



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

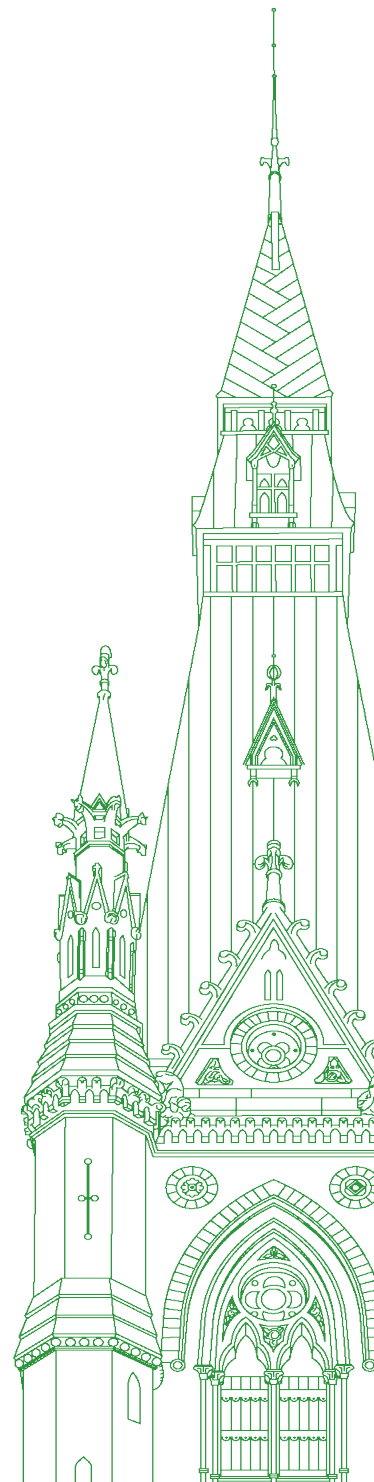
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Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 27, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)

[*English*]

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING SAFEGUARDS ACT

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-41, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying) and to make related amendments to other Acts.

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

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[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security regarding Bill C-236, an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and the Prisons and Reformatories Act.

Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1, the committee requests a 30-day extension to consider the bill.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a), a motion to concur in the report is deemed moved, the question deemed put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, October 28, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[*English*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, entitled “Monitoring of the Rehabilitation Services Contract Awarded to PCVRS by Veterans Affairs Canada”.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

PACIFIC FISHERIES

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise to table a petition signed by coastal British Columbians. They highlight that fish in Canadian waters are a public resource and should provide lasting economic, social and cultural benefits for Canadians, first nations and coastal communities; that the current Pacific licensing and quota system has weakened British Columbia's independent fishing fleet, reduced employment security and created barriers for new entrants in intergenerational succession; and that rising licence and quota prices, excessive lease costs, corporate concentration and speculative investment have made it increasingly difficult for active harvesters to earn a sustainable livelihood, with some paying lease fees of up to 80% of the value of their catch.

They highlight that Canada does not maintain a public registry identifying the beneficial ownership of commercial fishing licenses and quota, and places no restrictions on future foreign beneficial ownership in the Pacific region. They also highlight that FOPO recommended reforms to improve the sharing of risks and benefits in Pacific fisheries.

The petitioners call on the government to, first, implement a made-in-British Columbia owner-operator and fleet separation framework where appropriate; second, establish a public registry disclosing the beneficial ownership of commercial fishing licenses and quota; third, prohibit future foreign ownership and foreign beneficial ownership of commercial fishing licenses and quota in the Pacific region; fourth, limit excessive corporate concentration, support fair transition measures and improve access to capital for independent fish harvesters, first nations and new entrants; and, last, implement long-overdue licensing reforms that strengthen independent fish harvesters, coastal communities and the long-term sustainability of Pacific fisheries.

Routine Proceedings

● (1005)

ENDOMETRIOSIS

Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to table a petition from almost 3,000 people from across Canada and Saskatchewan with regard to endometriosis. This petition came about because of a meeting with a constituent named Tina and her health care providers in my office.

Almost two million Canadians are affected by endometriosis. Endometriosis has a significantly negative impact on the well-being and health of Canadians suffering from the condition. There are severe existing gaps in diagnosing and treating endometriosis, including long wait times to see health care providers, the need for increased awareness of the condition and the slow progress of endometriosis research in Canada.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to adopt the following recommendations from the Standing Committee on Health's report entitled "Women's Health in Canada". First, it should increase funding for research that supports innovation and discovery with respect to the diagnosis and treatment of endometriosis. Second, it should develop a national action plan on endometriosis in collaboration with related governing and administrative bodies, as well as people living with endometriosis, clinicians and researchers, to address gaps and barriers that hinder awareness, diagnosis and treatment.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Unless we want to change the Standing Orders to enable members to read petitions, I suggest that we enforce the rule that says members cannot read a petition. If you review the petitions from today so far or yesterday's petitions, you will see that more and more members are reading petitions.

The Speaker: I will keep an eye out for that.

Presenting petitions, the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola.

FLOOD MITIGATION

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola.

I have a petition for all of British Columbia, but with a focus on Merritt, in my riding, which is part of the West Coast Corridor Resiliency Partnership. We had floods in Merritt in 2021. The government promised that it would have British Columbians' backs in Merritt, and it has contributed next to nothing despite those promises.

I stand with the good people of Merritt, who want the infrastructure that is required for flood mitigation.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Wade Chang (Burnaby Central, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise to present two petitions this morning.

The first petition is about the memorial grant for first responders. The petitioners note that first responders put their lives on the line to protect Canadians and that their families may face significant financial hardship when tragedy strikes. They call upon the Government of Canada to increase the memorial grant to reflect inflation

and ensure that it is indexed annually. They believe that the families of first responders who make the ultimate sacrifice deserve the support that reflects the rising cost of living.

An hon. member: He's reading too.

The Speaker: Sometimes it is hard to understand if a person is reading the petition or reading a summary of the petition.

There is still quite a bit of time left for the segment.

Wade Chang: Mr. Speaker, for first responders, we can and must do better.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Wade Chang (Burnaby Central, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition concerns the temporary special measures introduced for Turkish and Syrian nationals following the major earthquake of February 2023. The petitioners note that many families that benefited from these measures have permits that have expired or will expire by the end of 2026. Many of them established themselves in Canada, contributing to our economy and raising children who now attend Canadian schools.

The petitioners—

An hon. member: We have readers.

The Speaker: When it comes to petitions, there is always a bit of an introduction and then a summary that sometimes sounds like the petition. It is difficult sometimes to gauge, but as long as it is of reasonable length and is not clearly being read, then it is acceptable.

The hon. member can continue.

Wade Chang: Mr. Speaker, the petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to extend temporary resident status by 36 months and to provide work permits, where applicable. They also want applicants to be allowed to work in Canada while waiting for a decision and want to ensure that the best interests of affected children are taken into consideration.

● (1010)

EU MEMBERSHIP

Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the people of Richmond Hill South. It is a real honour to present this petition.

The petitioners are concerned that the Prime Minister has welcomed the European Commission president's proposal for Canada to join the EU as an associate member. The petitioners are concerned that Canadians have endured years of Liberal immigration mismanagement and do not want EU-style, open-border policies imposed on Canada or Canadian taxpayer dollars to be used to directly or indirectly fund EU programs. They believe that Canadian laws, borders and taxes must be controlled by Canadians, not EU politicians and bureaucrats, and that Canada is a sovereign nation and will never be the EU's 28th member state.

Therefore, the petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to, number one, immediately disclose all discussions and proposals concerning Canada's potential associate membership to the EU; number two, reject any agreement that would surrender Canadian sovereignty or impose EU immigration policies, laws, taxes or regulations on Canadians; and, number three, guarantee that Canada will not become a member of the EU.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Will Greaves (Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to present a petition on behalf of my constituents and those living in the riding of my hon. colleague, the member for Vancouver Quadra.

This petition is signed by a group of scientists and academic experts on the west coast who are concerned about legislative proposals put forward by the government. They encourage the government, in particular, to ensure the highest standards of environmental assessment and review for all legislation, including Bill C-39. The petitioners call for the highest standards of governance to be ensured so that protections and safeguards for Canada's democratic processes and decision-making will be preserved in the future. The petitioners, as experts on the natural environment and our economy, also call on the government to reject any false distinction between supporting the economy and the environment, because both can be done at once.

* * *

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 would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—APPEARANCE OF THE PRIME MINISTER BEFORE THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska—des-Sources, CPC) moved:

That, given that,

Business of Supply

(i) the cost of government is driving up the cost of living,

(ii) the Parliamentary Budget Officer reports that this government's fastest-growing cost is interest on the national debt which has more than doubled since 2021,

(iii) this Liberal government now spends more on debt interest than the Canada Health Transfer,

(iv) an average family of four will pay nearly \$6,000 in federal taxes toward interest on the national debt this year, based on numbers from the Parliamentary Budget Officer,

(v) the Prime Minister promised that he would reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio and deficit-to-GDP ratio,

the House call on the Prime Minister to appear as a witness before the Standing Committee on Finance to testify on saving Canadians money by cutting deficit spending, debt interest and taxes.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills North.

I rise today to speak to my opposition day motion. The motion calls on the Prime Minister to appear before the Standing Committee on Finance to explain how his government plans to cut deficit spending, debt interest and the tax burden on Canadians. Behind the billions of dollars we discuss here in Ottawa lies a reality we must never lose sight of: that of hard-working families, retirees counting every dollar, entrepreneurs trying to keep their businesses afloat and young people dreaming of owning a home.

In my riding of Richmond—Arthabaska—des-Sources, I meet people who get up early, work long hours and do everything they can to provide a good life for their families. These are farmers, manufacturing workers, business owners, young families and seniors who have contributed to our society throughout their lives. These people are not asking for the moon. They want to be able to cover the cost of groceries, the mortgage, home heating and other bills without constantly worrying about their finances. Above all, they want to know that the tax dollars they hand over to the federal government are being used responsibly.

Public finances are not merely a matter of figures. They have a very real impact on the lives of Canadians. On October 20, the Parliamentary Budget Officer published her latest economic and fiscal outlook, and those figures should give us all pause for thought. According to this report, Canada's real economic growth is expected to reach just 0.9% in 2026 and 1.5% in 2027. These are modest growth rates for a country blessed with such abundant natural resources, such talented people and such significant economic potential. For Conservatives and for me, that is simply not good enough. Surely, we can be more ambitious.

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Meanwhile, federal deficits are projected to total more than \$333 billion over the next five years. That is not all. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the federal deficit is expected to reach \$63 billion this year, before rising to \$70 billion in 2027-28. Even in 2030-31, the government is projected to run a deficit of nearly \$68 billion. In other words, these forecasts do not point to a return to a balanced budget at any point during the period under review.

I want to call attention to another very alarming item in the report. Public debt charges now make up the fastest-growing category of federal expenditures. In 2021-22, they amounted to \$24.5 billion. This year, they are expected to reach \$60 billion. By 2030-31, the cost of debt charges alone could reach \$83 billion. These funds are not going to be used to build hospitals, hire nurses, improve our roads and highways or give Canadians a break on their grocery bills. They will be used to meet financial obligations racked up the government.

Of course, all governments have to be able to borrow. Debt can be useful for funding necessary and productive investments. However, the government has to be able to show that the borrowed funds will produce tangible results and that public finances will remain manageable. This is exactly why we are requesting today that the Prime Minister come and explain himself before the finance committee. We are seeing no results on the ground. In fact, daily life is growing worse for our people.

I would now like to focus this debate on a reality that I am very familiar with, the reality of Richmond—Arthabaska—des-Sources.

• (1015)

In my region, we are fortunate to have innovative entrepreneurs, passionate farmers, manufacturers and community organizations that do outstanding work. However, behind this economic vitality, there are also people facing significant financial hardship. The recent statistics on food assistance are particularly telling.

According to Moisson Mauricie—Centre-du-Québec's 2026 hunger report, the network of 61 member organizations are now responding to over 137,000 requests for food assistance every month. That is an increase of 23% in just one year and an increase of 60% in five years. I repeat: Requests for food assistance have increased by 60% in five years. What is even more worrisome is that nearly 13% of the households assisted by this network have employment income. They have an income, but they are still struggling to make ends meet. That means that people are working, getting paid and yet still have to ask for help to put food on the table. That is what is happening.

The report also indicates that over 17% of the households that receive assistance rely mainly on an old age pension or retirement pension. Let us think about these seniors who worked for 30, 40 or 50 years. These are people who paid their taxes, raised their children and families and contributed to the development of our community. Today, some of them have to turn to food banks to make ends meet. That is what is happening right now. This situation deserves our full attention.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the volunteers and community organizations in our regions that meet these needs every

day. Their work is essential. However, we should be asking ourselves why so many Canadians need their services. Our collective goal should be to allow people to live with dignity from their work and their retirement income.

In a country as rich as ours, both in terms of resources and opportunities, we need to find a way to make the essentials more affordable. That means a more productive economy, investments that create wealth and the sound management of public finances. We need to put an end to the Liberal culture of reckless spending. This Liberal culture is all about reckless spending.

I am also thinking about the farmers in my riding. In Richmond—Arthabaska—des-Sources, agriculture plays a significant role in our economy and our regional identity. Our producers have to contend with the cost of fuel, machinery, equipment, fertilizers and transportation. When a farmer's expenses rise, they cannot always incorporate those costs into the selling price of their products. They often have to absorb the increase at the expense of their profitability. When production and transportation costs rise throughout the food chain, this inevitably affects the price paid at the grocery store. That is why economic decisions made here in Ottawa have to take into account the impact on businesses and families in our regions.

The same goes for our manufacturing companies. When a company needs to invest more to modernize, hire workers, or break into new markets, it needs a predictable economic environment. As a former entrepreneur, I know that what people need is predictability. Businesses need to have confidence in the future. They need a government capable of distinguishing between investments that truly foster growth and spending that simply burdens public finances. Prosperity cannot be decreed. It is built through hard work, innovation, investment, and entrepreneurship.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer's report also raises a fundamental question about the government's financial commitments. The Prime Minister promised to reduce the deficit-to-GDP ratio. However, according to projections published on October 20, that target is unlikely to be consistently met. The Prime Minister has to be able to defend his choices to the representatives of the people of Canada.

I want to close by calling to mind once again the people of my riding. A family in Victoriaville will have to make choices when revising its budget, because the cost of essentials continues to rise.

• (1020)

The Prime Minister also has to make choices. We expect him to appear before the Standing Committee on Finance to answer our questions and those of concerned Canadians.

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Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to hear our colleague talk about the importance of volunteering in his riding. Many organizations in his riding, including the Breakfast Club, provide meals to thousands of children. The problem is that his leader described the work of the Breakfast Club as bureaucratic. He has said that helping to ensure that kids go to school with full bellies is bureaucratic.

I would like to know if the member agrees with his leader.

Eric Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, once again, I want to thank the people and volunteers getting involved in our communities.

In my riding, a group of men founded Clan Destins, which supports the Boîtes à lunch program. These individuals have dedicated themselves to the cause and are raising funds because the government is currently unable to support them. I thank them for that. What we need right now is for people to be able to make ends meet. That is the ultimate goal.

• (1025)

Claude DeBellefeuille (Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke at length about businesses and economic matters, but he did not say a word about the loss of purchasing power among seniors. He knows very well that seniors aged 65 to 74 have not received an increase in their old age security pension. They have lost their purchasing power.

Does my colleague intend to support Bill C-261, which I am sponsoring, so that this injustice and inequity between seniors can finally be eliminated?

Eric Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, I think she must have been absent during my speech, in which I spoke about our seniors who worked for 30, 40 or 50 years and paid taxes all their lives. That is exactly what I said in the speech I delivered a few minutes ago.

[English]

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would first like to congratulate former NDP MP Olivia Chow on her re-election and for receiving the greatest vote count by any mayor in Canadian history last night.

My colleague, in his speech, talked a lot about small and medium-sized businesses and the pressures they are facing. Right now, we are seeing record profits for big oil, big banks, big grocery and big telecommunications companies. Does he agree that there should be an excess profit tax on those posting obscene amounts of profits?

That could then reduce taxes for small and medium-sized businesses so some of the pressure can be taken off them. The big corporations are eating their lunch right now and it is time we provide relief for them.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, the Conservative Party is the party that wants to lower taxes. We need to cut red tape in Ottawa, reduce the size of government and put money back in the pockets of all Canadians. That is what the next Conservative government will do.

Jim Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt, CPC): Madam Speaker, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the interest on the national debt is the fastest-growing category of government expenditures, outpacing health care transfers.

How does my colleague think the government could reduce spending and put the budget back on a more responsible path?

Eric Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, it is unbelievable. We are paying more for interest on the debt than we are investing in health care, as my colleague just said. Has anyone thought about everything that could be done with that money? The problem is the current Liberal culture; the Liberals spend recklessly without achieving any results.

I often talk about a real-life example involving the lease of a parcel of land in Nova Scotia. A private company leases land for \$13,500 and is leasing it back to the Liberal government for \$20 million a year for 10 years. That comes to \$200 million. That is how the government spends its money. We need sound management, and the culture of reckless spending must end.

[English]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government's economic plan is not working. We now have enough data coming in over the last 18 months of the Prime Minister's tenure to know that its plan is not working. That is confirmed by the most recent report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer of October 20, which warns that the federal debt is growing at two times the pace of the federal deficit. That is because the government is capitalizing the borrowing it is doing and putting it on the balance sheet through the use of arm's-length entities like Crown corporations rather than expensing it on the profit and loss statement, on the budget. This accounting is in some ways hiding the pace of the growth of the federal debt. As a result, the PBO projects that the federal debt will increase this year from 41% of GDP to 43% of GDP by decade's end, going from \$1.3 trillion to \$1.67 trillion, an increase of some \$367 billion. This is despite the fact that the Liberal Party and the Prime Minister promised in the last election to ensure, "debt-to-GDP declines over the budget horizon." Clearly, the government is not abiding by its commitment in its last platform.

This massive growth in the federal debt is having real consequences. As a result of this acceleration of the growth in the federal debt, two times the pace of the deficit, interest on the national debt is now starting to grow at an alarming pace. Just several years ago, interest on the national debt cost six cents for every tax dollar of revenue. Today, it is 10.5¢ for every tax dollar of revenue. By decade's end, in a mere just over three years, it is going to be almost 14¢ of every tax dollar, which is projected to be approximately \$83 billion a year. That is almost one and a half times what the federal government spends in cash transfers on public health care.

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For those who say that that amount is not nearly as high as the crisis we faced in the 1980s and 1990s, I looked at the interest expense ratio charts the government produces. When the interest on the national debt started to accelerate in the late 1970s, if I recall correctly, in 1977 it was a mere 14¢ of every tax dollar. A short six or seven years later, it had skyrocketed well beyond 20¢, hitting 30¢ per tax dollar in less than a decade, leading to the fiscal crisis of the mid-1990s. This growth in interest on the national debt is concerning. It is an alarm that has been raised by many of the folks who helped get Canada on the right fiscal track in the late 1990s, like Don Drummond, who has been saying that the government should abide by its fiscal anchors and keep the debt-to-GDP ratio on a declining track, and that we are putting the very hard-earned gains of the 1990s at risk. Those hard-earned gains led to a much lower cost of capital for this country relative to other economic peers such as the United States. That is being put at risk with the government's reckless spending.

Even though the government is borrowing at twice the pace and is spending way more than the previous Trudeau government, with deficits double that of the last budget of Minister Chrystia Freeland at almost 2% rather than 1% of GDP, and is spending tons of money and borrowing even more money, the economy is not doing well. In fact, economic growth is being downgraded. The PBO downgraded economic growth for this year to 0.9%.

• (1030)

That follows on the heels of other economic projections, which have downgraded growth over the last couple of months. The Bank of Canada has downgraded growth, and bank economists have downgraded growth. We are now in a situation where growth has been downgraded to less than 1% this year, effectively zero, all while affordability and inflation continue to be a problem. In fact, the markets are projecting that the Bank of Canada is going to hike interest rates. We have somewhat of a stagflationary environment here, again, proof that the government's economic plan is not working.

I would like to finish by focusing on this fact: The previous Liberal government blew through every fiscal anchor it established. I reviewed all the fiscal anchors it established. Do we remember the 2015 Liberal promise of a fiscal anchor, the one that they campaigned on in that election, that we would run budget deficits just on a temporary basis, capped at no more than \$10 billion a year and just for a couple of years, and would return to budget balance? When they came to office, the Liberals threw that plan out the window, just like they chucked out the plan to reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio they made in the last election. In the Liberals' first budget, they replaced that temporary set of deficits with a new fiscal anchor of a shrinking federal debt-to-GDP ratio over the medium term. Then they abandoned that fiscal anchor.

In the fall economic statement of 2020, Minister Freeland introduced new fiscal anchors tied to labour market indicators such as employment and unemployment. These guardrails were later dropped. Then the government came forward with a new fiscal anchor, which in some ways was the old fiscal anchor. The Liberals came forward with the fiscal anchor of refocusing on reducing the debt-to-GDP ratio. They introduced that fiscal anchor in budget 2022. That ratio did not move consistently downward, and so they

later abandoned that pledge. The Liberals came up with a new pledge in the fall economic statement of 2023, where they decided that their new anchor would be to keep annual deficits below 1% of GDP.

Then we got a new Prime Minister and a new Liberal leader who replaced that fiscal anchor with two new fiscal anchors, abandoning the fiscal anchor he had promised in the platform and in the last budget. Those two new fiscal anchors were a declining deficit-to-GDP ratio and to balance operating expenses with revenue by 2028-29.

Here we are, less than a year later, and the government is going to blow through that umpteenth fiscal anchor that it established because the PBO projects that deficits to GDP are going to be increasing rather than decreasing, from 1.8% this year to 2% in 2027-28. I would note that this fiscal anchor is double the previous fiscal anchor that Minister Freeland had established.

The government and the Prime Minister are putting us on a reckless path of spending and ever-increasing deficits. That is particularly worrying when we look at what is going on with countries that are facing high debt loads, such as France, and when we look at what is going on with the pace of growth of the U.S. deficit and debt. We are not an island, and we are not a reserve currency. If there is going to be a crisis in sovereign debt borrowing, Canada is particularly vulnerable, as we were in the mid-1990s, and we will be buffeted by whatever crisis takes place outside of this country because of this ever-increasing debt and this ever-increasing interest on the debt.

The PBO is highlighting what many other reports have highlighted: that the government's economic plan is not working, that the national debt is growing at double the pace of deficits, that economic growth is slowing, that inflation is starting to take hold again and that affordability remains a crisis. For all those reasons, I encourage the House to vote for the motion.

• (1035)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to the member opposite. He made reference to Canada, France and the U.S.A. I think it is important that, when we think of the G7 countries, which include the United States, France, Germany and England, Canada places exceptionally well. We are one of only two countries, Canada and Germany, that have a AAA credit rating. The Conservatives want to see cutbacks. Would those cutbacks be to military expenditures, where we are meeting the 2% targets? That is a \$5-billion expense. Are the Conservatives saying that we should not be spending that money? Are the Conservatives saying that we should not have given the tax break for 22 million Canadians? Are they saying that we should reinstate the carbon tax, in order to justify what the member opposite is saying? Where is the overall plan to develop the Canadian economy, coming from the Conservative Party?

• (1040)

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, I disagree with the IMF's assertion that Canada's debt to GDP is in good shape. I think that fails to take into account the fact that Canada's subnational governments have some of the highest, if not the highest, indebtedness in the OECD. If I recall correctly, the Province of Ontario has more debt than the State of California, whose economy is bigger than Canada's. Subnational debt in the United States is much lower than in Canada, and that is not incorporated into the G7 rankings that the IMF has analyzed, nor is the fact that of the G7 countries, Canada is the smallest currency and is not a reserve currency, unlike the other members of the European Union, in the Eurozone, the United States or Japan.

I think that assertion fails to take into account what the member opposite has been talking about. In brief, to finish, the solution is to address supply-side reforms, rather than the government's approach of always subsidizing demand-side initiatives. That is the fundamental problem with the government's economic approach.

[Translation]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I also think this government's priorities are misplaced. For example, the entire budget for official languages support programs in Quebec, which was \$120 million last year, is dedicated to strengthening English in Quebec, even though French is the language under threat.

The government also says it has no money for the Translation Bureau, so it plans to make cuts and eliminate 340 positions through attrition at the Translation Bureau, which is essential to ensuring access to both official languages here in Parliament.

What does my colleague think of that?

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, I think it is vital to defend the rights of francophones across Canada. I think that starts with ensuring that our economy grows significantly to make it possible to subsidize programs for francophones and the French fact in Canada.

The problem with the government's economic plan is that whenever a challenge arises, its response is more government spending rather than the kind of fundamental economic reforms that would create the conditions for stronger GDP growth and a more productive economy.

That is the fundamental problem with the government's plan.

[English]

Scott Anderson (Vernon—Lake Country—Monashee, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very expensive speech, as it turns out. I just googled the debt. We are spending between \$2,500 and \$5,000 per second in this country on the debt. The 10-minute speech was a \$3-million speech. It may only have been \$1.5 million on the lower part. I would like my colleague to explain to the Liberals once again why debt is bad.

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, the growth in the debt is concerning, because we have seen this story play out before. It starts to chew up an ever-increasing amount of federal revenues,

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putting at risk the very social programs, like health care and education, that Canadians rely upon.

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 good to be here this morning to combat the misinformation from the Conservatives. I do not know how many falsehoods the former member for Carleton can jam into one opposition day motion, but the Conservatives seem to have outdone themselves this time. No matter how many falsehoods they put together, they cannot constitute a truth, and that is what we see in this opposition day motion.

I welcome the opportunity to speak to the motion. It gives me the opportunity to speak to our government's plan for building a stronger Canadian economy while maintaining fiscal responsibility. It is an important debate at a time when events beyond our borders are having real impacts on economies and households around the world.

The global economy is changing rapidly, and we all know that. Long-standing trading relationships are shifting. Uncertainty remains very high, and countries around the world are competing for investment, jobs and opportunities. In that environment, Canada must be both ambitious and disciplined.

We begin from a position of fiscal strength, and we cannot understate this. It is really important that Canada, as a country, starts from one of the strongest positions, certainly in the G7. Many of our agencies internationally that look at and compare economies around the world say that Canada has one of the strongest fiscal positions in the world, including the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. Our responsibility, I would say, is to protect that advantage while putting it to work to build a more productive, resilient and self-reliant economy. That means making deliberate choices about where government spends, where it saves, and where we invest today so that we can deliver prosperity for tomorrow.

Budget 2025 marked an important shift in how we manage federal finances. Rather than allowing the cost of government to continue growing, we are shifting resources toward investments that can expand Canada's economic capacity. In short, we have shifted from government operations to boosting productivity. We are spending less on running government so we can invest more in building Canada.

Our fiscal anchors remain very clear: balancing day-to-day operating spending with revenues by year 2028-29 and maintaining a declining deficit-to-GDP ratio, and we are making progress. Despite what the Conservatives say, despite how much they talk down the Canadian economy, we are making significant progress in this country.

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The government is now on track to balance the operating budget in 2027-28, which is one year ahead of schedule. Let us not forget that in the spring economic update, we reported \$11 billion less of a deficit than was previously projected. At the same time, we are following through on the efficiency measures set out in budget 2025. That includes the comprehensive expenditure review, which, alongside other measures identified in the budget, will deliver \$60 billion in savings and revenues over the next five years.

We are also reducing the size of government. We are rightsizing the public service to a more sustainable level through attrition, workforce adjustment and early retirement incentives. As that work advances, we are turning our attention to additional areas where government can operate more efficiently, including targeted horizontal reviews and efforts to rein in spending on external management and consulting services.

We recognize that rising debt servicing costs reinforce the very importance of maintaining sound public finances. That is precisely why we are taking action to constrain the growth of day-to-day operating spending, to find savings across government and to maintain clear fiscal anchors. However, we will not strengthen Canada's finances by weakening Canada's economy. We know the opposite is actually the truth, but that method is what the Conservatives propose over and over again.

The Conservatives propose to cut back and not invest strategically in the economy, which would really weaken the Canadian economy. This would not improve the public finances of the country at all. In fact, we know that if we make strategic investments, building a stronger economy will continue to strengthen Canada's public finances over time. That is the sustainable path forward. It is disciplined spending combined with strategic investments that expand our productive capacity and support stronger economic growth.

• (1045)

This is exactly what we are seeing in the economy today. We have seen the GDP up in the last quarter, Q2. It was up by 3.3%, exceeding expectations. It was the fastest growth in the G7. We saw GDP per capita up to 3.9%. Wages have been outpacing inflation, and we see new business investment on the rise at 8.9%, almost 9%. This is significant, especially when we look at the headwinds the country and the global economy are facing due to wars, conflicts and the oil price shocks associated with those, not to mention, obviously, the trading relationship with our southern neighbours, which has been strained and is affecting the Canadian economy.

This is where our approach differs from one presented by the opposition. Fiscal discipline is necessary, but cutting for the sake of cutting is not an economic strategy. Conservatives are known for that. They would cut indiscriminately in ways that do not make sense, that do not select the areas where government operating expenses can be improved or where government operations themselves can be optimized. Our approach to spend less on operations of government means we can invest more in building Canada's economy. The purpose of that discipline is not simply to spend less, but it is also to create the capacity or the fiscal room to invest more in the things that make Canada stronger and more productive. Those are capital investments in productive, revenue-generating assets that will return dividends to the taxpayer in the future. Yes, it

will take time to grow the economy and see those investments realize themselves in the Canadian economy, but we are seeing that progress already being made.

This means making government work better, removing barriers to investment and creating the conditions for more capital to flow into the Canadian economy. One way we are doing that is through the new productivity mega deduction, which is one of the most significant changes to Canada's business tax system in half a century. I have talked to business owners all across my riding and in my region, and let me tell the House, they love this measure. They think this measure is really sound support from the government at a time where uncertainty is really the thing they are most grappling with. This measure creates long-term certainty. It allows businesses of all sizes to immediately deduct the full cost of a much broader range of investments, giving them a powerful incentive to build, expand and create good jobs in Canadian communities. This includes investments in everything from fibre optic networks, software, research and development, to mines, pipelines, railways, bridges and roads.

We are also making immediate expensing permanent. This is significant, because we know that when those policy signals from the government change, they can really disrupt investment flows and disrupt industries, because they are planning ahead for many years to come. Their capital investment plans are things that are very sensitive to those swings and changes. Giving them long-term certainty is the number one thing we hear from the industries and the business community across Canada. I have done two pre-budget consultations over two summers now, and one of the themes that comes out of those conversations every single time is how businesses need long-term certainty, how capital needs long-term certainty in order to flow. This is how they make better management and investment decisions, and they need those clear and crisp policy signals that give them long-term certainty. This is exactly what we are doing with this measure.

We have made immediate expensing permanent. This measure will increase the share of assets eligible for immediate expensing from roughly 15% to more than 65% of capital assets, while lowering the marginal effective tax rate on new business investment from roughly 13% to 6.4%. We are cutting it in half. This makes Canada the most tax-competitive advanced economy in the world. It is significantly lower than the United States. It is 10% lower than the United States, and it is one-third of the OECD average. This is significant in terms of incentivizing new business investment into Canada.

Creating the conditions for investment is only one part of the equation. We also need to get projects built and built faster. That is exactly why the government stood up the Major Projects Office, to advance projects of national interest designed to connect our economy, diversify Canadian industries and trade, and create high-paying careers.

• (1050)

Since September 2025, 18 projects and 10 transformative strategies have been referred to the Major Projects Office, representing more than \$126 billion of investment in Canada's economy. These are investments with the potential to transform Canada's economy, investments in critical minerals that the world needs, energy infrastructure that can help Canadian resources reach new markets, transportation infrastructure that can help move Canadian products faster and more efficiently across Canada into those global markets, and major projects that can create good jobs, strengthen our economic security and unlock new opportunities across the country.

I am particularly proud of the Darlington new nuclear project, just next door to my riding. It is significant, as it is the first deployment of small modular reactors as a major project. It got \$2 billion of investment from the Canada Growth Fund, a fund that our government set up and capitalized with \$15 billion a few years back. That Darlington new nuclear site is creating 18,000 construction jobs and 3,700 operational jobs in my region, in Durham region. That is significant employment and far outweighs the job losses that we have experienced since the trade war started with the United States. It is 10 times greater, in fact, than the job losses. Those are significant employment opportunities in my region. I am very proud of that work, of the Canada Growth Fund's investment, the private capital that was associated with that investment and the many job opportunities, the good, high-paying careers at OPG in Durham region.

This is what spending less to invest more looks like in practice: a more efficient government, a more competitive investment environment and more major projects getting built across Canada.

It is not just in my riding. There are all kinds of projects right across the country, the northwest transmission line in B.C., Churchill Falls, which was announced and is a massive clean energy project, Contrecoeur in Quebec and many more. There are quite a few critical mineral projects that are really exciting to see come online.

The measures we have put in place are the signs of a responsible government. It is not simply about how much we spend. It is about the investments we are making that deliver results for Canadians.

Canada has everything it needs to succeed: the resources, the talent, the ambition. We now need to put them to work. That means spending less, again, on running government and creating more room for investment. It means attracting capital, getting major projects built and creating good jobs in communities across the country. Above all else, it means making choices today that will strengthen Canada's economy for generations to come.

Canadians expect their government to be careful with their money. They also expect us to have a plan for the future. Those objectives are not in conflict. They actually complement one another. We

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can control government spending while investing in growth. We can protect Canada's fiscal strength while building the infrastructure our economy needs. We can attract investment and create opportunities while making Canada more resilient and more self-reliant. Those are the choices our government is making every day. That work will continue.

Next week, our government will introduce budget 2026, building on the progress already under way to strengthen our economy and create many new opportunities for Canadians. We have an opportunity at this juncture to build a stronger Canada and our government is determined to seize that opportunity to make Canada the strongest economy in the G7. I think we have been very clear and very consistent with that message and are staying true to it, with our compass pointed at true north, which is to build a stronger country, create more self-reliance and to ensure that we do so in a fiscally responsible manner that creates good-paying jobs for Canadians.

Canadians, above all else, want a highly productive economy. They want to see their standard of living increase over time. They want to feel like they are getting ahead. They want good incomes that outpace inflation. They want the extra income so that they can afford to feed their family, go on vacation and have a high quality of life.

• (1055)

That is what Canadians are known for, and that is what Canada is known for, so that is exactly what our government is focused on every single day, creating that prosperous economy where Canadians can feel like they are getting ahead.

Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member representing the government is omitting a key fact. The government, for the last 11 years, has been borrowing money and promising Canadians that the next day will be a better day. The government is printing money and piling on the debt. Our debt service is somewhere around \$60 billion, and will probably be \$80 billion in two or three years.

That is very concerning. Anyone with the right economic mind can understand how concerning that is to Canadians' lives. Canadians are still lining up at food banks. The Liberals are printing all this money, borrowing all this money. It is billions of dollars. The debt service is piling up and Canadians are not getting ahead.

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How does that make sense to the member?

• (1100)

Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, it does not surprise me that the premise of the member opposite's question is false. What I mean by that is that our government has been responding to crisis after crisis that has hit our economy. I do not think it is news to anyone in the House that the global economy is highly integrated and that Canada is subject to the pressures that the world is facing today.

We have had to borrow money to invest in the Canadian economy, but there is growth in the Canadian economy. I understand the Conservatives would not invest in that growth. They would cut all of the things that Canadians rely on. They would not invest in children. They would not invest in a groceries and essentials benefit. They would not feed kids at school. They would not invest in dental care. They would not invest in child care.

The Conservatives have made it very clear that they would not make investments. They would not have a productivity mega deduction to spur business investment in this country. They would not do those things because it is as if they think the economy will grow by itself without the government making strategic investments, and we—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, not only are the Liberals running up massive deficits, but they are also forgoing sources of revenue. One example is that they are refusing to tax the web giants, despite the fact that they are causing immense harm to our local media.

Worse still, this outcome was entirely predictable. They did it to appease Mr. Trump as part of the negotiations, but they got nothing in return. They merely whetted the U.S. administration's appetite.

[English]

Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, we have done everything we can to be a reasonable trade partner and reliable trade partner with our southern neighbour. At this point, we are pursuing diversified trade relationships all around the world.

We have seen the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of International Trade and others work to help Canada and our businesses access foreign markets all around the world. We have signed over 21 new trade and security agreements in just over a year. We saw the highest level of non-U.S. trade in our history in July of this year. There are very significant increases to Canada's trading relationships that are part of diversifying and of ensuring that we have a resilient economy.

There are results in the Canadian economy. The member opposite said we are borrowing money, but we are also seeing growth. I cited in my speech we have 3.3% GDP growth, the highest in the G7. There was 3.9% GDP per capita growth in quarter two. Business investment is up almost 9%. We have seen a 22.6% increase in business investment in new machinery and equipment since we put in place our—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong.

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for all of his work.

In 2008, when we had the world economic recession, it was former prime minister Stephen Harper and former minister Jim Flaherty who put together a plan to infuse money into infrastructure and build to keep the Canadian economy strong, and it worked. We now see the Prime Minister taking that experience and having us build nation-building projects and infrastructure and diversify our trade. All of these things are working.

Can my colleague expound a bit on the evidence we are seeing that things are moving in a better direction?

Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, I represent the riding that Jim Flaherty served for about a decade before he passed. He was a good finance minister, and I agree with the strategy, which is that, in hard economic times, often one of the things that governments do is to strategically invest in infrastructure. Canada is now ranked as the number one place in the world for new investment in infrastructure.

We are the most attractive in the world for infrastructure investment. That is significant, and we have seen lots of new private sector investment interest in Canada from around the world. The Prime Minister's investment summit got almost half a trillion dollars in new business investment commitments from our financial institutions here in Canada, our big banks and our pension plans.

We are going to build this country up, and infrastructure is one of the ways that we can invest in a more productive Canadian economy for all Canadians.

• (1105)

Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC): Madam Speaker, back in 2020, government tax revenue was \$284 billion. In 2025, it is \$417 billion. The GST went from \$32 billion to \$52 billion. The amount of money the government has racked up in debt means that a lot of money is going to be spent on debt servicing charges. The GST that is currently being collected is not even enough to cover the debt servicing charges, let alone things like health care transfers to the province, military spending and things like that, which Canadians are expecting.

I very simply ask the member, with the government set to blow the debt servicing charges all the way up to \$83 billion in the coming years, and with all the extra tax revenue the government has been generating, where did the money go? Why is the government running such a massive deficit if it has increased tax revenue by over \$130 billion in five years?

Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, we know that debt servicing charges are rising, but that is not because of the Government of Canada. It is because of long-term bond rates that determine the interest rates the Canadian government will have to pay. We recognize that those debt servicing charges are going up, but what is the solution in that environment when Canada is facing a trade war and facing all these economic shocks?

The Conservatives would dial it all back so that we would have no growth in the economy. That is not the solution. The solution is to invest strategically in an economy that becomes more productive and is able to generate revenue, which is exactly why we have launched the capital budgeting framework. We are focused on revenue-generating assets and investing strategically in the Canadian economy so we have growth and productivity gains, so Canadians have a better standard of living in the future, and eventually, as those revenues come in, so we can pay down the debt and deficit, which is what we all want to see.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague made reference to the issue of dialing back. As an example, I think of Canada's commitment, through the leadership of our Prime Minister, to bring our Canadian Forces spending up to 2% of GDP, which I think we achieved within seven months of being in government. Now we are looking at eventually increasing it to 5% of GDP. These are important sovereignty-related issues. These are expenditures that are really important for us as a nation.

We hear the Conservatives talk as if they want investment in the Canadian Forces, but at the end of the day, it is questionable whether they even support that sort of an expenditure. What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, the question gives me the opportunity to point out that, under Conservative leadership, we were under 1% of our commitment to NATO. Under our government, we reached the 2% target way ahead of schedule, and way ahead of previous governments' commitments, which is a good thing. My constituents in my riding want Canada to be safe and secure for the future. We know that, in today's environment, in today's world, which is more dangerous and divided, we need to make those investments in defence.

It is unfortunate to some degree that the world is in that state, but those are investments that Canadians expect us to make. It is a shame that the Conservatives would not step up to make those investments at this time. They would claim some ideological stance on fiscal responsibility that makes no sense in today's environment in order to cut back even further from defence investment.

Our government has stood up, under our Prime Minister's leadership, to invest over \$80 billion in defence in the last budget, budget 2025. Those are important strategic investments in our national security.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I send my regards to my colleague from Whitby, whom I have not seen in a while, and to you as well. You know how much I enjoy speaking when you are in the chair, especially since you are often the only

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person who listens to me, along with my Bloc Québécois colleagues. I doubly appreciate it. I did not want to start a debate on that, though, so I will start my speech over again and give back the 30 seconds I lost saying those things. We need to take this seriously. It is an opposition day.

As I said recently in the House, there are 343 members of Parliament—though there are a few vacant seats—and I do not think there is anyone in the House who is not concerned about the cost of living. I think that is important. When we visit our ridings, we see that people are concerned about the rising cost of groceries and transportation. There is also the anxiety and fear of what may lie ahead.

The Bank of Canada is talking about raising interest rates. That means higher mortgage rates. There is talk of increasing bond rates, which will also have an impact on fixed rates. People are not just worried about the cost of living and the price of gas at the pump today. People who are budget conscious and are stretched increasingly thin are worried about the impact in the medium term. This is a big problem, because a situation that we thought was temporary, with the Strait of Hormuz and the war in Ukraine, seems to be becoming permanent.

I have said this to a number of colleagues here, and I have also discussed it with the Minister of Finance and National Revenue: The least wealthy 20% of Quebecers and Canadians must be foremost in our minds. We know that 80% of people have seen a significant increase in their purchasing power in recent years. We tend to forget that. People generally feel that they deserve pay raises, but do not deserve higher costs. The fact remains that some people have experienced a real increase in their purchasing power. Meanwhile, 20% of people have not seen their purchasing power grow. For those people, the slightest increase in the cost of meat, gas and utility bills hits hard. That is why I think we should vote in favour of this motion.

Why do I think that? It is because the Prime Minister who took over the reins of government told us that Canadians could judge him by the prices at the grocery store. I am not the one saying that. Quite frankly, I would never have said something like that during an election campaign. I would never have made such a statement, but the Prime Minister did. Perhaps he has some kind of superpower for the rest of us do not have over food prices, which are set on the Chicago Board of Trade. I do not know what superpowers the Prime Minister may have, but he said it.

Now, the preamble to the motion does take a simplified view of the situation. We acknowledge that. It is a Conservative motion. If we are ever going to vote for a Conservative motion, we will have to accept some oversimplification, which I will discuss later on. However, I think that politely asking the Prime Minister to spend a little time here in Parliament and in committee, to pay a little attention to the parliamentary process and to come and speak about the cost of living, might not be such a bad thing.

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As I said, ever since the Prime Minister took office, we do not really know what is going on at the Department of Finance anymore. We do not know who is truly making the decisions or where the initiative is coming from. In committee, the Minister of Finance does not answer our questions. He shows up with infographics, pages covered in little coloured bubbles, and says, for example, that ordinary people can do the math on the excise tax cuts using a paper and pen. The Prime Minister has expertise in economics. He knows the impact of taxes. He knows how these things are calculated. He has a background in economics. Perhaps that could compensate for those economic areas where the Minister of Finance is lacking. That might help increase the quality of debate at the Standing Committee on Finance.

We would be remiss in not having the Prime Minister appear before the committee. It is a sound idea. I think the Prime Minister would like that. He is a great communicator. He is someone who has learned over time to communicate, sometimes directly with the public. However, he needs to learn to communicate with parliamentarians, especially since there are legitimate concerns. For instance, the motion refers to debt and government spending.

When the Prime Minister arrived, when he first decided to take that position, the first step was to convince people that this was a new government, but it depends on how one defines a new government. A few seats changed hands, and there are a few new ministers. The truth is that the Trudeau government had been in office for nearly a decade, a decade during which we can all agree that fiscal restraint was not a priority. The Prime Minister therefore decided that there was not much he could do about that. He was in a tough situation. His hands were tied. On top of that, he arrived in the midst of a crisis.

• (1110)

The Prime Minister decided he would cover up the problem by inventing an investment concept that the Parliamentary Budget Officer does not understand and that CPA Canada was unable to explain to us in committee. Despite what the government says, this is not at all in line with what is being done in the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom has a unitary government, whereas here we have health transfers. When Quebec uses a transfer from Ottawa to build a hospital, who does the infrastructure belong to? Does it fall under Quebec's infrastructure plan or is it an investment expenditure by Ottawa? Is it counted twice?

Brushing problems aside or redefining them to sweep them under the rug does not get rid of the dust that is under there. I think that the Prime Minister needs to explain that decision.

Why is the government classifying tax credits as investments, as tax expenditures? That is not done anywhere else in the world.

To my mind, investments normally refer to assets that appear on a balance sheet: concrete, buildings, hospitals. Ottawa owns 2% of all capital, of all public infrastructure in Canada. That 2% comes from the investment advisory council set up by then finance minister Bill Morneau. It was tabled in committee. That means there are no federal investments. The few federal investments that do exist are already accounted for in private sector accounting. Some of our colleagues come from the business world. Airports, which the government is seeking to privatize, along with ports and many Crown

corporations, are already accounted for elsewhere. That means they cannot simply be folded into the government's figures through creative accounting.

When a government's response to a problem is to obscure it, re-define it and deny its existence rather than resolve it, I think that raises a number of questions.

As I said, CPA Canada representatives appeared before the committee. This is the organization that people look to for expertise on tax rules and definitions of what constitutes an investment in Canada. When I asked the CPA Canada representatives if they considered this to be an investment, things got pretty awkward. Sometimes, the people who appear before the committee do not want to upset the government, but they did not have an answer. The Minister of Finance does not have an answer. All they can say is that a written response will be provided to the committee.

Now, the motion oversimplifies a few things. Is it true that federal government spending caused inflation? I think the House should know that this is not an entirely accurate interpretation of reality.

Our GDP is below its potential. In other words, we could produce more without creating inflation or inflationary pressure.

Our unemployment rate is above what is known as the "natural" rate. In other words, we could have economic growth and reduce unemployment without creating inflation.

We know very well that, in a situation like this, government spending does not systematically cause inflation. That is taught in school. Decades and decades of empirical research prove it. However, that does not mean that borrowed money does not carry interest. That does not mean that the government should spend money willy-nilly. That does not mean that it should not have fiscal anchors. That does not mean that it has to spend years saying it is keeping an eye on the debt-to-GDP ratio.

Now, all of a sudden, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance are blowing through the targets.

When targets are not met, they cannot be redefined. They cannot.

Obviously, the Conservative motion oversimplifies a few things, but the concerns about the stewardship of public funds are not unreasonable. What the Conservatives are essentially asking is why we do not put questions directly to the Prime Minister, who seems to be making all the decisions himself.

