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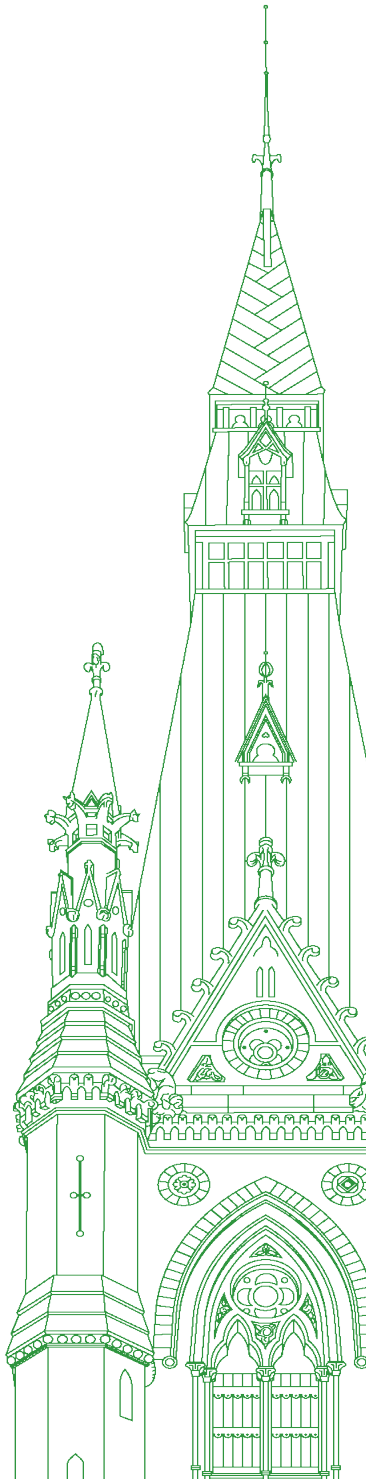
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Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 2, 2026

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1100)

[*Translation*]

INCOME TAX ACT

The House resumed from June 15 consideration of the motion that Bill C-269, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (heat recovery tax credit), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Jobs and Families, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-269, which seeks to amend the Income Tax Act.

The member for Calgary Centre's bill seeks to create an investment tax credit for certain heat recovery equipment. The bill's objective is laudable, as heat recovery technologies can help businesses recover the thermal energy generated by their operations and use it productively, rather than letting it go to waste. Some technologies make it possible to use waste heat to generate electricity, improving energy efficiency while also helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

This raises two questions. The first is this: Should we encourage the development and use of such technology? The answer is yes, and that is already happening. The current tax system already provides support for investments in this type of technology. The real question, then, is this: Is the tax credit proposed by the member the right tool for the job? In this case, the answer is no.

When we look at the bill as a whole, it is clear that it has some fairly major problems.

First of all, the bill is much broader than it seems at first. It is presented as a way to support technologies that produce electricity using waste heat, yet the text of the bill goes much further. The definition of qualifying equipment is quite broad, such that the tax credit would apply to several different types of equipment used in industrial heat recovery and energy generation. This is an important distinction. When we create a tax incentive, it is important to know exactly what we are trying to encourage, because that will dictate what activities will qualify for the tax credit and how much it will cost taxpayers.

In the case of Bill C-269, the stated objective and the means proposed to achieve it are not perfectly aligned. This would have significant fiscal implications. According to the Department of Finance's analysis, a narrowly focused tax credit for waste heat-to-power technology could cost roughly $70 million per year. However, Bill C-269 goes much further. It could apply to a broad range of equipment used in industrial heat recovery and energy generation processes. As a result, its cost would be considerably higher.

That is one concern, but it is not the only one. The tax credit proposed in Bill C-269 would be permanent, unlike the clean economy investment tax credits that are currently available. Those credits are time-limited to encourage investment in the short and medium terms. A permanent tax credit does not create the same incentive for businesses to invest quickly. In addition, certain integrity rules that apply to many of the existing tax credits were not included in Bill C-269. For example, the bill does not provide for eligible capital costs to be reduced by other government assistance received.

In short, Bill C-269 does not achieve its apparent objective, which is to specifically support waste heat-to-power equipment. The eligibility is defined too broadly and could include a wide range of equipment, at a high cost to taxpayers. We also need to take into account the tax measures that already exist. There are already tax incentives for waste heat-to-power equipment.

For example, the productivity superdeduction announced in budget 2025 reinstated immediate expensing of clean energy generation and energy conservation equipment. In practical terms, this measure allows businesses to immediately write off the cost of certain eligible investments rather than having to deduct it over several years.

● (1105)

We have gone even further. In September, the government announced the new productivity mega deduction. Building on the superdeduction, this measure will allow businesses to immediately write off the cost of a much broader range of investments.

These measures are already helping to drive investment in new equipment and accelerate the adoption of cleaner, more efficient technologies.

Bill C-269 proposes a new incentive in an area that already benefits from substantial tax support. As currently drafted, the bill could provide an additional tax benefit for investments that already receive preferential treatment. Before introducing a new permanent 30% tax credit, we should consider whether it genuinely addresses a need that is not already covered or whether it would simply duplicate existing measures.

