, which has a near-surface disposal facility. It looks like it originally did, under nature. The water is tested. It is pure when it comes out. This is a good way to clean up our land. I would hope that the stalling done to prevent this from going forward moves to the side and allows our land to be remediated.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (2400)

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been on my feet a number of times today. I am pleased to talk about something I asked the government about a while back as to whether the government would adopt our Conservative action plan to fix diesel prices in this country. I mentioned in my question that a guy named Steve Van Raalte from my riding was having trouble paying for fuel. He is a heavy-duty mechanic, and he has to drive around from job site to job site. This was really cutting into his bottom line.

I pointed out that there are at least two companies in Alberta that are interested in developing and are working on developing a process to make diesel fuel out of natural gas. This is a pretty cool technology. I will just talk a little bit about Shell's Pennzoil. Shell developed the ability to make engine oil out of natural gas and brought it to market commercially in 2011, so it is entirely possible.

The reality is that the companies that are developing this cool technology will probably never set up in Alberta. They are developing the technology in Alberta, but they will probably set up in another jurisdiction because of the industrial carbon tax. There is no way to pay for it when they have to pay the industrial carbon tax. The other challenge they face is that the banks will not fund them, and insurance companies are not interested in funding them, because of the policies and the rhetoric that have come out of the Liberal government over the last 10 years.

Interestingly, when I asked this question the week before last, I got a response from the parliamentary secretary to the housing minister, addressing housing. I did not get an answer at all about diesel prices and the things I was concerned about. The answer was shockingly out of touch. I am hoping that tonight we will actually get an answer to my question about whether the government will get out of the way and remove all the taxes on diesel fuel.

Diesel prices have risen by over 80%. I would point out that the last time the price of oil was at \$100 a barrel, we were paying about \$1.40 a litre for diesel fuel. Today we are paying \$2.44. A whole bunch of Liberal policies have been put in place that are causing this, from our money's not being worth as much as it used to be, to our not having developed our own resources in Canada because of the stifling, leave-it-in-the-ground Liberals.

We have put forward our emergency fuel plan. We want to provide emergency remittance and tax relief to companies. We want to get rid of the industrial carbon tax. We want to make sure we can get the refineries and the pipelines built. We want to be able to make sure that the energy we produce here in Canada can be used in all parts of Canada. It is crazy to every Albertan that we are the energy superpower of the world yet cannot get our energy to the east coast. We also want to make sure that we have a reserve so we can have a buffer in the price shocks that happen.

I am wondering if the Liberal member can answer me. Will the Liberals be supporting our plan to get diesel prices down so guys like Steve can make enough money to put food on the table for their kids?

Claude Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are living through a period of economic uncertainty shaped by global instability and rising costs. In response, this government continues to focus on what we can control, not on one specific measure, by looking at the total picture: building a strong Canadian economy, diversifying our trade partners abroad, delivering responsible fiscal management and supporting Canadians who are under pressure from everyday expenses. People across the country are worried about the price of essentials like fuel, food, housing and daily necessities. That is maybe why the member heard about housing.

This government understands those pressures, and we are taking concrete, responsible action to ease the burden while safeguarding long-term economic stability. This includes immediate support on daily costs. 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 of implementation in April, gasoline prices declined by 11¢ per litre, delivering immediate relief to consumers. We also ended the fuel charge last year. On September 2, we announced an extension of the measure until January 31, 2027, after which we will apply 50% of the regular excise tax rate from February 1 to March 31, 2027.

All told, this is estimated to provide \$5.3 billion in tax relief for Canadians, of which \$2.9 billion is from the September extension. This pause on the excise tax lowers prices at the pump and helps reduce transportation and production costs across the economy, supporting families, truck drivers and the businesses that rely on them to move goods. Many businesses also get back the GST on fuel through their income tax returns.

The government also introduced the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit to provide additional significant support to 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. Combined, this means that a family of four will receive up to \$1,890 this year and a single person up to \$950.