It is a bit hard to object to that, especially since the government has decided to forgo certain revenues. The Parliamentary Budget Officer says that we will have to wait and see what the budget says, because certain things could still change. Decisions are going to be made. We will find out next week. Based on the current trajectory, however, the Parliamentary Budget Officer says that the deficit expectations will not be met, that the deficit is going to be bigger and that the resulting additional deficit will add up to roughly the same amount as the tax holiday recently granted by the government. The parliamentary debate on that issue just ended, but the government is giving itself two or three weeks to draft a budget, which we know will very likely pass, barring a major upset. Considering all the to-ing and fro-ing between the two sides of the House, anything could happen in a week, but nothing is expected to happen.

Anyway, there was the excise tax, and there were also the tax cuts for the rich over the past few years. The government tells us that it cut income tax rates for the middle class. However, while it lowered them for the first and second tax brackets, the wealthiest people, earning \$200,000 to \$300,000 a year, pay taxes at the marginal tax rate.

I see some puzzled faces.

• (1115)

As members know, we have a marginal tax rate. A wealthy person gets the basic exemption and pays a lower rate in the next tax bracket. In the next tax bracket up, they pay a higher rate. The wealthiest fall into every tax bracket. When the government says it is lowering the second bracket, the people who benefit the most are those who make a great deal of money. There are other mechanisms for redistributing wealth. The government is forgoing revenue without achieving the intended redistributive effect on households. Since we have a budget management problem, it is important to redistribute the money to people who have less. Spending is high, but it is not achieving the goal. We could be doing more with the same amount of money, so it is worth asking the Prime Minister some questions, and even asking the Minister of Finance some questions too, if he is willing to answer. Now that is a challenge. The Minister of Finance is very talented when it comes to sidestepping questions, but I think we deserve some answers on this.

We also deserve answers on oil subsidies. The last time I checked, oil is not subject to tariffs. It is the sector that has received the best treatment from Donald Trump. It seems that Donald Trump is just as passionate about oil as the Prime Minister is. Why has this industry been getting 90% of the government's attention for some time now? I was listening to the member for Whitby speak earlier. Before becoming a parliamentary secretary, the member for Whitby was one of the Liberal caucus' most ardent advocates for combating global warming. He moved motions about it. He held press conferences with the people who are now suing the government for its inaction on climate change. Someone is paying for these subsidies. The Liberals are counting them as investments. There are people paying for these subsidies. They have an alternative use. If these are indeed investments, there are other types of investments that would be more beneficial for future generations. We deserve some answers about that.

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The government tells us that it is going to make 15% cuts to all departments, downsize the public service and speed up attrition. At the same time, it is creating Crown corporations. First, there was an agency for defence contracts. That was under Bill C-31. The government is now introducing Bill C-40, saying that it will undo everything that Bill C-31 did. We do not even know what the right system is anymore. Bill C-40 is going to undo what Bill C-31 did and create a Crown corporation whose CEO will earn twice as much as the Minister of Finance. We are wondering why the government is doing this. Are there issues of transparency or issues of conflict of interest? Did the Ethics Commissioner ask about it? We do not know. Why not ask him these questions? The Prime Minister is a smart guy. He is known for his intellect. He is capable of answering our questions.

I would like to get an answer to that, especially since he keeps cutting public service positions while telling us that AI is going to solve the problem at the Canada Revenue Agency, never mind that AI is making 80% of the errors. Then he goes and creates agencies like this one. Are the staff at these agencies counted as part of the public service? These agencies will of course have staff. Do they count? When he says he has been very successful in reducing the number of public servants, will those be real numbers or not? I asked that question in committee, but we did not get an answer, so I think that still warrants hearing from the Prime Minister.

Then there are the provinces' finances. There are public services. We were talking about the cost of living. People want to be able to afford their groceries. They want to be able to go to work. They want to be able to afford daily essentials, but people also get sick and they want to receive health care too. They want decent hospitals. They want infrastructure. Last year, the Minister of Finance met 50% of the provincial premiers' requests for infrastructure funding, and he attached all kinds of conditions to it. Receiving health care is important. People continue to get sick even though the federal government does not run the hospital, and those folks need to be taken care of. The conditions need to be scaled back as well. Transfers come with a bunch of conditions attached.

The Liberals are saying that there are interprovincial barriers and that they should be doing something other than dealing with regulations, red tape, bureaucracy and so on. They are now saying that they are going to make transfers and that there are going to be two million conditional federal-provincial agreements, each of which will take a whole floor of public servants to manage. Is that not the opposite of the approach preferred by the Prime Minister, who has the heart of a Conservative, and by the Conservatives, who, in many ways, have the hearts of new Liberals? Should we not ask questions about that? We should, because the provinces, Quebec and the federal government are interconnected. That is part of the cost of living.

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● (1120)

As for seniors, they are now divided into two classes: those aged 65 to 74, and those aged 75 and over who are entitled to more than the others. The long-standing understanding has been that, when people plan for retirement, everyone begins receiving OAS at age 65. By the way, OAS benefits are taxable and subject to the progressive income tax system, as I was explaining to my colleague opposite a few minutes ago. There is therefore an element of fairness and targeting at play. How is it that the government has money for the excise tax but it suddenly does not have the same amount of money to give to Quebec seniors? These are questions that must be answered.

The same can be said of fiscal anchors. When a government is first elected, it promises fiscal discipline, but when its fiscal anchor no longer suits its purposes, it simply changes the anchor. Why? I looked up the definition of “anchor” in the dictionary. It is something that is supposed to be solid, otherwise the ship would run aground. A fiscal anchor is not meant to be changed with every budget.

That is what the Parliamentary Budget Officer lambasted the government for. She says that we need to pay attention to the debt situation overall, not just to the deficit as defined by the Prime Minister. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, over the next five years, cumulative deficits are projected to total \$333.3 billion, while the debt will increase by \$732.9 billion. That is more than double. We need to ask questions about that.

We need to challenge the investment expenditures. Are they really investments? Incidentally, Ottawa does not have an infrastructure plan, unlike the provinces, which follow proper accounting rules. Ottawa tells us that these are investments, but there are no assets backing the liabilities. There is no annual depreciation of those assets. It is all a fiction.

Quebec actually records the money it deposits into the generations fund as an expense. In other words, Quebec sets aside cash in a fund for the benefit of future generations and accounts for it as an expense. Ottawa, on the other hand, records spending as an investment when there is in fact no investment. That raises questions.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer tells us that, in five years' time, by 2031, the debt-to-GDP ratio is going to rise from 40.8% to 42.6%. That is just the federal debt. Canada's public debt includes provincial and municipal debts as well. When the Liberals compare themselves to the G7, they compare Canada's federal debt to the debt levels of unitary states and announce that things are just fine.

On that note, I want to say that the government has had an obsession with the G7 for the past year and a half. The G7 is all it thinks about. G7 countries have high-speed trains, so it wants them too. G7 countries have this, G7 countries have that. It seems to be stuck on the G7, or maybe its G7 key is stuck—I will work on that and ask for a correction to the blues later.

Who is this government comparing itself to? Perhaps it is comparing itself to France. How are things going in France when it comes to the cost of living? How are things in France? Perhaps it is comparing itself to the United States, which is part of the G7. The debt situation in the United States is great. Perhaps it is comparing

itself to the United Kingdom. Are things going well in the U.K.? Is that an example to follow? Let us keep looking. It is comparing itself to Japan, where the savings behaviour and public debt ownership are primarily Japanese, and there have been significant problems with public debt and demographics for years. It is comparing itself to Japan.

The Liberals point to the G7 to argue that things are going well in Canada and in Germany.

The questions being asked about the trajectory of public debt in Canada and the questions that the Conservatives want to ask are legitimate. Those questions deserve answers. If the Prime Minister disagrees, he can say so.

In the last minute of speaking time I have left, I would like to return to what our priority should be. A budget is coming, and our priority should be the people who are at risk of losing their jobs today. The government has announced a \$9-billion fund for Ontario's steel industry, yet not a single penny has been set aside for Quebec. Where is the fairness in that? There are steel mills in Quebec, but they are not getting a single penny. We need to protect those jobs, too.

The 20% of households that will be hit hardest may find themselves unable to buy school supplies for their children when food prices rise by even half a percentage point. We need to look after these people. We need to increase the Canada groceries and essentials benefit. We need to look after them.

The Liberals know that their suspension of the excise tax is set to expire early next year. They need to prepare for it. They must keep in mind the people I have just spoken about.

If the Prime Minister keeps these people in mind, rather than business leaders, then I am confident he will agree to appear before the committee and work constructively with us and the rest of the opposition.

● (1125)

[English]

Steven Bonk (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, there was so much in that speech that I agreed with and quite a bit in that speech that I did not agree with. I think the main thing I do not agree with is that the Prime Minister has the heart of a Conservative. A Conservative would never run up such ridiculous amounts of debt. There has been more debt added to our national debt load during the terms of former prime minister Trudeau and the current Prime Minister than there was under all of the other prime ministers combined.

In fact, we see now that in a lot of the COVID spending, all the bonds that were sold during that time were short-term bonds, and \$600 billion or 29% of our national debt is going to be turned over this year. When the member was mentioning hospitals and the infrastructure needs in Canada, I could not agree more with him. We are now spending more on debt repayment than we do on health care transfers.

Could the hon. member explain a little further how the debt that is crippling us now is actually halting the investment in infrastructure?

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I did not want to get into a psychoanalysis of who has what kind of heart. What I am saying is that, for a number of years now, the Government of Canada has been maintaining certain fiscal anchors. It said it would increase spending, and by a large amount, considering the billions of dollars involved, but it believed that the debt-to-GDP ratio would decrease or stabilize over time. That means that it is important for the government to control the debt-to-GDP ratio.

Now, in her report, the Parliamentary Budget Officer is telling us that the government is abandoning that fiscal anchor and that the debt-to-GDP ratio is going to increase. Since the government is not following its own rules, it is now saying that it is going to change the rules and the definitions.

Basically, the motion says that we have questions for the Prime Minister. Perhaps he is the right person to answer those questions. Sometimes we cannot ask him those question in the House, for reasons that I am not allowed to mention, so perhaps we need a more relaxed setting, a little more time and a different format to ask the Prime Minister questions. I think that the Standing Committee on Finance would be a very appropriate forum.

That is why we support the motion.

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government has introduced a number of affordability measures. At the same time, we have a plan to build projects of national interest to create jobs.

Given the ongoing global crisis, does the Bloc Québécois not think that this is justified?

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague very much. We have worked together in the past and are likely to continue to do so. However, why does the Prime Minister not come and discuss this with us in committee?

The Liberal member seems proud of these measures, proud of the plan and proud of what the Prime Minister is doing. She makes it sound like the government is not making any mistakes. There have been housing problems, there was the Roxham crisis, and Quebec is demanding to be paid back the hundreds of millions of dollars it spent on asylum seekers. That is part of the problem. The member is proud. I do not fully share her point of view. The government is not doing everything wrong, but there are things that need to change.

Why does the Prime Minister not appear before the Standing Committee on Finance?

It could be constructive, and the Prime Minister might enjoy appearing before the committee. I think the member should send him an email or go see him in the lobby to tell him to appear before the Standing Committee on Finance, because he will enjoy it as much as she enjoys being in the House.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is always a great pleasure to listen to my colleague from Mirabel. As we know, in addition to being a member of Parliament, he is a university professor. He has a Ph.D. in eco-

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nomics, so when he speaks, it always makes an impression. I feel like I am getting an economics 101 lesson when I listen to his speeches. I wanted to thank him for that.

There is one thing he may not have had time to mention. The government is currently implementing budget cuts. It is cutting budgets in the public service and is also making cuts to direct services. Take, for example, what is happening in federal prisons, whose budgets have been slashed by \$132 million and which have had to reduce the number of correctional officers on the front lines. As a result, inmates have managed to get items such as food and alcohol delivered to them by drone. There are significant budget cuts happening, and I think the government should rethink its priorities. It gives everything to the oil companies and nothing to seniors and prisons.

What does my colleague think?

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, this is what can happen when budget cuts are made quickly across the board, using a blanket approach. The government decided that, aside from defence and two or three other organizations, every department will face 15% budget cuts.

With regard to penitentiaries, the Archambault facility was located in my riding before the electoral boundaries were revised. There were significant security issues there, including people smuggling in 3-D printed parts for firearms. Thankfully, no one ever smuggled in enough parts to build a whole firearm. The people who work there provide a direct service, one that is essential both to the safety of Quebecers and Canadians and to that of inmates, as well as to maintaining public confidence in our correctional system and in the rule of law.

There is this notion that budget cuts can be made everywhere and AI can be brought in, as though we were at McKinsey, and that it will deliver the same results because the federal government does not really provide services. In fact, the government provides few enough as it is, so I think it should give special consideration to those areas where services are actually being delivered and where public confidence in our most fundamental institutions could be undermined. The situation in our penitentiaries illustrates what can happen when the intentions are good, but the desire is to move too fast and go too far.

• (1135)

[*English*]

Ned Kuruc (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague this: In his expertise, as he has a background in economics, does he believe that the Prime Minister could actually get this budget under control? What are some of his points about that?

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I did not write the budget, thank God. Perhaps that answers my colleague's question. This is not an easy situation. The reality is that the economic situation is really not easy. No one here decided to impose tariffs on us; they were imposed on us from outside. We are experiencing major structural challenges, and in a situation like this, the choices we make become all the more important.

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When there is growth, as there was in the 1990s, when money flows freely and the economy is doing well, we can afford to be less discriminating in the choices we make without it having an immediate impact.

The motion does not call for a return to a balanced budget, far from it. What the motion says is that if we want the debt-to-GDP ratio to stabilize, we will have to make choices. These are not easy choices, but I think it is up to the Prime Minister to answer for them. Like many Quebecers and Canadians, I think that a lot of things get decided in the Prime Minister's Office.

One cannot take all the credit, hold press conferences, travel the world trumpeting the decision, and then turn around and say that the minister will handle it. The Prime Minister wants to make the decisions, and he must answer for those decisions in the appropriate parliamentary forum, namely before a committee.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister is working very hard at building a stronger, healthier economy by dealing with the many different stakeholders throughout the nation, along with the premiers and indigenous leaders, in developing export opportunities for Canada, small businesses, creating jobs and so forth. He has a cabinet. There are parliamentary secretaries. There are ample opportunities. The Prime Minister does not have to answer every question that is posed in the House of Commons or the standing committees. That is why we have a cabinet. The vast majority, more than 98%, could very easily be answered through ministers and parliamentary secretaries.

It seems to me that what the member wants is for the Prime Minister to do even more work at committee stage, when in fact there is ample opportunity for the opposition to ask questions and hold the government accountable.

Does the member not believe in the parliamentary system of cabinet in government, the parliamentary secretaries, and so forth?

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I have sat in the House for five and a half years, and this is the first time I am going to vote on a motion that calls on the Prime Minister to appear in committee. My colleague is talking to us as though we spend our weeks asking the Prime Minister to waste his time in committee. This is a specific situation. There is a budget coming up. The Prime Minister has given himself special responsibilities and must be able to answer for that.

What are we to make of the fact that the Prime Minister is capable of cutting government spending by 15% in a G7 country, but is unable to cut back on something else to free up an hour to appear before a committee? We know the Prime Minister is capable of making cuts. Surely he can cut 15% of the time devoted to something on his schedule, such as a meeting. He could come to Parliament Hill a little earlier. He is a hard-working man. He has long workdays. He is capable of appearing before a committee, given the special circumstances.

Seriously, I think my colleague might be proud of his Prime Minister when he hears him testify. He might be pleased with what comes out of it. He might discover that this is what it means to believe in the parliamentary system. I urge him to show a little open-mindedness.

[English]

Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Cloverdale—Langley City.

Today we are speaking about a motion before the House that is quite timely, because the Prime Minister's government is projected to borrow \$733 billion in five years. That is more than the total debt accumulated by every prime minister in Canadian history before Justin Trudeau. It is also more than the debt added during Prime Minister Trudeau's ten years in government, years that included a once-in-a-century global pandemic. What took generations of prime ministers to accumulate, the current Prime Minister plans to borrow in just five years.

This is an extraordinary pace of borrowing, and it is mortgaging our children's future, but what do Canadians have to show for all this borrowing and all this spending? Our economic growth forecast has been downgraded to just 0.9% this year. We have a record 2.4 million visits at food banks in a single month, and one in three is for a child. Millions of Canadians are struggling to afford the most basic necessities. Meanwhile, the fastest-growing expense for the federal government is not defence, not infrastructure and not health care. It is interest on the national debt.

How sad is that? There are billions of dollars that cannot be spent on health care, infrastructure or lowering taxes for hard-working Canadians. By 2030, the government is projected to spend approximately \$83 billion a year just to service the national debt. What is the government's plan to bring this under control? There is no plan.

In fact, the Parliamentary Budget Officer projects that the federal debt-to-GDP ratio will rise over the next five years. That means that our debt burden is growing rather than shrinking, and it is in fact growing faster than our economy is growing. That is why we are calling on the Prime Minister to appear before the finance committee to answer a very simple question: What is his plan to reduce the deficit spending, bring debt interest under control, deliver tax relief for Canadians and bring the debt under control?

Let me ask a question. What would we do if our household debt were spiralling out of control? Would we change the way we measure our debt? Would we start calling our everyday expenses investments? Would we move some of our borrowing onto another credit card and tell our family that our finances were improving? No, of course we would not, but that is precisely the kind of fiscal manipulation we are seeing from the Prime Minister.

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He built his reputation on his financial credentials. Canadians were told they could trust him to manage our country's finances responsibly, but look at what has happened. The debt-to-GDP ratio is no longer the government's primary fiscal anchor. Every other serious country around the world uses this fiscal anchor, but the Prime Minister has shredded it and made up one of his own. He redefined operating expenses under a broader capital investment framework, allowing spending traditionally treated as operating expenses to be treated as capital investments.

There is the borrowing, hundreds of billions of dollars in loans, Crown corporation financing and other financial transactions, that adds to federal borrowing requirements without increasing the reported deficit by the same amount. In other words, the Prime Minister can borrow as much as he would like, and the fiscal anchor he has chosen will never be tripped. Then, the government turns around and tells Canadians that it is on the path to balancing the operating budget. Is that not convenient?

● (1140)

Here is what Canadians need to understand. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, over five years, the government is projected to run \$333 billion in deficits, but borrow \$733 billion. That is a difference of \$400 billion. Much of that difference relates to loans, Crown corporation financing and other financial assets. Loans are recorded as assets because there is an expectation that those loans will, of course, be repaid.

Let us take the example of Canada Post, a Crown corporation that has loans given by the federal government. It has not reported an annual profit since 2017, and it has accumulated billions of dollars in losses. That raises a very obvious question: How confident can taxpayers be that all government loans will be fully repaid? With the government expanding its use of Crown corporations and other financing vehicles for defence, housing and investment initiatives, Canadians deserve full transparency about the borrowing, liabilities and financial risk involved. Moving borrowing into a different part of the government's accounts does not make the financial obligations disappear.

Here is what makes this even more concerning. The International Monetary Fund has called for greater clarity and independent verification of the government's fiscal framework. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has warned that the government's new fiscal anchors provide very little discipline on borrowing. The PBO has made one thing absolutely clear: Balancing the operating budget does not mean that the government's finances are balanced.

Here we have a Prime Minister who built his reputation on financial expertise, asking Canadians to trust him while adopting fiscal measures that provide an incomplete picture of our growing borrowing requirements. Fiscal responsibility is not about how we cleverly present the numbers. It is about whether we can actually control the debt and spending. Changing the accounting does not change the bill that Canadians will ultimately have to pay.

On that note, \$83 billion in interest means \$6,000 per Canadian household just to service the debt. That is \$6,000 in taxes just to service the debt. That does not include the repayment of the debt. That is why the Prime Minister must come before committee, answer these questions, explain how he intends to restore fiscal disci-

pline, and present a credible plan for the repayment of the debt so we can bring this amount of debt under control.

What concerns me even more than the debt is what all the government spending has actually delivered for Canadians. I judge the success of a government by a very simple measure. Can Canadians build a good life for themselves and their families? Can a young couple afford their first home? Can parents afford to raise their children? Can seniors retire with dignity? Can an honest day's work still provide a decent standard of living? That is how we should measure success. Today, millions of Canadians are struggling to do precisely those things. We have a record of 2.4 million food bank visits in a single month, and one-third involve children.

● (1145)

Let us think about what that says about the state of our country's finances. This is Canada, one of the wealthiest, most resource-rich nations on earth, yet we have parents working hard, sometimes at multiple jobs, who still cannot afford to put food on the table for their children. We have a moral obligation to help those in need, of course. When someone falls on hard times, when a family faces hardships or when a senior cannot make ends meet, we should stand with them.

However, we also have a moral obligation to ask why so many Canadians need that assistance in the first place. Why are millions struggling to afford basic groceries? This is not normal, and we must never accept it as normal. What troubles me is that the Liberals seem to celebrate the number of people receiving government benefits as evidence of their success. I believe they are measuring the wrong thing. I do not want to celebrate how many Canadians depend on government assistance. I want to celebrate how many Canadians no longer need it.

● (1150)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I brought up the issue of Standard & Poor's and Moody's, which have given Canada a AAA credit rating, and it is important to note that. Out of the G7 countries, which include France, England, Germany and the United States, all industrialized countries, Canada has a AAA rating. The only other country that has it is Germany.

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By using Canada's fiscal position to invest in building Canada, we are going to build a stronger and healthier economy. The Conservatives do not seem to understand that. Using Canada's fiscal capabilities will make Canada a stronger and healthier country in the long run. Does the Conservative Party not understand the benefits of doing that?

Sandra Cobena: Madam Speaker, I would encourage the member to understand how those credit ratings are issued. If the member remembers, in the last budget, there was a warning from Fitch Ratings to the federal government about the amount of debt it was incurring, because it dropped the fiscal anchor that measures debt, which is the debt-to-GDP ratio. For a rating to be maintained, the debt-to-GDP ratio must be maintained. What are we seeing? It will be getting worse over the next five years.

Members from the Liberal government continuously stand up in the House and say that they will take no lessons from the Conservatives. Well, perhaps they can take a lesson from the cold, hard math, and the math is not looking good. I would encourage the member to take a sobering stand, recognize that there is a problem with the amount of borrowing the government is taking on and provide a credible plan to repay it.

[Translation]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government forwent revenue by scrapping the digital services tax on the U.S. tech giants that are threatening our culture, our media and our identity. The government did this to please Mr. Trump as part of the tariff negotiations, but it got nothing in return.

What does my colleague think of that?

[English]

Sandra Cobena: Madam Speaker, it is, of course, important to look at the full equation when we are looking at the country's finances. Revenues are important. We need to continue to generate revenues, but what we are seeing right now is that expenses are out of control. More importantly, the interest expense is the fastest-growing expense on the books, at \$83 billion in interest. This interest has to be serviced. Ultimately, it has to be paid, and it is paid by dollars taken from hard-working Canadians. We cannot continue down this trajectory of ignoring the spending and ignoring the debt and how the debt is going to be repaid.

Amarjeet Gill (Brampton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will take this opportunity to ask the member what it means to have more debt, deficits and interest payments. We all know that taxpayers are on the hook to pay the debt, which is amortizing their future and their kids' future. We have seen that everyone is struggling with affordability. Youth are struggling, and seniors are looking for relief.

What are the impacts of the debt and deficits on future generations and everyday life for Canadians at the present time?

Sandra Cobena: Madam Speaker, I was a commercial lender for 15 years. I worked with debt and loans, and there is a certain level of sustainability that has to be considered.

Debt can be very risky. Right now, we have a government that is, in fact, hiding the true amount of debt. The Liberals are hiding it in Crown corporations. When we cannot see the full picture, how can good decisions be made? A business owner will tell us that they

need reliable financial statements to make decisions, and we do not have that in our country's finances.

• (1155)

Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Madam Speaker, what if I told Canadians that every single week, the federal government spends \$1 billion on something that will totally shock them? That \$1 billion does not put a nurse at a bedside, does not build a home for a struggling family and does not make life one bit more affordable for Canadians. That \$1 billion is 1,000 times \$1 million, every seven days. What are Canadians getting for all that money? It is the bill for interest alone on the national debt. The worst part is that the \$1 billion a week does not pay off a single penny of the debt itself.

I think most of us know what it is like to sit down at the kitchen table with a pile of bills and wonder how we are going to make everything work. Imagine a family that has been relying a little too much on their credit card just to get through the month. They are doing their best, but the balance keeps growing, and every time they make a payment, so much of it goes toward interest that they barely make a dent in what they owe.

One would think the sensible thing would be to sit down together, take a good look at where the money is going and figure out what they can cut back on. Instead, someone comes up with what they think is a brilliant idea: Why not get a second credit card and divide all their spending into two categories? On the first card, they can put everyday necessities, things like groceries, prescriptions, gas for the car and monthly bills. On the second card, they can put everything that they decide is an investment in the family's future, like replacing a roof, buying new clothes for the kids and even taking the family to the movies, because, after all, spending time together is an investment too.

Here is the clever part. From now on, they will only judge how well they are managing their money by looking at the first credit card. As long as they can get that balance under control, they will tell themselves that they are finally living within their means, even while the spending on the second card keeps growing. When the bills arrive, the bank does not care what they have decided to call their purchases. It does not matter whether the money went toward groceries, a new roof or a night at the movies. They still owe every dollar that they borrowed, and they are still paying interest on it. They have not solved their debt problem. They have simply found a new way of keeping score that makes one part of their finances look better without improving the overall picture.

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That little story might sound ridiculous, but it is a good way to describe how the Prime Minister is presenting the federal government's finances. He is completely ignoring accounting practices accepted worldwide and has now decided to divide government spending into two categories. On the one side are the everyday operating expenses, and on the other are things his government calls investments in Canada's future. Just like our family with the two credit cards, the Prime Minister wants Canadians to focus on getting that first account balanced while borrowing buckets of money to pay for what is going on the second.

One does not have to take my word for whether this approach is actually keeping government spending under control. Just last week, the Parliamentary Budget Officer released her latest report, and the numbers tell quite a story. Since June, the government has announced \$52.6 billion in new spending and tax measures over the next five years. Of that amount, \$43.8 billion, more than 80%, has been classified as capital investment, which means it does not count against the Prime Minister's promise to balance his operating budget. Think about that for a moment. For every five dollars in new measures that the government has announced, more than four dollars has been put into the second bucket, where they do not count against the Prime Minister's promise to balance the day-to-day budget.

Let us go back to that family sitting around the kitchen table, looking at their two credit card bills and trying to figure out how they are ever going to get ahead. They have been making their payments every month, but the balances never seem to come down because so much of what they are paying is being eaten up by interest. The longer they carry that debt, the more money they lose to interest, instead of being able to spend it on things the family needs.

• (1200)

Most Canadians understand that problem because they have either experienced it themselves or watched somebody they love struggle with it. What many Canadians may not realize is that the federal government has run up such an enormous debt that the interest alone now works out to nearly \$6,000 a year for every family of four in Canada. The Parliamentary Budget Officer tells us that the interest on our national debt is now the fastest-growing expense in the federal budget. We are not talking about health care, where Canadians are already waiting months for treatment, or national defence, where our military desperately needs new equipment, or even the benefits that seniors rely on to get by. We are talking about interest payments to corporate bankers and bondholders.

This year alone, the federal government is expected to spend approximately \$59 billion on interest. According to the PBO projections, that annual bill is going to climb to \$83 billion by 2030. We can just imagine what that means for the next generation of Canadians, who will inherit not only the debt but the cost of servicing it.

Here is where I find this especially troubling. When the Prime Minister took office, he promised Canadians that he would spend less, that he would bring some discipline back to Ottawa's finances and that Canadians could expect a different approach to managing their money. Instead, we are looking at a deficit roughly twice the size of the one left behind by Justin Trudeau, with the government continuing to borrow billions more every year. Anyone who has ev-

er tried to get out of credit card debt knows that they cannot keep increasing the balance and expect the interest payments to somehow take care of themselves. Eventually, those payments begin to crowd out everything else in the budget, and they find themselves working harder and harder just to keep up with what they already owe.

That is exactly the concern we should have about our federal finances because every dollar Ottawa spends paying interest on the debt is a dollar that is not available to hire another nurse, provide another hospital bed, improve the services Canadians depend on or leave a little more money in the pockets of hard-working Canadians. The really frustrating part is that those Canadians are already making difficult choices every single day. They are putting things back on the grocery store shelf because they cannot afford them. They are postponing repairs to their homes. They are telling their children there simply is not enough money for some of the things they used to enjoy. They understand that when money is tight, they have to make choices.

Canadians are entitled to expect their government to show that same kind of discipline, which it promised. At the end of the day, it does not matter whether someone has one credit card, two credit cards or a hundred different ways of dividing up the spending. If they keep borrowing more than they can afford to repay, the interest will keep growing. Eventually, someone has to pay the bill, and in this case, that someone is the Canadian taxpayer.

The Prime Minister came into office promising to spend less, but Canadians are still waiting to hear how he intends to bring down the deficit, reduce the enormous interest bill we are leaving to our children and grandchildren and give hard-working families some relief from the taxes they are paying. That is why Conservatives are calling on the Prime Minister to come before the House of Commons finance committee and explain his plan. We want to know how he intends to get government spending under control, how he plans to reduce the interest we are paying on the national debt and when Canadians can expect to see some of their hard-earned money stay in their own pockets.

This week, every Liberal member of Parliament will have an opportunity to support this request. Surely, asking the Prime Minister to explain how he intends to keep his own promises should not be controversial. Canadians have been doing their part. They have been working hard, paying their taxes and making difficult decisions around their own kitchen tables. I believe they have earned the right to expect their government to be just as careful with their money as they have to be.

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The Prime Minister has told Canadians he knows how to manage the economy. We are simply asking him to come to the finance committee, show us the numbers and explain his plan. Canadians do not need another credit card. They need a government that knows how to pay the bill.

• (1205)

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are at a critical moment in our country's history. We see the unjustified tariffs from the U.S., and the price of oil and gas going up, and we know that action is needed. If we look back at the last world economic recession, in 2008, it was the current Prime Minister who worked with then prime minister Stephen Harper and Jim Flaherty to invest in infrastructure and projects here at home in order to keep the economy going, and it worked. The Prime Minister is applying that experience now, and I think it is the right approach.

Would the member not agree that building projects in the national interest to create jobs, protecting ourselves by diversifying our trade and bolstering our defence are all good things?

Tamara Jansen: Mr. Speaker, nobody disputes that tariffs and global uncertainty are hurting our economy. In fact, Prime Minister Harper balanced the budget during those difficult times.

The PBO acknowledges that these are tough times, but it also tells us that since June, stronger revenues created \$37 billion in additional fiscal room while the government announced \$52.6 billion in new measures. That is a choice about how to use the available money, and it is entirely reasonable to ask the Prime Minister to explain it.

Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the important statistics to consider in relation to why this motion is before the House is, of course, that the Prime Minister's attendance at question period is roughly 26% of the time, and not all questions are answered. We have very important questions for the Prime Minister around the country's finances, questions that are not answered with the made-up definitions or the fiscal anchor that he has chosen to control spending and debt in this country.

Can the member comment as to why it is important for the Prime Minister to answer these questions in the finance committee?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Before we go to the answer, I will remind the member for Newmarket—Aurora that we cannot refer to the attendance or non-attendance of any member of the House in this place, even if it is done in an indirect way.

The hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City has the floor.

Tamara Jansen: Mr. Speaker, it is very simple. The PBO has just told us that the government's own fiscal rules have imposed limited fiscal discipline. In plain English, the government's spending rules are doing diddly-squat to stop the wild spending spree it is on. We are looking at a \$63-billion deficit this year, climbing to \$70 billion next year, while interest payments continue to grow.

These are not numbers coming from the opposition. They are coming from Parliament's independent budget watchdog. Surely, that deserves an explanation from the Prime Minister.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to listen to the Conservatives talk about fiscal responsibility when Canada is tied with Germany in the G7 with a AAA credit rating.

Exactly what would the Conservatives cut? Do they support, for example, the \$5 billion in additional money for the Canadian Forces? Do they support the tax cut that was given to Canadians? Do they support the programs that are providing support on affordability, like feeding children in our schools or the groceries benefit program? Do the Conservatives want to support the programs that are helping Canadians?

Tamara Jansen: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague loves to talk about our amazing credit rating, but Canada is already spending more as a share of our economy than the G20 median, and the OECD tells us government spending has increased significantly since before the pandemic. Even Russia, which is in the middle of a war with Ukraine, is spending less than us.

Meanwhile, the Parliamentary Budget Officer is projecting continuing federal deficits and rising debt interest costs. Canadians deserve to hear whether the Prime Minister has a credible plan to bring federal borrowing under control.

• (1210)

[Translation]

Marianne Dandurand (Compton—Stanstead, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with the member for Québec Centre.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise today to speak to a subject that we all agree on, the importance of improving the cost of living for Canadians. We all hear about this. I think that members on both sides of the House agree that the cost of living is a very important issue for Canadians. It is an issue that I hear about in my riding, as do my colleagues. What we do not agree on is how to go about improving the cost of living. Our government is taking action to improve the cost of living and to make life more affordable for people in our communities.

I want to talk about some of the measures that we have put in place to help people in my riding and across Canada. It must be said that we are going through a very difficult time because of the highly unstable global geopolitical climate. This has been going on for several years now. Yes, we need to take action, but all of these tensions have consequences. That is what we, in the government, are working on. In the long and medium terms, we need to improve our fiscal situation and our trade so that we are in a more comfortable position. In the short term, we are proposing measures that will provide immediate support for Canadians, measures that will give them some relief. We do not want to make these permanent expenditures. What we need to do is strengthen our economy. That is what we are working on.

The government's response to the current cost of living crisis is to expand opportunities for businesses through federal procurement and to help them take advantage of those opportunities. Major projects that will spur economic growth are a good example. We are going to buy Canadian and build Canadian. We want Canadian businesses to prosper here at home, and it is working. Many Canadian companies are winning contracts. At the same time, we need to diversify our markets. We are overly reliant on a single trading partner. As we often say, when our neighbour to the south sneezes, Canada catches a cold. We cannot continue like that. We need to diversify our markets.

A tremendous amount of work has already been done over the past year. More than 20 new agreements have been signed with new partners. That will create significant wealth here at home. When we create wealth, it means our businesses are thriving, paying taxes, and providing good-paying jobs for Canadians. As a result, we are creating the right conditions for a stronger, more resilient and more prosperous economy.

Another aspect I want to talk about is fiscal responsibility. One of the things our government is working on is creating additional fiscal room within government. This fiscal room allows us to invest in businesses and streamline certain government operations. Very recently, we announced that we are going to cut red tape in a wide range of areas within government. Our businesses welcome those changes because they make it easier to do business. They are also very cost-effective because they allow us to achieve the same results with fewer resources. That is one of the solutions we are putting in place.

The results we are achieving is a country where the net debt-to-GDP ratio is the lowest of any G7 nation. That bears repeating, because it is a game-changer. It inspires trust in people who want to invest in Canada. It reassures them that they can keep investing and that we are heading in the right direction. Our public finances are on a solid footing, and we are on a path to long-term sustainability.

Budget 2025, tabled almost a year ago to the day, set us on a very positive course. We have made other federal investments to stimulate private investment and strengthen the economy. That is what we have been able to achieve.

• (1215)

At the same time, we reduced operating costs. The money that we freed up is allowing us to invest even more.

Business of Supply

Over the next five years, we expect to save \$60 billion through operating cost reductions. Sixty billion dollars in operating expenditures saved over five years makes all the difference in the government's ability to direct its resources toward far more productive long-term priorities, including investments.

That has required a great deal of adjustment. Some of that work is still ongoing, but those adjustments had not been made since the COVID-19 pandemic. The government had to hire a lot of people to support the wide range of programs that were rolled out at the time. We are continuing that streamlining effort and reviewing public service staffing levels. Middle management is allowing us to move more quickly in some cases while also creating additional fiscal room.

This budgetary approach ensures that we carry out horizontal, targeted and ongoing reviews. As a result, it is constantly being updated. We are reducing expenditures on external management and consulting services while strengthening in-house capacity. We aim to balance budgetary and operating expenditures by the 2028-29 fiscal year and keep the deficit-to-GDP ratio on a downward path. We are already on track to achieve this.

This balance in expenditures, originally projected for the 2027-28 fiscal year, will now be achieved a full year ahead of schedule. That progress confirms that we are on the right track. By clearly distinguishing between day-to-day operating expenses and long-term investments, we are able to stay on a positive trajectory.

I would also like to highlight a number of measures that are in place and that directly support the people of my riding. In Compton—Stanstead, 14,000 families benefit from child and family benefits, receiving assistance to help cover expenses such as education, sports and other things. As a result, approximately 25,000 children receive support, and nearly \$100 million is distributed in my constituency through the Canada child benefit.

We also created the Canadian dental care plan. Nearly 33,000 people in my riding are benefiting from this dental care benefit. People can now go to the dentist, which has a long-term impact on overall health, and that is extremely important.

Those are two examples with figures from my riding. We also doubled the GST and HST credit last summer, which became the Canada groceries and essentials benefit. We also increased it by 25%. That money is going into the pockets of the people who need it most. It gives them a little more money for all the essential items they may need.

Business of Supply

That is why I said at the beginning of my speech that we are taking action not only in the medium and long term, but also in the shorter term, with measures like this one, to put more money in families' pockets now. Our fiscal framework allows us to choose these kinds of solutions and deliver benefits in regions like mine.

We have taken other steps aimed at reducing fuel-related costs as well. We know this is a significant expense. In rural areas like mine, people travel a lot. They need a car. We are working on that. We have programs for energy-efficient home renovations. In fact, the Prime Minister visited the Eastern Townships to discuss a heat pump program. We continue to make progress on the issue of housing costs by building more homes.

I believe that our government is putting in place the tools we need to help keep the cost of living for Canadians in check. We will continue to work toward that goal in the short, medium, and long term.

• (1220)

Jim Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know that we are facing a cost of living crisis, and we acknowledge that.

That said, it seems to me that the government is taking money out of people's pockets and then putting some of it back through subsidies and other programs, all while the debt continues to grow.

Does the government intend to examine and address the root causes of the rising cost of living, rather than simply treating the symptoms?

Marianne Dandurand: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very relevant question, and I will address its premise.

What we are doing is redistributing wealth, ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity. Through taxes, we are taking more money from the pockets of those who have more financial flexibility and redistributing it. For me, it is a question of fairness and ensuring that all children, regardless of their background, can access the same kind of service. I believe this rebalancing is very important, and we will continue along this path.

We truly believe that everyone should have an equal opportunity.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for giving such a clear and accurate account of everything the government is doing to help families, but I think she forgot one thing. Perhaps I just missed it. I am thinking of the record investments in child care services for families and children in Quebec. The Canadian government allocated nearly \$2 billion to the Quebec government to create the equivalent of 150,000 child care spaces in Quebec alone.

As a mother, as a woman, but also as someone who believes in fairness and in the importance of children achieving their full potential, what does my colleague think of that investment in child care in Quebec?

Marianne Dandurand: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Québec Centre for setting the record straight. Indeed, I had not mentioned that.

In fact, a wonderful child care centre in my riding is nearly complete and will soon open its doors in Sainte-Catherine-de-Hatley, in a truly beautiful setting. Significant federal funding is flowing to Quebec to support affordable child care services, and we are continuing along that path.

My colleague also gives me an opportunity to speak about Canada's national school food program. He knows that I have close ties to agriculture, and that is another area where we are making a difference.

I believe that each child deserves to attend school on a full stomach. Our program truly supports what has already been put in place in Quebec, helping provide meals to even more children.

Marilène Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have been talking about investments versus spending. My colleague, the member for Mirabel, spoke about the government's creative accounting. I know that members listened closely to his remarks earlier.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of an approach that makes government spending appear lower than it actually is.

As my colleague pointed out, even experts were unable to shed light on this accounting when the matter was studied in committee. I think what we are talking about here today is the government's massive spending, which has resulted in debt servicing costs now exceeding health transfers to Quebec and the provinces.

Marianne Dandurand: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for bringing us back to the speech by our colleague from Mirabel.

I always find the member for Mirabel very creative in his speeches. His references always make me smile, but we certainly do not always agree on certain matters, including the way we do accounting.

Quite frankly, what we have managed to do is separate operating expenditures from capital expenditures to get a clear picture of our operating costs, reduce them as much as possible and free up those funds to invest in productive initiatives that will strengthen the Canadian economy.

If that is what some call creativity, then I would call it very constructive creativity, because the results are positive.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me an opportunity to say a few words about the motion. I think that most members of the House, if not all, are aware that we are living in a world that is changing quickly and in unpredictable ways. In the face of economic uncertainty and international trade tensions, Canada must focus on what it can control. That means strengthening our economy here at home, diversifying our trade relationships abroad and making strategic investments to build an even stronger, more independent and fairer economy for everyone.

The cornerstone of this approach is having a sound financial position. Indeed, a sound financial position gives us the means to act. It allows us to protect Canadians when circumstances require it. It also gives us the tools to respond to economic shocks and, more importantly, to invest in the future.

Canada is well positioned to weather this period of uncertainty. I am not alone in saying so. According to the latest projections from the International Monetary Fund, or IMF, Canada is expected to have the second-lowest deficit in the G7 this year as a share of its economy. The IMF also forecasts a continued decline in that deficit over the coming years. It is expected to fall from 2.5% of GDP in 2026 to 2.4% in 2027, before falling to 1.7% by 2031.

We also have the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio of any G7 country. Canada is one of only two G7 countries, alongside Germany, to hold a AAA credit rating from all major credit rating agencies. This top-tier rating reflects the confidence that global investors have in Canada's public finances. It is a significant strength, helping to keep borrowing costs as low as possible while ensuring that we have the capacity to act.

Furthermore, we are the world's most connected economy, with free trade agreements covering countries that represent 1.5 billion consumers. We also offer the most competitive tax system in the G7 for new business investment.

Last month, Canada hosted the very first Canada investment summit. The goal was clear: to bring together some of the world's largest investors and show them what Canada has to offer. The summit laid the groundwork for substantial new investments and strategic partnerships, with nearly \$500 billion in new funding and investment commitments in Canada.

It is important to attract investors to Canada, but that is not enough. We also need to create the conditions that make them want to invest here. That is why our government announced the new productivity mega deduction. We made that announcement recently, at the investment summit in fact. The productivity mega deduction is a major tax investment. This measure makes Canada the most competitive G7 country for new business investment. It provides businesses with immediate expensing for a broad-based range of depreciable property on a permanent basis. It increases the proportion of assets eligible for immediate expensing from about 15% to over 65%. It will support Canadian businesses of all sizes, small, medium and large, by encouraging them to invest more in their workforce, thereby stimulating long-term growth in Canada.

Canada has a financial advantage, and we are determined to protect it. Budget 2025 also marked a shift in the government's strategy for managing public finances. As the Prime Minister announced recently, the government is on track to balance operating expenditures and revenues in 2027-28, one year earlier than expected.

By reducing the government's operating expenditures, we can invest more in the assets and infrastructure that strengthen our economy. In other words, we are devoting fewer resources to the day-to-day operations of government, but allocating more on building Canada's economic capacity for decades to come. We must protect that capacity, which is why the government has set clear objectives to guide its budget decisions.

Business of Supply

• (1225)

First, we must balance operating expenditures with revenues. Second, we must keep the deficit on a downward track relative to the size of our economy. That is how we will preserve Canada's fiscal advantage in the years ahead.

In closing, we have one of the strongest fiscal positions in the G7, the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7 and a AAA credit rating. Our responsibility is twofold: to preserve those strengths and put them to work in support of growth and prosperity for Canadians. That means investing in infrastructure and major projects that strengthen our economy. That means attracting more private capital to Canada and encouraging investment. That means giving our businesses the means to invest and grow. That means diversifying our international trade and helping our businesses access new markets. That means maintaining careful management of our public finances.

That is exactly what we are doing and what we will continue to do.

• (1230)

[English]

Ned Kuruc (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's 10-minute speech on all the benefits the Liberals believe are going on. What would be the problem with the Prime Minister's coming to committee and explaining some of those himself?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that the member listened to my attempt to briefly describe what we are doing for Canadians. He has had lots of opportunities, including with his leader, to ask questions to the Prime Minister and his ministers, who are always willing and able to come to committee.

What matters even more is that we work together to sustain and support those investments that I highlighted in my short speech.

[Translation]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is indeed a significant deficit. We agree. At the same time, the government has forgone revenue by waiving the digital services tax for U.S. tech giants that threaten our culture and our media. They did that to appease Mr. Trump, but they gained absolutely nothing in the tariff war.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

Business of Supply

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague for his steadfast commitment to culture in Quebec and across Canada. He is absolutely right to underscore the importance of continued federal support for our artists, artisans and media organizations, including in my own constituency, which has a very rich cultural and artistic scene.

I would encourage him to take note of the record investments included in the 2025 budget and of the government's ongoing commitment to supporting our artists and artisans.

Marianne Dandurand (Compton—Stanstead, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague from Québec Centre, who is always very eloquent. I really appreciate what he said about businesses.

I know my colleague works very hard for families. I would even go so far as to say that he was one of the architects of the Canadian dental care plan. He always talks about it with so much pride. I think we should be the ones thanking him on behalf of families. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to him on behalf of the families in my riding for putting this exceptional program in place.

I wonder if he could talk a little more about the importance of the Canadian dental care plan for families like the ones in Compton—Stanstead and Québec Centre.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: I thank my colleague, whose generosity, kindness and insight are always on full display, for raising the Canadian dental care plan.

The reason it is not talked about that much is that it is doing so well. Contrary to the expectations of some members on the other side of the House, roughly 98% of dentists are now participating in the plan. When we meet with dentists, as my colleague does all the time, they tell us that they see the importance of oral health every day for the thousands of people who would not otherwise come to see them. These people could suffer from infections or other oral health problems that could spread throughout their body and send them to the emergency room or a family doctor who could do nothing for them.

Thousands of people, not just seniors, but also young people, do not have access to dental insurance and cannot afford oral health care either. They are people we must continue to support. We must also continue our efforts to reach them and ensure they are aware of the assistance available to them.

• (1235)

Jim Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, government spending is driving up the cost of living, and the national debt continues to rise. That debt will cost families an extra \$6,000 in interest alone.

How serious should the government be about tackling that debt?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I believe, as he suggests, that we do need to ensure sound management of public finances. I also believe that we need to take care of people.

I know the member across the way is relatively new here, so I would like to welcome him to the House, if somewhat belatedly.

He may have heard his leader describe the support provided by breakfast clubs in his own riding as “bureaucratic” or suggest that feeding children is bureaucracy. I would like to know whether the member agrees with him.

His leader also said that investing in child care is wasteful.

Why is it wasteful? I have never understood why, but I would like to know. I would also like to know whether the member agrees with his leader's position that investing in affordable, high-quality child care is a waste of money.

[English]

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the Leader of the Opposition.