Significant changes to the tax system should normally be considered as part of the budgetary process. Tax credits cannot be assessed in isolation. We must examine their cost, evaluate whether they are likely to achieve their intended objectives and, above all, consider how they interact with existing tax measures.

Bill C-269 is a good example. As I just explained, some of the investments that the bill seeks to encourage already qualify for tax incentives. The budgetary process provides a way to assess the impact of this kind of situation. It allows us to more effectively examine different measures, compare their costs, analyze their benefits and, ultimately, determine whether a proposal is both necessary and advisable. An exhaustive examination also makes it possible to study how a proposed measure will affect public finances.

Simply put, we cannot support the bill as drafted. Waste heat to power is a good environmental policy, but Bill C-269 is not the right way to encourage it. The government agrees with the bill's underlying objective. We want to encourage Canadian companies to invest in cleaner, more efficient and more productive technologies. To do that, however, we have to choose the right tools.

The tax credit proposed in Bill C-269 is overly broad. It has significant design shortfalls, and it would be permanent. It would duplicate tax measures that already support such investments. The bill's intentions are good, but a sound fiscal policy requires more than good intentions. A fiscal policy has to be carefully crafted. The measures it introduces have to be well targeted. They have to fit cohesively with existing measures and be implemented in a way that uses public funds responsibly. For these reasons, we cannot support the bill.

● (1110)

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-269. My colleague from Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan previously indicated where the Bloc Québécois stands on this bill. As she already said, although it is clear that the bill does need some improvement and some clarification, the idea behind it is fundamentally good, especially in a context where the goal is to reduce our carbon footprint as much as possible and produce increasingly cleaner energy.

The bill's sponsor, the member for Calgary Centre, actually talked about that in his speech. Given that this is what we are striving for, studying Bill C-269 would be worthwhile, so it should be referred to committee. Although the bill is not perfect, we do believe that it can at least be improved. We think it makes sense to work on it, and we hope to hear from experts and witnesses who will be able to shed further light on its substance.

The Bloc Québécois agrees in principle with the bill. We will vote in favour of it at second reading. Unfortunately, we have already heard the Liberals say that, although they agree with the rationale behind the technology and its use, they believe the bill is far too broad. They are concerned it may overlap with other tax credits. They believe it is not sufficiently cohesive. It is a bit of a shame that this is the reason they are refusing to refer the bill to committee, where any imperfections and kinks it may contain could be worked out.

The bill is sponsored by the Conservative member for Calgary Centre, who mentioned that it was drafted with the help of Kanin Energy and Janice Tran, who certainly has a stake in seeing the bill passed, since the company provides consulting services and develops projects in the field of heat recovery and energy efficiency. While there is certainly an economic interest, it also appears that experts supported the drafting of the bill.

We support this initiative in part because Quebec already has measures in place to promote heat recovery and reuse. For example, Hydro-Québec offers financial assistance programs to help businesses adopt heat recovery technologies in their buildings. According to reports, in some cases, up to 85% of the heat that is usually lost can be recovered through the use of appropriate technologies.

There are several forms of heat recovery, including water-loop systems and recovery of heat from chillers. We know that chillers are widely used in the growing number of data centres that are being built. Heat can be recovered using plate heat exchangers, cassette heat exchangers or heat wheels. There are numerous technologies available.

A number of heat recovery projects have already been developed in Quebec. Take, for example, Les Fraises de l'île d'Orléans, a farm that captures and uses waste heat from the QScale data centre in Lévis. I mentioned data centres earlier. In the Eastern Townships, the Humano District project has a data processing centre directly on site so that it can use the waste heat to heat its buildings, preventing the emission of nearly 400 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent per year. In this case, two companies with similar needs and outputs teamed up. There is also the Zibi development, which is located not far from here, right next to the Kruger plant. We know that, in the winter, Kruger meets the heating needs of the people living in the Zibi development. The waste heat is used for residential heating. There are a lot of agricultural projects across Quebec, particularly greenhouses. Serres Toundra in Saint-Félicien, the Demers greenhouses in Drummondville and Serres Sagami in Saguenay all use waste heat to heat their facilities.

There are a lot of projects out there, but that brings me to my first question: Would this type of project, where the heat is used for purposes other than the generation of energy, be covered by Bill C-269?

● (1115)

Clause 10 of Bill C-269 defines "qualifying heat recovery equipment" as:

> ...equipment acquired by a taxable Canadian corporation after December 31, 2025 — other than equipment whose primary function is the generation of energy — used all or substantially all to recover heat produced by industrial processes and to convert it in order to generate energy...

The "convert it in order to generate energy" part is important because, as I understand it, a project that directly uses the heat produced would not be eligible. This raises another question. December 31, 2025, is the date from which projects would begin to be eligible. This measure is intended to encourage businesses to purchase equipment that converts heat. However, when a deduction is granted retroactively, is it really an incentive? That is the question. After all, tax credits represent money that the government is forgoing. We want to ensure that this is an effective measure that incentivizes businesses to make the switch, rather than simply covering expenses that have already been incurred.