We know that housing affordability continues to challenge many Canadians, just like the price of fuel, especially those trying to purchase their first home. That 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.

Taken together as a whole, these and other actions reflect a balanced approach, immediate cost relief, targeted support for those who need it the most, and prudent management of the public purse, which the member opposite and his team often suggest to us. This government continues to respond to affordability pressures with fairness, discipline and a focus on results for all Canadians.

• (2405)

Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I am thankful the member found the right answer to read tonight on the right topic, but he never addressed what I asked him, which is what he had to say to Steve about the realities of living life in Canada.

The member is new here, but I want to bring him back to nearly a decade ago when the Canadian dollar was worth more than the American dollar. We could afford to buy groceries for our kids. We did not need a school program to feed our kids. The government continues to do things that lower the value of our money, and that is one of the major reasons that everything costs so much more. Pouring more money into the system only inflates costs. We have talked about this endlessly.

We have called for all taxes to be removed from diesel fuel. Will the Liberals commit to removing their Liberal clean fuel standard?

Claude Guay: Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect their government to respond to rising costs with practical solutions, which does not take a master's degree in economics, and that is exactly what the government is doing. Extending the fuel tax relief is only one important measure helping families and workers.

What is really important is that the member's question ignored the root cause of the fuel supply challenges, which is the Russian aggression in Ukraine and the situation in the Strait of Hormuz. Instead, he tries to blame Canadians. With our G7 partners, we are working to address this issue, and since an agreement was reached last Friday to increase fuel supplies, prices have declined by 5%. This demonstrates that global action is required to address global challenges, because the increase in Canadian production alone is not enough. Affordability requires—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the brave women and men serving in the Canadian Armed Forces. Last June, I asked the

Adjournment Proceedings

defence minister if the Liberal government would reverse its policy to slash the housing differential for CAF members by 72% while increasing the rent by 5%. The minister responded to my question about rent by claiming that applications to join the CAF are up, that more women are joining, that the culture is changing, that they are buying weapon systems and that they are buying rifles. He then finished his laundry list by claiming that Stephen Harper left a mess.

The minister ran away from the question faster than a Russian soldier does from the sound of a drone. Having served across the aisle from the member for Ottawa South for over 20 years, I do not believe that his answer was the one he would have given had he been properly briefed. The minister's office had four months to draft a better answer. I look forward to the parliamentary secretary's response, where he will explain why Liberals are hiking rent and slashing the housing benefit. If I had to guess, he will try to avoid the rent issue and focus on the pay increase, a classic Liberal policy of giving five dollars with their right hand and taking \$10 with their left.

For any Canadians wondering why the Liberals seem to always work at cross-purposes when it comes to the armed forces, I would encourage them to pick up a copy of the book *Into the Breach: A Soldier's Journey*. It is a memoir from former chief of defence staff General Wayne Eyre. A passage was published over the weekend in *The Globe and Mail*. In it, General Eyre recounts some of his experience in dealing with the Liberal government following the second invasion of Ukraine by Russia: "That began an exasperating two-year odyssey of strategic indecision and procrastination. As global security continued to precipitously decline, Canada dithered, readiness suffered and respect from allies evaporated further."

At one point in the two-year mission to convince the Liberals to spend more on defence, the general considered writing a letter to the prime minister, documenting his concerns. The deputy minister for national defence advised the general that if he wanted to really get his message to the prime minister, he would need to make a placemat instead. This placemat would be a large piece of paper graphically depicting complicated information in an understandable manner. It is shocking to learn that the public service treated Trudeau like a child at a chain restaurant. Despite operation infographic, the prime minister was not persuaded.

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The Prime Minister's Office asked for more reviews. More reviews meant more delay. The general described this as strategic indecision. The strategy is not the defence of Canada but the re-election of the Liberal Party. This is the exact same approach the current Prime Minister is taking with his never-ending review of the F-35 purchase. Nothing is actually being reviewed. The Liberals are just engaged in strategic indecision. The Liberals think that by withholding a decision on the F-35, they can use the purchase as leverage in negotiations that are not taking place.