I want to set the scene. It is Friday night in a kitchen somewhere in this country. The kids are asleep. A mother sits alone at a table, with a paycheque in one hand and a stack of bills in the other. She lays them out side by side, and she adds them up once. Then she adds them up again, and then a third time. On the third time, the paycheque wins. That kitchen table is in every single riding in this country. No matter who we are or where we come from, we have heard the stories from our own communities.

Every morning before the sun comes up, millions of Canadians lace up their boots, kiss their kids goodbye and head out the door to earn that paycheque. It is an overtime shift, a night course, years of training and a sore back at the end of the day. For generations, it meant something simple: If a Canadian worked hard, they could build a better life for their children. For too many families, that promise is very broken in this country. We come here every week with those stories that families tell in our communities. That is what I am going to talk about here today.

A recent C.D. Howe Institute report found that 60% of Canadian households now spend more than they bring in. The lowest-income families spend more than double their disposable income, the next group overspends by nearly a third, and the middle-class families in this country, the backbone of what creates our economy, are spending 12% more than they make every single month. For a family with \$60,000 in take-home pay, that means it is \$7,200 short every single year.

Behind those numbers are actual people and their stories. It is the mother at the grocery checkout putting raspberries back because the total came up to more than she expected. It is the dad picking up a second job and missing his son's games. It is the parent who tells their kids they are not hungry tonight, just so there is enough food on the table. It is the conversation no parent wants to have: "Not this year, sweetheart. Maybe next year." It is the young couple that wanted to start a family but keeps pushing it back. It is a senior who has worked her whole life but now has to decide between prescriptions and filling the fridge. It is the parent lying awake at two o'clock in the morning doing the math over and over again in their head, hoping it comes out different.

These families are not irresponsible. Nobody puts groceries on a credit card for fun. Nobody takes a payday loan to keep the lights on because they like the interest rates. Nobody drains a retirement fund they have been saving for 20 years for the thrill of it. They do it because they have no choice. What does the government tell them? Well, the Prime Minister specifically says that affordability is the best it has been in a decade.

How did we get here? Part of the answer is across the aisle. It has been the same people sitting in the same chairs and saying the exact same thing over the last 11 years. The Liberal government has doubled the national debt in that time, adding more debt than all previous governments in Canadian history before it, all of them combined. When Ottawa borrows and spends without restraint, the families I spoke about are the ones paying the bill. They pay it again and again, because debt is not free. It comes with interest.

According to the PBO, who was hired by the Liberal government, Ottawa will pay \$9 billion in interest on debt this year. That is more than \$1 billion every single week. It is more than double what it was five years ago. It is now the fastest-growing expense line in the entire federal budget. Nobody can dispute those facts. Every Canadian has a share in that interest. It is \$1,400 a year for every individual, and for a family of four, that is roughly \$6,000. By 2030, the PBO projects that it will be \$1,900 for every person, which is nearly \$8,000 for that same family.

• (1240)

That money is enough for a hockey season that a kid did not get. It is a modest camping vacation they keep putting off till next summer. It is a birthday party that is scaled down to cake at the kitchen table because times are tough. Those are the real stories and those are the real impacts of \$6,000 a year for a family going to \$8,000 a year because of reckless spending.

What does the family get for that? The Liberals will stand up today in the House and ask them if they like this or that program, but the fact is they get nothing for the interest they pay on it. They do not get a single hospital bed. They do not get one classroom. They do not get a kilometre of highway. They do not get anything for their military with the interest on that debt. All of that money goes directly to bankers and bondholders, not to the families that are struggling, the mom who put the raspberries back on the shelf, the dad who took on a second shift and will miss his kid's hockey game, or the senior who just cannot decide what to do next. That money goes straight to bankers and bondholders.

Business of Supply

The bills keep growing. Every Canadian share of that federal debt is now over \$33,000. For a family of four, that is more than \$130,000. It is a second mortgage they never asked for. It is a second mortgage they will one day hand to their children. Here is the cruellest part of it: Parents in this country are working themselves to the bone so their kids can have a better life, and the government is sending these same kids the bill.

Today, the question is very simple. How does the Prime Minister expect these families to pay that bill? How does he expect them to pay \$6,000 more a year or \$8,000 more a year? I know there are a lot of people, including him, who do not worry about \$6,000 or \$8,000, but there are a heck of a lot of families in this country who absolutely do, and they are asking questions. Canadian families are all doing their part. They get up, and they go to work. They stretch every dollar until it squeaks. They sacrifice every single day without complaint. When the money runs out, they sit down at the kitchen table and they face those numbers honestly. Then, they go over and over it again in their heads, trying to make the math work out differently. The Prime Minister should be willing to do the exact same thing.

This is why this motion calls on the Prime Minister to appear before the Standing Committee on Finance. It is very simple. It calls for him to not send a minister and not send a list of talking points, but to come himself to the table and answer the questions every single family in this country is asking: How is a mother with a stack of bills supposed to cover \$60 billion in interest? How is a young couple supposed to start a family with a \$130,000 share of debt hanging over them? How much more does he plan to put on the Liberal credit card before it all comes due?

Every family, every person and everybody in the House, at one point in their lives, had to explain their budget to someone, to a bank, to a landlord, sometimes their own kids. The Prime Minister should be able to explain that to every single Canadian taxpayer, and he should be able to do that at a table without getting up in the House and telling those same families that affordability is the best it has ever been and that they have never had it better.

I urge every single member of the government to vote for this motion, to vote for accountability. They have asked for the trust of the public, and they owe something in that trust relationship. The public is asking questions about how it is going to pay its fair share of that debt, and the Prime Minister ought to come to committee and answer those questions. It is not a difficult motion, and I hope members vote yes.

Business of Supply

• (1245)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, back in 2010, I campaigned in a by-election. I can recall an instance in a German-Canadian Congress building, located on Mountain and Arlington, where a senior told me they did not even have the ability to purchase food because of the cost of medications.

There is absolutely no doubt that the government and the Prime Minister have been issued a mandate and are very much concerned about the issue of affordability. All one needs to do is take a look at what the government's actions have been, whether it is providing support for dental care, providing food for children in schools or introducing the Canada grocery program. These are programs dealing with affordability, both directly and indirectly, and the Conservative Party continues to vote against them. There is—

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

Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, the member just listed a grand list of failures. Everything the government has put forward in a program has failed Canadians because there are more Canadians eating food from a food bank than there were before the government started its food program.

Everything is getting worse under the government, and all of those programs are a drop in the bucket compared to what those families are paying for interest, which is \$6,000 now and will be \$8,000 in 2030. They have questions. Is it worth it?

The Prime Minister should answer those questions instead of colleagues just hearing talking points from his House leader.

[Translation]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a great deal of money is going toward servicing the debt right now.

Does my colleague agree that we should take some of that money and send it to the provinces to increase health transfers?

[English]

Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite can absolutely ask that question of the Prime Minister when he comes to committee.

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this motion ultimately comes down to the fundamental principles of accountability, transparency and oversight. I am wondering what the member's comments would be about the fact that the government is introducing a budget on November 5, a Thursday afternoon.

Now, I have been here for 11 years, and I do not think I have ever seen a budget introduced on a Thursday afternoon. It leaves Friday for question period and then members will be, over the next week, in their ridings for the week of Remembrance Day. That really speaks to the issues of accountability, transparency and oversight. It proves that the government does not want any questions on this budget.

I would suggest that it is going to be a really bad budget and that is why the government does not want to do it. I wonder what her comments are on that.

Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, if the budget looks like the last budget, then I understand completely why government members would not want to be questioned on it, not on a Friday and not on a Monday. The government introducing a budget on a Thursday before a break week, and then taking that next week, tells us everything we need to know. That is why this motion is so important.

It is important to get the Prime Minister at committee to explain his comments, to explain why he told the House that affordability is better than it has ever been and to explain to Canadian families why he is charging them \$6,000 a year while they cannot buy raspberries or take a vacation.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the deputy leader of the Conservative Party says that programs, such as the dental care program that provides dental services for seniors who are on fixed income, are a failure. The deputy leader of the Conservative Party says that the food program in our schools, which feeds 400,000 children, is a failure.

I think it is time that the Conservative Party wakes up. If Conservatives are concerned about affordability, then they had better start supporting these programs or step aside and let the government do its job.

• (1250)

Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, the deputy leader of the Conservative Party says that the House leader is a failure. His answer was a failure, and all of those programs that he has introduced in the House are failures, because everything is worse than it was before he started.

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve more for their money. Hard work should be rewarded here in Canada. Those who get up every morning to go to work and those who are trying to retire after having worked hard their whole lives deserve a good paycheck.

However, after 11 years of this Liberal government, the more time passes, the less work is rewarded. A larger share of wages in Canada is being eaten up by inflation. People even have to hand what they earn at work over to the government in the form of very high taxes. However, the government will argue that taxes pay for services. Is that true? Are the services we receive commensurate with the taxes that we pay?

The fastest rising-cost under this government is not the cost of services, health care or benefits for children or seniors. It is the cost of the interest payments on our national debt, which will be \$60 billion this year. That is more than the government is spending on health transfers, more than it is spending on services, more than the total amount Canadians pay in GST, twice as much as the government is spending on benefits for children and much more than it is spending on our soldiers.

Business of Supply

What does the interest on the national debt cost a family of four?

Five years ago, a family of four had to pay about \$2,500 a year in taxes to cover the interest on the national debt. Today, that same family must pay \$6,000 in taxes simply to cover the interest on the debt. In four years' time, that family will be paying \$8,000 a year just to service the interest on the debt, not to pay down the debt itself.

That makes debt interest the fastest-growing expenditure of all. At the same time, the Prime Minister's record deficits are driving up the cost of living by fuelling inflation.

The debt situation is far worse today than it was a year ago. Canadians were promised a Prime Minister who would be more prudent than Justin Trudeau, but instead he has doubled the deficits. He did so after resorting to creative accounting in the government's books.

According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, this Prime Minister plans to add another \$733 billion to the national debt over the next five years. That means an additional \$40,000 in federal debt for every Canadian family and every household, on top of the \$1.3 trillion already owed.

Canadians are being crushed by the government's debt. What are the consequences? More people are turning to food banks. An entire generation is being locked out of home ownership. Fuel prices at the pump are among the highest in the western world. Poverty is on the rise.

That has to change. Canadians deserve better. The goal of the official opposition is to save them money, save their jobs, keep them safe, repair and reduce immigration, and put Canada first.

• (1255)

That is why we are proposing to invite the Prime Minister to appear before the committee so that he can explain to Canadians how a family is going to pay \$6,000 a year in interest on the national debt. It is also so that we can put forward our solutions, such as cutting down on red tape, consultants, corporate welfare, foreign aid, money for bogus refugees and more, in order to reduce the deficit and restore fiscal balance. The size of government must be reduced, along with the burden that government imposes on Canadians.

We want to return to a country where everyone who works hard can have a big paycheque that stays in their pocket and where the dollar keeps its value. Greater purchasing power will enable our young people to buy a home, our families to buy food and our seniors to have the excellent retirement that they deserve. That is the Conservatives' goal.

For those reasons, we are calling on all parties to work with us to fulfill and restore the promise of Canada here, at home.

[English]

Hard work should pay off. When someone puts in a long day's work and bring home a paycheque, the money should stay in their pocket, and the dollars should retain value. The money should buy affordable food, homes and fuel. People should be able to put their kids in sporting activities that improve their health, their discipline and the quality of life they enjoy. They should be able to retire

knowing that the money they saved up will buy them the necessities of life and allow them the freedom to enjoy the years they have earned. That means they should get value for money from the government.

When people pay taxes, they expect something in return. Are they getting it? Well, what is the fastest-growing expense in the government's budget? Is it seniors benefits? Is it health care? Is it the child benefit? Is it police? Is it our military? No, it is none of the above. Under the Prime Minister, for the first time in over two decades, the single biggest expense is interest on the national debt. It is an expense that has more than doubled in the last five years.

Now, \$60 billion of Canadian tax money goes to bankers and bondholders. That is more than we spend on health care transfers, more than we spend on the military and more than we spend on the child benefit. In fact, it is almost twice as much as we spend on the child benefit. Not only has it gotten worse; it threatens to get worse still. It is up from 10¢ to 13.6¢, almost 14¢, of every dollar the government spends that goes straight to bankers and bondholders for interest. This is the highest share of our budget since 2007.

Here is what it means for the average family of four. In 2021, interest on the debt cost it \$2,500 a year. Right now it is \$6,000 a year, and in four years, under the government's plan, it will be \$8,000 a year. To put it in perspective, we are now spending vastly more on debt interest than we collect in GST. That is right: Every time we make a purchase at a retail outlet and we see that GST on the receipt, we should know that 100% of what we paid is not going to health care or our troops but is going to pay interest on the national debt.

The situation, though, I have to say, is not as bad as it seems. It is worse, because the Prime Minister has cooked the books. He has decided that if he divides the debt and deficit up onto three separate credit cards, it will not cost as much. He says that some of the spending is operating cost. Some, he arbitrarily says, is investment. Further sums are for Crown corporations. At the end of the day, it is all money the government has to borrow and on which it has to pay future interest, all of which is a burden on the shoulders of taxpayers.

To be clear, what the Prime Minister calls investment is fuzzy, undefined, and based on no generally accepted accounting principle. No other government in the world follows his definitions. It is simply what he picks in order to reduce what he calls his operating budget. Well, even with cooking the books, the Prime Minister has not managed to do that either.

Business of Supply

The Parliamentary Budget Officer reports that operating spending is up 11% in just over a year, rising well over three times faster than the growth in the population and the overall economy, and the Prime Minister intends to add \$733 billion to our national debt over the next five years, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. This works out to \$40,000 in new debt for every single family in this country, and to get what? It is bigger lineups at food banks, a generation of youth who cannot afford a home, higher insolvencies, jobs leaving our country and our brightest people moving south. It is the biggest increase of any country in the world of people exiting to go to the United States of America. It is “elbows up, Canadians out”. That is a bad result for all those hundreds of billions of dollars of deficit spending.

• (1300)

There is a better way. We could restore the value of hard work by cutting bureaucracy, consultants, foreign aid, handouts to fake and phony refugees, and other wasted money in order to bring down debt, inflation and taxes; to make our money worth something; to ensure that our dollars are spent on health care, military, policing and borders, not on bankers and bondholders; and to restore the promise of this country, where anyone who works hard gets a great life on a safe street in a home they own, with meat and potatoes on the dinner table and a wonderful retirement under our proud flag. Let us make it happen.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hate to disappoint the Leader of the Conservative Party, but I can tell him that Canada is indeed not broken. Canada is still the best country in the world to call home.

The Leader of the Opposition downplays the importance of investment, but just last month, in September, the Prime Minister and the Canadian government invited the world to come to Toronto. What we saw was half a trillion dollars of potential investment. That is completely unheard of in Canadian history. In collaborative co-operation, working with our provincial entities and major projects, again, we are nearing half a trillion dollars. The federal collaboration is working. Investment is looking into Canada like it has never before. It is time the Conservative Party recognized that Canada is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I need to give the time for the member's response.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the only thing broken is the record on the other side of the aisle. I have never heard any party so capable of bragging triumphantly of promises it has not yet kept. The member got up and did not say that the investment had occurred. He said that it has the potential to one day occur. Someday over the rainbow, if we just follow it, we might get to a pot of gold. We just need another summit, another signing ceremony, another photo op or a bunch of new made-up MBA isms, such as catalyze this and synergy that.

We will not build an economy out of buzzwords or unrealized promises. We will build an economy by getting the government out of the way and off the backs of the Canadian people to realize their real potential.

[Translation]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative motion says that the Liberal government is spending more on servicing the debt than on health care transfers.

If the Conservatives ever managed to reduce debt servicing, would they commit to increase health transfers to Quebec and the provinces?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, it is true that the Liberal government spends more on servicing the debt than on health care. Conservatives believe that it should be the other way around.

Canadians pay income tax and other taxes to get health care services. They deserve to have the best health care service in the world, but this is far from the case. Our current health care system includes 6 million people with no family doctor. The waiting lists keep getting longer. Within the OECD, we rank among the worst countries when it comes to health care services.

One problem is that the Liberals are diverting money from our system to bankers to pay down the interest on our debt. We should pay down our debt and support health.

[English]

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, oftentimes in the House when we talk about these subjects, the common response we get from the members opposite is, “What would Conservatives cut?” I am curious if the Leader of the Opposition would like to expand on the Conservatives' exact approach to practising fiscal restraint, which we desperately need in this country right now.

• (1305)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals always ask, as if it were some kind of gotcha question, “What would we cut?” We have only found about \$200 billion of savings that we have identified and stated publicly. To start with, there is the Alto rail disaster. The government wants to spend \$150 billion on a train that is already off the tracks even though it has not built a single inch of rail. That is \$150 billion right there.

Massive increases in corporate welfare, which favours corporate power brokers with massive interest-free loans, grants, subsidies and other favours, would be reversed. This is companies such as Brookfield and others that the Prime Minister has a personal interest in. While he hides his money abroad, he mostly forces Canadians to subsidize his corporate interests here at home.

We would get rid of the deluxe benefits for fake and phony refugees, who get more benefit from our tax dollars than our hard-working seniors do. We would cut back on foreign aid and stop sending our money out of Canada. It belongs to the Canadian people. We would bring it back to our people.

I just came up with four or five excellent examples of how we could cut back the enormous, wasteful, morbidly obese government we have on the other side of the aisle, so Canadians can have a more rewarding life.

[Translation]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kings—Hants.

We just heard a speech by the Leader of the Opposition that was once again full of catchphrases. I think he came here just to record his social media sound bites for this week. If Canadians are interested in practical measures, then they need to look to this side of the House. We are implementing measures to strengthen the Canadian economy, which is working for everyone.

I think that Canadians see right through the official opposition's tactics when they hear this kind of rhetoric. We need only look at the results of the most recent by-elections and polling numbers. Canadians clearly favour our approach, which is based on practical measures that make a difference in people's lives.

On that note, I will focus on the content of my speech, because today's motion deals with the cost of living. To address the cost of living, we can implement immediate measures. I am thinking of the enhancement of what was previously known as the GST/HST credit and the tax cut for the middle class that we announced last year. These are measures that put money back into Canadians' pockets now.

That said, we need to think from a medium- and long-term perspective. I am thinking in particular of the national food security strategy that we launched earlier this year. This strategy aims to address factors within Canada's agri-food ecosystem to help stabilize grocery prices over the medium and long term. One of the pillars of this strategy is to increase food production in Canada. To achieve this, we are implementing a range of programs designed to support innovation in the food sector, help our entrepreneurs modernize their equipment, and assist them in acquiring the capabilities needed to do more processing in Canada. Our goal is to have more Canadian food on our plates and to ensure that our entrepreneurs already active in the agri-food sector have the means to modernize and become more efficient: With the same workforce, how could they improve their equipment and processes so they can produce more food right here at home? I am also thinking of all the tax incentives we are putting in place to increase our production of fruits and vegetables in Canada year-round, particularly through our incentives for the construction of greenhouses and other controlled-environment growing facilities.

Our goal is to increase Canada's food sovereignty and reduce our dependence on others. Countries that are dependent on international trade are more likely to be affected by supply chain disruptions. That is why conflicts affect the price of groceries in Canada. However, if we boost domestic production, we are less likely to see price fluctuations based on changes happening abroad.

I am also thinking about the exchange rate. When we import a lot of products and the exchange rate varies, that also affects prices.

Business of Supply

Strengthening our food sovereignty at home helps stabilize grocery prices over the longer term.

Boosting competition is also important. We know that. In Canada, five major retailers control nearly 75% of Canada's grocery market. Our national food security strategy will allow us to help independent grocers buy and transport products at competitive prices without relying on the big grocery chains. We need to make it easier for independent grocers to access supply chains through various programs, increase competition in the sector and improve grocery prices for consumers.

Thanks to the national strategy, we will also be providing nearly \$130 million to the Competition Bureau and the Competition Tribunal to investigate, prevent and counter anti-competitive business practices.

Rules are in place, but we must have the means to enforce them.

Finally, we need to reduce red tape. In fact, a bill has already been introduced to this end, because red tape can have an impact on production costs.

Strengthening the Canadian economy and supporting Canadians also requires strategic investment in our infrastructure. These investments must be made in partnership not only with the provinces, but also with municipalities. At the end of the day, there is only one taxpayer, and it is that taxpayer who ultimately foots the bill. When we invest alongside local governments in infrastructure projects that are essential to our communities, we help place those municipalities on a sounder financial footing. If the federal government does not contribute to major infrastructure projects, local governments may have no choice but to adjust their tax rates, and this will be reflected in our constituents' property tax bills.

• (1310)

That is why I think it is important for the federal government to be involved when there are plans to upgrade water and sewer systems to increase housing capacity in our communities, for example.

Last summer, I was involved in making three announcements where the federal government, the provincial government and the municipalities made joint investments in water and sewer infrastructure projects, not only because these systems were aging but also to increase housing capacity in the areas where the work is being done. If we want to grow our communities and increase our housing stock, we must ensure that we have the proper water and sewer infrastructure in place to support that growth. I am thinking about the announcement that I made last June in Campbellton, alongside the late Mayor Soucy, regarding the upgrades to infrastructure on Notre Dame Street in the Atholville area. I also made an announcement in Grand Falls about the relocation and replacement of older sanitary sewer infrastructure on Taylor Street, Park Street and O'Regan Street. In addition to supporting residential development in this area, this project will also address critical environmental challenges because the Saint John River is nearby and we could see that a manhole was on the verge of collapse. This could have led to a serious environmental incident in Grand Falls.

Business of Supply

Through these investments, we are not only supporting the construction of more housing but also addressing an environmental imperative.

My last example is the announcement of more than \$1 million that we made in Edmundston to extend water and sewer lines to service a residential project on Laboissonnière Avenue, des Mélézes Street, and Mgr Lacroix Avenue.

These are tangible ways that we can help our communities and all citizens who benefit from these projects.

As for the cost of living, we know that the price of electricity is also a major concern for Canadians. We know that the heating method used can have a significant impact on electricity bills. That is why we recently announced the launch of the national heat pump rebate program to help up to 820,000 households across the country switch to more efficient electric heat pumps. Our goal is to increase the number of homes that are more energy efficient in order to reduce electricity consumption and save people money every month. Heat pump systems have several advantages over traditional heating systems. They are more energy efficient, lowering energy costs for consumers. They also combine heating and cooling within the same system for year-round comfort, in the summer with air conditioning and in the winter with heating. What is more, it helps us meet our greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. Under this program, households with below-median incomes will get up to \$10,000, and other households will get up to \$2,000. This is another concrete measure put in place to help people cope with the cost of living and also to meet our environmental objectives.

As for the cost of living, I think it is also important to mention our affordable child care program, which we launched in 2021. The results speak for themselves. The statistics show that the labour force participation rate of young parents, particularly young mothers, has increased since this program was launched. Child care spaces have been created and made available to families in multiple communities across Canada, and we continue to work with provinces and territories to strengthen the early learning and child care system across Canada for the long term.

Huge progress has been made over the past five years, but we know that the needs are great and that there is still a need for more affordable child care in our communities. There are still waiting lists. There is more work to be done, but when we look at the progress made over the past five years in expanding access to affordable child care in Canada, we see that great strides have been made. In fact, last June, an announcement of up to \$5.4 billion over two years was announced. This is in addition to the more than \$58 billion in funding that has already been allocated to this program since 2021 under the current extension agreements with the provinces and territories. This is another example of a concrete investment that has an impact on the cost of living, on Canadian families and on their ability to fully participate in the labour market.

I will conclude by saying that addressing the cost of living and strengthening the Canadian economy so that it works for everyone requires concrete measures and action, not just empty rhetoric. The official opposition's rhetoric is always followed by votes against every measure we put in place.

On this side of the aisle, we take the issues seriously, take action, and implement concrete measures.

● (1315)

[English]

Burton Bailey (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, public debt charges are the fastest-growing major expense and have already surpassed Canada health transfer payments. That means Canadians are paying more to service debt than they receive for health care.

Can my hon. colleague think of a few ways the Liberal government could improve the amount of debt? Could it cut back on its spending so that Canadians can live more affordably?

[Translation]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we are managing our fiscal situation meticulously. We have undertaken a review of government spending across the various departments. We are ensuring that public finances are managed effectively. The goal is to have sufficient fiscal flexibility to be able to meet the needs of Canadians. When we implement various measures to strengthen and stimulate the Canadian economy, the idea is to have a thriving economy that allows us to fund the various social services that help Canadians cope with the cost of living.

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague defends French and culture, and we all agree that debt servicing costs are huge. In this context, we find it hard to understand why the government is forgoing considerable revenue by eliminating, for example, the digital services tax on American tech giants, which are a threat to our culture and our media. Furthermore, the government refused to allow the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission to collect levies from these same tech giants, which would have brought in considerable revenue for culture. Instead, it dipped into people's taxes to try to compensate for the cancellation of the levies.

What does my colleague say to that?

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that my colleague alluded to the official languages in the preamble to his question. It gives me an opportunity to remind the House of the Liberal government's historic investment in the official languages. The action plan for official languages 2023-2028 invests \$4.1 billion in supporting the official languages and the vitality of francophone minority communities. Even taking inflation into account, this is the largest investment in the official languages in the history of Canada.

It lets us support French-language education in our communities, take measures to support health, access to justice and employment services, and document our realities better through Statistics Canada data. In all, over a dozen federal organizations are involved in implementing the action plan for official languages, which is generating tangible benefits across Canada. I know what I am talking about, because I represent Madawaska—Restigouche, one of the ridings with the highest concentrations of francophones outside Quebec. These investments in the official languages are vital to my region.

Alana Hirtle (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent speech.

[English]

One of the issues in my riding has been children coming to school without having breakfast or something to eat. I know the government has been doing some work on this.

I am wondering if the member would be able to explain more about how we have been helping families through food at school.

• (1320)

[Translation]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Mr. Speaker, I share my colleague's concern. No child should ever have to spend a day in the classroom with an empty stomach. It is not conducive to learning.

As a government, we have taken this issue seriously. We established Canada's national school food program, and given the program's success and importance, we made it permanent. For example, in my province of New Brunswick, this translates into an agreement valued at \$11.3 million over three years. This investment is making the free breakfast program available in all schools across the province of New Brunswick. In addition, the government is supporting the launch of a pay-what-you-can lunch program administered by our provincial partners. This is a good example of a concrete measure that allows us to support children and families, while helping to create a healthy learning environment that meets their needs.

Hon. Kody Blois (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure, as always, to rise in the House on behalf of my constituents in Kings—Hants, but also in my role as Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, to take part in the debate on the Conservative opposition day motion moved today concerning Canada's fiscal situation.

I would like to raise a few important points for the benefit of Canadians who may be watching at home today and following the debates in the House of Commons in order to better understand the overall situation. In my view and in the government's view, the wording of the motion moved today by the Conservatives is problematic because it fails to take some crucial context into account, including Canada's fiscal position in general.

[English]

I am going to start by going to the first point in the text of the motion. The Conservatives assert that “the cost of government is driving up the cost of living.” I would reject the premise of that. The text of the motion fails to take into consideration the fact that

Business of Supply

the government has a comprehensive expenditure review, and the government will be reducing government expenditures by \$80 billion over the next five years. Part of that includes downsizing the number of staff of the Government of Canada, the federal government, and targets have already been met in that domain.

The motion fails to recognize that global events are having an impact on the cost of living for all countries, not just Canada. There is a blockade at the Strait of Hormuz, which is impacting global energy prices, and that is being felt globally. That is, of course, being felt by Canadians because it is a domestic challenge we are facing, but it is being felt by countries around the world. There is also a war in eastern Europe, in Ukraine, and while we have been a steadfast ally in supporting Ukraine, the implications on food security and energy security are felt globally.

We are in a global trading environment, but our government has focused on controlling what we can here at home. The Conservative text of the motion today fails to understand the work that the government is doing to reduce operational costs. The text of the motion does not take into consideration the government's promise to balance the operating spending of the government by fiscal year 2028-29. That is important.

I am a proud Nova Scotian. I get to see the work of rebuilding the Royal Canadian Navy in Halifax, in my home province, where we are making generational investments that started under a previous government but have continued. We have also reinvested in the River-class destroyer. Those are long-term investments that I hope all members of this House understand are important for protecting our sovereignty and providing for the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Our goal as a government is to make sure that the expenditures the government takes on are part of the long-term industrial capacity and long-term economic growth of the country, and that we have a true balance in the types of operational spending the government is going to be taking on. The Conservatives ran on a platform in the last election that included approximately \$130 billion of new spending. My hon. colleagues across the way can appreciate that it feels somewhat facetious to raise this type of measure when the platform promises of the Conservatives, had they been in government, would have led them to spend \$130 billion above and beyond expenditures at the time. That is an important piece.

Let us talk about Canada's fiscal position. Governments are different from household finances, but let us think about the average Canadian. My wife and I, when we were able to buy a home, did not have the money to outright buy a home. We had to get a mortgage from a bank. We had to take on debt to build a future, raise a family and live in our community. Governments are no different. Governments have to look at the borrowing costs of making longer-term investments versus the sustainability of taking on the debt obligation to drive longer-term outcomes.

Business of Supply

Nowhere in the Conservative motion today does it highlight that Canada has the best fiscal position and net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. Canadians need to understand that Canada's overall debt, as a relative size, is proportionate to the economy. We are four times the factor in the better than Germany. On the net debt-to-GDP ratio, our fiscal position is nine times better than the United States's. We also have the second-lowest deficit in the G7.

This is at a time when the government is cutting in certain areas and making tough choices, while at the same time making massive investments in energy, critical minerals, defence and the things that we believe are important long-term for the Canadian economy and our sovereignty. Nowhere in the opposition day motion does it highlight that to Canadians. It is the prerogative of His Majesty's loyal opposition to choose how these texts are developed, but nowhere does it recognize that that is the case.

The one area where I would agree with the Conservative position is that we have to remain vigilant. Bond rate increases are happening around the world. If we look at what is happening in France right now, its government bond yields are continuing to go up, which means the cost for the government to borrow is going higher and higher. That is now starting to be priced into the market. Our Prime Minister and this government understand that we need to maintain Canada's fiscal position. That is exactly what we are doing in the face of global market uncertainty, particularly around financing.

• (1325)

[Translation]

Today's motion is also about affordability. The wording of the motion moved by the Conservatives links government spending with affordability and the cost of living in general.

It is unfortunate that the Conservatives fail to mention the affordability measures that our government has introduced. For example, the national child care program is a concrete measure that is intended to help educate our young people, but it is also intended to make life more affordable for parents. We are working with the provinces and territories.

As my hon. colleague from Cumberland—Colchester mentioned earlier, there are school programs in place across the country. Through Canada's national school food program, we are ensuring that 400,000 students across the country have the opportunity to eat breakfast or lunch made with food from local farms.

There is also the Canada child benefit. In my riding, that benefit offers families nearly \$17 million to help them provide for their children. The amount is calculated based on household income.

Those are concrete measures that the government has put forward.

I also mentioned the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. That is why the government proposed eliminating the federal excise tax on gasoline and diesel. This is important. This measure is not there to guarantee that everything goes smoothly, but the government is using this concrete measure to give farmers, businesses and the general public a helping hand.

[English]

I really look forward to the debate. I did not have the opportunity to be on my feet this morning. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues about how the Conservative position seems to not reconcile the fact that Canada is in a strong fiscal position. I have no problem with His Majesty's loyal opposition highlighting that the government needs to remain diligent and needs to be thoughtful about its approach in the days ahead, but the text of the motion was presented to the House today without presenting any of the key statistics that actually outline Canada's fiscal position. It is difficult, certainly, for a government, and, I would say, many members of Parliament, to be able to vote without those key statistics that provide Canadians a better overall picture of where we are at.

The ability to talk about the fact that the debt servicing costs of governments across the world are rising because of bond rates and that governments need to be fiscally responsible and thoughtful, balancing operations and balancing budgets, while at the same time making long-term investments, is all fair game, but that level of nuance is something that I have rarely seen from the Conservative Party in my seven years, even though I have great friends across the way and there are some thoughtful colleagues, for sure. I would like to see the party in general try to find the types of texts that we could vote on and that, I think, are a little bit more balanced in terms of how they move forward.

• (1330)

Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member said that the motion was short on text, but the motion referenced the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report, which is full of data and statistics. I bring to his attention page 3, which reads:

Public debt charges are the fastest-growing expense. They are projected to more than double from \$24.5 billion in 2021-22 to \$59.3 billion in 2026-27.

I will let him reflect on that and maybe check through the report for some of the other data there. He spoke about households and talked about buying a house and getting a mortgage. I was in the mortgage business for 22 years. The government's household analogy would be more like buying a house and then going back to the bank every year to refinance the house and borrow continually against the house. Sooner or later one hits a wall. Sooner or later the debt becomes unsustainable.

Is he concerned about the Parliamentary Budget Officer's warnings about sustainability?

Hon. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, first of all, with regard to the household analogy, what that member fails to recognize is that if he is concerned about the overall debt as a proportion of the size of our house, he should take a look across the street and in the neighbourhood and realize that, actually, we are in one of the best positions. That does not mean that we still do not have work to do, but nowhere in his public commentary that I have heard in the House today does he recognize that Canada actually has the strongest fiscal position within the G7.

If he would like to highlight that we should take that barometer out wider and look at the G20 or other comparable countries, I think that is a fair question to raise, but when he talks about debt servicing charges going from \$24 billion to over \$50 billion, what he is failing to recognize is that the size of the economy also grew at the same time. When we deal in nominal numbers, it can feel like a very big number to the average Canadian. Again, I am not trying to shed the responsibility. The government has to be careful and thoughtful on this question.

In the context of his framing, he does not highlight the fact that the overall economy has grown to such a size that Canada's fiscal position remains sustainable.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative opposition day motion is not one I could vote for, but I do sense a reason for asking the Prime Minister to come up for a committee.

It is very hard to have the level of response and accountability from the current Prime Minister that we got from Justin Trudeau. Prime Minister Trudeau tried to create a tradition of Wednesday questions, where he would answer every question that came up through a Wednesday question period. I think he was trying to create a tradition that maybe the next the Prime Minister would continue.

Does the hon. member for Kings—Hants think there is a way that is less confrontational and partisan than what we have before us today to encourage the Prime Minister to be more available and accountable to other members of Parliament?

Hon. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, I actually did not have the chance in my remarks to address that particular point. I mean, it has not happened often that a sitting Prime Minister is going to sit in front of a parliamentary committee. My hon. learned colleague knows that that is quite rare in circumstance.

We have a very talented team of government ministers, including the Minister of Finance. Obviously the Prime Minister is the one who is ultimately responsible as the first amongst equals within the cabinet. At the same time, we have a competent bench that can respond to these questions. The hon. member has time every single day the House of Commons sits to ask these questions of the government.

I would differ as to whether or not it is the Prime Minister that has to be before a committee. Hopefully, today, that hon. member will get a chance to ask some of these questions to the Minister of Finance when she has her turn in this place during question period. That is accountability every single day that we look forward to.

• (1335)

[Translation]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the same vein, Bill C-5 and Bill C-39 are concentrating power in the PMO, which can declare that an oil project is in the national interest and which makes all the decisions.

It seems like the Minister of Finance is merely a mouthpiece for the Prime Minister. That is why people would like to speak with him directly in committee.

Business of Supply

What does my colleague think of that?

Hon. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, again, the ministers responsible for Bill C-5 or Bill C-39 are the Minister of Transport and the Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs and One Canadian Economy. They are fully capable of responding to the Bloc Québécois and other members of Parliament.

We believe we have a system of accountability both here in the House of Commons and outside it, with the media and with our constituents when we go door to door. We have a system of accountability here in Canada.

[English]

Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Barrie South—Innisfil.

Today, the opposition moves that the House call on the Prime Minister to appear as a witness at the finance committee. For 11 years, the cost of government has driven up the cost of living. The result of these accumulated deficits is that interest on the national debt is the fastest-growing cost of the government. The Liberals now spend more on debt than they do on the Canada health transfer. This works out to \$6,000 in federal taxes per Canadian family of four. The Prime Minister promised that he would reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio and the deficit-to-GDP ratio, but the Liberal government has broken every fiscal promise, has jettisoned every fiscal anchor and has smashed through every fiscal guardrail that it has ever set for itself. In the wake of a truly horrific Parliamentary Budget Officer's report, it is time for the Prime Minister to explain himself at the finance committee.

It is worth remembering how we got here. In 2015, on page 12 of their campaign document entitled "Real Change: A New Plan for a Strong Middle Class", the Liberals promised modest short-term deficits of less than \$10 billion in each of the next two fiscal years. They immediately broke that promise when they tabled a \$30-billion deficit in 2016 and another \$30-billion deficit the next year. They acted like they had never promised maximum modest short-term deficits and a return to balance by 2019. That is a return because that is where they started from. They said not to worry because they had a fiscal anchor. They promised, "a low and consistently declining debt-to-GDP ratio".

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They made that promise in 2015 and again in the 2016 budget, when Bill Morneau actually said, “our interest rates have never been lower, so we can borrow on excellent terms”. Never mind that he was breaking a campaign promise from only a few months earlier, never mind that the deficits would only get worse, never mind that without a plan to ever return to balance, they might eventually have to refinance their debt at higher rates and never mind that despite Justin Trudeau's claim, budgets do not ever just balance themselves.

They cut loose this first fiscal anchor in the fall 2018 economic statement when their debt-to-GDP ratio jumped up. Then in 2019, they again promised to reduce debt as a function of our economy “each and every year”, and they failed to keep that promise, too, because even before the pandemic began in March 2020, the Liberals were already on track to break that promise. They had already baked in a structural deficit and added \$100 billion to the national debt before COVID without any COVID spending. After the pandemic, they went back to claiming that a declining debt-to-GDP ratio was their fiscal anchor, “a line we shall not cross, and that will ensure that our finances remain sustainable so long as it remains unbreached.” So said Chrystia Freeland in 2022.

Of course, they breached it again. They breached it in the very next budget in 2023 and again in 2024. By late 2024, the finance minister resigned rather than table a fall economic statement that blew through her own promise, breaking projections that she had made just six months earlier regarding new spending. Then the new Prime Minister arrived. Their 2025 platform again promised declining debt to GDP “over the budget horizon”, but right after he won the election and ran on that promise, he ignored it and came back with a new plan. He resorted to accounting trickery, a promise to balance the operating budget and to do so by 2028-29.

He promised a declining deficit to GDP, but their spring economic statement earlier this year already projects that the debt-to-GDP ratio will continue to rise and will not decline until 2029, at which time it will still be higher than it was in that 2024 fall economic statement that precipitated the resignations of both Freeland and Trudeau. We have seen that for 11 years, the government has broken every fiscal promise, smashed through every fiscal guardrail and repeatedly cut loose every fiscal anchor, which brings us to this month's Parliamentary Budget Officer's report, the “Economic and Fiscal Outlook”.

● (1340)

According to the PBO, “The federal debt-to-GDP ratio...is projected to rise each year...[through] 2030-31.” So much for the line they shall not cross. So much for their finances remaining sustainable so long as that line goes unbreached. So much for another fiscal anchor cut loose and sunk to the bottom of the ocean.

The PBO projects that “the Government will not meet its second [fiscal] anchor of...a declining deficit-to-GDP ratio”. Anchors away. The report goes on to say that “the two fiscal anchors have imposed limited fiscal discipline on government spending and borrowing.”

It continues:

Public debt charges are the fastest-growing expense. They are projected to more than double from \$24.5 billion in 2021-22 to \$59.3 billion in 2026-27 and are projected to reach \$83.0 billion by 2030-31....

On a per capita basis, public debt charges [climbed] from \$640 in 2021-22 to \$1,419 in 2026-27 and are projected to reach \$1,952 in 2030-31....

This is a terrible report. The short-term outlook, though, for the balance of this year actually reflects higher than projected revenues, but the higher revenues are because of world oil prices, not increasing economic output. In fact, the higher revenue comes “Despite weaker real economic activity”. The government receives higher revenues, and consumers face higher prices. A brief sugar high of unexpectedly higher revenue will not pay down the national debt, and it is not going to anchor the government's finances.

The rapidly rising cost of debt service on the national debt is entirely due to accumulating deficits. It is not from higher than projected interest rates, but the possibility of higher interest rates in the years to come has been identified by the PBO as an emerging risk to Canada's fiscal health. The report states, “Public debt charges are now...twice as sensitive to higher interest rates as in pre-pandemic outlooks, mainly because the Government carries a larger stock of interest-bearing debt.”

We must remember, this is the government that was willing to pile on debt long before COVID and continues to do so long after, and these are the same Liberals who said back in 2016 that low interest rates meant it was safe to run deficits. Now we are twice as vulnerable to factors beyond our control because interest is now the fastest-growing government expense. We now spend more on interest than we do on national defence. We now spend more on interest than we do on the health transfer. It is now over 13% of the federal budget and rapidly rising.

The per capita interest cost is rising faster than per capita income. An average family is already paying nearly \$6,000 in taxes just for interest on the national debt, and the number is going to grow quickly in the next four years. Canadians cannot afford to pay more taxes in order to pay more interest, and this government continues to rack up debt. Canadians are not getting ahead. Their incomes are not keeping pace with inflation. They are already highly taxed, and the portion of their taxes that is going straight to bondholders is increasing.

As for the portion of Canadian taxes that goes to interest, the government's options narrow. The room to lower taxes, increase services, increase defence capability or pay down debt is more and more limited. That is why Conservatives want the finance minister to come to the finance committee and testify on saving Canadians money by cutting spending, debt interest and taxes. It is time for the Prime Minister to take responsibility for his broken promises and his government's failed approach to budgeting.

This government inherited a balanced budget. The Liberals inherited a rapidly declining per capita interest expense. It is right there in the report. They inherited what The New York Times called the world's most prosperous middle class. They had every advantage that a new government could possibly ask for back in 2015, and they blew it.

This PBO report should be a wake-up call to the government. It is time for the Prime Minister to admit that up until now, the Liberals' fiscal anchors and campaign promises were not kept. Some say it is never too late to do the right thing. I would hope that the Prime Minister may actually welcome the opportunity to attend the finance committee. He can apologize to Canadians for his broken promises, and he can still reverse course and save Canadians money.

• (1345)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will go to the facts. Out of the G7, only Germany and Canada have the AAA credit rating. The difference between us and the Conservatives is that we understand and appreciate the value of investing in Canada, in Canadians, to build a stronger and healthier economy.

Just moments ago, I was talking with members from CentrePort in Winnipeg. CentrePort is going to be one of the driving forces of Manitoba's economy. By doing that, it will make a difference, with both private and public investment growing job opportunities. That is not unique to the northwest area of Winnipeg. It is happening in every region of Canada.

Why does the Conservative Party oppose government and private sector investment?

Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure where the member was really heading to there. I know he is impervious to shame. This member ran on a platform way back in 2015. The Liberals do not care that they do not keep their promises. The government that he speaks for breaches every fiscal anchor it lays down for itself, and this member does not care.

[Translation]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one of the factors making the deficit so big is the billions of dollars in subsidies that have been handed out to oil companies.

Does my colleague think that this type of subsidy should continue?

[English]

Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, Bloc members always raise this. I think they are quite confused about what a subsidy is. The government,

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for all of its misgivings and all of the terrible policy that it has, is not squandering Canadian tax dollars on subsidizing oil and gas, other than its failed and failing approach to project development. It took a pipeline like Trans Mountain that would have been built by private investors, chased the private investment out of the country, and built it at the public expense at about a 500% cost overrun. I do oppose that style of policy-making.

The problem with this government is that its entire approach to industrial policy is to cherry-pick projects and use the power of public money behind construction.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, to pick up on what the member just said, TMX would not have happened had the government not been directly engaged in building that pipeline. I can understand why Conservatives are confused, because the Conservative Party, while in government, did not even build an inch of pipeline to the west coast. It took a Liberal administration to do that, just like it has taken a Liberal administration to have LNG and this particular Prime Minister for LNG phase two to be among the numerous major projects in progress today in every region of our country.

Will the member now recognize the value of a proactive government working in collaboration with provinces to build projects?

• (1350)

Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, it is always entertaining to listen to the Liberals talk about something they broke and then demand extraordinary recognition for their attempts to put things back together. They chased Kinder Morgan out of Canada. They chased it out by moving the goalposts and refusing to champion the approvals that existed and then afterwards want enormous credit for nationalizing that project although they had forced the proponent out.

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in *Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith*, there is a famous scene where Obi-Wan Kenobi is on the high ground and Anakin Skywalker, who eventually becomes Darth Vader, is getting burned. In that scene, Obi-Wan says to Anakin, "You were the chosen one." He says, "You were supposed to bring balance to the Force. You were not supposed to join the Sith. You were supposed to defeat them." Well, in April 2025, the Prime Minister billed himself as the chosen one. He was supposed to bring balance to our fiscal force. He was going to spend less, and things were going to improve. Things have done anything but improve in this country. In fact, I would suggest that they have gotten a lot worse under the Prime Minister in terms of fiscal mismanagement.

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We have had two PBOs, the previous one and this one, who have sounded the alarm on the state of the country's fiscal finances, and the most recent report should cause anyone to pause. For anyone who has kids, anyone who has grandchildren or great-grandchildren, it should cause great concern about the direction this country is heading in terms of fiscal mismanagement. Frankly, what concerns me, not just as a parliamentarian but as a father, is that my kids will be picking up the scattered pieces of what is left economically in this country after the Prime Minister and the Liberal government are done with it.

The alarm was sounded by the latest Parliamentary Budget Officer. Members will recall that the Liberals were not happy with some of the things the previous Parliamentary Budget Officer was reporting to Canadians. He referred to the state of our finances as "stupefying". The current Parliamentary Budget Officer has picked up where the previous one left off and has raised the alarms in a great way in this country. The latest fiscal update from the Parliamentary Budget Officer goes like this. The interest on the debt this year is going to be \$59.3 billion, which is more than we send to the provinces for health care transfers.

She went on to say that by 2030-31, the interest on the debt is going to be \$83 billion. This means that an average family of four in this country is going to be paying \$6,000 on the debt this year, and that is going to rise to \$8,000. This is money that could be put in people's pockets. It could be put toward the health of their children through sports programs or better nutrition. We are seeing food banks in this country reporting that millions and millions of people a month are going to the food bank. Many of them are working-class Canadians who cannot afford the necessities of life anymore.

It is not just the deficit that is a problem. Cumulatively, over the next five years, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has said, the level of debt is expected to increase by \$732.9 billion. That is \$732.9 billion added to the already existing debt. The only ones who make money off this are the bondholders and the bankers. With the interest that is paid on that debt, and in some of the examples I gave earlier, this is just what those numbers are going to look like.

This motion calls on the Prime Minister to not stand in the House for 35-second questions when he is here. It calls on the Prime Minister to stand before a parliamentary committee and answer questions about the state of the finances in this country, which has been created by government spending and by programs that have gone to well-connected insiders, and to answer questions about Alto, questions about foreign aid and questions about why Canadians are in such bad shape when he said and made a promise to them in April 2025 that he was going to make things better.

• (1355)

These are very simple questions that need to be asked, not in 35-second sound bites in this place, but before a parliamentary committee so we can have a fulsome discussion about the state of finances in this country for Canadians to be made aware, truthfully and honestly, of the state of their finances and what it means to the future of this country and the future of their kids and grandkids, who, like I said earlier, are going to be picking up the scattered

pieces of what is left of this country after these Liberals are done with it financially.

There is a budget coming up November 5, and it is curious to me why it is being presented on a Thursday afternoon. I have been here 11 years, and I have never seen a budget presented on a Thursday afternoon. Typically, budgets take place on Tuesday afternoon. There is then a full opportunity for opposition members to call into question some of the issues related to the budget, but this is happening on November 5 of this year, a Thursday afternoon. This means that Friday, which is generally a reduced session, will be the only period we have to ask questions about the budget, and then we are back in our ridings for the week of Remembrance Day.

I think the purpose of this is that Canadians and parliamentarians may actually forget about what is in the budget. I also think the government is fearful about what it is going to report in this budget, and that is why it is being introduced on a Thursday afternoon. This is equal to government news coming out on a Friday afternoon when it does not want anybody to pay attention to it. That is concerning in and of itself.

When we talk about accountability and transparency, we talk about the Prime Minister coming to committee to answer these questions. We know he is not willing to answer the questions here. Otherwise, the government would not be introducing a budget on a Thursday afternoon when members of Parliament will be back in their ridings the next week for Remembrance Day. At a minimum, because he said that he was going to make things better for Canadians, the Prime Minister needs to come to committee to answer those questions.

As I said earlier, what these numbers mean is that the average family of four is going to be paying roughly \$6,000 a year in interest on that debt. This is just absurd at a time when Canadians are struggling and dealing with food insecurity and housing affordability. They are dealing with issues of anxiety and stress. There is not a day that goes by, and I am sure there are other members of Parliament on all sides who are dealing with this too, when we are not walking somebody in off the ledge who is dealing with these issues of affordability.

In 2015, Canada had the wealthiest middle class in the world, and now we have 2.3 million people a month, and in many cases, these are working-class people, who are visiting food banks in this country. Food banks are reporting that their shelves are bare now because of the demand that has been happening. We have seniors in grocery stores putting items back on the shelf because they cannot afford them.

This is not a normal state for a G7 country. The Prime Minister said that he was going to fix it, and he has done anything but. In fact, I would suggest that he has made this situation much worse with the lack of control in spending, the debt and the deficits. It is disturbing. It is disturbing for my kids. It is disturbing for all of our kids and grandkids. They are the ones who are going to pay the price for this.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

MISSISSAUGA—ERIN MILLS

Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate the mayor-elect, Alvin Tedjo, as our new mayor of Mississauga. He is a person of conviction and one whom I look forward to working with. The people of Mississauga made the issues very clear: affordability, safety and jobs. I look forward to working with our new mayor and our collective councillors to ensure that we deliver for the people of Mississauga.

These issues affect our safety and our entire community, and they must be addressed through consensus and through collaboration between everybody who has stood up and raised their hand to run and to serve in our community, so I want to thank everybody in our Mississauga community for coming together and for ensuring that Mississauga continues to be Canada strong.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Scot Davidson (York—South Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they say, “You meet the nicest people [in] a Honda.” As the MP for York—South Simcoe, the proud home of Honda Canada, I can say that the people who build Hondas are every bit as nice too.

Next week, Honda celebrates 40 years of continuous car-making excellence in Canada since its plant first opened in Alliston, Ontario, on November 3, 1986. Today, it produces the Honda Civic, the Canadian car of the year. More than 4,000 Canadians work there, and it supports 30,000 more jobs across the sector. From the associates on the line to the suppliers and dealers who put Canadians behind the wheel, every one of them has helped build this legacy. Canadian manufacturing succeeds when we stand behind it.

To everyone at Honda, I wish a happy 40th and all the best, as it keeps the power of dreams driving themselves forward.

* * *

PHYSICIAN AWARDS IN B.C.

Parm Bains (Richmond East—Steveston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this spring, Doctors of BC recognized the recipients of its annual awards, celebrating physicians whose leadership, service and dedication continue to strengthen health care across British Columbia.

Among this year's honorees was Dr. Gulzar Cheema, who received the Silver Medal of Service. For over 40 years, Dr. Cheema has made exceptional contributions to medicine and public service as a physician, educator and former MLA in both Manitoba and British Columbia. In 2001, Dr. Cheema was appointed British Columbia's first minister of state for mental health, a landmark role that brought cabinet-level leadership and advocacy to mental health and wellness more than 25 years ago.

Doctors of BC also recognized outstanding physicians including Dr. Charlotte Yong-Hing, Dr. Edith Blondel-Hill, Dr. Steven Good-

Statements by Members

child and Dr. Eric Yoshida, whose work continues to make a meaningful difference in communities across the province.

I congratulate all this year's recipients on this well-deserved recognition.

* * *

BATTLE OF RIDGEWAY

Fred Davies (Niagara South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on June 2, 1866, nine Canadians were killed at the Battle of Ridgeway. It was Canada's first battle fought on Canadian soil using Canadian troops with Canadian officers. Ultimately, 32 young Canadians died. Most were barely out of adolescence. Many people argue that this battle against Fenian raiders who crossed from the United States intensified discussions leading to Confederation. We may not have been standing here in the chamber today were it not for the sacrifice of these men who died on Lime Ridge in my riding of Niagara South along the shores of Lake Erie.

After 160 years, it is time to finally recognize the sacrifice of these men, who defended Canada on Canadian soil, in Parliament's Books of Remembrance, just a few short steps from the chamber. I call on the government to add the names of those who perished on Lime Ridge 160 years ago, recognize that sacrifice and show their names to future generations through respect by a grateful nation.

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[Translation]

BRIGADE DE PROPRETÉ IN TROIS-RIVIÈRES

Caroline Desrochers (Trois-Rivières, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to highlight the work of the Brigade de propreté, a cleanup crew in Trois-Rivières.

Every day, this cleanup crew helps make our city cleaner and more welcoming. This wonderful initiative is the result of a partnership between Point de rue, an organization that works with people experiencing homelessness, and the Société de développement commercial du centre-ville de Trois-Rivières, or SDC, which, incidentally, is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year.

This initiative goes far beyond maintaining our public spaces. It also supports people who want to get their lives back on track, by helping them return to the workforce and regain their confidence.

I want to congratulate Karine Trahan, from Point de rue, and Ève-Marie Marchand, from the SDC, for their commitment to establishing this cleanup crew.

I want to congratulate the entire cleanup crew and thank them for contributing every day to keeping Trois-Rivières clean and making our community proud.

Statements by Members

● (1405)

*[English]***RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS**

Mike Dawson (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, October 16, in Miramichi, we honoured the retirement of Court of King's Bench Justice Fred Ferguson, KC. Although born in Dalhousie, he has long been regarded as one of our own.

After law school, he worked as a Crown prosecutor for three decades alongside colleagues Jack Walsh and Bill Morrissey. He prosecuted some of the most serious and widely noted criminal cases in the country. Appointed to the provincial court in 2003 and elevated to the King's Bench in 2008, he is widely respected across Canada for his unmatched knowledge of the criminal law. He earned a reputation for being approachable by young lawyers and by all those who appeared before him. Colourful and courageous, and sometimes called “the oracle”, he is a devoted husband to Debbie and a proud father to Adam and Jess.

I ask the House to extend its best wishes to Justice Fred Ferguson on a distinguished career and a well-deserved retirement.

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OTTAWA ELECTION CONGRATULATIONS

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Kanata, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Ottawa voted last night, and today I rise on behalf of my Ottawa MP colleagues to congratulate Mayor Mark Sutcliffe and all the city councillors who were elected yesterday. Special congratulations go to the three new councillors joining the table: Erin Coffin, Joanne Chianello and Chelsea Walton.

Ottawa made history last night because, for the first time, women will outnumber men around the table. That is a milestone worth celebrating, and one that reflects the strong women who lead and build communities in our city.

We look forward to working with Mayor Sutcliffe and the council to tackle the challenges ahead and to continue to build a strong and vibrant national capital. I congratulate all. Let us get to work.

* * *

AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the House and Canadians about Bob Gibson, who is a retired air force pilot. He and his wife, Charmaine, are on Parliament Hill today. Their son followed in his dad's footsteps and is also a pilot in the air force.

Something members might not know is that members of the Canadian Armed Forces are more likely to be diagnosed with ALS. Unfortunately, Bob has an ALS diagnosis and is worried that his son, who followed in his footsteps of serving the country, may also face the same diagnosis.

The ALS community is calling for a \$50-million investment from the Government of Canada, and I support its request. The funding would open clinical trials, help researchers understand the disease and explore the link between military service and ALS. We

know that time counts. Members of the House will remember our late hon. colleague Mauril Bélanger, who had nine months from diagnosis to his passing.

We can do more than offer hope and best wishes to people living with ALS and to those who serve our country. We can help fund research and hope.

* * *

*[Translation]***JEAN-EUDES SENNEVILLE**

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Jean-Eudes Senneville, who passed away on October 4 at the age of 86.

A disciplined businessman and visionary, Mr. Senneville was a true pioneer of the wild blueberry industry in my riding of Lac-Saint-Jean. He was a community builder who helped shape the blueberry economy for more than half a century, but his legacy extends far beyond his company.

In 1979, he opened his first freezing plant, which became the cornerstone of Quebec Wild Blueberries. Nearly 50 years later, four state-of-the-art processing plants are helping our wild blueberries reach markets far away from our region.

Although his forthright manner occasionally ruffled a few feathers, he forged lasting partnerships and left an indelible mark on the blueberry industry.

Mr. Senneville's influence on Lac-Saint-Jean and Quebec will continue to be felt for years to come. To his family and loved ones, we offer our most sincere condolences.

* * *

● (1410)

*[English]***RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS**

Doly Begum (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Women's History Month comes to a close, I rise to honour Lynda Kosowan, a true trailblazer of our community, who recently retired after 40 remarkable years of leading the Scarborough Women's Centre. Under her leadership, the centre has supported more than 175,000 women and their children. Through professional counselling, mentoring and workshops, the centre has helped women move away from abuse, poverty and isolation toward independence. Thanks to Lynda's leadership, no woman who walked through the centre's doors had to face her challenges alone.

On behalf of Scarborough Southwest, I want to thank Lynda for her extraordinary service and wish her a joyful and well-earned retirement.

* * *

[Translation]

LES CUISINIERS DIFFÉRENTS

Natilien Joseph (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Les Cuisiniers différents is a noteworthy organization doing remarkable work in Longueuil—Saint-Hubert under the leadership of executive director Chantal Pagé. Thanks in part to Canada's national school food program, Les Cuisiniers différents provides meals to students while advancing its mission to promote the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities.

The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities had the privilege of hearing Ms. Pagé share her experience and expertise regarding these programs and their tangible impact on young people. I am always very proud to see an organization from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert contribute to the discussions shaping public policy.

I want to congratulate everyone involved with Les Cuisiniers différents on their commitment and their invaluable contribution to our community, and I am grateful to Ms. Pagé.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN STEELWORKERS

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 22 days ago, the industry minister threatened legal action against Stelco's American owner. Today, Cleveland-Cliffs claims it has complied with all 34 undertakings, while the minister alleges breaches of six binding commitments. Meanwhile, hundreds of workers face layoffs, and the government continues to issue warnings instead of taking legal action. It is enough letters and enough deadlines. It is time to act.

Our Conservative steel plan calls for enforcing Stelco's job guarantees, cracking down on unfairly traded Chinese steel, eliminating the industrial carbon tax, fast-tracking LNG projects using Canadian steel, and negotiating a deal with the United States. From Stelco to Algoma, steelworkers are paying the price as our industry faces mounting pressure. Canadian steelworkers can compete with the best people in the world. They should not have to compete with their own government.

It is time for the Liberal government to stop extending deadlines, start enforcing commitments and start protecting Canadian steel jobs.

* * *

[Translation]

ROGER BARRETTE

Madeleine Chenette (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to pay tribute to a constituent of mine. Roger Barrette has dedicated 47 years of his working life to the health and

Statements by Members

social services system, including 40 years at the Thérèse-De Blainville CLSC, now known as Santé Québec Laurentides.

Mr. Barrette has witnessed the major changes in our health care system from the early days of CLSCs to the present. Throughout all these years, he has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to our community. Even today, he continues to come up with innovative ideas for the benefit of our community. I recently had the pleasure of meeting with him and presenting him with a certificate of recognition to honour his exceptional career.

Our public services are sustained by women and men like Roger Barrette, who dedicate their careers to serving the public and contribute every day to the well-being of our constituents.

On behalf of the people of Thérèse-De Blainville, I thank Mr. Barrette for his 47 years of service, and I offer him my heartfelt congratulations.

* * *

[English]

AFFORDABILITY

Amanpreet Gill (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of all struggling families not just in my hometown of Calgary, but across the entire country.

Every month, the Liberals manage to set new records. Unfortunately, these records are for food bank visits. Food Banks Canada recorded 2.35 million food bank visits in a single month, the highest number ever recorded in our history. This crisis is being made even worse by high fuel prices, which make it more expensive for farmers to grow crops and harder for truckers to deliver food to Canadians.

That is why Conservatives will continue to fight to make life more affordable for all Canadians, so that no family has to choose between putting food on the table and paying for the fuel they need in order to get to work.

* * *

● (1415)

BRITISH COLUMBIA ELECTION

Aaron Gunn (North Island—Powell River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, common sense is coming back to British Columbia. For the first time in nearly 100 years, my fellow British Columbians have ended a decade of NDP rule and elected a new Conservative government, one that shares our goal and vision to make life more affordable in B.C., to bring back safe streets and fiscal sanity and to unleash the true potential of B.C.'s resource economy.

Oral Questions

The resurrection of this movement and this party did not happen overnight. Over the past five years, I have been honoured to work alongside a number of passionate and principled individuals to bring this vision into reality. They include Angelo Isidorou, Aisha Estey, Sacha Peter and Harman Bhangu. I would also like to congratulate Premier-elect Lorne Doerkson for his crushing victory and for meeting this unprecedented moment with steadfastness, resilience and grace.

The future is once again bright in B.C., and I know that Conservatives here in our nation's capital are ready to play our part.

CANADIAN FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Corey Hogan (Calgary Confederation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, Canadians marked National Forest Week, and sector leaders from across the country gathered in Ottawa at the Forest Products Association of Canada's annual conference to strengthen this vital sector.

There is no question that U.S. trade actions and the decline of newsprint have made for some challenging years, but we are a nation of forests. Forestry quite literally built this country, and forestry will continue to build this country. Next week, we will release our forestry strategy. This strategy will build on the work of the forest sector transformation task force and the action plan released this spring.

I want to recognize the workers, innovators, researchers, indigenous partners and industry leaders whose dedication helps keep our forest community strong, last week, this week and every week. When forestry is strong, Canada is strong.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we already have a free trade agreement with Europe and a military alliance with NATO and 30 European countries, but the Prime Minister is threatening to cede our sovereignty to costly European policies on taxes, immigration and regulations. This is not going to reduce the cost of living, and it is going to encroach on provincial premiers' jurisdictions without their consent and without their input, including the Premier of Quebec on his own turf.

How can the Prime Minister be so out of touch and so arrogant?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us not forget that the European Union represents 450 million consumers and 18% of global GDP. I am very proud that there is a rapprochement happening between the European Union and Canada. Our diplomatic efforts are bearing fruit.

It should also be noted that the benefits that Canada negotiates in the interest of Canadians are in the interest of Quebec. These are opportunities for our businesses and our citizens. I would like to

commend the Quebec delegation in Brussels for its contributions to Canada's diplomatic efforts.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no rapprochement happening. No agreements have been signed, either. Ten European countries have not signed the agreement we already have. There have been no results. The Prime Minister is all talk and no action.

The same goes for spending. Inflation caused government revenues to skyrocket, but the Prime Minister squandered the money. The Parliamentary Budget Officer reports that he is planning to add \$733 billion to our debt over the next five years, which amounts to an additional \$40,000 in debt for every Canadian family.

How can the Prime Minister be so out of touch and so costly for Canadians?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is far too much to unpack in that question. First, he said we are "all talk and no action" and that there have been few results, but I would point out that our non-U.S. exports have increased by \$33 billion in recent years. That is an 11% increase at a time when we are seeing a realignment of the Canadian economy to be more resilient and more self-reliant.

Now, whenever he talks about inflationary programs, I always ask the Leader of the Opposition the same question, but he is never able to come up with an answer: What exactly is an inflationary program? For example, is it the 213,000 children in Quebec who benefit from the Canada child benefit and the \$819 million that is sent to Quebec families to meet their needs? Is that an inflationary program?

• (1420)

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, inflation is going to bring a \$20-billion revenue windfall to the government. That is great news for the Prime Minister but terrible news for the people lined up at food banks and the young people who cannot afford a place to live. It is still not enough to offset the irresponsibility of the big-spending Prime Minister, who is going to add \$733 billion to our national debt over five years according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. That is \$40,000 for every family in Canada.

Will he acknowledge that he is out of touch and that Canadians are out of money?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader, as Canadians know, has no credibility when it comes to the economy. He has never worked one day in it.

On this side of the House, we have a plan. We have a plan to build Canada strong. At the Canada investment summit, there was \$500 billion in investments. Non-U.S. exports are set to double over the next decade. Foreign direct investment is at levels not seen in decades.

On this side of the House, we have a plan to invest in our economy and to build our economy strong. The leader continues with the rhetoric.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister had any results at all, he would stand up and answer questions about his record deficit and the fact that the fastest-growing item in the budget is not health care, not the military and not borders, but interest on the national debt, enriching his banker buddies at the expense of hard-working Canadians.

The average family of four will spend \$6,000 this year on taxes to fund interest on debt. Will he acknowledge that he is out of touch, that Canadians are out of money and that the debt is out of control?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, do members know what a good leader does? A good leader does not raise his hands up, blame everybody else and offer nothing constructive as a solution. On this side of the House, let us look at some economic facts: the best net debt-to-GDP in the G7, the fastest-growing economy in the G7 and the best credit rating in the G7.

On this side of the House, we have a Prime Minister with economic and business credentials. The leader has never worked one day in the economy and is in his third decade in the House producing nothing.

The Speaker: I would advise members not to be provocative, because it creates a reaction and leads to a bit of chaos in the House.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

* * *

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a good leader stands up and answers questions in the House of Commons, and a good leader gets results.

Now we learn that the government is admitting it will not get the Prime Minister's promised results on housing. In a response to an Order Paper question, the Liberals have now admitted that the Prime Minister has broken his promise to double homebuilding and that construction will actually fall to near-record lows over the next three years, blaming immigration, as the Liberals do, for the housing shortage.

How could the Prime Minister be so out of touch with Canadians who need homes?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I would reprimand the member opposite for constantly attacking immigrants.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

The Speaker: The hon. member may continue. Let us listen to him.

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, I think almost every member of the House comes from immigrant stock. Canada is a country of immigrants, and to blame immigrants for a housing crisis is absolutely unfair and unjust.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: It is a little loud. I do not want to reprimand anybody.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

● (1425)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member says he wants to reprimand anybody who blames excessive immigration numbers for the housing shortage. Well, let me read directly from a document he tabled in the House of Commons. It is a document on the housing shortage. It says, "One of the drivers of the housing shortage has been the strong growth in housing demand driven by immigration."

Will the minister stand up now and reprimand himself?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a difference between immigrants and immigration, first and foremost. When the member opposite—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: We need to reset the clock to the beginning.

The hon. member from the top, please.

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, there is a big difference. The member opposite demonizes immigrants, which is specifically what he said. The member opposite said, "immigrants".

Many countries in the world, including Canada, have challenges around immigration. Lots of people want to come to Canada. We need to keep up with the housing we build, and as the Prime Minister has said, we need to make sure the housing we build fits the immigration levels. We want immigrants in Canada. This is a country of immigrants. We believe in immigration. It has to be controlled, and our housing builds have to match accordingly. That is what we are focused on.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the wake of the Parti Québécois' election victory, the Prime Minister telephoned the Premier of Quebec to offer his congratulations and express his desire to work together on key priorities, including the economy, housing, support for workers and homelessness. It was a gesture of goodwill, but that collaborative spirit appears to have been short-lived.

How can the Prime Minister justify muzzling the Premier of Quebec on his own turf, during the Canada–Europe summit taking place this week in Montreal?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will leave it to the leader of the Bloc Québécois to choose his own analogies, but I believe that is a bit of a stretch.

Does the member know what I am hearing from the Quebecers I meet? I am talking about the Quebecers who elected 44 Liberal members from Quebec, including the recent election in Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, where the Liberal candidate received more than 50% of the vote.

They are saying that they want us to continue diversifying our markets and strengthening the resilience of the Quebec and Canadian economies. They are encouraged to see that exports to markets outside the United States have increased by 11% over the past year. They are pleased that, over the past year, Canada has signed 20 trade and security agreements with countries around the world.

It is the Government of Canada doing that work, in partnership with the provinces and territories, and we will continue that work in the interest of all Canadians.

Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that that lines up with what we were hearing in Quebec this morning.

The Premier of Quebec asked to give a speech at a summit examining issues like culture, workforce mobility, the fight against global warming, and agriculture. The Premier of Quebec is entitled to take the floor in the largest francophone city in North America. Ottawa's response was that no, Quebec's voice does not need to be heard at international fora.

Does the Prime Minister claim to speak for the Government of Quebec as well?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we hear in Quebec City, what we heard today and yesterday, is that Quebecers want us to pursue our efforts to diversify our markets, especially with the European Union. Why? It is because the EU represents 450 million consumers and 18% of global GDP.

Also, Canada negotiates in the interest of Canada, in the interest of all the provinces and in the interest of Quebec. I commend the Quebec delegation to Brussels for its contributions to our diplomat-

ic efforts to strengthen our ties with the European Union. We are going to stay the course.

• (1430)

Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada's leading exporter to Europe is Quebec. However, if we are not at the table, we are on the menu, as the Prime Minister himself said, and we now know that the federal government does not want Quebec at the table. He will talk about issues that fall exclusively under Quebec's jurisdiction, and Quebec will have no say. He will talk about pipelines, fossil fuels and maybe new markets, the forestry industry, labour, the environment and culture. Quebec's future is at stake, but we are clearly on the menu.

Will the Prime Minister agree to remedy the insult he delivered to all Quebecers in front of the whole of Europe?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the Premier of Quebec was invited to welcome the dignitaries and attend the dinner, as were several other provincial premiers who will be there, as well as a number of representatives of major industries, major businesses and major institutions in Quebec who will also be there. The invitation is still open.

I think it would be good for the Government of Quebec to be there.

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[English]

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal tanker ban is a gigantic multi-billion-dollar gift to Donald Trump's America. Right now, we are getting a \$26-a-barrel lower price in the U.S. than we could get on the world market, because we cannot get our oil overseas. What if there were a company with a railroad already in place, promising to move 250,000 barrels a day and ship it from Prince Rupert to get world prices through the Pacific? Well, it turns out there is one. What is standing in the way? It is the Prime Minister and his tanker ban.

Will the Liberal government vote for Conservative Bill C-264 to get our oil to the world?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada, B.C., Alberta and affected first nations are working together to build the Pacific link, which will massively increase exports. We are building in partnership with indigenous people all across this country.

Rather than pick fights with indigenous people, why do the Conservatives not join us on the north coast transmission line and help us build that with indigenous people? Why do they not help us build the Darlington SMR with indigenous people? Why do they not stop fighting indigenous people and start building Canada strong?

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is all well and good to build a pipeline to the Pacific 10 years from now with tens of billions of dollars of taxpayer money, but that does not stop us from also allowing a project that could begin today and that could start shipping oil in two years on a rail track that already exists, without any taxpayer subsidy required. There is only one thing standing in the way, and that is the Prime Minister and his tanker ban.

Will the Prime Minister get out of the way, vote for Conservative Bill C-264, get rid of the tanker ban and get our oil to the world?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat it. The Conservative leader can join us with indigenous people and help us build the sunrise pipeline expansion. He can join us and help us build the Taylor to Gordondale expansion. He can join us and build the Pacific link. He can join us and build the north coast transmission line. Instead of fighting indigenous people, he should work with indigenous people to build Canada strong.

* * *

FINANCE

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the previous Liberal government over the last decade blew through every single fiscal anchor it had established. Last year, we got a new Prime Minister and new Liberal leader, who established new fiscal anchors in the last budget, with deficits double that of its predecessor. Well, here we are, less than a year later, and the PBO projects that the Prime Minister is going to blow through these new fiscal anchors.

Will the Prime Minister confirm the PBO's projection that the upcoming budget will blow through the fiscal anchor?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been clear: We are spending less to invest more in the Canadian economy.

We found over \$60 billion in government savings, reported a lower deficit in the spring economic update, and are on track to balance the operating budget a year ahead of schedule. We have done all that while cutting taxes on income, housing, fuel and new business investment, and supporting Canadians with groceries and essentials, while seeing the highest level in foreign direct investment in nearly two decades. That is how we demonstrate fiscal discipline and build Canada strong.

• (1435)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what stats the member is cherry-picking, but business capital formation has declined in five of the last six quarters, and GDP growth is under 1%, effectively zero. As to spending, the debt is growing at double the rate of the deficit, and interest payments on the national debt are skyrocketing to 14¢ per dollar of revenue by decade's end.

I ask the government to answer the question. Will the government blow through the fiscal guardrail in the upcoming budget, yes or no?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada starts with the strongest fiscal position in the G7. We have seen the net debt-to-GDP ratio is the best in the G7. We have a AAA credit rating, the best in the G7. In Q2 of this year, we had the highest GDP growth in the G7. I do not know how many stats the member opposite needs. We saved \$60 billion in government operations. We have attracted over \$500 billion of new commitments in investment in the Canadian economy.

I am not sure what the member opposite needs in terms of stats to understand that Canada is doing well and only getting stronger under the current government.

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canada health transfer child benefit, EI, the child benefit and equalization payments do not have much in common, but they do have one thing in common: Canada spends less money on each of those than it does on interest on the debt. After the Liberals doubled the national debt, the Prime Minister doubled the deficit in his first year alone. Eleven cents of every federal dollar is now for interest payments. That is not social programs, it is not health care and it is not police. It is just interest.

Will the Prime Minister get out of his seat and tell Canadians which matters more to them: their services or his creditors?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are blinded, I think, by their pessimism and negativity. They cannot even see the opportunities that our government is seizing in the Canadian economy: \$500 billion in new investment commitments from domestic investors; doubling non-U.S. trade by the year 2030; and projects such as Darlington, Con-trecoeur, Grays Bay, Roberts Bank and Churchill Falls. These are generational projects that will secure long-term prosperity for Canadians.

Budget 2026 next week, on November 5, will build on that progress. The Prime Minister says, "Fortune favours the bold."

Oral Questions

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in just the time that it took the member to answer that question, Canadian taxpayers were forced to pay \$112,000. That \$112,000 will not pay for one of the government's social programs. In five out of the last six quarters, investment has been down in this country, despite what the member says. That is Liberal hypocrisy in a nutshell. Their fiscal recklessness means less money today and even less tomorrow. The member cannot explain it.

Will the government support our motion today and have the Prime Minister come to committee and at least try?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me put a few facts on the record for the member. We are building a strong economy that benefits all Canadians. We have the second-fastest growth in the G7 and the best balance sheet in the G7, and we are the most competitive country for business investment. We have higher per capita job creation than the United States.

This is a government that is focused on what matters to Canadians, like bringing the cost of housing down, ensuring that they have affordable child care and ensuring that there are investments in the skills, training and education that they need to build the brightest future possible. That is our record.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska—des-Sources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the federal deficit will reach \$63 billion this year. National interest payments will cost the equivalent of \$6,000 for a Canadian family of four. However, the government continues to run up deficits while families are struggling to make ends meet. One of my constituents wrote to me and said that she is collecting empties to be able to fill up her gas tank to pick up her daughter. That is what life is like under the Liberals.

I asked the Prime Minister to appear before the Standing Committee on Finance. Will he accept my invitation?

• (1440)

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no one can remain indifferent to the account he shared concerning his constituent. Keeping in mind those families who are struggling to make ends meet, for example, let us look at the Conservative reality. At every turn, they vote against measures that have a real impact on people's lives.

I am thinking of the member opposite and, more specifically, his riding of Richmond—Arthabaska—des-Sources, where 20,587 children are receiving an average of \$4,176 a year through the Canada child benefit, and 34,563 of his constituents are benefiting from the Canadian dental care plan.

I know he is very active in his riding. Does he tell the people he meets that he has consistently voted against all these measures that are helping residents?

LABOUR

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-39 continues to raise concerns. Yesterday, the United Steelworkers sounded the alarm regarding workers' rights:

The power the government is trying to give [the] minister here is a power that does not exist in other G7 countries. Even in the United States...there is no such power to force an end to a strike and send employees back to work. This is something that...should send a signal. There are a lot of red flags being raised....

No other G7 country goes as far as Bill C-39. Why do the Liberals want to continue trampling on workers' rights?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-39 is intended to build Canada strong by advancing major projects and major construction initiatives, as requested by workers, among others. People are also looking to make significant investments. At the recent investment summit, we know that commitments of \$500 billion in investments were announced. We want a very healthy labour-management climate. We want to provide a framework for these discussions and support them so that many more collective agreements can be reached at the bargaining table.

Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is a big difference between the wishes expressed here and what is written in the bill.

People are still talking about Bill C-39. Here is what the CSN said this morning:

The powers given to the minister to suspend a strike...are...a serious infringement on freedom of association. Even framed by the national interest, it remains arbitrary, vague and...unacceptable.

Yesterday, law professor Maxime St-Hilaire criticized Bill C-39 for making emergency measures permanent without any guardrails. He said that he has observed several instances of totalitarian behaviour on the part of the current government.

Will the Liberals finally realize that they are out of control?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that is an exaggeration. We obviously do not share that view.

What we want to do is support the parties. Ninety-five per cent of parties successfully negotiate collective agreements. We want to better support the remaining 5% with special mediators and support from the Department of Labour, so that collective agreements can be reached in the federal sector.

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[English]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at the fisheries and oceans committee, the Liberals blocked a motion to have the Prime Minister's wife, Diana Fox Carney, appear to explain her appointment as Canada's new ocean envoy. The request was straightforward: explain her mandate, her priorities and how she plans to oversee more than \$1.2 billion in taxpayer funding tied to the role created by her husband, the Prime Minister.

If there is nothing to hide, why are the Liberals preventing Mrs. Carney from appearing before the committee responsible for fisheries and oceans, and being accountable to Canadians for this appointment and the taxpayer funds associated with it?

Ernie Klassen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Madame Carney is an expert in climate policy, and we thank her for stepping forward as Canada's ocean envoy.

The Conservatives are trying to score cheap political points, but we are focused on the work. Our Liberal government will protect Canada's oceans and build our coastal economy.

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Diana Fox Carney has been given an official government role that her husband, the Prime Minister, created, and she has been given more than 1.2 billion tax dollars to work with. The government is not a family-run business. It is not *The Sopranos*, but it is looking more and more like well-connected Liberal insiders are taking care of themselves while the people they govern are suffering.

If that is not the case, why not allow Mrs. Carney to come to the committee responsible for fisheries and oceans to explain her role and be accountable to Canadians?

• (1445)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a particularly spurious attack coming from the opposition.

Canada is a world leader in oceans protection and oceans conservation. We have multiple departments, multiple ministers and multiple initiatives, including on our west coast, where we are working very hard on the southern resident killer whale population.

We will continue to be world leaders in oceans protection. We thank the Prime Minister's wife for volunteering to spearhead our efforts.

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STEEL AND ALUMINUM INDUSTRY

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the industry minister said Cleveland-Cliffs has broken its commitments. Now just today the company again said it is fully compliant with all 34 of its undertakings, including employment. Meanwhile, Stelco workers remain laid off. Competing press releases do not help workers.

Yesterday, the industry minister stood in this House and said that she would provide the demand letter to this House. Today, the member for York—Durham formally made that request. I am assuming, since she is so confident that the company is in breach, she will have no problem providing that letter. Will she do it, and when?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is most important is this morning I met with Marty Warren, who is the head of the steelworkers. The steelworkers in Canada are 100% behind the government when dealing with this issue.

Oral Questions

Of course I am willing to work with the opposition, because I believe that not only do we have a strong case but this should not be a partisan issue. We should be working together to make sure that we protect jobs. Meanwhile, what I expect from the Conservatives is that they take a strong stance on American tariffs, while also making sure that they support us while trying to protect these jobs.

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is just a letter. I did not hear a date there, and hopefully this is not more “all talk and no action.”

Meanwhile, I am hearing from steel service centres and downstream manufacturers all across the country that are having difficulty securing supply. Now, idling of Stelco's coated lines is certainly adding pressure, and a complex tariff rate quota regime is making some of these companies scramble. These are businesses that buy Canadian and employ Canadian workers. We need to make sure that their voices are heard.

Will the industry minister and the Prime Minister commit today to ensuring steel service centres and downstream manufacturers are part of their steel task force, so we can make sure they are getting what they need?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes.

[Translation]

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have completely abandoned the Canadian steel industry. The American tariffs are costing businesses a fortune. Just ask Groupe Camnor, Beauce Atlas or Garaga. The tariffs are costing them each an extra \$1.5 million a month. That amounts to an additional \$54 million a year for these three incredible businesses in Beauce.

The Prime Minister promised us a deal with the Americans, but he has completely failed. Can he set his pride aside and sign a good agreement with the United States?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure my colleague that this is not about pride. I think he should have thought about his question before asking it. Everyone across the country needs to be united in standing up to the White House, which is basically trying to make us more dependent on the United States and weaken our economy.

I would like my colleague to know that I would be pleased to work with him to protect jobs in the steel sector. We are already doing that, but we can always use more help from the opposition.

*Oral Questions**[English]***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Braedon Clark (Sackville—Bedford—Preston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, we have studied many issues of importance to veterans and their families. These discussions will continue informing our understanding of the modern veteran. They will shape how we respond to the unique realities veterans face following military service, and they remind us that we must support veterans and their families beyond just Remembrance Day on November 11.

Could the Minister of Veterans Affairs share how she and our government are advancing recognition and commemoration of our service members?

Hon. Jill McKnight (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, remembrance lives on when one generation inspires the next. As the Royal Canadian Legion's poppy campaign begins, Canadians will pause to honour the Canadian Armed Forces members who have served and sacrificed. This year, our remembrance can also take inspiration from Chaelyn Han, winner of the National Youth Remembrance Poster Contest. Her artwork reminds us that remembrance is not only about looking back, but also carrying forward the stories and sacrifices that shaped our country.

Let us wear our poppies with pride and carry commemoration—

• (1450)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

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HOUSING

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to a question about why the Prime Minister is suggesting he will increase immigration levels, even though government officials are warning that housing supply has been impacted, the housing minister gave a completely inane answer that is unbefitting of the gravity of the situation.

When newcomers are invited to Canada, they should be able to afford a place to live, and Canadians should be afforded that opportunity, too. If the Prime Minister plans to increase immigration levels, where are all these people going to live?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand that immigration and immigrants have built this country and have contributed to building Canada. Quite literally, when I say “building Canada”, 23% of all contractors and builders are immigrants, and in some regions it is a lot higher.

Immigration is critical to addressing skill gaps in the construction sector when Canadians are not available to fill those jobs. In the coming months, we will continue to take a responsible approach to immigration to maximize benefits for all Canadians.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's own officials are saying that housing is outpacing demand.

It has been reported that the Minister of Housing held a \$10-million real estate portfolio. That must be nice. I want him to know something. Millions of long-time Canadians and newcomers alike cannot afford housing, and that is because he, the Prime Minister and the immigration minister, a real trio of quality there, are setting levels so high that people cannot afford or find a place to live.

Levels must be decreased. Will they agree?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the immigration minister said, the levels are under control right now. We are working very closely between immigration levels and housing starts.

We see the success we are having on the housing front. We have seen 141,000 homes created by the MLI select program. We have seen over 80,000 homes in the apartment construction loan program. With Build Canada Homes, there are over 19,000 non-market affordable homes. We are seeing a scale of construction right now across Canada that is unprecedented, and we are making sure it fits with our immigration levels.

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is the reality. When housing supply cannot keep pace with demand, the result is higher rents, higher wait lists and young people giving up on their dream of ever owning a home. That is not fair to young Canadian couples who cannot afford a home to start a family, and it is not fair to the newcomer who was promised an opportunity and ended up in an overcrowded basement suite or a shelter.

This is something the government does not get. Why does the government not understand this basic principle?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is rich coming from the other side who vote against affordable housing measures at every turn. That is hypocrisy.

We are focused on scaling up construction of housing across our country. I have just recited the latest numbers we have. We have positive news on rent. Rents have come down for 23 months in a row, making life more affordable for Canadians and for newcomers.

We have to make sure we continue that trend and that we build strong. We could use more support from Conservatives on that front.

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is rich is the housing minister blaming immigration for the housing shortage that his government created. The Prime Minister's own officials warned him that his out-of-control immigration levels were causing a housing shortage, yet he told *The New York Times* that he wants to increase immigration levels.

His decisions are destroying support for immigration in this country. Conservatives would restore Canada's consensus for immigration. Why will the government and the Prime Minister not do the same?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the member in the opposition, who cannot seem to listen, here are the facts. The temporary resident population has dropped by 80% for international students and 59% for temporary workers, with a 69% decline in asylum claims. The StatsCan figures show the population has declined for the first time in our history. Rentals.ca reports that rents are down by an average of 9.2%. TD Economics reports an immigration slowdown, reduced housing prices—

• (1455)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Colin Reynolds (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada faces a 29-year low in workforce participation. The job-finding rate has dropped again, now down to 30.6% under the Liberal government. Canadians are losing jobs and they are losing hope.

While Canada has a job crisis, the government has chosen to give public subsidies to a company that fired Canadian workers to hire foreign workers. Why did the fisheries minister approve a public subsidy to Ichiboshi L.P.C. after the company had already been caught firing Canadians to hire illegal workers?

Hon. John Zerucelli (Secretary of State (Labour), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Conservatives, while they talk down Canada and talk down our workers, that this country is building. Let me give some examples. Maybe the member has forgotten about LNG Canada phase two, with \$33 billion in private investment and 4,000 new construction jobs. The Nouveau Monde Graphite project means 1,000 new jobs. At the Darlington nuclear station, there are thousands of jobs.

Canada is building. I hope the Conservatives join us.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that response had absolutely nothing to do with the question that was asked.

Canada faces a 29-year low in workforce participation. This question is about fisheries. There was an Order Paper question the government tabled on February 19, question 885, that admitted that the government provided public subsidies through that department to a company that had fired Canadian workers to hire illegal workers.

Oral Questions

Why can the fisheries minister not stand up and answer that question? Why are you subsidizing a company that fired Canadians to hire illegal workers?

The Speaker: Again, it is through the Chair, please.

The hon. Secretary of State for Labour.

Hon. John Zerucelli (Secretary of State (Labour), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about workforce participation. What this government is doing is building. We are building projects right across the country, with Canadian steel, Canadian lumber and Canadian unionized workers.

Let us remind the Conservatives of some of the projects that are going on in this country. There is BHP's Jansen potash project, six new icebreakers in Quebec City and LNG Canada phase two, with 4,000 construction jobs. There is the Pacific link pipeline.

We are building this country. Workers are excited. Unions are excited. Let us go build this country.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question is about fisheries. The fisheries department gave a subsidy to a company that fired Canadians to hire illegal workers. The government tabled the Order Paper question response in the House, question 885, on February 19. Again, why did the government, through the fisheries department, provide public subsidy to the Ichiboshi L.P.C. company after it fired Canadians to hire illegal workers?

Ernie Klassen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister recently announced the renewed Atlantic fisheries fund with her provincial counterparts. This new fund will provide \$300 million over five years to our fishing sector to spur innovation, enhance infrastructure, build on science and develop new markets. We are providing harvesters with the tools they need to grow the sector and create market diversity during these uncertain times.

[Translation]

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how are things going for young people today? According to most of the indicators that matter to our young people, things are not going well at all. Buying a home is virtually impossible. Physical and mental health are declining. Now our young people are looking for jobs.

A committee has learned that companies are hiring illegal workers but are receiving government subsidies, even though the government is aware of the situation.

Is there anyone on the other side who will stand up and explain to taxpayers why their money is being given to companies that are taking opportunities away from our young people in order to pay illegal workers?

Oral Questions

● (1500)

[English]

Ernie Klassen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister recently announced the renewed Atlantic fisheries fund with her provincial counterparts. This new fund will provide \$300 million over five years to our fishing sector to spur innovation, enhance infrastructure, build on science and develop new markets. Our government is here to build, and that includes strong fisheries and coastal communities.

* * *

*[Translation]***YOUTH**

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals rise every week to tell us how many people in our ridings need government subsidies to survive. They are so proud to give us the numbers, not realizing that this is the result of 10 years of Liberal policies that have stretched people to their limit. I imagine that for them, the ultimate achievement will be when all Canadians need Liberal subsidies.

We believe that the real task is to build a country that gives our young people opportunities so that they can work, buy a home and start a family.

When will the Liberals stop living off announcements and start building opportunities so that our young people can learn to stand on their own two feet?

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, our colleague talks about building opportunities for young people. That is exactly what our government is doing across the country. Whether through investments in major projects in Quebec and the rest of Canada, student aid, summer jobs, or assistance for industries facing unjustified tariffs, our government is always looking for the best way to help and support young people and all workers in Canada.

We will never stop doing that.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has everything the world needs: skilled workers, innovative businesses, strong infrastructure, abundant natural resources, as well as a reliable, stable country and government. That helps explain the success of the recent investment summit in Toronto, which unleashed \$500 billion in commitments for our businesses and workers. Another reason for that success is the productivity mega deduction, which will allow businesses of all sizes to deduct a wide range of assets so they have more money to invest in their workers and their companies.

Can my colleague from the Quebec City region, the Minister of Government Transformation, tell the House how Canadians—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Transformation.

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Québec Centre. He is right. We made a choice: to invest in Canadian businesses and create good-paying jobs. That is exactly what we are doing with the productivity mega deduction, which will generate \$22 billion in annual economic benefits and support up to 80,000 new jobs each year. In fact, what we are doing is making Canada the OECD country with the most competitive tax rate by a wide margin. This will empower our small, medium-sized and large businesses to achieve their ambitions, to grow, succeed and innovate. That is how we build Canada strong and ensure that we remain masters in our own house, now and forever.

* * *

*[English]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, B.C.'s new Conservative premier wants to build out ports and rail to get Canadian energy to global markets. Strathcona Resources proposes to ship 250,000 barrels of Canadian oil a day through Prince Rupert. It is a Canadian company, Canadian oil, Canadian jobs and a direct deepwater route to Asia, but the Liberals' job-killing Canadian oil exports ban blocks it.

Will the Liberals finally get out of the way, repeal Bill C-48, cut dependence on the U.S. and let Canadians sell Canadian oil to the world?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we are working with Alberta, we are working with British Columbia and we are working with first nations to sell Canadian oil to the world. We are doing it. We are selling electricity. We are selling oil. We are selling hydro. We are selling nuclear. We are selling copper. This is all in partnership with indigenous people.

They want to fight with indigenous people. Why do they not stop fighting and start building with us?

Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no other major energy producer in the world derails and stops its own exports like the Liberals do to Canada. During the last antidevelopment decade, smaller companies got killed. Multinationals moved investment out but got golden handshakes from the Liberals. Canadian-owned Strathcona invested more in Canada and does not want tax dollars.

If the Liberals mean a single word about making Canada an energy superpower, will they support the Conservative plan to repeal their shipping ban to export Canadian oil so Canada can be self-reliant, affordable and united?

• (1505)

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is who is investing in Canada. Shell just put \$30 billion into the upstream in Alberta. Equinor is putting \$10 billion into Newfoundland. Petronas is putting billions of dollars into this country. There are people from all over the world coming to invest in this country because of Liberal policies. Maybe the Conservatives should get on board.

Aaron Gunn (North Island—Powell River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals like to talk a big game when it comes to dealing with the United States, yet they refuse to lift the ideological and unscientific tanker ban that land-locks Canadian resources and depresses the Canadian dollar, giving our oil away on the cheap to the Trump administration while Canadians struggle with the cost of living crisis here at home. However, there is now a plan, a private sector proposal, to export Canadian oil by rail through Prince Rupert.

Will the Liberal government finally get out of the way, repeal the tanker ban and allow this country, Canada, to achieve true energy independence from the United States?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are all very proud of the work that my colleague is doing with these major projects across the country. We are talking about Coastal GasLink. We are talking about LNG one and two. We are talking about the north coast transmission line. We are talking about some of the biggest port infrastructure investments in Canadian history.

Guess what. The member is new. He lives with regret because he is not the premier of British Columbia today. We built not one, but are about to build two major pipelines to the west coast of Canada.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Canada works to diversify its trade and reduce reliance on any single trading partner, how can we build our long-lasting relationship with the European Union to strengthen our economic ties, expand opportunities for Canadian businesses and workers and unlock the full potential of this important partnership?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada and the EU are turning our shared interests into action. This week we are welcoming EU leaders here to Canada to build on SAFE, to build on the CETA and to build on the strategic defence partnership. It is our second-largest trading partner, and that is \$178 billion in trade last year alone. We are building our national resilience, we are building our domestic economy and most importantly we are building Canada strong.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer's latest report revealed that the deficits over the next five years will total more than \$330 billion. In addition, the Alto project represents another \$150 billion. The Liberal government is digging itself deeper and deeper into a bottomless pit of debt.

Can the Liberals confirm whether or not the \$150 billion for the Alto project is included in the \$330-billion deficit?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers have no reason to take note of the Conservative Party of Canada's opposition to a transformative project that will create 51,000 jobs, add points to our GDP, and change the game when it comes to mobility in our country, especially between Quebec's biggest cities, namely Quebec City, Trois-Rivières, Laval, Montreal and Gatineau.

I urge and implore my colleague to get on board with high-speed rail. Let us get Canada moving.

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives want to scrap B.C.'s north coast oil tanker ban, putting our coastal communities and indigenous livelihoods at risk. The Prime Minister has already promised to uphold the ban, yet Canadians are being asked to shoulder the financial risks of another costly pipeline. As the Prime Minister meets with first nations leaders and premiers, this is a moment to build trust, not break promises.

Will the Prime Minister stand up today and unequivocally commit to protecting the north coast tanker ban, respecting indigenous rights and keeping his government's promise?

• (1510)

Hon. Rebecca Altj (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear. The building Canada strong act would not change the duty to consult. The bill proposes a centralized Crown consultation hub so that indigenous peoples can spend less time navigating government red tape and more time having meaningful conversations.

Our government is focused on building Canada strong, and we cannot do that without indigenous peoples.