The Liberals desperately want Canadians to think the Liberal government has changed. Meanwhile, it hikes rent for Canadian soldiers while paying \$20 million in back rent for a slab of concrete it calls a spaceport, which it never used. The Liberals signed a 10-year lease on a concrete slab they call a spaceport. In Canada, renters typically have to pay first month's and last month's rent when moving into an apartment. What Canadians do not do is pay for rent 12 months before they move in, but that is exactly what the Brookfield government did. The Liberals took out a nine-year lease on a concrete slab and agreed to pay for 10 years.

• (2410)

[Translation]

Claude Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the member's concerns about the well-being of our service members, who serve this country with pride and professionalism every day.

This is an issue that is close to my heart. I am the father of a Canadian Armed Forces member who has a small family to support. This means ensuring that the Canadian Armed Forces have the support they need to thrive and succeed, and that members are fairly compensated given the unique challenges of military service. That is why we have increased the total benefits package for members of the Canadian Armed Forces by 20% by modernizing the military factor adjustment and other allowances, in addition to introducing several new ones. We know that affordable housing is a real challenge for many military families, just as it is for Canadians in general. I can understand the anxiety caused by changes to housing costs and allowances. They are not easy to understand at first glance. I will try to clarify things.

[English]

The member is raising two separate issues: the Canadian Forces housing differential for members renting in a private housing market, and shelter charges for members living in DND-managed residential housing units. These are governed differently, with different protections for each group of members.

The housing differential is not a universal benefit. It is a tailored monthly payment to help members when private housing costs in their place of duty outpace their income.

• (2415)

[Translation]

The Canadian Forces housing differential policy is reviewed annually to ensure that it reflects changes in members' circumstances. In 2026, median private-market rental costs fell in more than half of the regions. In addition to the housing differential, housing charges apply to members residing in accommodations managed by the De-

partment of National Defence. These charges do not strictly constitute rent, as the government does not have a landlord-tenant relationship with members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

[English]

The Canadian Forces Housing Agency is required by law to annually review the base shelter cost to reflect the local market. This is done by applying the Statistics Canada consumer price index, and for 2026-27, the local reviews resulted in a 5% increase that translates to a national average of \$57 per month. Annual increases are capped at \$100 per month for existing occupants, and members are protected from paying more than 25% of their gross household income in shelter charges.

[Translation]

We look after our military personnel and provide them with affordable housing and fair pay so that they can focus on the demanding task of protecting Canada.

[English]

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, let me just remind people what happened here. The Liberals took out a nine-year lease on a concrete slab and agreed to pay for 10 years. That back rent helped pay for the stock options exercised by one of the spaceport's shareholders.

Liberal insiders are getting rich off insider trading while the brave women and men in the Canadian Armed Forces get rent hikes and black mould. As the government ramps up spending, Canadians should expect to see a lot more of this type of Liberal corruption.

[Translation]

Claude Guay: Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify my remarks but I will ignore the opposition member's conspiracy theories.

We modernized the entire pay system for members of the Canadian Armed Forces. It now includes new and enhanced allowances that are in line with the requirements of military service. We adjusted the differential allowance to offset housing costs in areas where affordability challenges are most acute.

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[English]

We are protecting members in DND-managed residential housing units by limiting annual increases and capping their shelter charges at 25% of gross household income, and we are investing the revenues from those shelter charges back into the military housing portfolio to support the quality of life of CAF members and their families.

[Translation]

We remain focused on fair compensation, personalized support and practical safeguards for the dedicated professionals of the Canadian Armed Forces.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 38(2)(b), the hon. member for Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay not being present to rise during Adjournment Proceedings, the matter for which notice has been given, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. The House therefore stands adjourned until later today at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:19 a.m.)

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