*Business of Supply***MARINE TRANSPORTATION**

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, BC Ferries has parted ways with its CEO, but that will not build shipyards. Conservatives and Liberals blame BC Ferries for sending jobs overseas, but Ottawa shares responsibility. Conservatives eliminated the 25% tariff on foreign-built large ferries. Then the Liberals extended it to all ferries. That revenue could have built Canadian shipyards. BC Building Trades and the Build Them Here coalition demand action.

Will the Liberal government commit in this budget to expand Canada's capacity to build, repair and recycle ships, including in Port Alberni, creating good-paying union jobs?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, we have spoken many times about the possibility of further developing those industries at Port Alberni. We are obviously very interested in that.

As for BC Ferries, as the member well knows, that is a provincial Crown corporation that reports to the Minister of Transportation of British Columbia, and I think his questions for BC Ferries are best asked of that minister.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—APPEARANCE OF THE PRIME MINISTER BEFORE THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that the Conservatives like to give a false impression. Canada does have financial capabilities, and we still get the AAA credit rating from credit agencies. I see the member is closely following what I am saying. Hopefully, he is actually listening.

At the end of the day, we have the financial resources to be able to invest in Canadians. The Conservative Party of Canada has made the decision to not invest in Canadians and to not see the value of growing Canada stronger and healthier for all to be able to participate. It has focused strictly on one issue, not recognizing that we do have a AAA credit rating.

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there will be deficits this year of \$59.3 billion, meaning that every single family in the country will be paying \$6,000 toward the federal deficit. The government is adding \$733 billion to the national debt. The least the Prime Minister can do, with all of his experience, all of his expertise and all of the things he claimed to be to Canadians, is to come to a committee of parliamentarians who are here representing the people of Canada, to be accountable and transparent, and to answer the question that parliamentarians, on behalf of Canadians, want to put before him. That is, why are we in this position when he said we would not be?

• (1515)

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): Mr. Speaker, based on the last question from the member for Winnipeg North, it just shows that the Liberals have no credibility on this file anymore. They, under Justin Trudeau, spent and spent without care. Now, even despite having fiscal anchors that they pinky swore they would follow, the PBO has said that they are set to blow through them.

In the member's opinion, if he were a credit rating agency, how would he rate the performance of the government, from its rhetoric a year ago to the state of the finances today?

John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I would give it a new rating measure, and that rating measure would be that it is my kids and my grandkids who are going to pick up the scattered pieces of what is left of this country after the Liberals do even more damage economically and fiscally than what they are doing right now.

That is what the PBO said, that the debt and deficit are going to increase. They have raised the alarms. Not only one PBO but two independent officers have now said that this is an alarming trend that is happening. There are no fiscal anchors. The things that worry me are my kids, my grandkids and the future of the country after the Liberals are done with it.

Blaine Calkins (Ponoka—Didsbury, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not bad enough that the new Prime Minister has split the budget between operating and capital and is distributing the debt that he is creating among those. He is also passing debt on through Crown corporations. To hide all of that, as my colleague brought up, the Liberals are introducing the budget on a Thursday afternoon before a break week.

If things are as great as the Liberal government decries that they actually are, why are the Liberals behaving this way?

John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, it is a relevant question, and there is a very simple answer to that. It is that there is probably nobody in this place who knows better how to game the fiscal system than the former central banker in this country. The member is quite right. The Prime Minister is actually putting this on multiple credit cards, and the debt is just mounting.

What we are asking is for the Prime Minister to come to a committee and explain himself, not in the 35 seconds that he has in question period. We saw today that there were literally no questions that were answered. That is why we now call it the non-answer period.

He can come to committee. He can be accountable, be transparent and allow parliamentarians the oversight, on behalf of Canadians, that they need to get the answers to the questions that we are asking, not avoid the questions.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, there are still quite a few members having side conversations, potentially raising the volume in the House. I would invite them to take their conversations into the lobby.

As well, for those outside of the chamber in the courtyard around us who are having conversations, there is still quite a bit of noise coming out of question period. I would invite those people to leave the courtyard and perhaps take their conversations elsewhere so they do not disrupt the House.

With that, we will resume debate with the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the get-go, I want to follow up on what the member for Barrie South—Innisfil just finished saying about the leader of the Liberal Party having been the Governor of the Bank of Canada. I would remind my friend across the way that it was Stephen Harper who recognized the skill set he has by appointing him Governor of the Bank of Canada. In fairness, he is not the only prime minister to have recognized that. So did the Prime Minister of England in ensuring he would then become the Governor of the Bank of England. That is something that is worthy of noting.

Not only did Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Prime Minister of England recognize the leader of the Liberal Party's credentials, but Canadians as a whole did just that. In the last federal election, Canadians were very concerned about a wide spectrum of issues. They looked at what the leader of the Conservative Party had to offer and contrasted that to what the leader of the Liberal Party had to offer. Never before has the Liberal Party of Canada received as many votes as a direct result—

• (1520)

The Deputy Speaker: I have to interrupt the parliamentary secretary. I have a point of order from the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, despite your best efforts to remind people to lower the noise in the chamber, I very rarely hear the voice of the hon. parliamentary secretary. I would hate to miss it this time.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for the reminder. The Sergeant-at-Arms is going around the courtyard asking those guests and others who may be circulating in the courtyard to keep the volume down because it is disturbing the work of the House.

I invite the parliamentary secretary to continue.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, what I was trying to highlight is the fact that Canadians have a very good understanding of what our Prime Minister brings to the table in terms of economic credentials. I think it is important that we take a look at the larger picture.

I had the opportunity to ask questions today in debate to the leader of the Conservative Party and the deputy leader. For those who are following the debate, the question I asked the deputy leader was in regard to very important programs. I talked about two programs in particular. I talked about the national dental program that provides support to seniors who are on fixed incomes, as an example,

Business of Supply

literally tens of thousands of seniors in every region of our country. I highlighted that program, along with the national school food program, which has 400,000 children benefiting from that particular program. I asked her to provide her thoughts on it.

Now, I will put the personal shot she took to the side, but she made it very clear that those programs are failures. I was disappointed in the manner in which, in a very clear and concise way, she said that those programs were failures. She should tell that to the senior who is on a fixed income in her own riding or a child who is receiving the benefits in a classroom.

That is the type of insensitivity that we see coming from today's Conservative Party. They talk about affordability, but when it comes to actual actions, the government has delivered a wide spectrum of actions, and I will go over them. What we see is the Conservative Party, time and again, devaluing these programs. I have heard members of the Conservative caucus calling the school food program garbage. Talk about being insensitive to the issues of the day, like affordability. They talk about it; they like to get those clips, but in reality, their actions speak louder than words. We saw that demonstrated today when I posed a question to the deputy leader of the Conservative Party.

For those who were around or who followed the speech of the leader of the Conservative Party, they should take a look at what he said. I am sure he will cut and paste, and try to make it look good for the far right. However, if we listen to the entirety of the speech, we cannot help but walk away thinking that Canada has a serious problem and, in fact, that we are broken. Talk about depressing.

There is no doubt that there is always room for us to look at ways in which we can improve. We do not question that. However, I say to the leader of the Conservative Party that Canada is not broken. Canada is doing exceptionally well when compared to our peers. We have people, companies, other governments and pensions looking at investing in Canada in a very real and tangible way. They are not going to do that if they believe that Canada is broken.

Let us take a look at last month. For the first time ever we had a Prime Minister host the world in Toronto, where we were asking people to come and take a look at what the government had been doing over the previous 12-plus months, and to look at ways in which they might be able to invest in Canada, in those major projects. We had over \$500 billion, that is half a trillion dollars plus, that recognized that Canada is worth looking at. That is what they are actually doing.

• (1525)

It is a historic amount of money. They would not be doing that if they honestly believed what the leader of the Conservative Party was saying today in his remarks on the opposition motion. I believe that the Conservative Party is way off base. To Conservatives, it is all about the deficit.

We have the second-lowest deficit-to-GDP ratio in the G7. If we want to talk about the AAA credit rating, think in terms of the G7 countries. Everyone would like to be a part of the G7, I would suggest, but take a look at those G7 countries. We are talking about the United States, England, France and Germany. There are only two nations, Germany and Canada, that have a AAA credit rating.

Business of Supply

When I had the opportunity to state that fact to the opposition critic of finance, his response was like, "Well, they don't know what they're talking about". He then went into the reasons he believes that of the credit agencies, which also provide credit reports to provincial entities. He indicated that, "Well, they don't know what they're talking about." I have a lot more confidence in those credit agencies than I do the official opposition, because day in and day out, the Conservatives want to talk down Canada.

What is at the core of the motion the Conservatives have before us today? It is hard to believe, but they are saying that, as we have the budget coming down, they are concerned about the deficit. They want to have the Prime Minister go before a standing committee. Maybe the opposition can tell me if, when they were in government, Stephen Harper ever went to a standing committee dealing with the budget. I will save them some time: It never happened. At the end of the day, if we want to do a comparison, the leader of the Conservative Party today, when he was in government, was in the only Conservative government that was ever found in contempt of Parliament. It was the only government in Canadian history.

When we start looking at fiscal capacity, what is it with the Conservative Party in terms of not recognizing the potential that Canadians have? There is potential in our resources, commodities, ingenuity and technology, which is there and real in every jurisdiction in Canada. The Conservatives' response is that they are not prepared to see that sort of investment take place, because they constantly criticize the projects we bring forward. All they say, and focus their attention on, are two things. One is character assassination, whether it is the Prime Minister or other ministers. The other is the deficit situation, but we have been very careful in demonstrating that everything is, in fact, under control. It is by making these investments that we are going to create additional revenue in the future. All one needs to do is to take a look at the projects that are on the table.

There are a couple of quotes I would like to share, and then I will go on to some of these projects I made reference to.

In regards to the Minister of Finance, I thought he made it very clear the other day in dealing with the financial issue. He said, "The International Monetary Fund just said that Canada has the strongest fiscal position in the G7 and the second-fastest growth in the G7, almost twice that of Germany and Japan."

● (1530)

I see that as good news. The Minister of Finance would reinforce some of the statements I have made, if not all the statements, such as that AAA credit rating. When I talk about having our finances in order and the financial capacity to look at building a stronger, healthier Canada that works for all Canadians, I would suggest it would be irresponsible of the government not to take advantage of that. It pleases me greatly to be able to say that we very much have a proactive Prime Minister who really understands how an economy works and has the relationships not only in Canadian borders but outside of Canada in order for us to advance that.

I do not say that lightly. Let us look at the things we have done as a government that led up to the Investment Summit that Canada hosted just last month that I commented on earlier with regard to half a trillion dollars. If we want to support small, medium-sized

and large businesses, we need to find customers. In the last federal election, when people were genuinely concerned about Trump's tariffs and trade, the Prime Minister made a commitment to Canadians in that campaign that we would look at ways to expand trade opportunities that went beyond the Canada-U.S. border, and that is exactly what this government has been doing in good part. We have signed 20-plus trade and security agreements. It is probably 22 or 23 at this point, with many more in the works.

Whether it is the Minister of International Trade, the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade among the provinces, there are numerous ministers, led by the Prime Minister and supported by every member of the Liberal caucus, out there in the world encouraging and promoting trade opportunities. That is why we are seeing the types of trade numbers today in terms of opportunities gained, at least in good part, working as a team with small businesses, provinces and indigenous people. This is what is making the difference. We have the opportunity to grow the economy, but it means we have to also be prepared to invest in it.

Earlier today, representatives of CentrePort in Winnipeg were in the government lobby, and I had a chance to have a very brief chat. I thanked them for what they are doing in building a stronger economy in Manitoba. It is both private and public investment that is feeding that growth because they know they can count on the federal government, the provincial government and private businesses investing in CentrePort. That is exactly what is happening today, which is creating jobs and opportunities into the future. That is a very small example, which is important to my province, of investment that takes place. We can take that snapshot and apply it to every region of our nation.

● (1535)

That brings me to the whole thought we have been talking about, which is how we can build, build big and build now. Since the last federal election, we have been working collaboratively with provincial governments and indigenous leaders at ways we can build and expand the Canadian economy, and at the same time protect our environment. There are many projects.

In the past, I have talked about the premiers and Prime Minister working, virtually from day one after the last federal election, to build one Canadian economy, and the federal government has done its part in passing the legislation that was necessary to enable that to happen at the federal level. We continue to work with the provinces so that more provinces will take down some of their barriers, because Canadians made it very clear that they want one Canadian economy.

They also made it very clear that they want to expand the economy, and expanding the economy means major projects. Let me try to summarize the major projects. We can go from coast to coast to coast, from Arctic sovereignty to what is taking place in B.C. We can talk about LNG phase two and of billions of dollars of investments. We can talk about MOUs in Alberta with a Conservative government. We can talk about copper mines and about the canola issue in the province of Saskatchewan. I already talked about CentrePort, in Manitoba, but we can also talk about the Port of Churchill. We can go into Ontario and talk about nuclear power. We can talk about, in the province of Quebec, something the Conservatives often bring up, the port of Montreal or about the expansion of hydro in Atlantic Canada, among other major projects.

From coast to coast to coast, we have a federal government that is working with provinces to make big projects happen and work, and we will all benefit from that. This is one of the ways we can secure more financial resources coming into the country, and if it takes time to be able to secure that, we will put in that time, because we want to make Canada the strongest and healthiest nation in the G7, and that is what we are fighting to achieve.

Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not even know what to begin to say about the member's speech, but let us just look at some basic numbers here. The Government of Canada's own data shows that, in 2020, it had \$284 billion in tax revenue. In 2025, it was \$417 billion in tax revenue. The government's favourite line is to say that it is spending less so that it can invest more. However, \$130 billion more in tax revenue is coming into the government than it did in 2020, yet Canadians are wondering what on earth they got for the \$130 billion, plus the extra debt that is tacked on top of that.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the entirety of my speech, with the exception of the reference to Stephen Harper, was about the time since the last federal election. Canadians elected a new Prime Minister and a new government. If we were to take a look at the expenditures, I would tell the member to look specifically at the Canadian Forces, because in the Canadian Forces, for the first time in generations, we have actually hit 2% of the GDP.

This is something that has been called for, for years. Stephen Harper dreamed of it, and even the previous administration with Justin Trudeau hoped to achieve it. The Prime Minister actually achieved it within six months of being elected. I believe that it is a good expense to support members of CAF and our sovereignty.

• (1540)

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have a Prime Minister who has plenty of time to have plenty of meetings in many places around the world. He is even meeting with the European Union soon, and he will try to sign trade agreements on things that are the responsibility of Quebec. They will be implemented in Quebec, yet the Premier of Quebec, who represents the Quebec government, is only invited to a cocktail party.

If the Prime Minister has time for cocktails and if he has time for meetings, then why can he not find the time to come to the parliamentary committee and show some deference to the parliamentary system? I know he has ministers. I know he has people around him.

Business of Supply

Some people think he has a good team. That is an opinion, and it needs to be confirmed. Nonetheless, why is it that, in this time of crisis, in this time of great transformation, the Prime Minister is able to find 15% to cut from the public service, but is unable to find a mere 15% to cut from his daily schedule in order to free up time to appear before a parliamentary committee for just one hour and show the deference he is expected to show toward the parliamentary system?

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I think that members, at times, undervalue the important role that ministers of government play. We have ministers who go to standing committees. We have parliamentary secretaries who are at standing committees. There is an opportunity in opposition.

I sit just two seats behind the Prime Minister. I constantly see members from the opposition go up to the Prime Minister prior to question period when he is here, whether it is Bloc members or other opposition members.

An hon. member: When he is here.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect everyone is absent from the House at times, but the point is that there is ample opportunity.

I think members opposite should recognize that we do have a cabinet and we do have parliamentary secretaries, so there is ample opportunity to ensure there is accountability.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. One of my colleagues just referred to the Prime Minister's absence from the chamber. We are not allowed to mention the Prime Minister's absence from the chamber, even if it is true.

The Deputy Speaker: I want to clarify that, when a point of order is raised, it is best not to violate the rule about which the point of order was raised. Members cannot do indirectly what they are not allowed to do directly.

[English]

I am going to switch to English for a moment just to make sure that members understand that we cannot do indirectly what we are not supposed to do directly. Members should not mention the Prime Minister's presence or lack thereof. I thought the parliamentary secretary went around that artfully. I know he is a very seasoned member of this House and a provincial legislature that has the same rule. Members should be mindful about not making a reference to the presence or lack thereof of a member of the House.

All members are called upon to do work outside of the House, both directly in parliamentary committees and in conducting the business of the House beyond just this chamber. It is just a good reminder for all of us to be mindful of that.

[Translation]

I thank the member for Lac-Saint-Jean for raising this point of order. That is a very important rule.

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[English]

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure.

Jennifer McKelvie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke about the proactive approach of our government, so I was just hoping that he could really elaborate on what it is that excites him the most about the investments that are being made. It is important that we are investing in ourselves right now so we can build Canada strong. I would really like to know what he has found to be the most important investments, not only for the country but also for his home province.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, for me, I have always perceived myself to be a nationalist, first and foremost. I love the fact that the government's approach has been to ensure that every region of our nation is getting major projects. We are working with indigenous people and provinces to make sure that every region is going to benefit from major projects and investments.

For me, in terms of my home province of Manitoba, of course, I am somewhat partial to that. I love the attention that is being given to our aerospace industry through investments in the Canadian Forces. I love the idea that Port of Churchill, for the first time, is being talked about as a viable port into the future. I like the idea that we are working so collaboratively with Wab Kinew as a premier, as well as the other premiers, in building a stronger and healthier nation for all.

• (1545)

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I did, of course, notice the investment summit to which my hon. friend, the parliamentary secretary referred, and it is with a sense of déjà vu. The hon. member was not at the Glasgow climate negotiation in 2022, where the Prime Minister was basically the star of the show because he was the special climate envoy for climate finance to the UN Secretary-General. He announced the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero, which he pegged at \$128 trillion of available investment. Now, this may have a familiar ring to some of us here. Nothing is quite as ephemeral as bankers' non-binding promises, so that \$128 trillion announced as GFANS, as they actually made it an acronym instead of a website, is all that is left of it. The only thing that was net zero was the actual investment that emerged from the \$128 trillion.

Now, the question I have for my hon. colleague is a precise question: Why will the government not amend the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act? We have real dollars, \$800 billion of Canadian pension plan dollars, that right now, by law, can only be used and invested where it gets the best return on investment.

To my hon. friend for Winnipeg North, I, in retirement, would like to look down the road at my investment in a local school or a local hospital and not where it went, that \$200 million, because the investment board decided it would make more money in Grok developing AI and deepfakes.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I think I will save the CPP issue for another day. I am going to provide a comment on the Toronto summit.

The Canada investment summit attracted the potential for a half trillion dollars of investment. To give the member opposite a sense of the excitement that was created around this summit, we had the premier of Manitoba there, Wab Kinew. He said that, if somebody wanted to invest in the Port of Churchill, Manitoba would exempt them from paying provincial sales tax.

I think there is a wide expectation because this is not just the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister might have been the one who brought everyone to the table, but we have provincial jurisdictions, indigenous people and investors from around the world. I believe there will be billions of dollars of investment as a direct result of that particular summit. It is only a question of time, and I am glad to see that we had so much take-up, in particular from provincial governments.

Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that the Liberals just changed the math around a bit to make it work with their 2% commitment, such as making the Canadian Coast Guard fall under national defence so they could take credit for the money being spent on the Coast Guard. They did not actually, truly or properly reach that 2% by providing our military with the things that it needs.

What I want to double down on here is that the Prime Minister became Justin Trudeau's adviser in 2020. Again, tax revenue for the government was \$284 billion. When the current Prime Minister was advising the former prime minister, it went all the way up to \$417 billion. I know that number is going to continue climbing. At the same time, the government is blowing past a balanced budget. It is on a path to keep it going up to around \$80 billion a year. At one point, it was projected to be sustained at \$63 billion a year. The PBO said that.

Canadians are still wondering what they got for this, other than more people at the food bank.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to recognize that the member wants to talk about Justin Trudeau, and I would talk equally about Stephen Harper. Both of those former prime ministers saw the merit of seeking the advice of our current leader of the Liberal Party, today's Prime Minister. I see nothing wrong with seeking advice. I see that as a positive. I can assure the member opposite that there are many people who sought the advice of today's leader of the Liberal Party, the Prime Minister of Canada. I suspect that it has a lot to do with his economic credentials.

At the end of the day, if we were to be judged on the last 18 months, whether on issues of affordability, the Canadian Forces, investments in Canada or major projects, I believe Canadians would see through the Conservative games.

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• (1550)

Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House before I begin that I will be splitting my time today with my esteemed colleague from Vaughan—Woodbridge. I am happy to share time with him.

Today, we are going to talk about the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report. I agree with parts of it. The House will hear my critiques of parts of it as well, because all of this is open to debate. I hope my colleagues across the way will listen to some of this debate on how we forge our direction in Canada economically going forward.

I will quote from the report:

PBO anticipates that federal borrowing will grow significantly faster than deficits, which are measured on an accrual basis. Over the next five years, cumulative deficits are projected to total \$333.3 billion, whereas federal borrowing is projected to rise by \$732.9 billion....

Let us look at the delta there, the change, if we can. There is over \$400 billion more in borrowing than deficits. This is a partial result of what the financial wizards on the other side of the House are bringing to Canadian federal government budgeting. It is a whole bunch of cash out the door that Canadians have to pay interest on without it looking like debt. This is the issue about investments versus spending. They have changed the way we look at debt and deficits in Canada and have categorized them differently.

Nevertheless, the number Canadians need to worry about is the amount of interest they are paying on that debt. That number has gone from \$24 billion a year in 2020, around when I first came to the House in 2019, up to \$59 billion this year and \$83 billion in four years' time. Let us think about that escalation of debt. That escalation of debt is two things: It is more money we are paying interest on, but it is also a higher rate of interest. The Parliamentary Budget Officer illustrates clearly that the stress we have on the debt and the amount in bonds outstanding are going to cause Canada to start paying a higher interest rate. It is right in the report.

We can talk about our AAA rating, but the fact is, because we are borrowing so much, we will have to start paying a higher rate of interest. It is not just more interest on more debt and more debt, but a higher rate of interest as well. This is what we call a waterfall. This is going to continue to impact Canadians. It is \$83 billion at the federal level alone.

If we take a look at all the debt in Canada in U.S. dollars, we have about \$4.6 trillion in debt across the nation. This puts us as one of the most indebted nations in the world. This is a problem. It is a combination of consumer debt, corporate debt and government debt.

The government always tries to say that our debt-to-GDP ratio is only 40% plus, but let me say that that is an illusion, because government debt in this country is not just federal government debt; it is federal government debt plus provincial government debt. The amount of debt that provincial governments are in collectively across the country is about \$1 trillion. If we add up the debt, not the amount outstanding, of \$1.6 trillion at the federal level and \$1 trillion at the provincial level, plus the massive amount of debt that consumers and corporations have outstanding, we have a massive wall of debt in Canada that is almost the worst in the world.

There comes a point in time when this becomes a problem and we have to start addressing it. That time is right on our horizon, because interest rates are starting to rise. Not only are they going to rise for the federal government, making it pay more money, but they also going to rise for consumers, who are going to have to start paying more for their mortgages and more for their consumer debt. They are also going to start rising for corporations, which will have to cut back because they are paying more in interest and have less money to invest, as the Prime Minister likes to say.

Let us look at the \$83 billion in debt interest, which is ridiculous. When Canadians ask why we cannot fix health care, I am going to bring them back to the Jean Chrétien years. I remember the Mulroney years when we talked about an operating balance. Brian Mulroney was a very good prime minister, in my opinion, and he got us to a point where we had an operating balance. We still had a huge amount of debt we were paying, but we had an operating balance.

This is where the current government pretends it wants to go, although it is very selective about what it uses in the numbers in the operating balance. The Parliamentary Budget Officer's job is to assess the government against its performance, but a lot of the numbers are now hidden. I am glad she points out the accrual basis and the extra \$400 billion in borrowing under the government's new way of accounting for these programs.

• (1555)

It is a mirage. We have to get ahead of this. This \$80 billion a year in debt interest payments is far too much for Canada. That is \$2,000, give or take, per person in Canada, not per family. For a family of four, \$8,000 goes out the door before they even see it. Most families in Canada are probably not paying \$8,000 in taxes, but that is going out the door whether they like it or not. Everybody is behind, not counting their personal debt as well.

What effect does this have on the economy? It causes inflation. If we look at what the Parliamentary Budget Officer says in this report, she talks about the reduction in real GDP growth, to 0.9% in this economy. The nominal is 5.4%. What is the difference? It is called the GDP gross domestic product deflator, which is 4.6%. If anybody tells us the interest is only 3% or 2.5% in Canada, then why is the GDP deflator, which is a proxy for inflation, at 4.6%? If we measured these things, as they are real and affect people's lives, we would understand the pain that Canadians are feeling right now, as opposed to hiding behind a bunch of numbers.

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Let me correct the Parliamentary Budget Officer, because she buys into this mirage of what net debt is. When the government describes its net debt, what it is doing is taking hundreds of billions of dollars of pensioners' assets and saying that it is the government's asset. It is not the government's asset; it is the pensioners' asset.

The government should tell Canadians directly that when things get rough, because things are going to get rough with our financial situation, it is going to reach in there, grab some of their pension earnings and put them on its balance sheet, because the bankers across the world we owe interest to are expecting us to do that. If that is part of the arrangement, the government needs to make it clear to Canadians that their pensions, and Quebecers' pensions, which are not managed by the same management team, are on the table for the government to use. That is how it calculates its debt-to-GDP ratio. It is dishonest, unless the government has some arrangement with the Canada pension plan behind the scenes to make that happen.

What makes this even more troubling is that Canadians were promised fiscal discipline by the very well-educated Prime Minister. We have to acknowledge that he is a well-trained economist. However, the results we are getting from this well-trained economist are anything but good. If he is hiding the numbers in different balance sheets and raising the debt that Canadians have to pay, he is not performing as expected.

Canadians were promised fiscal anchors. There is not one fiscal anchor, in the seven years I have been here, that the government has stuck to. It keeps making things up as it goes along. Even the Parliamentary Budget Officer in her report has said that it is not going to meet its fiscal anchors.

When are we going to say enough is enough? It has no fiscal discipline whatsoever. An economist like the Prime Minister must understand our debt position in the world. He must understand that he is visiting inflation upon Canada. He must understand the cliff we are getting to as far as our outstanding debt in this country goes, including in the provinces.

Commitments are made to balance the budget. Commitments are made to get back to fiscal discipline in this country. None of them have been met. If anybody has been watching over the last several months, even though the government set itself a \$60-billion-plus deficit, it has continued to make announcement after announcement as if money is no object. If money is no object to our Prime Minister and he thinks he can continue to keep spending, making announcements and blowing \$40 billion here and \$50 billion there without any consequences, then we have to go back to the drawing board and figure out what exactly is going to happen.

I will tell members what happened when Jean Chrétien had to deal with the debt. Former prime minister Jean Chrétien had to cut payments to the provinces. The result of those cuts to the provinces is that they had to adjust their health care spending, and health care was cut across Canada. That was the result of a choice that that government had to make because it was fiscally off base. The debt had gotten too high in Canada. We are approaching that position again.

When I ran for this position, a key consideration was to get this country back to balance. We need to get back to balance. Will the government commit to getting us there sooner rather than later?

• (1600)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that the government has made a commitment with respect to the operating balance, which I think is a positive thing. The member might find some light in that.

He made reference to the PBO quite a bit in his comments. I wonder if he is aware that even under Stephen Harper's administration, warnings came from the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

At the end of the day, I believe we have fiscal capacity. Does the member believe that if we have fiscal capacity, we should seriously look at investing in Canadians to try to build a larger economy, which would help out in the long run?

Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, we have talked about the operating balance. I have pointed out a bunch of numbers that were part of the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report. Fiscal capacity is there until it is not. Suddenly, it all turns around overnight, and it turned around when Jean Chrétien was Prime Minister. I pointed out the example. It happens very suddenly when the IMF, the International Monetary Fund, comes in and says that we can no longer pay our bills.

What is on the horizon here? I will point out to the member that interest rates are rising around the world, primarily because of excess government debt everywhere, in Canada in particular. The increase in government debt is going to cause more risk. Therefore, bond rates will go up and more people will have to pay money. This avalanche will happen before it is planned. It will happen very suddenly, and we need to get it in front of us. We need to make sure we are aware of it. We need to make sure we know how to deal with it. Fiscal capacity will disappear very quickly.

Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister was the governor of the Bank of England, he had a fancy for printing money. We know that the Trudeau government's response to COVID was to print money. Some \$600 billion of extra currency was printed in Canada. Now we are starting to see the effects of that through inflation.

When we see the government trying to use creative accounting practices to cook the books in its favour, I am wondering if the member could explain a bit more the problems that it creates for Canadians, who are really struggling with the cost of living crisis, because opposite to what the government claims, affordability is the worst it has been in a generation.

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Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, the issue is that there is one pool of money in the world but a whole bunch of people dipping into it. As I pointed out, in Canada we have federal government debt, we have provincial government debt, we have consumer debt and we have corporate debt. All of these are in the same debt pool, so when there is a risk, it all goes up. When it all goes up, inflation happens. Inflation is going to happen as far as the expenses go on interest, but when the government excessively spends and runs huge deficits, it causes massive inflation in the economy, asset inflation in particular.

One of the reasons we have what is called a K-shaped economy in Canada right now is that people who have assets have seen those assets inflate. People without those assets have gone without, so those people are waiting in line for a home that is going to take far longer to build. They cannot enter the housing market for a much longer period of time, into their mid-thirties and forties now, when it used to be in their mid-twenties and early thirties. This is a problem. This is the cause of inflation. This is a result of governments spending too much and thinking that somebody down the road will pay the bill. That is not going to happen.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am going to go back to the issue of the ability to invest. If we are investing in projects that will generate wonderful revenues into the future for government, is that not a wise thing? I think of LNG two. Yes, there is a cost to the federal government, but in the long run, there will also be phenomenal financial resources coming, with a return to the federal government.

Would the member not agree that investing can mean many different forms of returns for Ottawa? That could be anything, including income tax and beyond. I would like his comments on the value of investing.

Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, that opens up a good avenue for me to talk about. LNG Canada should not require any government investment. Quite frankly, LNG one did not require any government investment. LNG two should not require any government investment.

What the Government of Canada is doing right now, under the Liberal Prime Minister, is effectively replacing private sector investment with government investment. It is inflated. It is not getting anything done particularly well, as far as what they call investment goes, if there is no test to it. Frankly, it is displacing the investment that should be happening in our economy rather than adding to it. It has to stop. We have to get the private sector back on track.

• (1605)

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today on behalf of the wonderful people in the great riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Canadians have been told for years that Ottawa needs to spend more to make their lives better, yet every time Conservatives in the House raise the affordability crisis, we are met with the same response from the Liberal government: another list of programs, another spending announcement and billions more dollars in borrowed money. Why is the measure of success for the Liberal government always how much money it spends, not tonnes produced, businesses opened or even jobs created?

We constantly hear from the Prime Minister and the Liberals that they are not spending but are investing. We have been hearing this for almost 11 years at this point, and I think it is time we ask a very fair question. For most Canadians, for Canadians watching at home, is their life any better today? Despite all the announcements, all the billions of dollars in allocated funds, has their life marginally improved at all?

Canadians are struggling to afford groceries. I hear from young people all the time in my riding and across this country who say they have almost given up on the dream of home ownership. They find it increasingly expensive. There is a report out of the Bank of Canada on the brain drain that is happening here. Young people are moving to different jurisdictions such as the United States in order to find employment due to cost of living constraints.

Just last week, Food Banks Canada reported 2.35 million food bank visits in a single month, an increase of 117% since 2019. The CEO of Food Banks Canada says this is:

the story of what happens when millions of people are running out of options. In the past, most people in Canada could absorb a small financial setback... Those days are over. Canada's bleak new reality is that millions of people are making impossible trade-offs every day as they choose between food or rent.

A statement such as that should alarm every single member of the chamber.

Taking all this into account, it is hard to even fathom that the Prime Minister had the audacity to stand up in this place and say, "Affordability is the best it has been in...a decade." These are not me putting words in his mouth; those were his words. However, I would not blame him. After all, he is only the Prime Minister of Canada, and as a matter of fact, colleagues, he just got here.

Well, he has been Prime Minister for almost two years at this point, and at some point he has to take responsibility for the country he is governing. We are beginning to see a very familiar pattern with the Prime Minister: He tells Canadians one thing, but his record demonstrates something that is very different. His promise to get federal spending under control is one example. How often have we heard the Prime Minister state boldly that the Liberals are going to spend less and invest more? I know he just got here, but surely a year and a half is enough time to explain how he intends to keep that promise he made to Canadians.

Last week, the Parliamentary Budget Officer released her latest assessment of the government's finances, and the numbers raised some serious questions. Allow me to list just a few of the PBO's findings. This is sourced from a CTV news article:

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The PBO released her latest economic forecast on Tuesday, which is projecting slower growth in the country's real GDP forecast... The outlook also spells trouble for the federal government's debt, and the cost of servicing that debt, projecting a growing debt-to-GDP ratio in the coming years.

Declining deficit-to-GDP ratio is one of the federal government's [own] fiscal anchors. But, according to [the] PBO..., the charges to service the debt is "the fastest-growing piece of government spending right now."

When the Prime Minister tells Canadians his government is going to spend less, I think they are entitled to ask exactly what he means by this. There is simply no factual evidence to support that he is spending less, as he claimed time and time again that he would. In fact, he is spending so much more. It is not just the size of the deficit that should concern Canadians. It is all those years of borrowing and what exactly that is now costing us.

Five years ago, Ottawa spent \$24.5 billion servicing the national debt. This year, that bill is projected to rise to \$59.3 billion. In four years from now, that is going to climb to a whopping \$83 billion. That is 13.6¢ for every dollar of federal revenue. It is a number so big that the human brain can barely even conceptualize what that is or just how massive it is.

• (1610)

At a time when Canadians are struggling to access health care, the government is now projected to spend more on debt-servicing interest than it transfers to provinces and territories through the Canada health transfer. I ask the House and Canadians watching at home, what does that money actually provide? I will say what it does not do. It certainly does not shorten the wait times Canadians are facing to see their doctor. For a family of four, this year's federal interest bill will cost each family \$6,000. Canadians are being asked to live within their means by a government that has yet to explain exactly how it is going to live within its means.

Next Thursday, the finance minister is going to come to the House, stand here and deliver yet another federal budget. I think we should all take note, and Canadians watching at home should certainly be well aware, of the timing of the introduction of that budget, which is the Thursday before the break week, to limit accountability and scrutiny of the budget, which will raise some serious questions about what we will find in that budget when we get to dig into it.

I would love to be proven wrong on all this, but judging by all the metrics, including what the PBO said recently, all roads lead to Canadians' having a very good reason to be concerned about what is in the fiscal budget this year. The Liberal government's answer to nearly every problem seems to be to spend more money. Where does that money come from? It certainly does not grow on trees. It certainly does not come from Santa Claus. It comes directly from Canadians, either through taxes they pay today or through the borrowing that taxpayers will have to service for years down the road. The government continues to mortgage the future of my kids and the kids of every single Canadian watching at home today.

There is something else in the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report that Canadians should hear before the budget is released. Excluding new announcements, total revenues are \$9.2 billion higher, on average, over the next five years. Much of that comes from higher prices, particularly for oil and other commodities, which have boosted the federal tax revenue. In fact, the PBO has actually

lowered their forecast for economic growth this year. While Canadians are dealing with higher prices and a slowing economy, Ottawa and the Liberal government are collecting more revenue than previously expected.

What happened to all that additional revenue? The government has announced new spending and tax measures, costing some \$52.6 billion over the same five years. I am sure the government will tell us how important each and every single one of those measures is. If the Prime Minister's promise is to spend less and get the deficit under control, should we not at least expect some improvement in the country's finances when the additional revenues come in?

Instead, the PBO is projecting that the deficit will reach \$70.2 billion next year. That is before we have even seen what the government plans to announce in next Thursday's budget. We also keep hearing that the government is going to balance the operating budget. It is the government itself that decides what constitutes operating or capital expenses, and it does so quite arbitrarily, might I add. This leaves open the possibility that the Liberals move an expense from one category into another, simply to say that they have reduced or eliminated the operating budget.

According to the PBO, spending on capital expenditures is far outpacing the deficit. This is why Canadians should be very concerned about this classification issue. Federal borrowing is expected to rise by \$732 billion, while the cumulative deficit will be \$333 billion over a five-year period.

For Canadians, I come back to the question I have been asking throughout my this speech: Where is the Prime Minister's plan to spend less? Canada is still running enormous deficits, debt interest is growing significantly and the Parliamentary Budget Officer now projects that the government will miss its own commitment to maintain a declining debt-to-GDP ratio. Which spending is being reduced? When will Canadians see the deficit brought under control? How does the Prime Minister intend to stop interest from consuming more money than they send to Ottawa?

This is why the Prime Minister's image as a banker seems to be collapsing and he needs to come to the finance committee to answer these very serious questions.

• (1615)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think today's official opposition underestimates the value of accountability through the different ministers and parliamentary secretaries. Stephen Harper was here for question period but never showed up at the finance committee to address budget issues. There is no change there. Every day we sit, the Conservative Party gets to ask literally dozens of questions, whatever questions they want. There are always ministers here to field those questions.

The Minister of Finance presents the budget and will be held to account for the government budget. Does the member believe that the Minister of Finance has an obligation to be the one held accountable for the finance budget?

Michael Guglielmin: Mr. Speaker, absolutely we would love to see the finance minister at the finance committee as well. I know he will be coming to the finance committee when the budget is introduced.

However, given the state of the fiscal position we are in, the PBO's own assessment that was released recently and the fact that the Prime Minister of this country is a trained economist who ran on his image as a banker, as somebody who understands the fiscal conditions of this country, these conditions are deteriorating rapidly. If he is the man, he is the man to answer the questions, so he should come to the finance committee, address the committee and let Canadians know exactly what is going on with this fiscal position and the government's record.

[Translation]

Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader said that Stephen Harper never appeared before the Standing Committee on Finance. However, Stephen Harper did not have a 27% attendance rate at House of Commons debates.

The fact remains that the Prime Minister travels all over the world. He is involved in foreign policy. He is always closely followed by Brookfield, whether in Saudi Arabia, India or at an announcement about condos in British Columbia. We even wonder whether this company might not be his economic and political right-hand man.

However, he does not come to talk to us. He could come talk to us in committee about his vision of investment, or rather his obsession with investment. He is willing to invest \$150 billion in the Alto project, although there is no business case, and to destroy the 2% of farmland we have left in Quebec.

I would like to hear the member's comments on my remarks.

Michael Guglielmin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[English]

I would like to start by saying that the Prime Minister is probably the least accountable and least transparent prime minister I have witnessed in my lifetime. My colleague mentioned question period appearances, which are severely lacking in the chamber, but I would also say that we notice, as the Prime Minister goes around,

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that most of his announcements are actually made in foreign media, not here in the press galley to Canadian media. Where is the transparency? Where is the accountability? I am sure members of the media and the Canadian public would like to hear much more about the Prime Minister and his plans announced right here on Canadian soil.

With respect to big projects such as Alto's, I will say that it seems the government does not have a ceiling on these projects. It cannot demonstrate profitability, and we do not know what they are ultimately going to cost.

Burton Bailey (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech was excellent. I would like to ask a very simple question: Could the member think of just a few ways the Liberal government could lower federal spending to get its budget under control?

Michael Guglielmin: Mr. Speaker, we have already outlined some \$200 billion in spending that we could eliminate today. For instance, we could eliminate foreign aid. We could eliminate costly projects, such as the Alto project, that are just going to cost us a totally inappropriate amount of money without delivering results for Canadians. We can talk about all the consultants that the government has spent money on over time. Everywhere we look, we find misuse of funds. There are plenty of areas where we would see a place to cut spending so we could direct that money at better projects.

• (1620)

[Translation]

Abdelhaq Sari (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough Southwest.

I am very pleased to rise today to speak to the motion put forward by the leader of the official opposition. It touches on an issue that affects all of us: the state of our public finances and what they enable us to do for Canadians.

I believe there is at least one thing members on both sides of the House can agree on: The world is changing fast. It is changing unpredictably; trade tensions are on the rise, supply chains are being reshaped, and decisions made far from here are being felt in our kitchens, our factories and our small and medium-sized businesses. I see this in my riding of Bourassa every day. Families are carefully budgeting, and business owners on our main streets are wondering what tomorrow will bring. They do not expect slogans from us; they expect us to take this seriously.

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Faced with such uncertainty, what does a responsible government do? Our government is focusing on what it can control. It is strengthening the economy here at home. It is diversifying its trade relationships abroad. It is making strategic investments to build a stronger, more independent and, above all, more resilient economy. All of this rests on one essential condition, and one condition alone: a solid financial position. A sound financial position is not an end in itself. It is an asset for the country and a tool for the government. It is what allows us to protect Canadians when the storm hits. It is what gives us the means to respond to shocks. Above all, it is what allows us to invest in the future rather than simply endure it.

The good news is that Canada is entering this period from a position of strength. The government is not the only one saying so; the International Monetary Fund, or IMF, agrees. It should be noted that the IMF does not engage in politics; rather, it produces calculations, figures and rather interesting performance indicators. According to its most recent projections, Canada will have the second-lowest deficit in the G7 this year as a share of its economy. That deficit will continue to decline over the coming years. It is expected to fall from 2.5% of GDP in 2026 to 2.4% in 2027, before falling to 1.7% by 2031.

Across the globe, budgetary pressures are mounting, yet Canada remains among the strongest performers in the G7. We have the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the entire G7. Canada is one of only two G7 countries, alongside Germany, to hold a AAA credit rating from the major credit rating agencies. The AAA rating cannot be bought; it must be earned. This rating is not merely a badge of honour. It is a vote of confidence from investors around the world. This confidence has measurable value: It helps keep our borrowing costs as low as possible, and that directly protects taxpayers.

There are other assets in addition to that. Canada is the best-connected economy in the world, with free trade agreements that open the door to 1.5 billion consumers. We offer by far the most competitive tax environment in the G7 for new business investment.

We are not letting those strengths go to waste; we are putting them to work. In fact, last month, Canada hosted the first-ever Canada investment summit. We brought together some of the world's biggest investors and gave them a simple message: Come and see what Canada has to offer. The result was nearly \$500 billion in new funding and investment commitments in Canada. However, attracting investors is not enough. They need a reason to want to stay, to build and grow here in Canada. That is why we announced the new productivity mega deduction.

What does a mega deduction actually mean?

• (1625)

It means that businesses will be able to immediately and permanently write off their eligible investments in a broad-based range of assets. The percentage of assets covered will increase from about 15% to more than 65%.

This measure would help an SME that is hesitating over whether to buy a new machine. There is an industrial area in my riding of Bourassa. If an SME wants to buy a new machine or modernize its systems, this measure is a reason to say yes to that investment. If a large company is torn between Canada and another country, this

measure is a reason to choose our country, Canada. Whether small, medium or large, all our businesses benefit. Whether in Quebec, Alberta or elsewhere in the country, everyone benefits. When businesses invest in their equipment and their workers, our overall productivity improves.

Canada has a financial advantage, and we are determined to protect it, because investing in the future does not mean spending recklessly. On the contrary, budget 2025 marked a real shift in how public finances are managed, and this plan is working.

As the Prime Minister recently announced, the government is on track to balance its operating spending as early as 2027-28, a year earlier than our government had projected. We are also committed to rigorously implementing the efficiency measures set out in budget 2025.

The Minister of Finance and National Revenue will table the 2026 budget on November 5. On November 5, we will not be tabling slogans. We will not be tabling a motion. We will be tabling a budget. The logic is very simple: fewer resources devoted to the day-to-day operations of government and more resources devoted to the things that build our economic capacity for decades to come, such as infrastructure, major projects and revenue-generating assets.

Every family understands the difference between the money we spend to meet our day-to-day needs and the money we invest to build our future. A prudent family keeps a close eye on the former. A wise family never neglects the latter. That discipline is not optional. Our fiscal position is strong today, but in no way does that mean we can take it for granted.

That is why the government has adopted two clear and essential rules. First, operating expenses must be balanced with revenues. Second, the deficit must remain on a downward path relative to the size of our economy. These are two simple, measurable rules, and our government is abiding by them.

This brings me to my conclusion. Canada's fiscal strengths are real. We have one of the strongest financial positions in the G7, with the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio and a AAA credit rating. Our responsibility is twofold. The first responsibility is to preserve these strengths. The second is to use them for growth.

That means investing in infrastructure and major projects, attracting more private capital, empowering our businesses to grow, diversifying our trade so that we are less dependent on a single partner, and diligently managing our public finances. That is exactly what we are doing. As I was saying, we live in a rapidly changing world. Neither the Speaker of the House, nor I, nor the Prime Minister, nor any member of the House can control what happens outside our borders. However, we can control the choices we make, and our choice is clear. We are choosing to build on our strengths, invest in the future and build a more resilient and more prosperous economy for our children. We do not control the world, but we can control our choices.

[English]

Burton Bailey (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government often says health care is a priority, yet the PBO shows that the debt servicing spending this year already exceeds the health transfers. By 2030, the debt servicing cost will hit \$83 billion, while health care transfers are projected to only be \$67 billion.

Will the Liberal government commit that no future budget will allow the debt charges to exceed the Canadian health transfers?

• (1630)

[Translation]

Abdelhaq Sari: Mr. Speaker, here is what Canadians watching us need to know about interest charges: They have increased, but they have increased around the world.

Given the rise in rates that the whole world has experienced, the real question is this: Who is weathering it best? That is the real question, not whether interest charges have exceeded health transfers.

As I just said, Canada has the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7 and a AAA credit rating. That rating is what keeps our borrowing costs as low as possible. In addition, our deficit is on a downward path.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Bourassa, with whom I have the good fortune to serve on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs.

He spoke about what a responsible government does. He said we needed to diversify our alliances abroad. He said that while we do not control what happens outside our borders, we can control our choices. Now to my question. Does he think that we share common values with the Erdogan regime when it comes to democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and freedom of expression?

Can my colleague tell me if we share the same values as, for example, Saudi Arabia, where there is outright gender apartheid?

Does my colleague think that Mohamed bin Zayed is involved in what is happening in Sudan? He was welcomed with a huge banquet last night, but at the same time, he was condemned this morning in a press release.

Is my colleague telling me that, if the current tariff crisis had occurred in the 1980s, his government would have signed deals with South Africa, which was under the apartheid regime?

So far, that is what I see. I see a government that is setting aside its principles and values under the pretext of a trade war. Members are talking about what a responsible government does. They are rewriting history. It is Orwellian.

I would like him to answer my question.

Abdelhaq Sari: Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to say what a pleasure it is to sit alongside my colleague on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The first answer is very clear and simple: The Government of Canada will uphold its values, no matter which country it does business with.

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Economically speaking, we are in a situation where we need to diversify our trade. Of course, without compromising our Canadian values, we have economic interests in other countries such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and throughout Europe, with which a summit will soon be held.

We are going to pursue that with the values that Canada is known for. People want to invest in Canada for its values, its economic strength and the opportunities we give to our investors.

Braedon Clark (Sackville—Bedford—Preston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, my colleague and friend from Bourassa mentioned Canada's fiscal position relative to other G7 countries.

Can he explain why those facts are so important for our economy and our country?

Abdelhaq Sari: Mr. Speaker, to answer the question, I will just talk about the mega deduction, although there is also an opportunity to attract investors. For example, I had an opportunity to host a round table in Bourassa's industrial area. Industrialists and businesses want to invest, and the mega deduction will help them upgrade their fleets and machinery. That will create jobs. It is good both for employment in our ridings and for our industries.

To repeat what I said earlier, this is about our ability to attract investment, as we did at the first-ever summit. I think the future will be a lot more promising because we can attract a lot more investment, because of our potential and, as I said in the previous answer, because of our values.

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, on Wednesday, October 28, 2026, following Private Members' Business, the House shall continue to sit until midnight for the sole purpose of debating Bill C-34, An Act to enact the Digital Safety Act and the Digital Safety Commission of Canada Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, provided that, during the proceedings on the said bill, no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair, except for a unanimous consent motion to see the clock.

• (1635)

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

Business of Supply

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—APPEARANCE OF THE PRIME MINISTER BEFORE THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to-day on behalf of the constituents and residents of Simcoe North to talk about some important issues facing the economy and the importance of promises.

What is a promise if one has no intention of keeping their word? When a politician makes a promise, some people immediately think the politician has no intention of keeping their word. I think many politicians make promises they intend to keep. Should we not hold politicians accountable for the promises they make to Canadians, and for promises on subjects that go directly to the underlying credibility of the politician? What do I mean?

The Prime Minister was elected, I think in part, on a record or a résumé that many Canadians felt was credible, especially in the areas of budgetary economics or fiscal discipline. The Prime Minister introduced a new fiscal anchor, which is really a fancy term for a fiscal target. It has only been one year since that target has been in place, and the Parliamentary Budget Officer recently indicated that the Prime Minister will blow through his own self-imposed fiscal target. I mean, this is barely a year since that target has been in place, and the Prime Minister has chosen, and I say “chosen” because it is a deliberate choice, to blow through the anchor. The Parliamentary Budget Officer also indicates that revenues are up and that if the government had not increased its spending, it could have met its own fiscal anchor or fiscal target.

This is a deliberate choice by the Prime Minister to break a promise that he made to Canadians less than one year ago. Paul Martin, when he was finance minister, met every single deficit reduction target that was imposed. He met every single fiscal anchor that was imposed. There has not been a Liberal finance minister in 10 years who has met their own self-imposed fiscal targets. At the very first opportunity that the new Prime Minister and the new finance minister had to keep their fiscal promise to Canadians, they chose to break it.

How is it possible that the fiscal genius who is the Prime Minister, as some people will say, is breaking a fiscal promise? He is supposed to be the one who was fiscally restrained and cared about the finances of the nation, yet he is showing himself to be about as reliable, or perhaps I should say as unreliable, as Prime Minister Trudeau in this department. This is an example of the Prime Minister undermining his own credibility on the fiscal finances of the nation by choice, less than a year after he made the promise.

David Dodge, in 2023, wrote, “We have argued in the past that an interest cost/revenue ratio above 10% and a federal debt/GDP ratio that is not declining steadily from close to...where it currently

stands signal risks of unsustainability.” He is talking about unsustainability of fiscal finances.

I had a chance to ask Mr. Dodge, former central bank governor, about this point, and he responded:

If you're spending 10¢ out of every tax dollar that you collect on servicing past debts, that obviously leaves you with less to spend on providing current goods and services.

The problem that we collectively face now and going forward is that we're going to have growth of the economy or growth of the base revenues of government that will be equal to or perhaps even less than the interest rates. The burden of past debt will increase year after year rather than being eroded.

● (1640)

That was in 2023. At that point in time, we were just about to approach spending 10¢ of every dollar of government revenue on interest on the debt. In just a few years, the Parliamentary Budget Officer projects, Canada will spend nearly 14¢ of every dollar it receives on interest on the debt. In fact, interest on the debt is the fastest-growing expense line item in the budget. It is growing faster than health care spending increases and faster than any other expenditure.

I am asking myself how it is possible that the Prime Minister, who was elected in part because of his financial credentials, who is a two-time central banker, who is a very well-known economist, who was chair of the Financial Stability Board, who was a Goldman Sachs banker, who, to many people's applauding, was successful as chair of Brookfield and who has fiscal credentials, is making a deliberate choice to break a promise he made to Canadians.

He did not just make the promise to Canada in general. He made a promise to our young people that they would be able to inherit a government and fiscal finances that were not going to be eroded. He said he would spend less to invest more, yet we find out that the government is going to spend nearly 14¢ of every dollar paying interest on the debt. Those obligations will be passed to future generations, and they will have no choice but to meet those obligations. This means less money for social programs, less money to spend on the things Canadians want and a heck of a lot less money to provide significant tax relief to Canadians.

In the face of all of this, the Prime Minister's fiscal plan is actually to borrow record amounts of money in the bond markets. Next year, we will have to borrow almost \$600 billion. The year after that, it will be \$563 billion, and that is before the new borrowing we are going to see in the budget next week. The government believed interest rates were going to go down last year and into this year, but they have gone up. What is going to happen to debt service costs then?

This is why the deficit target is even worse this year than it was last year. The deficit is at least \$3 billion a year higher this year and every year going out. If there is continued trouble, or shocks in the bond markets, our debt service costs are going to increase substantially, and that 14¢ might become 15¢ or 16¢. Members might think I am making something up, but in the late 1970s, debt service costs were, I think, around 15¢. They then went up to 30¢. In fact, I think they peaked at 36¢. We are going in the wrong direction.

This was a primary promise the Prime Minister made to the House, to Canadians and to the next generation, and he is breaking that promise. He should feel the need to answer not just to the House but to all Canadians.

• (1645)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, where I fully agree with the member is on the Prime Minister's credentials. The Prime Minister has put Canada in a great financial position to look at ways we can invest in Canada and Canadians. In the long term, we will see additional revenues coming in to the federal government. This is part of investing. This is something that is direct. There are many indirect ways in which investing helps.

When we listen to the Conservatives, they seem to oppose investing in Canadians to build a stronger, healthier economy. A good example of that is how I was criticized because I made reference to LNG phase two. The Conservatives said the government did not need to invest in that, that it would have happened without the province and the federal government.

Does the member believe in government support and investment?

Adam Chambers: Mr. Speaker, I was unaware that the member was such a proponent of supply-side economics.

The truth is that the fiscal position of this country is being eroded. It is not getting better under the Prime Minister, even though he made that commitment to Canadians, when we are going to spend nearly 14¢ out of every tax dollar brought in on interest on the debt. Interest on the debt is the fastest-growing expense of the government. We used to spend only 10¢ on the dollar, and before Prime Minister Trudeau came in, we spent only about 7.5¢ of every dollar on interest on the debt.

This is going in the wrong direction, and I am quite shocked. I am surprised that the two-time central banker and much-lauded Goldman Sachs wunderkind has put Canada's fiscal health at risk by borrowing record amounts of money year after year and continuing to stay on this course.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Simcoe North, for his excellent speech. He is a member who brings a great deal of substance to parliamentary debate.

I would like to discuss the form of the motion, because the motion simply calls for the Prime Minister to be invited to appear as a witness before the Standing Committee on Finance. He does not

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even have to accept. I think that is necessary. The Minister of Finance appeared before the committee recently. He was unable to answer questions or understand how the tax system works. He showed up with an infographic featuring coloured bubbles that looked like something a seven-year-old would draw for Halloween.

Earlier, the member for Bourassa told us that, as the government, they do not move motions. They are above that. They bring down budgets. They are the ones doing the real work. We supported his private member's bill, incidentally. He seems to have forgotten that. I get the impression that all of this shows a kind of neglect or contempt for parliamentary work. The Liberals will probably vote against the motion.

What do they stand to gain by voting against the motion? We want to invite the Prime Minister to come answer questions. He can even decline the invitation.

Why would they vote against that?

[English]

Adam Chambers: Mr. Speaker, I have shared many good conversations about economics with my colleague. I find him to be incredibly smart, and his question is quite correct.

The Prime Minister does not need to show up to question period every day, and he does not, which is maybe why we are asking that he might show up to a committee to answer some questions about this.

While I have a lot of respect for the finance minister, and I hold him in very high regard as a parliamentarian, this fiscal promise to Canadians was not the finance minister's promise. This was the Prime Minister's promise. It is the Prime Minister's choice to blow through the fiscal anchor. It is the Prime Minister's choice to put our debt on a bad track. Frankly, the Prime Minister should want to answer questions.

• (1650)

Blaine Calkins (Ponoka—Didsbury, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague channelled Paul Martin in his speech, and so I would ask him how exactly the Liberal government of that era got back to fiscal responsibility when it came to downloading responsibilities and costs to the provinces. Conservatives have been talking about what is going to happen with our social programs. What happened with social programs when the Liberals of the past were in the same situation that the Liberals of today are going to be putting us in?

Adam Chambers: Mr. Speaker, it was devastating for social services delivery across the country when the Liberal government started downloading additional responsibilities, because it had to drastically cut its spending to make the bond markets happy. The bond markets are not happy right now, and we might see continued pressure on our fiscal finances as a result.

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The Deputy Speaker: 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 Saanich—Gulf Islands, Indigenous Affairs; the hon. member for Brandon—Souris, Finance; the hon. member for Riding Mountain, Health.

Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Clarke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to be here today. I will be splitting my time, to acknowledge that at the front end.

We have been asked to speak today on an opposition day motion, but it is so much more than that. This is about where Canada is right now in the world. We have a government that continues to spend recklessly, which is driving up the cost of living for all Canadians. We have a Parliamentary Budget Officer who has been using certain terms for over a year: stupefying, not hitting financial targets, mesmerizing, and additional costs that are driving up costs for Canadians.

We now know that the Liberal government is set to spend more on interest than it is on health care transfers. We know that the share of interest for a family is about \$6,000. That is money going to bondholders and bankers across this country. We also know that the Prime Minister, in an election that occurred a year and a half ago or so, promised that he would have a declining deficit-to-GDP ratio. We will talk more about the deficit-to-GDP ratio too, because that in itself is a way to avoid accountability.

Let us talk about the impact this is having on Canadians. We can see that inflation is starting to creep up. It is now up to 2.8%, and it continues to grow. In fact, all of the experts are now ringing warning bells and telling everyone. From markets to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, they are all predicting that the rate of inflation will increase and interest rates will also increase. Even Tiff Macklem is indicating that he will increase interest rates. That means that if someone is renewing a mortgage in the next three to six months, a \$250,000 mortgage at standard rates for a five-year term, they could see an annual increase somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$3,000 to \$5,000. I would ask all members in this House which families have an extra \$3,000 to \$5,000 to spend.

Just to do some simple arithmetic, if it were not for the Liberal government, we would not have an interest cost for the federal government of \$6,000. We would not have an increase in the cost of mortgages, which is now up to \$3,000 to \$5,000. That is thousands of dollars.

Here is a simple thought exercise. Let us think about what could be done with that money if it were not going to interest. It is money that could go to health care. It is money that could go directly to Canadians to be used for their children to play hockey. It could be used for Canadian kids to do the extracurricular activities they desire. It could be used for families to feed themselves at the end of the month, so they would not have to scrimp, save and put their grocery bill on their credit card.

Let us talk a bit about the fiscal anchor. The promise the Prime Minister made is not something the Conservatives or the leader of the official opposition made up. It was from the Prime Minister.

Most of the world, nearly all of it in fact, judges debt by something called the debt-to-GDP ratio. Our debt is a big, scary monster.

In fact, it is \$1.4 trillion. Instead of linking his promise to that, because he must have already known, this Goldman Sachs wonder kid, that he would not be able to reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio, he chose a different number. It sounds a bit like debt to GDP but is entirely different. He chose deficit to GDP. Instead of the cumulative debt, it is the amount the government is spending over what it is earning each year, which is eminently more in the control of the government of the day.

He said that we were going to have a declining deficit-to-GDP number, but he cannot achieve that. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said that the government is going to miss it for the next two years. When it comes to promises from governments beyond two years, I do not put a lot of stock in them, because two years is a long way out for the Liberal government. For the foreseeable future, the government will not hit that mark.

● (1655)

Some on the progressive left will say the problem is that we need more taxes and revenue, but the government is raking in record revenue. Is it because our economy is growing and doing great? No, not at all. It is because the government's inflation is driving up the cost of everything, suffocating our ability to live. It also drives up government revenue. That, combined with high oil prices, means the government is taking in more money than ever, yet somehow this banker has been able to outspend our record revenue.

Let us talk about a few more stats. As I said, Canadians are going to the grocery store and are realizing that a dollar does not go very far. It is \$50 to fill up one bag of groceries. The \$100 that used to pay for groceries for a week now lasts but a day or two. It is because of two issues. One we have talked about: inflation and higher interest. The other side of the ledger is income.

Generally, when a government has an expansive fiscal policy, we get higher income. It makes sense. If we are lowering taxes and spending more, according to Keynesian economics we should get economic growth. However, the government has managed to spend more and not get economic growth. It almost defies reason that it was able to do this. Only the Liberal government could spend billions and still have our GDP per capita, which is analogous in many ways to our income per capita, stay flat over the last 11 years.

If we do a comparison, our gross debt is about 110% and the U.S.'s is, to be frank, about 125%, which sounds a bit better. The U.S. has the reserve currency, which puts it in a stronger position compared to our country, as the Canadian dollar is not the reserve currency. The other thing that the U.S. and some other countries have going for them is economic growth. At the same time, we have had practically zero economic growth, GDP per capita, over the last decade.

America's economic growth has averaged well in excess of 2% to 3%, in some years even touching 4%. We can imagine our personal finances. If someone has a large mortgage, even if they have some credit card debt, and has a high income that is consistently increasing, that problem is fixable. The challenge for the Canadian economy, because of the Liberal government's poor economic and fiscal management, is that we have high debt and low, flat incomes. Our GDP per capita would put us at the very bottom of any U.S. state's. These are significant economic challenges that have real economic consequences.

When we talk about bond yields, interest rates, inflation and other metrics, the reality for the people of Northumberland—Clarke is that they are suffering. Over the summer, I spent numerous days going to various food banks across my riding. Every single one of them has had a massive increase since 2015. I really hope the Liberals do some soul-searching. They can pick data points and numbers and we can argue about them, but what they cannot argue about is the people in Northumberland—Clarke who are suffering right now.

Just one of those food banks, if I can share a number, has seen a 3,000% increase since 2015. There is a wide cross-section. It has seen a dramatic increase in children, for example, who have to use the food bank. It has seen seniors having to use the food bank. It has seen people who are employed having to use the food bank because of the Liberals' reckless spending, which has driven the cost of living out of control.

The government really needs to do some soul-searching and think about the ways it can reduce costs. I hope it does that in the next budget. I do not think it will, but Canadians desperately need the government to get spending under control so that Canadians can afford to live.

• (1700)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize, as the debate winds down, that as much as the Conservatives try to play on the fear of our deficit and debt situation, experts around the world, whether from the monetary associations or credit rating agencies, have recognized that Canada has good financial capacity. Canada has been given, for example, a AAA credit rating. In the G7, that is something that only Germany can also claim.

At the end of the day, we believe that it is important for us to invest in Canadians, in our infrastructure and in so much more. Can the member explain why, as we believe we should be investing, the Conservatives do not recognize the true value of investing?

Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, this comes down to a decades-old, if not centuries-old, debate. Conservatives believe at heart that the best people to spend Canadians' money are Canadians. We do not believe we need the government to control our lives. Ronald Reagan once famously said that Liberals define compassion by how many people the government helps; Conservatives define compassion by how many people the government does not have to help. If we simply restrained spending, parents would be able to feed their children, businesses would be able to thrive and people would have jobs. These are all self-inflicted wounds by the government.

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Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is telling Canadians to just trust him. He wants Canadians to buy fish in the ocean without even seeing them. I think it would be responsible for the Prime Minister to explain that to Canadians, since he is a fantastic economist, and make them understand what he is trying to do.

The government has been borrowing money for the last 11 years non-stop. How long is it going to take the government to realize that what it has been doing is wrong? I would like the hon. member to elaborate on that.

Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I always at least enjoy the passion brought by the member for Winnipeg North, but he is not the one who came up with some of these economic plans. That was the Prime Minister. In fact, I am so old that I can remember two years ago when the member was arguing for the exact opposite of what the Prime Minister is now saying.

Let us bring the Prime Minister before committee and have him explain why his plan is failing.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the point is that the plan is not failing. It is the Conservatives who are failing Canadians by not recognizing that, whether it is the Progressive Conservatives, and I underline "Progressive", in some provinces, the New Democrats in other provinces or the Liberals in other provinces, many governments and administrations recognize the value of investing in Canadians. It is only the far-right Conservatives here in Ottawa who seem to oppose it. Why?

Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have a tell. Whenever they are losing, they use the phrase "far right", so we know we are winning on this debate.

I could give members the numbers: the flat GDP per capita, the ever-increasing deficit, the debt at \$1.4 trillion and the increase in interest rates. I could go through all that, but I invite the member to come down to Northumberland—Clarke and go with me to the food banks. They will all explain to him the dramatic increase in the use of food banks by children. That is because of his policies, and I—

• (1705)

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Business of Supply

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am inspired by my colleague from Northumberland—Clarke, who thinks that the Liberals are losing when they use the words “far right”. I wonder when we will start calling the current government the “near right”, because I find very little difference between what was found in the Conservative platform and what is being implemented by the new government, which still has the title “Liberal government”.

I wonder if my friend from Northumberland—Clarke notices that there have been quite a number of elements of the Conservative platform implemented recently.

Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I have heard perhaps the best compliment I have ever heard given to the member for Winnipeg North and the Liberal government.

Although I have heard that before, I do not think it is a reality. Here is the difference. Here is what Conservatives would do. Conservatives would put Canadians back in control of their lives. They would put dollars back in Canadians' pockets, not give them to Liberal government insiders.

Doly Begum (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise on behalf of the good people of Scarborough Southwest to speak about their stories and, of course, join in debate to discuss our government's plan, which has made targeted and high-impact investments for Canadians while maintaining the fiscal sustainability that is so necessary for our country right now.

I believe I will be able to shed some light on some of the work that we have been doing, and maybe address some of the misconceptions, and the negative energy, frankly, that we hear from the other side every single day. If the Conservatives could just get on board and actually understand the reality of what Canadians are facing every single day, we would be able to work together to actually address some of the challenges that all of us in the House have talked about. We have heard about food banks. Since the pandemic and throughout the last couple of years, we have seen the lines increase at every food bank. In Scarborough, I have seen that myself.

Just recently, when I talk to the food banks, they say they are getting to a point where they are seeing the numbers decrease. We are actually finding solutions. We are actually able to help people. We are helping students who used to line up at those food banks and families who used to line up at those food banks.

I really hope that we are able to have a discussion where we understand that the Conservatives have really highlighted this debate and made it about fiscal responsibility versus economic growth, as a choice. It is one or the other. I want to say that we need both. We need to have fiscal responsibility, and we also need to have economic growth, not one versus the other. We cannot choose one over the other. That is why it is so important that we are being disciplined, controlled in our measures and focused on that fiscal sustainability.

How did our government do that? Let us talk about some of the plans that our government worked on. When we look at our budgets, for example, the way we spend money, something that I have said over the years in my time as a public representative, standing up for the people I represent in my community, is that a budget is a

moral document. That means a budget highlights the values that we are focusing on, what we are spending on and what our priorities are. It really is a moral document on how we take care of one another.

When we look at the way we have spent and what our government has been focusing on, the number one priority that I see every single day, that I know is important for my community, is a plan to build housing. I see that as a priority for our government, and we are already working on that. Our plan also builds on major infrastructure to transform and connect our economy. We have had Conservatives in government for years, but one of the things we failed to do in the past was to actually connect our provinces and territories to one another. This government made an intentional effort to make sure that we are able to connect our provinces to one another so that we can actually have an economy that functions in a seamless way. It also means that we diversify our trades with countries across the world, make new friends and build capacity. That is exactly what we have done.

Another thing that we have done is our plan to lower costs to help families get ahead. That means helping families with our groceries benefit and a child care plan, and focusing on a national school food plan that helps in multiple cities. I know in the city of Toronto, that was something that a lot of schools and a lot of parents appreciated.

Canadians expect their government to manage public finances responsibly, and rightly so. Now rising debt servicing costs reinforce that responsibility, because when we look at the rising debt servicing costs, it is about how we are focusing on that responsibility. Fiscal responsibility is not just about balancing a number on the balance sheet, and it is not just about reducing that number and forgetting everything else, which goes back to what I was saying about that choice between fiscal responsibility versus economic growth. It involves making careful choices. It is about making choices today that strengthen our economy for tomorrow. It is about making choices that improve Canada's ability to stand up for the future and for the children of tomorrow.

● (1710)

In our April economic update, the finance minister gave us a clear and transparent account of Canada's economic performance in an increasingly, if I may remind everyone, uncertain world. It has done two things, I would say. One is that it has given transparency to our businesses, not just small and local businesses but all scales of businesses, so they can seize new opportunities and make sure they are able to thrive. It also helped families. It gave families the confidence to plan for their future.

A lot of families were starting to feel that the uncertainties seen around the world were having an impact at home. When we formed government and came into power, within months, families had the confidence to understand how they can move ahead. Yes, it will be tough, and it will get tougher, but we have a plan, and we will work toward making sure we are able to help families move forward.

How did we do that? We remained focused and we were disciplined. We focused on what we can control. That means balancing our day-to-day operating spending with revenues by 2028-29 and maintaining our fiscal anchors. We heard many of my colleagues speak to that in the House. We also looked at every dollar spent. It is not the government's money, but people's hard-earned dollars. We are responsible for people's tax dollars, and we are making sure that people's money is spent on behalf of Canadians to support growth, resilience and their well-being, to make sure they are able to get ahead. We have a responsibility to spend every single dollar in a way that helps Canadians every single day.

This is the approach that is very important for those on the other side to understand, especially for today's debate. Controlling the cost of government while making the investments needed for a stronger economy is what the government has done. It looked at what we could reduce spending on, and we focused on government spending. We looked at how we could build resilience and focus on building a stronger economy for our nation. Our government knows that we cannot just stand still. It is not an option. There cannot be inaction like we have seen in the past. Underinvestment can be detrimental and cost us significantly.

I want to focus on one more thing before I conclude. It is really important for us to understand that we are facing a time when people across the country want us to unite and help them. Canada is a country where we take care of one another, and if we are building resilience and a stronger economy, we must come together and make sure we are building an economy that helps our future generations.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:15 p.m., 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.

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.

• (1715)

Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 28, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, during the debate pursuant to Standing Order 66 on Motion No. 10 to concur in the tenth report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, later this day, at the end of the time provided for debate or when no member wishes to speak, whichever

Private Members' Business

is earlier, the motion on the previous question shall be deemed adopted on division, and the question on the original motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred pursuant to Standing Order 66.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the parliamentary secretary's moving the motion will please say nay.

Since no one is opposed, it is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I expect that, if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to call it 5:30 p.m., so we could begin private members' hour.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

RELIEVING GRIEVING PARENTS OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN ACT (EVAN'S LAW)

The House resumed from May 29 consideration of Bill C-222, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code (death of a child), as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this evening I am speaking to Bill C-222, which seeks to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code. This bill is sponsored by the member for Burnaby North—Seymour, and I want to commend him for introducing this legislation. It is a bill on a sensitive issue that provides for the following:

...a person to whom employment insurance benefits are payable to care for a newborn child or a child placed with them for the purpose of adoption remains eligible to receive those benefits even if the child dies during the benefit period.

The bill further provides that an employee remains entitled to maternity or parental leave in the event that the employee's newborn child, or a child placed in the employee's care with a view to adoption, dies during the period of leave.

This bill, which is non-partisan and crosses party lines, is compassionate and appropriate, as it seeks to ease the financial and psychological pressure on families who have lost a child. This is a bill that addresses a real problem, and we are confident that Quebecers and Canadians will benefit from these measures. This is a real game-changer for families dealing with such tragedies. Let us hope that reality will prove the old saying wrong, however, because it is never too late to right the wrongs of the gutting of EI and workers' rights that occurred under Conservative governments.

Private Members' Business

Let us not forget that, over the past 10 years, minor adjustments have been made without ever addressing the profound injustices against workers and EI recipients. Despite the Liberals' election pledges and commitments, nothing substantial has been tabled in this decade. Labour organizations in Quebec and Canada and the opposition parties, including the Bloc Québécois—which echoed the main criticisms made by the unions—have made many demands over the past decade.

That is why the Bloc Québécois condemns the inaction and obstruction of the Liberals, who voted against Bloc bills and motions to support workers and allow more people to access EI. However, we are persistent and we will once again table a bill for a more comprehensive reform of EI.

Let us get back to the bill before us. As we saw during the committee study of the current bill sponsored by the member for Burnaby North—Seymour, the cabinet and the Prime Minister quickly made a commitment to the Liberal member to offer their support and a promise that his private member's bill would receive the necessary royal recommendations, a crucial step for any private member's bill requiring new public funds.

I will quote a few figures. Infant mortality has remained relatively stable since the early 2000s in Quebec. The Institut de la statistique du Québec has counted approximately 380 child deaths before the age of one. The infant mortality rate for both sexes is 4.9 per 1,000 births. In the rest of Canada, the rate is slightly higher but not statistically significant. Among the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, we have one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the world. Fortunately, this tragic occurrence is pretty rare, as we can see from the figures.

Having seen the Liberals' tendency to cite the state of the public finances whenever they want to justify saying no, whether to a comprehensive reform of the Employment Insurance Act or to old age security benefits for those aged 65 to 74, the low infant mortality rate means that this enhancement to the EI program and the Canada Labour Code should come at very little cost. For those affected by such tragedies, however, a measure such as Bill C-222 would make all the difference and allow claimants to grieve with greater peace of mind, free from financial anxiety.

As we see time and again, Quebec is at the forefront when it comes to socially oriented public policies. Thanks to the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan, or QPIP, Quebecers already have a social safety net with the same criteria as those set out in Bill C-222. It is understood that a claimant may apply for QPIP benefits even if a child dies after a claim has been initiated. By contacting the plan's customer service department, claimants can receive the information and assistance they need from a representative. As a result, they receive personalized support tailored to their needs. The plan also specifies that the death of a child has no effect on benefit payments, since QPIP provides for a grace period following pregnancy or childbirth. Naturally, this also applies if a parent is grieving the loss of a child.

• (1720)

It is worth noting that, in 1972, Quebec passed the Crime Victims Compensation Act, which allows victims to receive compensa-

tion and the care they need to recover. This law sets out a financial compensation regime for any income losses the victim experiences. In December 2007, without specifically addressing the death of a child, the Quebec act respecting labour standards with regard to absences and leave included provisions that provided compensation for employees who are victims of crime, employees who have lost a loved one as a result of a criminal act or suicide and employees whose child goes missing. The Bloc Québécois believes that workers who are employed by a federally regulated businesses should have the same protections. Furthermore, there is a clear parallel between Bill C-222 and Quebec's political action.

It is also worth noting that, when the committee tabled its report in the House on May 29, 2026, the bill's sponsor was particularly proud that his government gave royal recommendation to his bill. That is great. That is the pivotal stage where the executive branch must give its approval when a private member's bill requires a commitment of public funds. It is important to point out that this is the fourth time in the history of Canada that a private member's bill has managed to make it past this legislative step. The member also mentioned that there are approximately 1,600 Canadian families a year who experience the death of a child. According to him, it is unconscionable to ask parents to contact Service Canada every 14 days to justify their need for employment insurance sickness benefits. Bill C-222 seeks to address this cold and callous measure under which parents cease to be eligible for parental benefits.

The amendments presented at report stage were specifically intended to prevent benefits from ending abruptly. They would allow parental benefits to continue, whether under the standard 40-week benefit period or the extended 69-week benefit period, including in cases where benefits have been extended because of a child's hospitalization. If a child tragically dies at the end of a parent's EI benefits period, each parent will be eligible for five additional weeks. In addition, the bill provides for a 17-week extension of bereavement leave with job protection. Lastly, grieving parents will only have to submit an attestation, sparing them the burden of submitting documentation every two weeks.

To achieve this result, the Liberals tried to put forward some amendments to their colleague's bill in committee, but several were ruled out of order by the chair because they required a royal recommendation. Furthermore, the parliamentary secretary had very little understanding of the amendments she was proposing and was of little help. Things were a bit confusing in committee, which significantly slowed down the work. Finally, the Liberals proposed amendments on May 27, 2026. It should be noted that these provisions are very similar to the ones that were rejected by the committee chair because they all involved expenditures and therefore required a royal recommendation from the government.

Private Members' Business

For example, one amendment sought to add a new ground for extending the benefit period under section 10 of the Employment Insurance Act if a claimant's child dies during the period in which parental benefits may be paid. This amendment would ensure that a claimant can receive up to 26 additional weeks of EI parental benefits after the death of their child. Parents came to testify in committee and their stories were deeply moving. Tears were shed during the committee's proceedings. It was not easy. The parents simply asked us to allow them to grieve in peace and, above all, without having to battle bureaucracy. Honestly, I do not think anyone ever fully recovers from the tragic death of a child. I am thinking of those bereaved parents. The Bloc Québécois is, of course, in favour of this bill, because our political party has always advocated measures that go even further. We have consistently maintained that a 50-week period is appropriate. We have long advocated for this through the "Émilie Sansfaçon" bill. Although different, our proposal was intended to assist claimants facing a serious illness.

Through this motion, the government is proposing to extend this period to 52 weeks. We welcome this measure, having long maintained that a stillbirth, a miscarriage or sudden infant death are profoundly traumatic experiences. We therefore agree that parents should be entitled to a 52-week period of respite to grieve, heal and come to terms with the loss of a child. All that remains is to take action on behalf of seriously ill workers. This is a battle that still needs to be fought, and for which we have already tabled the "Émilie Sansfaçon" bill. We must stop inflicting financial distress on these workers, as it is profoundly unfair.

● (1725)

This is a good start tonight. It is an important step, but it is far from the end of the fight.

[English]

Braedon Clark (Sackville—Bedford—Preston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-222, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code regarding the death of a child, also known as Evan's law.

I am pleased that all members who spoke during the first hour of debate of report stage expressed their support for the proposed amendments. The revised bill demonstrates that members of Parliament share a deep commitment to Canadian parents and a common understanding that when a parent faces the unimaginable loss of a child, they expect compassion, dignity and care from us.

Nothing in life is as profoundly devastating as the death of a child. It completely turns the parents' life upside down. In such moments, parents are consumed by their grief. Bureaucracy, money and work should not stand in the way of their recovery, yet under the current framework, they often do. This is not intentional and is what Bill C-222 aims to fix.

The hon. member for Burnaby North—Seymour deserves thanks for his leadership and perseverance in seeing this through and for his unwavering support to many parents across Canada.

[Translation]

I would also like to thank the many colleagues, stakeholders, witnesses and advocates who all contributed greatly to the development and improvement of this important bill.

Their voices have been essential in shaping a bill that truly reflects the reality faced by grieving parents.

Our government has long recognized that balancing family and work obligations can be challenging for Canadians raising children, in addition to the financial stress that can come with it.

● (1730)

Every parent's situation is unique, and our support systems should be able to adapt as much as possible.

Over the years, we have taken important steps to modernize EI maternity and parental benefits so that parents have more flexibility.

This includes allowing maternity benefits to begin earlier, up to 12 weeks before the due date, compared to the previous eight weeks, if mothers need to begin receiving benefits earlier.

It also includes offering parents a choice between standard or extended parental benefits and providing more weeks of benefits for parents who share them.

These measures reflect an effort to build an EI system that is responsive, flexible and sustainable and that supports families through major life events.

[English]

Grieving the death of a child is a major life event that the current EI system does not provide enough flexibility and compassion for. Losing a child is a tragedy that requires a compassionate and thoughtful response. This is exactly what the amended Bill C-222 aims to fix.

Currently when a child passes away, EI parental benefits stop. If parents do not notify Service Canada, they may unknowingly incur an overpayment and therefore have to repay. Parents can transition to EI sickness benefits, but they are required to report every two weeks. This is an administrative burden that is often overwhelming for grieving parents. This is not the compassion and understanding that Canadians rightly expect from their institutions.

That is why Bill C-222, with the amendments before us, aims to correct the situation. It proposes that parental benefits may continue following the death of a child, alleviating the need for parents to navigate complex administrative processes at a time when they are least able to do so. It would allow EI parental benefits to continue for up to the maximum duration already established, which is up to 40 weeks for those who select standard benefits and up to 69 weeks for those who select extended parental benefits.

Private Members' Business

More importantly, for parents who would be near the end of their benefits when their child passes away, the amended bill would ensure that eligible parents may receive up to five additional weeks of benefits as bereavement support. This provision would apply to both the standard and the extended benefits that were originally chosen. These additional weeks would be paid at the same income replacement rate selected at the outset, providing continuity and predictability to parents during such a difficult time.

[Translation]

Another important aspect of these amendments is the effort to minimize the administrative burden. While there may be some circumstances where parents would still need to notify the the Canada Employment Insurance Commission, through Service Canada, the bill would introduce a regulation-making authority to make this process simpler and more compassionate. That is a key improvement.

In parallel, these amendments would also ensure that employees in the federally regulated private sector continue to have access to job-protected leave provisions under the Canada Labour Code while they avail themselves of EI parental benefits, including if they receive the additional weeks of up to five weeks.

These include access to the remaining weeks of parental leave. For employees near the end of their leave at the time of the death of the child, they would be allowed to transition to the current eight weeks of bereavement leave for the death of a child, ensuring that parents do not have to choose between grieving and going to work.

• (1735)

[English]

These legislative changes are part of a broader effort by the government to strengthen the social safety net and ensure that federal support systems are responsive to the realities that Canadians face.

We have made significant investments in employment insurance and related programs, to provide meaningful assistance where it is most needed. For example, caregiving benefits have long supported Canadians who must step away from work to care for an ill or injured family member, including, of course, a child. In 2022, EI sickness benefits were expanded, extending their duration so individual families facing illness or injury have greater financial security and job protection as they recover. These changes were informed by consultations with Canadians and reflect an understanding of how caregiving responsibilities and health challenges shape people's lives.

Equally important is the work being done to improve how Canadians access these services. Making benefits easier to obtain can provide significant peace of mind, especially during times of crisis. At its peak, the EI system was managing more than one million claims during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is more than five times the usual volume. In response, the government expanded its capacity, streamlined processes and implemented new approaches.

Since then, we have continued our efforts. Between 2022 and 2025, Service Canada employees worked to refine procedures, test new strategies and improve delivery. As a result, backlogs have been significantly reduced, by 73%, as of January of this year. This

progress illustrates that government systems can evolve to be more responsive, efficient and compassionate.

When we consider Bill C-222 and the related amendments before us, we must remember that this legislation is about people. It is about ensuring that in the moments darkest for parents, government processes are not an additional source of stress or hardship. By allowing parental benefits to continue, by simplifying requirements and by ensuring that employees in the federally-regulated private sector have access to job-protected leave, these amendments would take steps toward that goal.

For all these reasons, I am pleased to support Bill C-222 with the proposed amendments, and I encourage all members of the House to do the same.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the order made earlier today, pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3), respecting the deferral of the recorded division on the motion to concur in the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, be discharged and the motion be deemed adopted on division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

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

It is agreed.

(Motion agreed to, order discharged and motion deemed adopted)

RELIEVING GRIEVING PARENTS OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN ACT (EVAN'S LAW)

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-222, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code (death of a child), as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to discuss Private Member's Bill C-222, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code with respect to the death of a child, introduced by the member for Burnaby North—Seymour. I would like to commend the member for taking up such an important issue and for working with all sides of the House to advance this bill through Parliament. I also want to congratulate him for obtaining a royal recommendation from the government, which allows the bill to proceed.

I would also like to acknowledge my Conservative colleague, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, for his work in collaborating with the member for Burnaby North—Seymour to have the bill move through the various stages, including our own internal caucus review process.

During his intervention in the last session, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan provided members of the House with an excellent summary of the collaborative effort across party lines that it has taken to get to this point, with various members of different parties championing this issue at one time or another, a journey that began over a decade ago with a motion put forward by our colleague from Airdrie—Cochrane that began the conversation in the House on offering more support to parents dealing with loss.

That motion recognized that parents who have paid into a parental leave system and then face the loss of a child should obviously not be forced immediately back to work. It highlighted the need, and it called for a system to be put in place that would allow them to continue to receive benefits that they have paid for, with, as my colleague so eloquently stated, clarity and simplicity and without disruption and red tape.

The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is a passionate parliamentarian and carries out his duties as shadow minister for employment effectively and efficiently. I would also like to acknowledge his work to explore the issue of what happens when a parent on leave dies during the benefit period. While it is outside the scope of this bill, I do hope that this issue will also be addressed.

This legislation addresses a topic that many of us do not want to think about. The loss of a child shortly after birth or adoption is an almost unbearable thought, yet it is a reality for so many families. In his speech at second reading, the member for Burnaby North—Seymour mentioned that approximately 1,600 families in Canada are faced with this tragedy each year.

I want to state for the record that I support the bill and am looking forward to its passage through the House. I hope that if it passes here, the other place will take up the legislation quickly so our current laws can be changed to support grieving families. The purpose of the legislation is to support grieving families in two meaningful ways.

Private Members' Business

First, the legislation would amend the Employment Insurance Act to allow a person who is entitled to employment insurance benefits following the birth or adoption of a child to remain eligible for those same benefits even if the child dies during the benefit period. Practically, what this means is that grieving parents would be able to continue receiving maternity or parental EI benefits for the entire period to which they would have been entitled had the tragic loss not occurred. This change means that parents would not need to apply for a different benefit because their parental EI support ended.

Second, this legislation would also amend the Canada Labour Code to extend the period of bereavement leave to which someone is entitled in the event of the death of a child. The bill would ensure that if a child passes near the end of a parent's leave period, the grieving parent would be entitled to a minimum of five weeks of leave following their loss.

Why are these changes necessary? As I mentioned earlier in my remarks, these proposed changes would potentially benefit 1,600 individuals, or 3,200 when you consider that when a child dies, two parents are impacted, not just the individual who was collecting EI. Additionally, the change would also benefit the families of bereaved parents. There could be other children in the family. There could be grandparents and others. What this change would do is relieve the financial pressure on the grieving couple and their loved ones.

● (1740)

If the bill passes, people would be eligible to remain on parental EI and receive financial support as they experience and work through unexpected grief. Additionally, they would be able to stay on a form of EI that does not require biweekly reporting.

Currently, grieving parents who no longer are eligible to receive parental EI may be able to access other EI supports. However, switching to a different EI stream, such as EI sickness benefits, requires a whole new claim. It requires the applicant to submit medical documentation to support the claim. Additionally, if the application is approved, the new form of EI benefit requires that reports be submitted every two weeks to justify the EI claim. Can members imagine trying to put together a new EI claim at a time when we are already stressed and numb with grief? If we get the new claim submitted and it is approved, can members imagine being asked to relive their grief over and over again by having to articulate the reasoning for their EI claim? The reason for the EI claim does not change from week to week, so it makes no sense to require parents to reapply for EI benefits that they would otherwise be entitled to receive had tragedy not struck their family.

Private Members' Business

Additionally, it takes a government employee time to process bi-weekly reports. We do not need to add unnecessary work to the program's administrators or red tape to those seeking these benefits. For those reasons, the proposed legislation is not just compassionate; it is common sense.

In closing, as a mother of four and a grandmother of 11, I am very thankful for the maternal and pediatric health care that we have in the country. We can be grateful that the measures proposed in the bill would not impact the vast majority of Canadians. Not everything we do in this place needs to affect millions of Canadians. It is important that we as parliamentarians recognize and consider the challenges that perhaps a small number of Canadians face.

I believe the changes proposed in the legislation are going to make a huge difference for those who find themselves requiring it. As I mentioned earlier, I do support the bill, and I look forward to voting in favour of it very soon.

• (1745)

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised to learn that my colleague is a grandmother of 11.

I rise today at final reading to examine and explore Bill C-222, known as Evan's law, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code regarding the death of a child. I speak for the families of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, from Cowichan Valley to the west shore. I speak for the parents of a Vancouver Island family who welcomed a child into their lives, and who were then asked to bear the unbearable.

I served in uniform and that service brings a different perspective to the value of life. Those who serve and the families who wait for them know how quickly a life can change with one day, one phone call, one sentence that can never be taken back. This is the lens I bring to this bill.

Allow me to explain what the bill would do. When a parent receives employment insurance, maternity or parental benefits, those benefits are tied to a child. Under the current rules, if that child sadly dies, parental benefits end. A parent may switch to sickness benefits, but must report to Service Canada every two weeks to show that they are still grieving. If they do not call within a week of that death, the debt begins to build that the Canada Revenue Agency will later claw back. The Canada Labour Code carries a similar gap, and leave protections may be cut short.

Let us consider what that asks of a family. They are grieving and the system presents them with paperwork. Bill C-222 would correct that, and a parent would keep the claim already in place. They would not file again, and they would not have to learn new rules. They would be given time, and time is the one thing grief demands.

I look forward to collaborating with the government on this. When a sound idea comes from the government benches, the right response is to acknowledge it. I have read this bill, and I have weighed both what it accomplishes and what it leaves undone.

This work did not begin in this Parliament. More than 10 years ago, the member for Airdrie—Cochrane brought forward motion 110, which opened the national conversation on supporting parents

who lose a child. This bill rests upon that work. It rests as well upon the courage of families, beginning with the family of Evan, for whom this law is named, who spoke publicly about the hardest day of their lives so that others would not face it alone. To those families, the House owes more than gratitude; it owes results.

While Bill C-222 speaks to the loss of a child, it does not yet speak to the loss of a parent. Let us consider a parent receiving parental leave benefits who passes away. That parent paid into the system. They earned those benefits. In a case in a colleague's riding, the benefits were cut off the moment a parent died. A family already grieving was handed financial hardship on top of their loss. A family that has lost a parent should not also lose what a parent paid for. This is the principle in the bill before us, but applied to a family it leaves out. If we hold that grieving families deserve time and stability, we cannot hold it only when the loss runs in one direction. Grief does not ask which way the law was written.

Some will ask why this important issue was simply not added to this bill, and the answer is a rule worth understanding. Under our procedures, a private member's bill that spends new public money cannot become law without a royal recommendation. This is the government's formal approval to spend, and without it, a bill, even with majority support, cannot pass. The question was never only what is right, but what is possible, and I understand that. However, through good faith across party lines, a path was found.

While this bill advances, it advances with a recommendation in support of families who lose a child. The human resources committee has agreed to study the extension of parental leave when a parent dies and has requested the cost from the Parliamentary Budget Officer. This is progress, and I welcome it, but a study is not a solution. A committee report does not help a family this month, and that is why timing matters. This debate falls just nine days before the budget is tabled. A budget is the place where the government's words become commitments. I therefore ask the government plainly to place the additional parental loss benefits to parents in the budget and expand parental leave protections to families who lose a parent.

• (1750)

Our shadow minister for employment expects the cost to be modest, because the measure would extend benefits that already exist with leave periods that already exist, for a small number of families who have already paid into the system. The figure from the Parliamentary Budget Officer will show whether that expectation is sound. We remember that an announcement is not a binding commitment, but a line in a budget is. I will continue to press for it in the House, regardless of who holds government. The committee has also agreed to undertake a longer study of employment insurance parental leave in general, and it wishes to hear from Canadians, so those who have lived this or who hold ideas on reform may share them with my office, and I will ensure that they reach the committee. Their experience will shape what comes next.

There is one more family of whom I wish to speak, because their story shows where this work does not end. Recently a Vancouver Island couple lost their son in the second trimester of pregnancy. Alongside their grief, they met a second difficulty. They did not know what respectful options were open to them. They did not know whom to ask or whether they could lay their son to rest as they hoped. With the help of a priest, at a cemetery in Cobble Hill near where I live, they could. The father built a tiny oak casket, the mother made a pillow, and their son was buried with prayer and dignity.

Their question afterward was simple: Why should any grieving family have to find these answers by chance? From that question grew the Journi May Dignity Initiative, and it calls for compassionate communications, clear written information and meaningful choices for families after pregnancy loss. It is a House of Commons petition, e-7765. It is open for signature today. It is not closed. It has not been tabled. It calls upon the Government of Canada to “Develop and implement a Pregnancy Loss Dignity Protocol within areas of federal jurisdiction” and to encourage provinces and territories to review their own practices.

Until it closes, every name counts. As such, I invite every resident of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford and every Canadian to read Journi's story and to sign petition e-7765. That couple asked a simple question, and Parliament can help answer it.

Let me close with what the House can do: advance the bill before us without delay; complete its commitment for the committee to study the loss of a parent and bring forward legislation; place that extension in the budget; hear from Canadians on parental leave reform; and listen to families, such as the family from Cobble Hill on Vancouver Island, so that no grieving family searches alone for a dignified path.

Supporting grieving families is not a partisan act. It is a standard and one worth upholding, whoever forms government, so I look forward to supporting the bill. I thank the member opposite for their work, and I look forward to seeing further work in expanding the benefits for grieving families, as agreed by committee.

• (1755)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

Private Members' Business

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2 to 10.

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

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I ask that it be carried.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I declare Motion No. 1 carried. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 2 to 10 carried.

(Motions Nos. 1 to 10 agreed to)

Hon. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in at report stage with further amendments.

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.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I ask that it be carried.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Terry Beech moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The question is on the motion.

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

Hon. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, I thank everybody who made this possible. I would request a recorded division, please.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Pursuant to Standing Order 98, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 28, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

*Concurrence in Committee Reports***ORDERS OF THE DAY***[English]***CONCURRENCE IN COMMITTEE REPORTS****HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

The House resumed from October 20 consideration of the motion, and of the motion that this question be now put.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to express appreciation for the effective role that the standing committees can play at times. The House of Commons is made up of a number of standing committees. Through those standing committees, there is an opportunity to do a wide spectrum of different studies.

One thing the Government of Canada has consistently been concerned about, coming out of the last federal election, is the economy and its impact on jobs, opportunities and so forth. We have seen a number of different initiatives that have been supported by the government.

We have a standing committee of the House that has spent some time trying to deal with the youth unemployment issue. I have a number of things I would like to share with the House on that, at the very least to acknowledge the efforts made by the standing committee to bring forward this particular report. I have argued in the past, when we have had a continuation as opposed to an adjournment, as to why these reports come before the House. Typically, it is a way we can provide concurrence if it is deemed necessary.

Before I provide my comments directly on youth and youth employment, I want to highlight the legislative agenda.

Just moments ago, we had the opportunity to pass a private member's bill that will have a profound, positive impact on Canadians. In every region, there will be Canadians who will directly benefit from the legislation we just passed. It is encouraging to see members on all sides of the House come together to see what I anticipate will be that bill passing tomorrow unanimously. I give credit to the member for taking the time to do the canvassing, to share the experiences and to work very closely with the Prime Minister's Office and others to make sure we could do that, because of the expenditure component of the legislation. It was a significant challenge.

I say that first and foremost to acknowledge exactly what my friend from B.C. has been able to accomplish but also to highlight that, as programmed private member's business, whether it is a motion or a bill, the Standing Orders facilitate its ultimate passage. If we look at government business, much like opposition business, there is a limited time frame. I have had opportunities to talk about this issue with other concurrence motions that have been brought to the House.

When a concurrence motion is brought forward during government business at the beginning of the day, what I have witnessed over the years is that it is often used as a tool to prevent government bills from being debated or to minimize the amount of time that a government bill is up for debate. I say this as more of a cautionary note. Government legislation does not have programming

per se. It is an issue with the Standing Orders, to protect both government and opposition. I believe we can come up with ways that would facilitate programming of motions or government legislation in much the same way that opposition or private members' bills are allowed to be programmed.

In Manitoba, we made some rule changes that facilitated that sort of programming for the first time. That is important to recognize at this stage because, I would like to think, there should be a high level of interest in ensuring that government legislation is debated in the House, while at the same time respecting what concurrence motions are there for.

● (1800)

Where there is an opportunity to talk about an important issue, we would find, if we were to check with the Clerk's table, that we could be debating concurrence motions, or issues raised at committees such as the one we are debating tonight, indefinitely. We could virtually take it all the way up to the next election. It is very important, when we get reports that come out of our standing committees, that we be very careful about which ones we determine we want to debate and then ultimately have concurrence or a vote on here in the House.

I am glad we are having this debate this evening because it is not taking away from debate on government legislation, which is critically important because it is a part of election platforms. Those debates need to occur. Then the legislation needs to advance to a committee and come back for the third and final reading in order to advance to the Senate and then to royal assent if the Senate does not send it back. Time is very important.

This is not to take away from the principles of the report itself. The report we are debating today is about youth unemployment, which has been a major concern of this government since the last federal election. I myself was very concerned about it and had the opportunity to talk about it in the last federal election. I can assure members opposite that whether they look at the Prime Minister or other members of the Liberal caucus, they will find a great deal of effort put into public policy to drive the issue of youth employment and determine what we can do to alleviate concerns.

Listening to the Conservative opposition's remarks, one would think that youth unemployment at this level is something new. Sadly, that is not the case. Youth unemployment at times can be a very difficult challenge. If we were to go back to 2012, two administrations ago under Stephen Harper, we would find that youth unemployment back then was just over 14%. The economy was doing relatively well, and we did not have the wars in the Middle East and Europe or the trade issue between Canada and United States.

We can contrast that to 2025, which was the first year we could actually report that, on average, youth unemployment was less than 14%. In 2012, it was over 14%; in 2025, it was less than 14%, on average. We are still concerned about it, which means we are trying to address the issue. I would argue that one needs to look at the different announcements we have made as a government to support our young people in Canada. As for employment opportunities, a number of things come to mind, and I would like to emphasize a few of those things in particular.

• (1805)

One would be general policy as a whole with the government promoting, encouraging and investing in our Canadian Armed Forces. We have seen dramatic results. Within six months of the last election, the Prime Minister and the government achieved that spending of 2% of the GDP. As a benefit of that, not only did we see a bump in salaries for our military personnel, but we also saw record numbers of young people get in line to become members of the Canadian Forces. That directly helps young people.

There is a sense of pride because it had been 30 years since we saw so many put in their applications. Yesterday, when I brought it up, the Conservatives said they are just applications. Well, those applications turn into real recruits. I believe the number is 7,000. Can members tell me when it was that high in the last 30 years? It has not been the case, which goes to show that government policy has clearly demonstrated a higher level of interest in providing more job opportunities in the Canadian Forces. I was young when I joined the forces. I would have been 20 or 21, I am not 100% sure, but as a young Canadian going into boot camp situations, I found the vast majority were young. This is one action since the last federal election.

Another action has been the Red Seal program. The Red Seal in trades is an incredible commitment from young people to play a major role in building a stronger and healthier Canada. Something I am often afforded the opportunity to talk about is how the government is advancing the importance of building that stronger, healthier Canada. As I cited just an hour or so ago, everything from major projects to small businesses is going to drive and build that stronger economy, and an important aspect of that is our skilled trades. These are important jobs of the future, and we have made a commitment to young people that we are going to invest in that program to the degree that we anticipate 80,000 to 100,000 people are going to directly benefit.

We are talking about a \$5,000 donation to individuals who are able to acquire that certificate, which helps pay for the education and the training that was involved. It provides incentive, whether for those in post-secondary institutions or secondary institutions. I think of high schools like Tec-Voc High School in Winnipeg, our Red River College Polytechnic and other post-secondary facilities. Cooks, autobody workers, bricklayers, hairstylists, machinists, plumbers, roofers, tower crane operators, welders and so many more are going to benefit, and they are going to be the youth.

The minister just made an announcement that we are going to extend the employer applications for the Canada summer jobs program until December 3. These summer jobs provide opportunities for young people. Thousands of young people are going to benefit

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from the summer jobs program, and providing those non-profits and others the opportunity to hire youth will benefit Canada as a whole.

• (1810)

I think of the many daycares in Winnipeg North and how many of them will be hiring summer youth. These are all programs designed to help young people land their first job. It is making a tangible difference. The government talks about youth unemployment and takes tangible examples of it. I just finished demonstrating that.

• (1815)

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great joy to my colleague. It is always a pleasure. I say it is not what he says, but how loud he says it.

The member talked about the Canada summer jobs grant. I am going to give him and the Liberals a very simple lesson in constitutional law. The charter was passed to protect the citizenry from the government, yet the government made people sign an attestation about what they believed. The government was using the Constitution as a sword from citizen to citizen. The government messed up. That was completely unconstitutional.

Will the member renounce this unconstitutional policy right here, right now? We all know it was wrong. It offended freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. Will he renounce it right now? He is, after all, part of the party that said it is the party of the charter. Let us hear it.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we are the party of the charter. Ours is the party that brought in the Charter of Rights, and I stand by the Charter of Rights.

It is interesting that the member would refer to that because, back in 2012, when there was over 14% unemployment with young people, what did the Conservative Party do to the summer youth program? It cut it. It put in a budget that cut the amount of jobs being created with that particular program.

We can contrast that to now having a government that has lower youth unemployment. We continue to not only support the summer youth program but also bring in other programs that support our youth, unlike the Conservative Party. Talk is cheap—

[Translation]

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

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am getting ready to make my speech, but before I do, I will try to summarize my frame of mind.

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Right now, at the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, the issue of training, employment and labour is another area where the Liberals are really trying to be paternalistic, telling Quebec what to do on a matter that falls squarely within Quebec's jurisdiction.

It is not just me saying so. The former minister of employment and labour said so last spring when he saw the Liberal government's intentions, particularly through Bill C-5. It is working to accelerate the economy so aggressively that it is even trying to impose its way of thinking on the education and training of our young people.

What I am saying is more of a comment than a question, but I feel as though I am starting to repeat myself in this House. It is somewhat discouraging to see the government continue trying to centralize things instead of working collaboratively on these issues when they concern Quebec.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the member. I was a provincial MLA for just under 20 years, and the province plays a critical role. There is no doubt about that.

When saying that the federal government should not support the Red Seal program, the member needs to reflect on the constituents she represents. I believe that our constituents having mobility rights under the Red Seal program is to the advantage of her constituents, my constituents and all the people of Canada, because if they achieve the Red Seal certification, the skills they learn through time and money will be recognized from coast to coast to coast. To say that the federal government has no role is highly irresponsible.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us highlight the dire situation we are in. It is one that the member is desperate to gloss over. We have the worst workforce participation situation in almost 30 years, according to the latest job numbers. We are at a 29-year low in terms of workforce participation in this country. We lost 110,000 jobs in the last two months alone. Unemployment is up to 6.5%. In particular, youth unemployment is up to 13%.

That is significantly higher than it has been in the past. It is much above the sustained pre-pandemic averages, for example. Basically, what we hear from members' offices is that it is good enough. It simply is not good enough. We should be providing hope and opportunity to young people and all Canadians. Instead, we have this 29-year low in workforce participation.

This unanimous all-party report contains constructive solutions. Why will the Liberals not adopt some of those solutions?

• (1820)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, in part, the member is factually incorrect. I said in my comments, if he was listening, that back in 2012, which is when he was working for Stephen Harper, the Stephen Harper government had over 14% youth unemployment at a time when the economy was doing relatively well.

In 2025, the youth unemployment rate was under 14%. That is not something we should be proud of, and that is the reason I spent

the time I did on the types of programs that we believe are important to get more young people working. That is what it is. The member talks about unemployment stats, and I have a stat for him. There have been over 150,000 net jobs created since the Prime Minister was elected just under a year and a half ago.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is not complicated. I want my colleague opposite to give me a clear answer.

Is labour mobility a federal jurisdiction or a Quebec jurisdiction?

That is the only question I have for him.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, my answer to the member would be that he should check with constituents to find out if there is an electrician with a Red Seal who feels that they should have the opportunity to do electrical work outside of the province of Quebec.

I can tell the member that individuals with a Red Seal are very proud of the fact that they did the training and spent the money that was necessary to get that Red Seal because it enables them to practise their skill set beyond the province—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): We do try to have the answer be about the same length as the question or comment.

We will continue with questions and comments. The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to my colleague's last question, the member opposite tried to go back to 2012 to argue that this youth unemployment problem is one that has persisted. He also said that the government is putting programs in place that are going to solve it.

My question is, why did the government not put those programs in place a decade ago when they had the opportunity?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member needs a refresh on when the last election was, when Canadians actually chose a new Prime Minister and 70-plus new members of the House of Commons to form the government.

If she were to consult with many people, she would find that there has been a shift in public policy. She will find that there has been a litany of things to support our young people, all of which I think are making a positive difference, but we do need to do more, and we will continue to work on youth unemployment.

[Translation]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I asked my colleague a question.

The Constitution exists; it clearly sets out areas of jurisdiction, and there are agreements between the provinces, Quebec and the federal government.

My question is simple, and I want him to give me the right answer.

Is labour mobility a federal jurisdiction or a Quebec jurisdiction? That is all I want to know.

Is he able to answer that question? If he cannot do so, what is he doing in the House?

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, much like many other issues that face an economy and beyond, we find that our constituents want the different levels of government to work together collaboratively with different stakeholders to get the type of results that our constituents expect of government. They want governments to work together as opposed to the constant divide and conquer that the Bloc tries to promote inside the House.

Tamara Kronis: Mr. Speaker, in response to my last question, the hon. member across the way said that there is a new government and that it has changed from the old government, and that is why the Liberals did not put these programs in place then.

I would like to know if the member now admits that the government he was part of for 10 years was a failure.

• (1825)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I definitely do not. There are many things we could talk about, such as CPP or some tax breaks. There is a litany of things that the previous government did well. I would even go further to say that even Stephen Harper did some things well too.

[Translation]

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to speak to an issue that is of concern to many: youth employment. This evening, I will try to use facts to properly present our position on the report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, of which I have been a member since February.

The report illustrates the gravity of the situation that young people are facing. From January to August 2025, the youth unemployment rate reached an average of 14%, the highest level since 2012, excluding the COVID-19 acute phase from 2020 to 2021 and the global financial crisis in 2009. Meanwhile, the overall unemployment rate was 7.1% in July 2025. The youth unemployment rate is normally always a few points higher than the overall average, but the difference is off the charts right now.

However, I am going to have to take a position straightaway in my speech on the matter of interference. Despite the topic's importance, the government keeps carrying on as though the provinces and Quebec do not exist. The committee's recommendations form the basis for a simple plan allowing the federal government to interfere in the area of labour while completely disregarding the existence of the agreements already signed between Quebec and Ottawa on labour training and revealing the Liberal Party of Canada's

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contempt for all of Quebec's labour market partners. A quick glance at the table of contents shows that the vast majority of the headings concern matters under Quebec's jurisdiction. For example, there are headings such as "Skills Mismatch, Education and Training" and "Vocational, Technical and Skilled Trades Pathways". I could go on reading from the table of contents.

Outside Quebec, the federal government may play a major role in employment and workforce training, but not in Quebec. Clearly, the committee members knew how to play the game. They added "in collaboration with provinces and territories", but this is a clear indication that the federal government wants to interfere in their jurisdictions. This wording is not a magic bullet that will protect Quebec from federal interference every time it could happen. It is imperative that the government introduce asymmetry for Quebec in order to comply with the Canada-Quebec agreement on workforce development and Quebec's legislative authority. Let us not forget that Quebec has jurisdiction over workforce development and carries out this role in close collaboration with labour market partners within the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail. Quebec tailors its approach, as it does in many other areas, by collaborating with the community.

The most striking example in this report can be found in this paragraph on page 42:

On youth welfare, the committee heard that provincial responsibility for group homes and youth in care intersects with federal interests in long-term social outcomes.

That is obvious, hence the idea of truly collaborating, government to government, each within its respective areas of jurisdiction.

I will now address the consequences of immigration. In the House, the Conservative leader once claimed that foreign workers were coming to take jobs away from young people. This only shows that he is mixing everything up and that the issue is much more complex than that. It is true that temporary immigration has an effect on the unemployment rate, but in light of the data, this statement must be qualified.

For example, according to the Desjardins study, international students are more likely to be competing with young people for jobs. The study also notes that the restrictions on international students that were lifted at the end of the pandemic—as members may recall, the government had eliminated the hourly work limits for international students—may have contributed to the rise in youth unemployment. This interpretation is supported by studies done by CIBC and the Institut du Québec. It is the influx of foreign workers with degrees that is believed to have contributed to the increase in available labour. Temporary foreign workers have less of an impact because these hires are subject to labour market impact assessments.

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Once again, I urge members to be cautious. After consulting with post-secondary institutions, I can say that these international students are not all here to steal jobs. They are also students who are important, particularly for the vitality of CEGEPs and universities in the regions. Once again, we need to qualify our statements. Of course immigration is far from being the only cause. It is a complex, multi-faceted issue, and it has more than a single cause. These same studies also state that the use of AI might be another factor that is contributing to rising youth unemployment in particular. In fact, this is mentioned in the report, in recommendation 6.

● (1830)

Studies have also found that policies aimed at addressing demographic decline should help reduce youth unemployment, while noting that youth unemployment is particularly sensitive to overall economic conditions. That explains why the youth unemployment rate is still high right now despite the policies currently in place. The tariff war with the United States has exacerbated Canada's economic situation and increased unemployment. This is also identified as one of the causes in the report. Take the forestry sector, for example. Quebec needs support measures other than loans. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister and the Premier of Ontario announced a new action plan to protect workers from tariffs and strengthen Ontario industries. They announced billions of dollars for Ontario, but there was nothing for the forestry sector. Then again, that comes as no surprise. It has always been that way.

What we actually need to do is address low wages and inflation, because socio-economic factors also contribute to youth unemployment. More specifically, with respect to education, in the 2026 spring budget update, the government promised funding for team Canada strong, but Quebec has yet to receive that money, which would help create more training opportunities in the skilled trades.

I will digress for a moment because this echoes Bill C-266, a bill that aligns with Ottawa's traditional centralizing approach and conflicts with Quebec's desire to maintain control over its own vocational training and labour market. The bill creates a federal framework in an area that falls under provincial jurisdiction, namely training, certification and labour market regulation. This opens the door to more permanent encroachment, despite the preamble's dubious claim about respecting jurisdiction. By requiring the minister to compile a complete list of skilled trades across Canada and map equivalencies, Ottawa is essentially assuming the role of the national authority on trades. This is no mere voluntary coordination role. It positions the federal government as the arbiter of provincial standards.

Under the guise of harmonization and reducing regulatory duplication, the federal government is giving itself a tool to put pressure on provinces that maintain higher requirements. This will jeopardize the standards of quality, safety and working conditions that have been established by Quebec institutions such as the Commission de la construction du Québec, or CCQ, Emploi-Québec and sector-specific organizations. The bill offers no explicit guarantee that provincial standards will take precedence in the event of a conflict between a national framework and Quebec's professional qualification regime. This leaves the door wide open for a standards downgrade that lowers Quebec's requirements to the level of a potential minimum Canadian standard.

Along with Bill C-5 and the rhetoric about one Canadian economy, Bill C-266 is part of a strong trend of Ottawa exploiting the argument of internal free trade and labour shortages to centralize power over standards, qualifications and mobility, at the expense of the autonomy of Quebec and the provinces. The Liberal government subscribes to this vision. In the 2026 spring economic update, it stated that it wanted to launch an initiative called "Team Canada Strong" to recruit, train and hire 80,000 to 100,000 new Red Seal skilled trades workers by 2030-31, with the goal of providing young Canadians with paid pathways to jobs in housing construction, major infrastructure and defence projects at speed and scale. The 2026 spring economic update proposed providing \$2 billion over five years, starting in 2026-27, and \$262 million a year ongoing.

In committee, during the study of these bills, we were told that the funding has yet to be distributed. The Government of Quebec, notably through its former minister of employment and labour, denounced these intrusions at the time and reminded the federal government that workforce training falls under provincial jurisdiction and that Quebec already had its own programs. It should be noted that, in Canada, credential recognition is primarily the responsibility of the provinces and territories, which have jurisdiction over regulating professions and trades and issuing licences to practise. Approximately 20% of jobs are in regulated professions or trades, where the use of a professional title and the performance of certain activities are restricted to individuals who hold a licence or certificate of qualification. In practical terms, more than 400 regulatory bodies, professional orders, colleges and apprenticeship authorities, as well as more than 200 post-secondary institutions, apply these rules and assess credentials and skills.

● (1835)

I could draw a lot of parallels between the bill and the report that we are examining in the House this evening. However, I will now wrap up this long tangent on Bill C-266, which I have heard a lot about lately, by saying that we just heard from witnesses and that we will discuss it further and submit a report.

I will now talk about work-life-study balance. That is also an important issue when it comes to youth employment. We need to give this some serious thought. Debt has an impact on youth employment, as do discrimination against minorities, indigenous peoples and women and the lack of protection and recognition for non-standard jobs. Inflation and low wages also have an impact. Finally, economic uncertainty can negatively affect hiring or result in layoffs for low-income workers. In fact, the government addresses that last point in its response:

The Government of Canada understands that weak productivity growth, high operating costs, and taxation can reduce firms' ability to invest, expand, and create jobs. As a result, businesses may be less likely to hire and create new opportunities, particularly in sectors such as manufacturing and natural resources.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to take a few minutes to discuss the report and the study in general. While they are obviously relevant, the lack of political will to acknowledge Quebec's asymmetry prevents us from finding lasting solutions to many aspects of the problem.

The federal government bears its share of responsibility and acknowledges this: economic uncertainty, inflation, a housing shortage, and reduced transfers, among other issues. However, unless and until the Government of Canada sits down in good faith with its counterparts in Quebec and the provinces to discuss joint solutions within each of their jurisdictions, the situation is likely to remain at a standstill.

I would like to make one final point. We will at least try to identify some solutions. Let us remember that, tonight, we are talking about a generation that works hard, studies hard and wants to contribute to society, yet is increasingly struggling to carve out a place in today's economy.

Let us also bear in mind that the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities' report on youth employment is troubling. The report notes that the youth unemployment rate reached an average of 14% in 2025, its highest level in more than a decade, excluding the pandemic.

The committee also heard that full-time students are facing particularly difficult circumstances and that summer jobs are becoming increasingly scarce. I would like to take this opportunity to remind employers that the application period for the Canada summer jobs program opens today and runs until December 3. I encourage employers to take advantage of this program, which could help young people get some work experience for the first time. This program could help them.

Every year, we are told that the amounts could be increased because this program is popular with both young people and employers. This is a concrete example of an area where the federal government could take action. It could also enhance the program a little. It has already done so, but it could do more to recognize the difficult employment situation young people are facing. Once again, I will leave that aside for now and encourage employers to apply for this program.

Meanwhile, as we know, the cost of living is skyrocketing. Young people are facing unaffordable rent, unstable jobs, underpaid

internships, difficulty accessing EI, and financial pressures that are delaying their life plans.

The Bloc Québécois believes that this situation must be taken seriously. First of all, we believe that the realities of Quebec and the regions must be recognized. The report clearly shows that realities vary greatly from province to province and even from region to region. In Quebec, some regions are near full employment while others, such as the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands, have much higher youth unemployment rates.

That is why Ottawa's one-size-fits-all solutions do not work. Instead, the Bloc Québécois is calling for increased transfers and greater flexibility for Quebec, measures tailored to regional realities, more support for Quebec's small and medium-sized businesses, and targeted investments in sectors that create high-quality jobs. We also believe that young workers in non-standard and seasonal employment must be protected.

● (1840)

The report points out that many young people fall into the EI spring gap and that the current criteria no longer reflect the reality of modern jobs. That is yet another reason why the Bloc Québécois is reintroducing a bill to overhaul EI and modernize it so it aligns with the current labour market. That is coming soon.

That is why the Bloc Québécois is pushing for comprehensive EI reform to incorporate a more accessible universal eligibility threshold and better protection for part-time, seasonal workers and workers with multiple jobs. The real problem is that the federal government has failed to properly plan for housing, infrastructure, economic integration and regional labour needs.

Lastly, the Bloc Québécois believes that young people deserve the opportunity to study, find suitable housing, work and build a decent future. These days, too many young people feel like they are working hard without really getting ahead.

We have a collective responsibility to restore their faith in the future.

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague touched on several issues in her speech. I would like to begin by thanking her for highlighting the fact that the application period for summer jobs is now under way for businesses and organizations seeking to recruit students. The deadline for submitting applications is a month away. People can go to their federal constituency office, find their MP and take the necessary steps to secure the jobs. Of course, all of this must be carefully balanced.

My question is this: My colleague was elected, if I am not mistaken, in 2019 and has been serving in this House ever since. She has therefore had the opportunity to observe how, over the years, the government has increasingly encroached on provincial areas of responsibility. There may have been a change 18 months ago, but the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

Could she explain to the House the direct impact of a federal government that does not interfere in these matters, specifically on youth employment?

Andréanne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, one thing is certain. When it comes to areas of jurisdiction, they are the ones with the resources. They created their own systems to be able to give young people training that reflects the needs of Quebec and its regions. It is all in the name: “area of jurisdiction”. When the federal government tries to meddle in an area that does not belong to it, like workforce training, employment or labour, we run the risk of ending up with redundancies, and once again, we run the risk of being much more inefficient. That is why we often demand transfer payments.

In this case, witnesses told the committee that the transfer that Quebec should have received would have improved the offering of unique programs in Quebec. In terms of skills training, we also heard that Quebec has something unique to offer when it comes to skilled trades.

I could go on about this, but I think I will move on to the next question.

Natilien Joseph (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am also from Quebec, and I also serve on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities with my colleague, who, I have to admit, does an outstanding job.

I have never witnessed the federal government attempting to interfere in matters that fall under Quebec's jurisdiction.

I would like to ask my colleague whether she thinks she is protecting Quebec's jurisdictions by voting against everything here in Ottawa. I think that Quebecers deserve better than political games. Every time there is a vote on something that benefits Quebec, they vote against it.

Andréanne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague is from Quebec, but I am wondering whether he is hearing the same testimony as me in committee.

For example, during the study on Bill C-266, witnesses from Quebec had to explain, even to the Liberal members, how the system works and why trying to use a one-size-fits-all approach to employment and labour to speed up so-called national projects shows a lack of respect for Quebec's unique vocational training system, for example.

I am not making this up. Witnesses from Quebec told us that in committee. It is always like this. We are talking about this subject this evening, but I am wondering where he is when witnesses from Quebec appear in committee.

• (1845)

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are learning all kinds of things on this wonderful evening. The member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert says that he has never seen the federal government interfere in Quebec's jurisdictions. That is actually quite amazing. We will be sending him loads of documentation. He can dive in and get an understanding of what this is all about.

Earlier, I asked my colleague, the member for Winnipeg North, a question. He is a pretty regular participant in debates in the House. He has quite a few hours under his belt, I think. He has been participating in these debates for years, and he apparently knows the Constitution off by heart. I asked him twice whether labour mobility was a federal or a provincial responsibility. Both times, he could not give me an answer. For a man who is intelligent, who understands and knows the Canadian Constitution and the agreements between Quebec and the federal government, it is rather surprising that he could not answer such a question. This raises some questions.

I would like to ask my colleague what planet the Liberals are living on, considering that they do not know the various jurisdictions set out in their own Constitution.

Andréanne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, Halloween is coming up, and I think I just figured out what to go as. I am going to dress up as a unicorn, because I am getting the impression this evening that the Liberals are inhabiting a fantasy land. The Constitution appears to pose no problem whatsoever. Everything is fuzzy; boundaries melt away.

Nevertheless, it is clear that workforce training, employment and labour fall under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. That is the answer. I have worked in both Parliament and the National Assembly. I was not a member of the National Assembly, just an assistant, but it was enough for me to be clear on who does what. All I have to do is read the Constitution to know that.

When the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert told me that he has never seen any attempt to interfere, I knew exactly what my Halloween costume would be: I am going to dress up as a unicorn.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech was very interesting. I always learn something new about Quebec when she speaks. I want to continue to learn more about the communities she represents. I know she has always wanted to learn more about the communities I represent.

My question may be simple, but it is sincere. After graduation, many young people in our communities struggle to find their first job. How can the federal government help them?

Andréanne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, with whom I always enjoy speaking. We worked together again today in committee. I congratulate her on her French.

In any case, trying to impose a one-size-fits-all approach and interfere with the training already provided in Quebec—with something that is already being done—is certainly not the way to help young people find jobs. At the federal level, there may be programs to help them gain their first work experience. One example is the Canada summer jobs program. However, I have also discussed many other work-related measures to help young people cope with the cost of living and find housing. These are areas of jurisdiction for Quebec that could help them relocate to where jobs are available within their province.

The government has allowed the economic situation to deteriorate. Maybe one way to help young people would be working to resolve this tariff crisis, because it creates uncertainty for businesses, which ultimately may have to let people go. In this climate of uncertainty, young people are often the first to be laid off. We have a Prime Minister who has adopted an “elbows up” attitude and who promised to resolve the situation. Clearly, if there were an agreement in place and less economic uncertainty, there would likely be far more jobs for young people.

• (1850)

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue of youth unemployment and how difficult it is for many young people to get that first job and join the workforce is very important. We find ourselves in a very unfortunate situation with the tariffs, but I would point out that this was initiated by our neighbours. We would love to discuss it, but someone needs to be on the other side of the table. They do not seem to be ready, despite what they say in public.

As for the federal government's role in workforce training, the federal government has a number of programs. In Quebec, we are aware of Quebec's unique circumstances, but I think we can work together to get there, especially since we provide funding to companies in the aerospace industry, for example, which offers training programs. We believe that is an example of how we can work together.

Andréanne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, it is great to help businesses, but in my speech, I mentioned something the federal government could do. I also discussed other solutions in my response to my colleague.

I was talking about assistance for small and medium-sized businesses during these troubled times. That could help them stay in business, which would automatically help young people. Also, instead of interfering in employment and labour, which is not its jurisdiction, the federal government could deal with employment insurance. It was mentioned as part of the solution. We also discussed it in committee during the debate on employment and youth.

We need to reform and modernize EI with criteria that will allow young people to qualify more quickly if they lose their jobs, so they can then return to work. That is something that falls under federal jurisdiction. Let us focus on what we can do.

[English]

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time this evening.

This evening, we are continuing the discussion on the jobs crisis facing our youth. Young people continue to experience Canada as a place where it is hard to find a good job and even harder to build a good life where they can have the financial security enjoyed by their parents and grandparents. Getting a first employer to take a chance on them can be very difficult.

We argue monthly in the House about the latest job numbers, but there is no question that youth unemployment is up and is in fact at its highest point in more than 25 years, excluding the pandemic. We also have a 29-year low in youth workforce participation. Young people are facing a tough labour market at a time when they have

never needed more income to afford a home, a family and a good life.

I attended the Vancouver Island Economic Alliance's summit last week. The 2026 economic update was so well done but so discouraging. It estimates that labour force participation among island youth aged 15 to 25 fell from 65% in 2021 to 62% in 2026. VIEA also reports that the share of islanders aged 15 to 25 fell by about 4% between 2016 and 2024, while the share over 65 grew by about the same amount. Future growth will depend on generating more value per worker through higher productivity.

Those figures cannot tell us what any individual young person is doing. There was an excellent panel on youth employment during the VIEA state of the island economic summit in Nanaimo last week, and at it, the three panellists did their absolute best to make light of the situation. One quipped, “Who said being a stay-at-home 25-year-old isn't a career?” Another pointed out that it is pretty hard not to take every chance possible to engage in the workforce, given the cost of everything. The third panellist came to Canada from a country that he described as unsafe and impoverished and noticed that these days, “Canada sometimes feels like home.”

When I listened to these young people trying to make light of their situation, it really impacted me, because these days, when I ask young people what they want to do for a career, an answer I now get frequently is “whatever makes the most money”. Young workers tell me that they cannot wait for an ideal job or a stable schedule. They need paid work now because they need it to cover rent. They need it to cover transportation costs to get to work, and they need to do all of that before they figure out how to eat.

This morning at committee, one of our local food bank people came to talk to committee about the increase in food bank use in our region. It is so distressing to hear of the increase in the number of young people needing to use food banks. It is a direct result of how difficult it is to find the kind of work that will pay for rent and transportation and still leave enough for food.

The Vancouver Island Real Estate Board reported a benchmark price of \$798,400 for a single-family home in Nanaimo in September 2026, requiring a household income in the \$165,000 to \$200,000 range for it to be affordable. For most young people, that number is so high that it is virtually meaningless. The average rent for a studio apartment in Nanaimo as of October 26 is between \$1,500 and \$1,700. Average rent for a basement apartment in Ladysmith is running over \$1,350 a month. That rent is considered affordable at a salary range between about \$55,000 and \$68,000 a year. That is hardly an entry-level job these days.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

Conservatives are trying to be constructive. To that end, we proposed the Conservative youth jobs plan, which includes a recommendation to build homes where the training and jobs are. Workers need housing near jobs, especially given the high transportation and fuel costs, and we need to make sure that those homes are affordable.

• (1855)

I am pleased to see that the report we are discussing here today enshrines several of the concepts in our Conservative job plan in its formal recommendations, recognizing the need for stable funding for student workplace programs and more funded placements for young people facing financial barriers or living in regions with high youth unemployment. Funded placements can help employers assess a new worker and also let that new worker test whether a career is right for them.

The report also recommends reducing tax and regulatory barriers to job creation and recognizing work across sectors, including in natural resources and manufacturing. VIEA's economic update counts about 40,000 people employed in construction and about 18,000 in value-added manufacturing on the island. These are employment counts, not vacancies. What they show, though, is why training should connect to industries already employing people in our region. We call on the government to reduce both taxes and red tape to allow for productivity growth, which we believe will in turn help with youth unemployment.

We need a climate where there is opportunity for people to start and grow a business, one that includes paid entry-level trades placements for young people, including those having trouble getting their first opportunity. We should measure whether the government's announcements in this area lead to actual apprenticeships or whether they lead to ghost jobs, false opportunities and dead ends.

The government's own data validates these fears. Last spring's economic update reported that more than 100,000 new apprentices registered in 2024, but only about 34,000 completed an apprenticeship. These are different cohorts, but the numbers highlight the need for registration targets to be matched with completion and employment results so that we can know whether these programs are effective. The committee recommends judging training programs by their effectiveness and shifting money away from programs that are not preparing young people for work. This would help Parliament see whether participants finish training and move into jobs, if the report is adopted and turned into real accountability.

An apprentice may have to leave paid work for blocks of classroom training, to care for a relative or for other reasons. We need to recognize the dignity and value of all work and a firm respect for all sectors of the economy. The report recommends reviewing income support and adapting employment insurance to fit the way that many young people work today, including when they have to piece together shifts across employers or rely on seasonal work. That would fit Vancouver Island very well, where tourism and construction follow the seasons. Someone trying to finish an apprenticeship should be able to manage the weeks when the paycheques stop.

The report also asks the government to consider youth employment opportunities when setting immigration levels, with attention

to entry-level openings and affordability. Why we need to legislate that the government needs to do workplace planning is beyond me, but here we are.

Young people are as diverse as Canada. The 15-to-24 age group includes full-time students looking for summer work and young people who have left school and need a full-time job. A program that works for one will not necessarily work for another, which is why we need a variety of programs and a thoughtful approach to this work. In addition, young people should get the chance to help shape these employment programs through meaningful consultations, and the results should be reported both by region and by the circumstances that affect access to that work.

This is an issue that needs continuous monitoring. Parliament should receive regular reports on the share of young participants who complete training and remain employed in their field a year later. Parliament should pay attention to rates of youth unemployment, and we should be speaking about this topic far more in the House. That would show our youth whether the government's trade target is becoming a real route into work. That is what we need at this time. We owe it to youth in Nanaimo—Ladysmith and across Canada to ensure that training can lead to a job that makes it possible to stay in our communities and that makes it possible to build a life that can include a home, a family and all of the opportunities we had.

• (1900)

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague had a lot of very interesting ideas. I am not a member of that committee, so I did not follow its work, but clearly some good ideas have come from that work.

Youth unemployment is indeed a very serious problem, and not just in Canada. We just have to listen to the news on TVs or on our computers these days to see that it is worldwide. Canada has special circumstances in that we live in a very large and very diverse country, and young people are having great difficulty entering the labour force. In that respect, it is upon us to continue talking about that as much and as often as we can and to try to correct the skills mismatch—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I have to give time to the member to respond.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Tamara Kronis: Mr. Speaker, I can see from the length of my hon. colleague's question that this is a topic he is genuinely interested in. I am pleased to see someone from the government taking this topic seriously. I would urge him to take to his colleagues the ideas that he has expressed, because our youth need the kind of support that the Conservatives are offering through the jobs plan that they are proposing. They need it as soon as possible.

I would be happy to work with the member anytime to see our proposals and plans implemented into policies that will help youth in my communities and across Canada.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, to my colleague from Vancouver Island, this may seem out of the blue, but in my riding, some wonderful teachers who used to teach shop are really worried about the decline in access for young people to learn trades. They have an idea that I am working on, and I am asking about it in case other members are interested in working on it.

Twenty-four Sussex Drive will need a major rebuild or renovation. The idea of this team of teachers is to get a team of youth from across Canada to rebuild the Prime Minister's house, learning trades, being paid as they do it, living in Ottawa and making it truly a project of national interest. Does the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith think it might be a good idea?

• (1905)

Tamara Kronis: Mr. Speaker, one of the things I love about our communities on Vancouver Island is that we have an incredible array of creative suggestions. I want to thank the member for that one. Unfortunately, that will not be up to me. That will be up to the committee that is planning the renovation of 24 Sussex. I would be delighted to join with the member in pursuing this proposal and encouraging the government to make use of the skills and creativity of our youth in every way possible.

I would add one more thing. Part of the concern we have about our young people right now is that they spend so much time on screens, and they are not developing gross motor skills, except in their thumbs. I would love to see more youth getting the opportunity to learn shop and trades in school.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the excellent work she does representing her constituents.

One of the first things I did when I became shadow minister for jobs is spend a bit of time travelling around and talking to people in different regions. I spent some time in the member's riding, and she set up some great engagements for me as part of that trip.

I know she has been a champion of recognizing and appreciating trades work. Some of the recommendations we have put forward have been about doing more to align education and training with the needs of the labour market and training Canadian young people for jobs here in Canada. I wonder if the member can share a bit about the work happening in her riding to achieve that.

Tamara Kronis: Mr. Speaker, thank you so much for the time you spent in my community learning not just about trades, but about all the things that our young people are interested in.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

As the member knows, I am in the trades since I am a goldsmith. I look for every opportunity I can to encourage people to learn to do things with their hands because I find that very satisfying. We have an incredible university in my community, Vancouver Island University, and I would encourage anyone who is interested in the trades to look into my community as a place to learn.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): This is just a reminder to the member to address her comments through the Chair since I have not been to the member's riding. I was not invited.

The hon. member has a point of order.

Tamara Kronis: Mr. Speaker, I want to ensure that the Speaker and all of his hon. colleagues as Speakers understand that they are welcome to come to my riding anytime. I would welcome them to see our communities.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): That was not quite a point of order, but the Chair appreciates it.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk.

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak about this motion tonight. I want to highlight the fact that everybody in Canada, if not the world, is welcome in Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, because obviously Quebec City is the most fantastic city in the world. As Prime Minister Harper used to say, each and every Canadian should have two cities in their heart. The first is where they were born and the second is Quebec City. However, as I was born in Quebec City, I have a conflict of interest.

[*Translation*]

I want to talk about this debate today regarding youth employment. Young Canadians are currently facing a serious crisis. It is important to recognize that the teenage years are not exactly the best years in one's life. We try things out, we discover ourselves a little and discover life. We face challenges that are sometimes a bit sad. Sometimes we succeed and sometimes we fail, but that is part of life. One of the great things about being a teenager, especially in our late teens on the cusp of becoming a young adult, is our first job. We all remember our first job. I would say it is the first step toward adulthood. It is a time when we stop being completely dependent on our parents, although, of course, we are always emotionally attached to them. We start making money. We start working. We start making some money.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

I will always remember how, in June 1980, I was working at the Brunet pharmacy at Place L'Ormière which, by the way, is still in business. When it changed hands about 10 years ago, I went to see the new owners to tell them that the pharmacy gave me my first job, and they were happy to hear it. Receiving that first paycheque at the age of 15, 16 or 17 is a big deal. In my day, in 1980, seeing a three-digit figure on a paycheque was really something. Earning \$4 an hour and receiving a three-digit paycheque was fantastic. Those are memories that stay with a person.

I am sure that my colleague, the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, who is also the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and a former Quebec finance minister, remembers that. He knows just how much respect I have for him. He balanced the Quebec government's budget. I would encourage him to follow his own example to balance the federal budget. I am sure that he, too, remembers his first cheque, although it may have had four digits on it. Maybe he started working at a bank when he was 16, who knows. As we know, he has a Ph.D. in economics, which is no small feat.

The reality is that a young person's first job marks the first step toward adulthood, and it is something they remember forever. That is why it needs to be a great opportunity and a great experience. Right now, however, the youth unemployment rate in Canada is very high. We are talking about 14%. That is more than twice as high as Canada's current unemployment rate of 6.5%, which is on the rise. We need to be cautious. That said, among young people 15 to 24, the rate stands at 14%. Over the past month, 48,000 youth jobs were lost. In Quebec, the situation is not necessarily any better, since the youth unemployment rate is twice as high as that of people 30 to 54. In short, from coast to coast to coast, and particularly in Quebec, we are facing a youth unemployment crisis.

Members will recall that everyone had a job right after COVID-19. Businesses, coffee shops and plants everywhere kept saying that they were hiring. Some restaurants were even closed on Monday evenings because they could not hire enough staff. Whenever I ordered my coffee at the drive-through of a well-known national chain, I always thanked the lady or gentleman for being there to serve me. There were plenty of jobs available. Those were different times. The unemployment rate was 5.3%. In 2025, it rose to a little over 8%, and now in 2026, it is around 10%. Specifically, for those aged 15 to 19, the unemployment rate is 12.5%. In Ontario, the unemployment rate is 22.6%. In Alberta, the youth unemployment rate is 24.1%. Almost one in four young people is unemployed. Sadly, it reminds me of 1982-83, when youth unemployment was over 25% and interest rates were hovering around 21% or 22%.

• (1910)

Every generation has its challenges. I will not make anyone cry about my generation today. I think of my father's generation. He was told that they were going to put a helmet on his head and that he had to go and kill the Nazis to save humanity. Let us just say that it was much more demanding for my parents' generation than for mine. At the same time, we hope that our children and grandchildren will have the same opportunities, which, unfortunately, is not always the case.

To close on the issue of unemployment, among those without a high school diploma, the unemployment rate is at 17%.

We need to tackle the issue of youth unemployment head-on. As I said earlier, people take great pride in taking that first step in their adult life, with a paycheque with three digits or sometimes four digits. It should be a good experience, and young people should be able to have that opportunity.

The Conservatives have a four-point plan. First, we must free up the economy. The government keeps bragging about wanting to speed up major projects and cut red tape, but the fact remains that, after 11 years of Liberal governance, Canada is lagging behind in this area. It is crucial that we unblock major projects. We must fully develop our natural resources. We must also enable all of our research chairs to achieve their full potential.

We must put an end to anti-resource laws. We must lower taxes to accelerate production and leave more money in businesses' pockets so that they can grow, rather than forcing them to send money to Ottawa or to the provinces, which leaves them with less money. They know how to create wealth. It is not the government that creates wealth. It is businesses that do that. We need to give them more freedom to operate.

We also need to fix the training system. The programs we have right now are too cookie-cutter, in our opinion. We need programs that are much better tailored to our needs. I am thinking of the Canada student financial assistance program in particular. We believe that we should focus on jobs where there are needs, jobs for which employers are actively seeking workers.

Let us be very honest. In the past, we used to say that education is an investment. That is still true. Earning a university degree, whether at the undergraduate, master's or doctoral level, remains important. We can all agree on that. I should point out that, when I was young, skilled trades were not held in particularly high regard. Today, we need these jobs, and young men and women can have amazing careers and lives with core trades that are essential to our economy. I am talking about plumbing and electrical work. People can do multiple tasks to build homes or build infrastructure. Those workers must not be overlooked. On the contrary, they deserve to be valued, just as all forms of work deserve to be valued.

We also need to build housing where the jobs are. We often hear businesses in regions outside the major urban centres described as being "remote". In reality, it would be just as accurate to say that the urban centres are remote from those regions. It may sound a little pretentious to describe them as being far away, but the distance from Montreal to the Gaspé Peninsula is exactly the same as the distance from the Gaspé Peninsula to Montreal. I checked. It is the same distance in both directions. A region should not be put down that way. I see that my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin agrees with me. He is nodding his head.

To share a little story, when I was the leader of the provincial Action démocratique du Québec, or ADQ, I was in Matane when there was talk about opening a CEGEP in Montreal. I said that a CEGEP was going to open in Matane and that people from Montreal would come to Matane, because people from Matane go to Montreal, and the distance is the same both ways.

We therefore have to overhaul training, build housing where the jobs are, and fix our immigration system. Unfortunately, for the past 10 years, Canada has pursued a one-size-fits-all approach to immigration. We opened the door like that with no respect for the immigrants themselves. Never forget that immigrants are the first victims of the kind of disrespectful immigration we have had for the past 10 years.

Therefore, it is a cocktail of proposals that includes liberating the economy, overhauling training, repairing immigration and building housing to fight youth unemployment.

● (1915)

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. Indeed, there is unemployment in general, but youth unemployment is quite high. Of course, this is also a major concern for us. It is really a matter of that first job. How does a person go about landing their first job?

I remember my first job. It was in 1975 and I worked the night shift. It was not necessarily pleasant, but by the weekend, the paycheck was nice. That is very important. That first job is a stepping stone.

My question for my colleague is very simple. In this context, in his view, what role should the federal government play in getting young people trained faster?

Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, the more things change, the more they stay the same. We are currently on the evening shift. That is where we find ourselves in 2026.

In all seriousness, the MP and Parliamentary Secretary's question is quite relevant. The federal government absolutely must listen to businesses and respond to their needs.

All too often, the government introduces one-size-fits-all programs, assuming that a single approach will work for everyone, but that is not the case. Take immigration and employment issues, for example. The unemployment rate is much higher in Montreal than in Chaudière-Appalaches. In Chaudière-Appalaches—the right side of the St. Lawrence River—the unemployment rate is 2%. When I say “right”, I am exaggerating a little, but there are quite a few Conservative MPs across all constituencies.

It is clear that, if we want to tackle the issue of youth employment, we must do so on a regional, not national, basis.

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke eloquently about the importance of a first job. I have fond memories of my own first work experiences.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for young people to get their first job. When they are late entering the workforce, they acquire less experience and have less financial resources. They also have

fewer opportunities to gain the skills they need to get better-paying jobs.

Can my colleague explain the long-term consequences of entering the workforce late?

● (1920)

Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague first and foremost for his excellent French. I do not know if anyone has seen him play the piano, but it is impressive. On top of that, he penned the biography of Quebec's future premier, the current Leader of the Opposition.

What young people need is to be given the chance and the privilege to experience the happiness of getting their first job.

Unfortunately, I must bring up the sad memory of what happened during COVID. I know that we were flying by the seat of our pants, we all understand that, but it was too bad to see young people being given money to stay home. They received \$2,000 a month.

I am sure that all members heard from business owners and job creators who said that young people wanted to work, but that if they were getting \$2,000 a month to stay home, employers could not compete with that. We pointed out at the time that this was a mistake. It was not easy to stand up against something that a lot of people clearly liked, but we did it, and it was the right thing to do.

Natilien Joseph (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to share a brief story, even though my time is limited. This summer, while visiting organizations participating in the Canada summer jobs program, I met a young man from New Brunswick who was working in Longueuil. I asked him whether he had come to Quebec because job opportunities were scarce in New Brunswick. He replied that this was not the case, that he was simply there to discover Quebec and that he loved gaining experience in other parts of the country.

Mr. Speaker, the question I would like to put to my colleague, for whom I have great respect and whose work I sincerely appreciate—I will not deny that—is the following: Does my colleague believe that mobility can contribute to youth employment?

Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, yes, absolutely, all Canadians are invited to travel the length and breadth of Canada to discover the riches and beauty of the most beautiful country in the world: Canada.

[English]

Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Bowmanville—Oshawa North.

Today's debate is about whether young Canadians have a fair chance to get started in life. Too many young Canadians are sending out resumes and knocking on doors, but every day, they are finding that no one is calling them back and no one is hiring them. How are they supposed to build a future if they cannot get their first chance?

Concurrence in Committee Reports

I have a youth advisory council, and its members said to me that they feel as though they are on a bus that is driven by someone who does not look back to ask where the passengers want to go. All they can do is sit on the bus and look out the window. This is quite telling, but I have a message to these young Canadians: They deserve a seat on the bus, and they deserve to have a say as to where the bus is headed. Members of the House believe that their contributions, their insights as to what policies are best to help them are incredibly valuable.

Let us imagine spending our last year of school looking forward to graduating, only to face months of unanswered job applications. The latest labour force survey shows that Canada lost 68,000 jobs in September alone, following another 42,000 lost in August. That is 110,000 fewer jobs in just two months. Youth unemployment stood at 13%. Employment among young Canadians aged 15 to 24 fell by 48,000 people in September alone. Let us think about the student who needs shifts in order to pay for school, or a graduate who keeps sending out résumés while the student loan payments are coming due. For young people, it often means putting off buying a home or starting a family. Young couples are putting their lives on hold. After months of unanswered applications, it is hard not to lose confidence.

This is being felt close to home as well. York Region reports that the average monthly number of people receiving employment insurance rose by more than 56% between 2023 and 2025. That is 56% more families trying to pay their bills while also looking for work. The region's review also found that although new job postings increased between December 2024 and December 2025, the share offering full-time work fell from 84% to 75%. Finding a posting and finding enough dependable work to pay one's bills are two very different things. Young people should have the chance to save, become independent and build a future in their own community.

I was door knocking in my riding of Newmarket—Aurora and met a young welder who was living in his parents' basement. He said that he makes a good living but still cannot afford to buy a house. He wants to be independent. He wants to start his life, but he does not want to have to live two to three hours away from his parents. He wants to stay close to home and build a family in his own community, but it is nearly impossible for him to do that today. As a mother, I want my children to have that chance of building a future here in Canada. As a member of Parliament, I want every young person in Newmarket—Aurora and across this country to have that chance as well.

A young Canadian cannot get a job at a business that cannot afford to hire one. That is why an employment plan has to address the costs facing the people who create those jobs. A small business owner has to make payroll every month before hiring another person. They need to know that they can afford to pay them. If the government wants young Canadians to be working, it needs to make it easier to open a business, to build a project or to hire another employee.

The committee's first recommendation calls for reducing taxes and red tape. Conservatives have proposed a youth jobs plan that starts with getting the economy moving by repealing antiresource laws, reducing taxes that discourage reinvestment and removing the red tape that is holding back homebuilding and business growth.

We want businesses investing in Canada, taking on more work and hiring our people to do it.

● (1925)

The report also calls on the government to consider jobs and housing when setting immigration levels, and to help qualified newcomers work in the field they have expertise in. We should not be inviting someone here with professional qualifications only to leave them unable to work in their profession. It is also unfair to young people when the government fails to consider how many entry-level jobs and homes are actually available. A young person looking for their first job and a newcomer trying to use their qualifications both deserve a fair chance to contribute and to build a career. The government needs to plan around the jobs and housing available and to work with the provinces to get qualified people working in their field.

We also have to make sure that training leads to work. Young people put years into their education. Many take on debt, and many have their family make sacrifices to help them. Recommendation 10 calls for training funding to go to programs that actually help young people find work. If a program is not delivering, the government should not put money in that program but should direct that money to the program where it will give someone a better chance of getting hired.

Our plan would give students more financial help if they choose to study in a field where employers need workers. That means looking at actual job market data and helping young Canadians train for jobs that need to be filled.

Young Canadians also keep hearing that they need experience to get their first job. How are they supposed to get experience if they do not get a chance in the first place? The report recommends more student work placements and stable funding for the student work placement program, a program I benefited from when I was in university, in fact. That would help students get experience with an employer while they are still in school so they have something on their résumé when they graduate.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

Another recommendation suggests bringing back grants that help apprentices pay for their training. If we need more electricians, carpenters or plumbers, we must ensure that the young people entering those trades can finish the training. However, even with the right training and a job offer, there is another layer of complication, another challenge, which is to find somewhere to live. If a young person is willing to move for work but cannot find a home they can afford, how are they supposed to take the job? The report recommends studying a tax write-off for employers that build housing for their workers.

My children are little, and I do not know where life will take them in terms of their careers, but I want them to know that they can build a good life here in the country we love, Canada. Young Canadians should be able to look forward to their future instead of wondering whether they will ever be able to afford it.

The report gives the government clear recommendations it can act on now to make it easier for businesses to hire, help students get work experience, support apprentices through their training and help workers find housing where the jobs are. Young Canadians should be able to build a future in the country they call home. They are willing to work for it. It is time the government stopped making it harder for them.

• (1930)

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed, youth unemployment is a major issue not just in Canada but around the world as well. However, we are talking about Canada, where it is a major issue. We find ourselves in a situation that is rather unique in that there are a lot of young people looking for jobs and a lot of businesses and companies looking for workers. There is a mismatch between people looking for jobs and businesses offering jobs.

In that context, what would my colleague recommend the government do first in order to make sure that the mismatch disappears and that the people looking for jobs can find one that businesses are looking for workers to fulfill?

Sandra Cobena: Mr. Speaker, that is an incredibly important question, and I am a firm believer that we will come up with the best policies when industry and government work close together to find the right policies.

In speaking to young people, they want to be part of the solution. I would encourage every member of the House to create a youth advisory council and get recommendations from youth themselves. In speaking to businesses as well, I have learned that they often find a mismatch for the skills needed for a particular job, which is why training and entry-level experience is important for students.

When we bring both parties, including the people who are part of the solution, to the table to have a discussion, we will have a better outcome in terms of policies. This report actually has some very simple solutions that would help ease the problem.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have just a brief comment in response to the question from the Liberal opposite, who quite rightly highlighted the need to work on bridging the gaps that exist between employers and young people in skills development.

One of the critical institutions that does that work in bridging the gap is the vocational institutions that work with employers to offer vocational skills that are highly aligned with the needs of the labour market. This is for young people, and the government is attacking them. In fact, the Minister for Jobs and Families has viciously and aggressively attacked these institutions and suggested they are all fraudulent. One thing the government needs to do is stop demonizing those who are doing this important work of trying to bridge the gap between employers and young people.

I want to thank the member for raising the issue of credential recognition. When skilled professionals trained in other parts of the world are forced to compete with young people for entry-level jobs, that is a big loss to our economy in every sense. How can we do better at addressing this gap in credential recognition so that people who are trained can work in their areas of skill and leave space for young people in entry-level jobs?

Sandra Cobena: Mr. Speaker, in the last election, we were very clear that part of the solution is the blue seal program so highly-trained immigrants could practise in their field of expertise. In speaking to a number of professionals, I have heard nothing but good feedback on that.

On the topic of young Canadians, their first job, that entry-level job they are looking for, their first opportunity, is oftentimes created by small businesses and medium-sized businesses. We need to support them as well.

• (1935)

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was with great pleasure that I heard my colleague mention a program she benefited from in university, because that was when I first had the opportunity to meet her, which was when we were students together.

The country we faced then, a number of years ago, which I will not put on the record for both of our sakes, was very different from the one facing youth now. One of the biggest problems I have seen is that young people cannot get a first job, which means employers are looking at 20-somethings with no experience. Can the member speak to the longer-term consequences of that?

Sandra Cobena: Mr. Speaker, I do thank the member for not mentioning the year we met when we were in university.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

That first job is incredibly important. It gives experience, and it is an employer saying, “We believe in you. You can do it. Your contributions are valuable, and we are taking a chance in building your career here in Canada.”

[Translation]

Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier on, during questions and comments, when I was answering the question from the member for Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, I got carried away a little. I said that the leader of the official opposition would be the next premier of Quebec. I want to make a correction: He will be the future prime minister of Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for correcting his comments in the House.

[English]

With that being said, we will resume debate with the hon. member for Bowmanville—Oshawa North.

Jamil Jivani (Bowmanville—Oshawa North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the great people of Bowmanville—Oshawa North to discuss the urgent and important matter of youth unemployment.

There are a lot of statistics that get referred to when we talk about this issue, and those statistics are very important, but I also want to spend some time talking about the people and the lives behind those numbers. To paint a broad picture, as a country, we have lost, in the last two months, 110,000 jobs, and in September, 70% of the jobs lost were lost by young workers. That is 48,000 jobs lost in one month by workers under the age of 25. This number is startling and alarming. It is a reminder that policy makers and legislators here in Ottawa must take this problem seriously and be looking for solutions.

I have the privilege and honour of representing a riding and a community home to two post-secondary schools, Durham College and Ontario Tech University. There are wonderful opportunities for me to not only feel old regularly, because when I speak to students I am reminded of just how much time flies by, but also to be reminded of all the incredible, dynamic, wonderful young people we have in this country.

To give a perspective on the student population of my home community, we have 13,000 full-time students at Durham College, as well as 30,000 part-time and continuing education students. At Ontario Tech University, we have over 14,000 graduate and undergraduate students. I have the opportunity to go to campus and hear how their lives are going, hear how they are experiencing this economy and see from their point of view how the Prime Minister's decisions affect their generation and the prospects they have to build a life, build a career, buy a home one day and move forward with their dreams.

Recently, I was able, with the help of a fantastic professor, Ms. Keri-Ellen Walcer, who is at the faculty of business at Durham College, to bring together a group of student leaders to share their experiences and give me their feedback on how the economy is affecting them, their peers and their families. We got together with heads of the Durham College students' union and the Ontario Tech students' union, as well as the Durham College student business club,

the Durham College blogging club and the Durham College makers and shakers club.

What really became clear to me from these conversations is that, if we want to tackle the youth unemployment problem, we have to be cognizant of how the economy is affecting the young entrepreneur. The young entrepreneur is the person who is going to build the economy of the future. The young entrepreneur is going to create jobs for not only himself or herself, but also for his or her peers and the broader community. If we are going to make a dent in these alarming numbers that indicate that job losses are acutely affecting young workers, we are going to have to have a plan for the young entrepreneur to be empowered and supported.

In the feedback that they shared with me, those students raised a number of issues that I think can paint a clear picture for members of the House to better understand how the future leaders of our economy are stressing and struggling with the current affordability crisis and the impact this has on job creation.

I want to start by talking about their concerns over housing. What they made very clear to me was that, because they are just eking by every month to be able to pay rent, and because of how difficult it is for them to make ends meet, it leaves very little time at the end of every day, at the end of every week and at the end of every month to actually work on their businesses, and they have a very broad range of interests, from fashion design to manufacturing and restaurants. They have all sorts of things that they want to be working on, but because of the affordability crisis, they have very little time to access opportunity to work on those things.

We know that in order to grow a business and in order to build an economy, young people need mentorship and they need networking. Especially if they want to start a business, they need mentorship and networking in the field that they want to work in, innovate in, create in and build in, but if someone is eking by every month, struggling just to get by day to day, then they have very little time to do the big picture thinking and planning to actually build those relationships to build that business and grow our local economy.

This paints a very clear and logical picture, so when the government comes out and says, it has a program, and the government and the Prime Minister are very good at announcements, press releases, press conferences and standing at a podium, often with a manufactured design behind them to indicate that they are doing something constructive, it leads to a lot of questions, like, in the middle of an affordability crisis, how much time young people have to access these supposed announcements and programs.

● (1940)

If young people are struggling to get by, where is the time at the end of the day to fill out government paperwork or talk in a government office about a program that is supposed to help their generation build for the future? This is even clearer if someone visits the Durham College campus. There they will see that, like many other campuses across the country, it has started a food bank on campus because of how bad affordability has become for the average student to get by.

This not only paints a picture of a precarious situation for young entrepreneurs to be operating in, but paints a picture of the difficulty in having the time and focus to build the businesses of the future, in accessing mentorship and networking, in accessing programming and in doing the planning necessary to build. It also paints a picture of severe mental health crises. What people will hear if they talk to students, not just at Durham College and Ontario Tech University but at campuses across this country, is that they are dealing with an extreme amount of stress to complete their studies, plan for the future and build a career when they graduate to pay their bills and get by. This leads to very serious mental health concerns for many of their peers, and it leads to a lot of concern about whether there are appropriate resources and supports for young people on campuses and beyond. This is not just clinical support, but community support and the opportunity to build relationships, friendships and fellowship. These things are often lacking in the lives of young people today as they struggle with the affordability crisis.

All in all, if we are to recognize, as I believe we should, that young entrepreneurs are critical to resolving the youth unemployment problem, then we also must understand the circumstances they are growing up in, the circumstances they are studying in and the circumstances they are working in. My belief is that if we are to take this problem seriously, then every time we see a statistic come out in a StatsCan report or a jobs number get released in the news, we should think about young people like the business leaders I mentioned at Durham College and Ontario Tech and the students all across this country who are bearing the brunt of an economy that simply does not work.

I recall that just a couple of years ago, members of an earlier iteration of the Liberal government used to talk a lot about the idea of generational fairness. I remember that buzzword being used very often. However, when we visit students at campuses and hear from them, we hear that the government has not produced generational fairness. In fact, the government has produced a very imbalanced economy where those who already have a home or business and have already made their way do not feel the same consequences as those who dream and strive to have those very same things and who are trying to get those things in an environment where it is much more difficult.

With my remaining time, I would like to highlight a plan that some of my Conservative colleagues have spoken about in the House today. It is a plan that Conservatives have put forward that we believe will make a difference for young workers and young entrepreneurs. It is a plan that will address many of the issues and concerns that I hear when I visit the students at Durham College and Ontario Tech. It is a plan that will address four particular pillars.

The first pillar is unleashing the economy by cutting taxes and reducing red tape. This is economic growth 101, and it is mind-boggling that we even have to argue these points in the House, but we do.

Number two is to fix the immigration system. There are too many people coming into our country. It is skewing the labour market and making the labour market worse for everybody. We have to address that. The only people who benefit from high levels of im-

migration are the large corporations that would like to see the wages of Canadian workers depressed.

Number three, the Conservative plan mentions the Canada student financial assistance program, to make sure that taxpayer dollars are being marshalled toward supporting students to pursue fields where there are actual jobs and opportunities.

Lastly, that plan is supporting workforce housing, which is very important, because as I mentioned, as young people struggle with affordability and the housing crisis, it makes it harder for them to get ahead and build their careers.

● (1945)

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing we can agree on, it is that the Canadian economy is indeed under severe stress. That stress is coming from the trade war. That stress is coming from the pressure of our trusted neighbour, which now wants to make sure that our manufacturing sector goes back to the United States. Of course, that is not going to happen. If we want to increase the creation of jobs for young people, we have to address the elephant in the room, and that is the attack that Canada is under from our trusted neighbour. This is just a comment, not really a question.

Jamil Jivani: Mr. Speaker, it is time for the Liberal government to reflect on the fact that the Canadian people are not falling for this anymore. The Liberals are being held accountable for what they have done.

Premier Eby just lost an election in British Columbia pulling the same shenanigans that the Prime Minister tries to do, which is to blame all of Canada's problems on another country and take no responsibility for his own bad policies. Young people deserve better, and that is why we have put forward the ideas we have. It is so that the government might do its best job possible to do right by our young people.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not all members may know this, but my colleague wrote an excellent book a number of years ago about the challenges young men are facing. Many things in that book are very relevant and very prescient. I know my friend and colleague has spent much of his life and career in this House and long before that trying to address the challenges that young men face.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

I am sure he has been hearing, as I have been hearing, about the struggle associated with hitting the initial rungs on the ladder. People want a secure career and a home. Those are the first steps toward being able to build out the life they want. Maybe that means getting married or having children. These things are a bit harder to do when they are living in their parents' home or are not sure where their career is going. These initial milestones are not just about economic well-being. They are also about people being able to realize the goals they have in terms of family, community and so many other things.

I wonder if the member could share, from his experience and the work he has been doing for many years, the particular challenges facing young people today and what we can do about them.

● (1950)

Jamil Jivani: Mr. Speaker, for young people who are facing a whole heap of challenges, as I did growing up, like those who come from a broken home, are dealing with all sorts of economic instability or have trauma that they are processing at a very young age, a job is a life raft of normalcy. It is a pathway to being part of society when they may feel very isolated and pushed away by life circumstances. When we see in report after report that entry-level positions, the kinds of jobs that were the first step for me and a lot of people in my generation, are harder now for young workers to get, it is a denial of that life raft. It is a denial of the normalcy that so many young people crave.

It is not just about the economic opportunity, which is tremendously important, and it is not just about building a career, which is tremendously important. It is about the stability and personal growth that a job offers. I think all young people deserve that.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I have been trying to amplify is the fact that there are a number of initiatives the government has taken. It is hard to tell exactly why the Conservatives are in opposition to them. I will give a specific example. With the Red Seal program, youth could benefit from 80,000 to 100,000 potential careers, and that is through a \$5,000 incentive to get them to finish the Red Seal program.

I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts on the Conservative Party's position on that program.

Jamil Jivani: Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank the member opposite for finally asking me a question that is not about the United States. I certainly appreciate it.

When it comes to policies, there are things the government has announced that I think can be very helpful, and there are existing policies of the federal government that can be helpful. The problem is that they are not enough. What we are asking is for the government to take the problem seriously and do more.

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour, as always, to rise on behalf of the people of Elgin—St. Thomas—London South. I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Edmonton Southeast.

I have the great privilege in this role of meeting people all over the communities that I represent, but I love when I get the opportunity

to meet with young people. I love when I get the opportunity to speak to classes. I can tell members that whenever I go into a high school class, they are always so enthusiastic. Sometimes they are so overwhelmed by their excitement that they cannot even bring themselves to listen.

I have a great deal of hope for high school students, even if they do not share that hope right now. Whenever I speak to these students, knowing that in any grade 10 class, not everyone is interested in politics, I always try to find issues that connect with them and issues that speak to the experiences they are going through, the lives they are living. Without a doubt, whenever I have asked these classes how many of them are having trouble finding a job, almost every hand goes up.

In fact, a few weeks ago, I was speaking to one grade 10 civics class, and I asked that very question. Students laughed because they view their inability to find a job right now as a punchline. They do not even believe it is within the realm of reality. That is heartbreaking.

We have heard, in the course of the discussion this evening, members talk about the importance of first jobs and the pride one feels having a first job. I remember that my first grown-up job, so to speak, was at the age of 14 working as a busboy at a hotel restaurant. It was an opportunity I had at 14 to develop skills, to earn a bit of income and to do something with my life, however young.

It was interesting. A year into that, for whatever reason, I felt like I wanted to do something else, and I did something that I do not recommend to anyone, certainly not now. I put in my two weeks' notice without having a plan. Within the next two weeks, I had been offered several jobs, at 15 and with one year of work experience. That was the opportunity available to me, available to people my age and certainly available to people in this chamber who are older in years than I am.

It is heartbreaking to me that this is no longer the case. Not only do young people today not face a situation in which they are getting multiple offers, but they are finding themselves applying for dozens or hundreds of jobs and failing to find even one company that will hire them. It is not because they are not passionate. It is not because they are not dedicated or hard-working. It is because the jobs are simply not available to them.

We have seen in the last year, despite the Liberal government's proclamations that things are great in Canada right now, really dismal unemployment numbers. In fact, I remember when youth unemployment reached a record just shy of 15%. How many people in this chamber were sounding the alarm about that? The region I represent has an even worse situation for youth unemployment right now. The London area, which includes St. Thomas and Elgin, has a youth unemployment rate, as of last month, of 19.9%. That means one in five youth looking for work cannot find it.

These numbers are bad enough, but they tell only a portion of the story. They do not show the people who have given up, the people who are not looking for work and the people who have withdrawn from the labour market. That number, when we take all that into consideration, shows an even more grim portrait. When young people cannot find a first job, it means they have a harder time finding a bit of a better job and then a better job than that. What I hear from employers, who are sometimes facing the opportunity to hire someone, is that they are getting applicants who are 20 or 22 years old who do not have any meaningful experience because they have not been able to find jobs where they would normally cut their teeth, where they would normally develop skills and gain experience.

We have now, as the cumulative effect of this, a delayed entry into the workforce, not for lack of desire but for lack of opportunity. There are a number of reasons for this. One of them is the economic climate that businesses and business owners face right now.

● (1955)

This, contrary to what the Liberals, I am sure, are going to say, is not something we can lay at the feet of the United States. This is the consequence of 11 years of Liberal government policy, taxes, regulations, red tape, bureaucracy and high-cost inflation, all of which makes it more difficult, if not impossible, for businesses, especially small and medium-sized businesses, to invest in talent, to hire people. If someone talks to small business owners, they increasingly find themselves working the equivalent of two, three or four full-time jobs because they cannot afford, especially with their margins, to hire. Whenever a decision is made to hire or not to hire, it is often that young entry-level worker who is going to be the one missing out on that opportunity.

They have been doing it recklessly, to the point where now young people are being displaced from job opportunities because of an abundance of temporary foreign workers who are occupying a lot of service positions, because the government said they could. The Liberal government said they could. This is something that everyone sees in this country. Everyone knows that, except for the Liberals, or at least they choose not to acknowledge it. If we do not get rid of this program, we are going to see more and more of what we have been describing tonight take hold. More and more young people will be unable to enter the job market.

We have put forward, as some of my colleagues have shared tonight, a number of concrete steps, things the Liberal government could do right now that would start righting the ship after this disastrous record of theirs over the last 11 years. However, I want to take the opportunity to give a voice to the people who have been the most directly affected by this, young people who have been reaching out to me and continue to reach out to me because of the lives that they are forced to live, because of what is happening.

Then we also have immigration. Now, the Liberals have tried to do this very dishonest thing whenever we raise this issue by saying that we are blaming immigrants for Canada's economic woes, when the reality could not be further from that. We are blaming the Liberal government, which has for 11 years held the keys to the country and decided exactly how many people are permitted to enter the country and work in the country. That is the Liberal government's

prerogative as government, and for 11 years the Liberals have been doing this.

Logan writes, "I am at rock bottom. I lost my car due to a weather-related accident. Since then I was forced to quit my job as I was in school. I have not been able to find a job since. Almost every day, I am applying and actively seeking a job. Still with no vehicle, I am running out of time and money. The money I saved lasted me up until now, as I am paying for rent on my own and food." Benjamin writes, "I cannot find a good job despite multiple degrees." Tyler writes, "Recently, I've started my last term of schooling to become a licenced plumber. For the last two terms I've been at school, I received a grant at the end of it, which helped me get things to further my career, like tools and textbooks. As of March 2025, the federal government has taken that away from me and all other apprentices." I am glad the Liberals finally acknowledged that when we talked about the importance of this, because this was so disruptive to students. Tyler continued to write, "Raise this matter in the House. We need Canadian-trained, skilled labour to help build this country."

We have Candace. I read a little bit of a letter she sent me in question period last week. Despite the minister responsible for jobs saying that she would welcome the opportunity to correspond with Candace, I asked for consent to table the letter and the Liberals shouted it down. Candace, a 25-year-old mother of a 17-month-old daughter at the time she wrote this, was laid off from her job because of the economic downturn and has applied for 500 positions. She says she has tailored multiple versions of her résumé for different industries. She has written personalized cover letters. She has actually made searching for a job her full-time job and has received only a handful of interviews. She has seen companies that she applied to hire temporary foreign workers instead. This is the reality facing young people.

The Liberal government needs to stop being dismissive of this, understand this, listen to this and work with us to deliver the solutions that are going to right this ship, that are going to give these young people who I represent, who all of us in this House represent, the chance at the future that we all had when we were their age.

● (2000)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will say at the outset, I am somewhat concerned about the manner in which the Conservative right today is trying to blame immigrants for problems.

Back in 2012, unemployment amongst youth was over 14%. In 2025, it was under 14%. I do not recall, back in 2012, the opposition criticizing Stephen Harper, saying that immigrants were to blame.

Concurrence in Committee Reports

I am wondering if the member was in opposition back then. There were immigrants doing jobs and there were ample examples of youth trying to find jobs. Would the member have been so enthusiastic in trying to paint a negative image of immigrants? Let us think of the harm that is being caused, in terms of racial tension in our communities. It seems to me that we need to be fair in our explanation to the young people of Canada and also be fair to immigrants in terms of explaining the situation.

Andrew Lawton: Mr. Speaker, the disingenuousness of that member is actually disgusting. I was very clear in my comments that this is not the fault of immigrants. I do not blame anyone for wanting to enjoy and embrace the bounty of this country. It is the Liberal government that sets the numbers. This is a mathematical problem.

I get that the Liberals, with their record, are not particularly good at math, but that member should be ashamed of himself for trying to make this about race when it is about opportunity. In fact, immigrants to this country who have done everything right are just as put out by this Liberal government's record. They too are displaced. They too are facing the same issues in the job market that every single person is.

This is not at all about immigrants. This is about the government that has allowed the TFW program to balloon into something where, by the way, even it acknowledges there was a problem. I have no idea where this is coming from.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on this discussion about immigration, because there is a total lack of nuance and seriousness in the discussion on this issue from the Liberals across the way. They are just trying to dodge having an important, substantive and genuinely nuanced conversation about how to get immigration right.

As my colleague spoke about, yes, it is about the numbers, and it is also about categories and skill recognition. When somebody comes here who has specific skills that they could put to use in the economy, and, instead, this government fails to recognize their skills and forces them to compete for entry-level jobs, that is bad for the newcomer, that is bad for the young people they are competing against, and that is also bad for those who could benefit from their skills, if done at a higher level. It is about getting the categories right, it is about recognizing skills and it is about shaping the policy in a nuanced way, rather than this attempt at Liberal demagoguery to avoid being accountable for their own failures.

● (2005)

Andrew Lawton: Mr. Speaker, I agree wholeheartedly with my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. I am so grateful he has been such a stalwart voice on this file, travelling the country and doing the work the Liberal government should be doing to engage these people in the process.

If the Liberals truly believe that they have done right by the country's young people, they need to look at how many of those people have joined the Conservatives because they were sold a bill of goods by the Liberal government. They were sold hope and promised the moon, and now they are seeing that reality is catching up, and they are far worse off than they were led to believe they would be.

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, just to pick up on an earlier part of the discussion as well, the member and other members have spoken about their first job. The first job that young people get is critically important for developing skills, experiencing what they can contribute to the world and also starting them on that ladder to building a family, to being able to own a home, etc.

These milestones are getting pushed further and further away because of these job problems. I wonder if the member has a comment on that.

Andrew Lawton: Mr. Speaker, I do not spend time just speaking to workers, I also speak to employers. One of the issues they have identified is that they cannot find young people with experience because young people have not been given the opportunities to develop those skills. We are seeing long-term consequences here that are going to continue to hurt employers and potential employees alike.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal (Edmonton Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this evening I rise to discuss the issue of youth unemployment, an issue that I know affects many Edmontonians and far more Canadians. I would first like to thank all members of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities for their hard work over seven meetings to draft this 10th report.

Canada has historically been a country where people build, discover and invest. However, for the last decade, Canada has experienced the opposite. More often, corporations are taking capital investment south of our border and students from our top universities are leaving to work on projects outside the country. Canada needs to do better. As parliamentarians, we must take an active role in shaping the environment for youth to succeed economically. That does not mean planning an economy for them. Rather, it means developing smart, pointed policy aimed at fixing a broken system of brain drain and a major lack of economic opportunities. As they say, the first step to fixing a problem is acknowledging that there is one. The 16 recommendations set forward by this report are an important start and, therefore, should be concurred in by the government.

In Edmonton Southeast, I am hearing more often from parents about their children having difficulty being able to find work, and the data supports these parental concerns. In August of this year, Canada lost 42,000 jobs, including 19,000 jobs for young Canadians aged 15 to 24. Similarly, in September 2026, Canada lost another 68,000 jobs, with youth accounting for 48,000 of those lost positions. In just two months, youth employment declined by 67,000 jobs. That is around 61% of the total decline in employment. These numbers are concerning and call for action.

Conservatives and my hon. colleague from Sherwood Park, Alberta, have offered real solutions. Our four-point plan includes unleashing the economy, fixing training, fixing the system where high-skilled newcomers compete for entry-level jobs and building homes where the work is necessary to create employment opportunities for youth. Conservatives have repeatedly called on the Liberal government to reduce red tape and taxes so that Canada can return to a simple but effective regulatory environment that supports the creation and growth of youth employment.

Multiple witnesses cited in this report conclude that heavy taxation limits the capacity to invest in new technology and expansion. In fact, one witness was even cited as saying that Canada is no longer an attractive place to start a career or business due to our sluggish economic environment. We cannot accept this assertion as fact. We must deliver better for our youth.

Employers must be encouraged to hire, build and keep workers in Canada. Youth are most affected by changing market forces, so entrepreneurs must see Canada as a reliable and predictable market to grow their business. Now, more than ever before, companies can move between countries. It is time for the Liberal government to address these issues by creating a landscape that attracts and retains those companies rather than letting them go somewhere more business-friendly. Furthermore, this report explicitly calls upon the government to acknowledge the importance that resource development and manufacturing play in our economy.

● (2010)

The Liberal government has actively worked to block major resource projects in this country. Announcements are nothing but announcements, and more paperwork does not get Canada back on track. We need faster approvals, shorter timelines and a greater acknowledgement of the people who build our country. Tradespeople are the backbone of Canada. We cannot build our roads and our homes without them.

We need a Canada where skilled trades work is celebrated and honoured. In our economy, these jobs can be some of the highest-paying and most rewarding for youth. There needs to be a shift so the trades are neither looked down upon nor compared to a university education. Each is a unique track that offers positive outcomes. The pipefitter or electrician needs a clear pathway from training to apprenticeship and certification, and they must feel that their work is worthwhile as a career.

The final point I want to mention is the certification of immigrants in Canada. Like many members of the House, I was not born in Canada. However, I always saw Canada as a country of hope, opportunity and prosperity. When I arrived as a young man, I was lucky to be a trained lawyer, and the pathways to credential transfer were clear. This is not the case for most jobs, which is an unfortunate reality that has held Canada back for decades.

The HUMA report finds that this holdup is forcing new Canadians to compete with youth for entry-level jobs. The 2021 census data showed that 25.8% of immigrants with foreign degrees were working in jobs requiring, at most, a high school diploma. This stat reflects Canada's broader productivity problem. Our economy loses out on increased tax revenues from high-wage jobs, and entry-level jobs become unnecessarily competitive for young Canadians. This

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scenario is all too common and, frankly, benefits no one. Conservatives have been asking for greater pathways for skilled immigrants to gain accreditation and equivalency training. A new framework would benefit the economy as a whole.

It is not a secret that our youth are struggling. Youth without jobs means more lineups at food banks. In March 2026, Food Banks Canada reported that 33% of visitors were under the age of 18. This is more than a 6% increase from the same time a year before. Young Canadians should not have to leave Canada to find opportunity because our economy fails to deliver.

The recommendations set out by this 10th report provides a starting point for addressing these challenges, from reducing barriers to employment to strengthening apprenticeship pathways and improving credential recognition. Concurrence in this report is an opportunity for Parliament to acknowledge the seriousness of youth unemployment and demand meaningful action. The government must now turn these recommendations into results. Young Canadians are waiting.

● (2015)

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have good news for the member opposite: Youth do not have to wait, because Canada's summer jobs portal just opened 75,000 jobs every summer, with 340 jobs in my riding of Whitby. I am sure the member opposite can acknowledge that this helps create opportunities for our young people.

We also have 80,000 to 100,000 new skilled trades positions, with training incentives, wage incentives and completion incentives with about \$31,000 per Red Seal apprentice. It is significant support for youth that provides opportunities.

We have also cut red tape. We set up a Major Projects Office, and we have Bill C-39 before the House, all of which would remove red tape and get approvals and permitting to speed up, stimulating the economy to make sure we have opportunities for youth. What does the member have to say about that?

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Jagsharan Singh Mahal: Mr. Speaker, the issue is not the temporary numbers. The member talks about summer jobs. Summer jobs are temporary, but the jobs that youth are facing issues with are not just the summer jobs.

It is more than that, and as the committee has recommended, we need to cut red tape. The member just confirmed that they have announced a program that would cut the red tape. It is nothing but announcements yet, so we have to see. We are willing to work, along with the party opposite, to make sure of that. Any positive changes to the current program that can help young people get jobs are welcome.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker. I have to come back to the issue of completion grants for the trades. Completion grants were started by Prime Minister Harper. It was a very successful policy and strongly supported. The Minister of Jobs and Families came to committee and said that completion grants were not working. It is on the record. The Minister of Jobs and Families said they were not working.

The government cancelled completion grants, then it relaunched them under a new name. It is like the Liberals said, “We came up with this great idea. They are called completion grants, which had been cancelled for a few months.” The minister assured us at committee that we should not worry, as they were going to connect the funding to ensure that nobody lost out in the intervening period.

These are the facts. The government has no new ideas. It is repeatedly celebrating things that have existed in this country for decades, and its approach is failing. It is more announcements, and the government is cancelling and then renaming old Conservative programs.

There is work to do. When will the government get with the program and actually do the work that needs to be done?

● (2020)

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly agree with the member's analysis of the situation right now. The government tries to use our ideas, but then all of a sudden it cuts half of them or applies them half-heartedly. If the government has to apply our programs, let us be honest about it and apply them, so Canadians can have good paying jobs and earn good cheques, and so youth can also be a productive part of society and have well-paying jobs.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member across the way from Saskatchewan was talking about—

Garnett Genuis: Alberta.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, it is Alberta. That Saskatchewan name in his riding kind of throws everyone off.

I can say that the member was reflecting on the past. There is one thing I know for sure, because I was in the third-party position when Stephen Harper was here. I know the member opposite actually used to work very closely with Stephen Harper.

The member will recall that they actually cut back on summer programs or summer work for young people, and it was somewhat

sad. By the way, that was the same time when unemployment for youth was over 14%. I contrast that to today, or 2025, when it is under 14%. Does the member not agree that it was wrong for the government back—

The Deputy Speaker: I have to cut off the parliamentary secretary to give a chance to the member for Edmonton Southeast to respond.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: Mr. Speaker, it is really mind-boggling that, after 11 years of government, the member still has to go back to the Harper era or the Harper government. That is because they do not have any concrete figures to rely upon for what they have done in their 11 years.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this has been an excellent debate tonight. The Liberals tried to shut down debate the first time we were discussing youth unemployment, but we have been able to resume it tonight to highlight the Conservative youth jobs plan announced a year ago, a simple plan with concrete, constructive proposals to unleash the economy, fix immigration, fix training and build homes where the jobs are.

We pushed the human resources committee to do a detailed study on youth unemployment. It came up with many very good recommendations reflecting an all-party consensus very much in line with the Conservative youth jobs plan. That was work we started, that the committee continued and that received unanimous support of the committee.

There are great recommendations that the government should follow through on, constructive ideas that it could put in the budget, such as reducing taxes and red tape; recognizing the positive role of natural resource development, manufacturing and other sectors; supporting the alignment of our immigration policies with the needs of the Canadian economy; and punishing companies that hire illegal workers. We heard a bit about that in question period today. There were three questions in English and two more in French asking why the government offered subsidies to companies that hired illegal workers. The government could not provide an answer.

Other recommendations include working to strengthen credential recognition. This is part of fixing immigration. Talented, skilled newcomers who come to this country should be able to put their skills and their training to work rather than competing with young people for entry-level jobs. It would be a double win for our economy to be able to actually deploy newcomers at the skill level they have. This was a central priority for us in the last election, a positive priority about aligning immigration with the needs of our economy.

There is much more in the 10th report. The government should adopt these constructive Conservative ideas in the next budget.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 8:24 p.m., it is my duty to interupt the proceedings.

Pursuant to order made earlier this day, the previous question is deemed carried on division, and the motion to concur in the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities is deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested. Pursuant to Standing Order 66, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 28, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

(Motion agreed to)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (2025)

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise at this hour in Adjournment Proceedings to pursue a question I asked in question period on May 5.

We were nearly at the anniversary of June 3, 2019, the date of the long-fought-for report. It was such a traumatic experience just to get an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. That inquiry wrapped up, and as I asked my question on May 5, I noted that it was almost seven years ago that the report of the inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and two-spirit plus people had been given to the government.

Back then, we hoped. The government of the day said it would do its very best and certainly was committed to achieving all of the calls for justice within the report. There were 231 calls for justice. In other reports, one might just call them recommendations, but I think it was powerful that they were called calls for justice. The horror of the number of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in this country remains with us, because many of those women and girls are still missing, and many more have gone missing since we got the report back on June 3, 2019.

The response I got from the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations was compassionate, caring and thoughtful, as is she. She did not provide a number of how many of the calls for justice had been achieved. She did, of course, express the concern that justice, as she said, was “not with respect to just one project, but a life we need to continue to live”, and that violence against indigenous people must end. However, it remains the fact that here we are in late October 2026, and we still are dealing with the reality that women are missing and murdered.

I have a lot of friends from all kinds of backgrounds, close friends, but it is only among my indigenous women friends that it is

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rare to find a friend who is indigenous in this country who has not been beaten up and abused. One of my close friends, I thought I knew about her life until she said, “I never told you about the time I was left for dead in a dumpster.” She said it as if it was a sort of normalized experience for indigenous women and girls, and it is, in fact, far too common.

I tried to find a number for tonight's debate, from Statistics Canada and other sources, as to how many indigenous women and girls have gone missing since we got the recommendations, which have not been fulfilled. It was hard to find a number because Statistics Canada and sources do not necessarily agree, but it is a large number of women and girls from the indigenous communities of this country who have gone missing since the report came out.

I will quote, because it was at least authoritative, the Native Women's Association of Canada, which states, “Despite half a decade passing since the release of the National Action Plan, the implementation of the 231 Calls for Justice has been insufficient.” It states that “many federal commitments remain delayed, fragmented, or difficult to measure in ways that reflect the realities Indigenous communities [face] every day.”

What we are looking at is an ongoing crisis. We have recommendations that were really important and sweeping, such as bringing in a guaranteed livable income, such as ensuring that there is safe and efficient transportation in rural and remote Canada, a recommendation that would serve all parts of society in rural and remote Canada, where people cannot get from A to B unless they own a car, other than hitchhiking and putting themselves at risk.

It is now, with a few seconds left, time to ask again. What is the level of commitment of this government? Will we hear a commitment to achieve these recommendations?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people continues to affect survivors, families and communities across this country. Of the 231 calls for justice in the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 215 of them call on the federal government in some capacity or other. On June 3, we released the 2025-2026 federal pathway annual progress report, marking the fifth anniversary of “Federal Pathway To Address Missing And Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls And 2SLGBTQIA+ People”, which is the Government of Canada's contribution to the national action plan.

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As it stands now, the Government of Canada has made efforts to advance roughly three-quarters of the federal work outlined in the national inquiry's final report. This year, our government reported progress on 163 of the calls for justice. As I have mentioned, advancing the calls for justice is not a one-time effort or a checklist for one party to fulfill. Many calls for justice require sustained action and an ongoing commitment to collaborate with other governments, organizations and civil society, while continuing to follow the lead of survivors and their families.

On Red Dress Day this year, the Prime Minister was presented with a sacred bundle by the National Family and Survivors Circle. That sacred bundle carries teachings, responsibilities and spirit, reflecting the lived experiences of victims, survivors and their communities from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Receiving that sacred bundle reaffirmed the Government of Canada's commitment to end the national crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

Also, on Red Dress Day we announced an investment of \$2.6 million over three years for the National Family and Survivors Circle Inc. to continue its vital work in centring survivors and families in the implementation of the calls for justice. We also announced an additional \$300,000 investment to help support the next steps on a red dress alert pilot in Manitoba. We continue to invest in indigenous-led approaches that advance the calls for justice through Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada's supporting indigenous women's and 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations program. Twenty-two projects have recently been approved to support indigenous-led solutions and advance indigenous-led priorities.

We also continue to support healing, wellness and community-led responses through the support of the contribution program for the well-being of families and survivors of missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people. At the same time, Indigenous Services Canada has been expanding access to safe, culturally appropriate spaces through the indigenous shelter and transitional housing initiative, which is part of the \$724.1-million comprehensive violence prevention strategy. This investment will have supported the creation of 38 new shelters and 42 transitional homes across Canada, including in northern and urban communities.

There is no doubt that there is lots more work to do on this important call to action and the calls for justice. We look forward to collaborating and to continuing to treat this national crisis with the urgency it deserves.

• (2030)

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I do not think the parliamentary secretary nor any minister would claim that this has been accomplished. I think we can agree that the work is, of necessity, going to be partial, but I am not convinced there is a sufficient level of urgency from the government for the fact that people, especially women and girls, continue to go missing all the time.

There is police training and the kinds of supports required under the calls for justice, including trauma-informed therapists going right away to help a woman who has been assaulted or attacked get through that process. Those kinds of steps were very specific in the

report, and they really must be treated with urgency, because every single attack of a woman hitchhiking on a rural road is something that was avoidable, predictable and preventable.

Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member opposite that the issue requires urgency and sustained effort. The crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA people demands urgent and sustained action, and we remain firmly committed to ending it. Of the 231 calls for justice, 215 are directly related to the federal government in some capacity, and we are acting on that responsibility. As I have said, almost three-quarters have been started and are in progress.

We are making targeted investments that translate into real support, safe places to go, and culturally informed care and services identified by communities themselves. This includes support for indigenous-led organizations, further investments in a red dress alert pilot and expanding shelters and transitional housing across the country. Everything we are doing is built on working together, being accountable and following the leadership of indigenous partners.

• (2035)

FINANCE

Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise again to ask my fellow Manitoban, the Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs, and Manitoba's only voice at the cabinet table, about the complete lack of major projects and development happening in Manitoba under the Liberal government.

The minister's response to my initial question about major projects coming to Manitoba, or the lack thereof, can be described as light at best. Where are the Manitoba Liberals? They are completely missing in action.

Conservatives in Manitoba understand the potential of our great province. We have been pushing opportunities at the Port of Churchill for years, including in multiple campaign platforms. We know that more opportunities exist in expanding our mining industry, and the same is true for the potential in value-added agriculture and processing. As the heart of Canada, Manitoba is geographically positioned to play an even greater role in our national defence industry as well.

Manitoba has all of this potential, yet where is the Liberal government's ambition for its development? On what significant new projects is it working on to bring growth and investment to Manitobans? So far, Manitoba has been a flyover province for the Liberal major projects announcement machine.

Will the minister get up and put on the record what her vision is for expanding major projects happening in friendly Manitoba?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know I have colleagues on this side from Manitoba who are really fantastic. They work hard and represent some of the ridings in Manitoba quite well.

I will also say that this summer, in the pre-budget consultations, I had the opportunity to meet with Manitoba's finance minister and talk about many of the major projects in Manitoba. Our government is supportive and is serious about working with Manitoba to advance its interests, help grow its economy and take advantage of the significant opportunities that it sees for itself and for Canada as a whole.

Countries around the world are grappling with an affordability crisis, and Canada is no exception. Political unrest and ongoing conflicts on two continents are taking their toll. Here at home, our closest neighbour and largest trading partner has placed tariffs on many Canadian goods entering the U.S. market, placing jobs and prosperity at risk. The cumulative effect of this disruption is higher prices for many essential goods. This is having an impact on Canadians and the businesses that support them.

While the situation originated beyond our borders, our government is standing up for Canadians. We are taking strong, decisive action to address affordability concerns by introducing measures that lower costs and keep more hard-earned dollars in the pockets of Canadians.

One of the most recent of these involves the federal fuel excise tax on gasoline, aviation fuel, diesel fuel and others. In April of this year, we introduced a temporary suspension, lowering the tax per litre for gasoline by 10¢, while the tax on leaded gasoline fell by 11¢ per litre, and the tax on diesel and aviation fuel fell by four cents per litre. This temporary suspension was going to expire on September 7, Labour Day. Before it could end, however, we announced our intention to extend the temporary pause until January 31, 2027, and after that date, regular rates would be reduced by 50% until March 31, fiscal year end.

We have also taken action on grocery prices with the Canada groceries and essentials benefit announced at the beginning of the year. This benefit replaces the GST credit and provides tax-free quarterly payments to individuals and families with low and modest incomes to help manage the rising cost of living. In July 2026, there was a 25% increase to the benefit amount, which will remain for five years. Canadians can expect the amount of this benefit to be recalculated every July based on their adjusted family net income from the previous year.

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We have also waived taxes on first-time home purchases at the federal level. That is significant. It is about \$50,000 on a \$1-million home.

These measures are on top of an income tax cut we announced last year where we lowered the tax rate for the first marginal personal income tax bracket from 15% to 14%, saving over 22 million Canadians money on their taxes. That is \$840 for the average dual income family or \$420 per individual.

We have cut taxes on income, housing and fuel, and offered a groceries and essentials benefit to help ease the pressures that families are under based on the cost of living. I would say that is progress.

In response to the member opposite's question about Manitoba, we are serious about building all across Canada and working with Manitoba every step of the way.

● (2040)

Grant Jackson: Mr. Speaker, what an embarrassingly out-of-touch response that was from the parliamentary secretary. I asked about specific, tangible, physical projects that the Liberal government is pursuing for my home province, and all the member had to offer was that he visited it one time and had a 30-minute chat with the finance minister at the provincial level. How typical of the out-of-touch Liberals to forget about the province of Manitoba.

Here are a couple of facts for the member. According to its own website, there are 20 major projects with the Major Projects Office. How many of those 20 major projects are in Manitoba? Not one. The port of Churchill plus is Manitoba's only specifically identified initiative, and the government classifies it as a "transformative strategy", not a major project, with absolutely zero details listed. Meanwhile, other provinces have eight, three or two projects listed.

When will the Liberal government and the six Liberal MPs prioritize major projects in Manitoba?

Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is without exception a priority for this government, and I am sure it is a priority to the Premier of Manitoba. There are projects and opportunities that we recognize. The Major Projects Office has been set up to advance projects in the national interest that meet the criteria.

Transformative strategies are nothing to be ashamed of. Those are excellent projects as well, and there are quite a number of them. In fact, the projects across Canada that we are advancing, in partnership with first nations and the premiers of each province, are good news for this country's prosperity in the future. We look forward to expediting those projects as soon as the member and his colleagues bring forward more projects that we can advance.

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HEALTH

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Michael Green, the former CEO of Canada Health Infoway, was fired after overseeing the \$300-million PrescribeIT scandal. Despite his massive failure, he was awarded over \$1 million in severance benefits, including another performance bonus after he was fired. Apparently, that was not enough for this failed PrescribeIT CEO. Court documents reveal that Mr. Green is now suing Canada Health Infoway for even more money, claiming that his massive payday was not enough.

How many taxpayer dollars are the Liberals allowing Canada Health Infoway to spend on this legal battle with its former CEO?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just over a month ago, the member opposite posed a nearly identical question during Adjournment Proceedings. I will respond by giving him a nearly identical answer.

As the Minister of Health announced in June, our government believes that Canadians deserve transparency and openness when it comes to how taxpayer dollars are spent. That is to be expected. There were obviously concerns with whether Canadians had received value for money when it comes to Canada Health Infoway, which is why the Minister of Health announced a multiphase review that included both an independent audit and a third party review of the organization's governance and structure.

The member opposite was a member of the health committee when Liberal, Bloc and Conservative MPs unanimously called for the Auditor General to look at the organization in question. What

was the Auditor General's response? She said that the reviews announced by the minister are enough for her and that any other work by her would be duplicative and of limited value. Let us allow that work to take place and make sure that the review and the audit show what is working and what is not so that we can be sure that we have modernized health data infrastructure that works best for Canadians.

Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, I am really glad the member mentioned the June story, because in June, the Liberals told The Globe and Mail that they were launching an independent third party audit of Canada Health Infoway after Conservatives exposed the \$300-million PrescribeIT scandal. That was over 130 days ago.

Has the government actually hired a third party auditor, and if so, who did it hire?

● (2045)

Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, again, let us review the facts. The member opposite was on HESA when that committee asked for the Auditor General to do an audit. The Auditor General said the work being done by the government to ensure that taxpayers are getting value for their money is enough for her. I trust that the Auditor General knows what she is talking about. It is too bad the member opposite does not have the same level of trust in her.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until Wednesday, October 28, at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:45 p.m.)

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