However, the issue raised by the Liberals regarding the targeted nature of the measure is also interesting. Does this measure duplicate other existing tax credits? I would like to float an idea I had. Could a business that purchases heat recovery equipment combine this measure with other existing tax credits and potentially see its bill reduced by more than 30%, or even 50%, 60%, 70% or 80%? Perhaps their purchase could turn out to be practically free if the tax credits are combined incorrectly.

Are all projects equal? That is an important question. If the goal is to replace the electricity generated by a nuclear or thermal power plant, then that seems worthwhile. However, if a company is allowed to generate its own electricity to replace the power produced by hydroelectricity, the environmental benefit is not the same. Is there a clear statement of what this tax credit is intended to achieve? After reading the bill, I do not believe there is. There is no system for comparing the environmental benefit of these measures, and we have to expect that not all projects will be equal.

In addition, as we know, oil and gas companies are already receiving numerous subsidies and tax credits while posting record profits. Is the tax credit primarily aimed at them? It is a valid question. They are making far less effort than businesses in other sectors to offset their greenhouse gas emissions, yet they would once again receive a tax credit most of them do not financially need. Would this not create an imbalance among the businesses that could qualify for the tax credit, both in terms of effectiveness and in terms of the need to financially support businesses in transitioning to cleaner, more environmentally friendly energy sources?

We hope to get answers and clarification on all these questions at committee. That is why we support passing the bill at second reading so it can be referred to a committee for further study. Witnesses will then be able to provide their views, particularly on the importance of ensuring that such measures serve as genuine incentives and target the right businesses and outcomes, so that the revenue forgone by the government translates into meaningful environmental benefits.

I would add to that another aspect that goes a bit beyond the bill but is still worth considering. We know that direct subsidies are generally easier to trace. Usually, any direct subsidy that a business receives has to be proactively disclosed. When the government grants a business a subsidy, that information is public. However, the same does not apply to tax credits, which are generally included in a business' tax return, which is confidential. This makes it difficult to determine, after the fact, who received the equivalent of what amount and which types of businesses these measures reached. That is true of all tax credits, including this one. That is one more reservation I would add to the list I just mentioned.

● (1120)

[*English*]

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague from Calgary Centre's putting forward Bill C-269 to address a gap in the system. I knew the member long before I was elected last year, so I know he is deliberate when he addresses a problem. When first notified, I was in disbelief that there was not already a capital cost allowance, CCA, group to address this issue. As a CPA in public practice, I spent a fair amount of time scrolling the details of different classes of capital costs to see where specific pieces of equipment fell for my clients, so I am glad this bill would address the gap in today's legislation.

For a couple of generations now, the tax law has not been about calculating a tax bill; rather it has been about changing human behaviour. Rules have been installed to penalize certain actions and reward others. Now, there are incentives either way to change how society behaves. In so many of the current government's pieces of legislation, there are unintended consequences from the bills, but I believe that Bill C-269 would very much address the problem correctly. This legislation would encourage industries to have green practices, not by changing their main industry but by dealing with by-products of their process. Therefore, the legislation would still encourage a good practice, not by punitive actions that could end an industry but by encouraging a practice of using its heat by-products to create power. In Yellowhead, I have a long list of industries that could be a good fit for this program, including the Mondi pulp plant, the Amrize cement plant in Exshaw, as well as the forest industry and oil and gas industry, all in my riding.

While these industries represent important opportunities for their workers and communities across Yellowhead, I also want to bring attention to an issue that has raised serious concern among my constituents. While back at home last weekend, I heard from countless constituents about the Liberal government's decision to cut the search and rescue dog program in Banff. This program saves lives. Since being made aware of the issue just over a week ago, my petition has gathered close to 10,000 signatures in five days and my office has received hundreds of emails. Last Friday, we sent a letter to the environment minister and the Parks Canada CEO, and we are awaiting their responses. The government needs to fix a problem it created and reinstate the rescue dog program in Banff. I do not think I have ever had as many media emails or interviews as I have had in the last week about this issue. I want to thank the local, national and international media for helping to bring this to people's attention to correct the issue. I recognize that this is not the issue we are speaking to today, but I did not want to miss the opportunity to tie that in with the safety of our parks.

Bill C-269 is a practical piece of legislation that seems common sense to me and deserves the attention of the House. This is about making better use of resources we already have, reducing waste, strengthening our economy and creating opportunities for Canadian businesses. In simple terms, this bill would give Canadian businesses an incentive to recover energy that would otherwise be lost, and put that energy to productive use. This is an obvious, easy choice for a government that seems to have a hard time keeping its environmental commitments.

I represent a large rural riding where people understand the importance of getting the most out of every resource. In communities back home, our economy is built on people who work hard, invest in the businesses and make productive use of the resources around them. A forestry operation cannot afford to waste valuable resources, a mine company cannot operate without reliable power and a manufacturer has to watch its operating costs. These are not foreign economic concepts for the people I represent; they are everyday realities. That is why I believe that Bill C-269 deserves the House's support.

Many industries produce substantial amounts of heat as part of their normal operation. I think about a lumber mill, manufacturing facility, processing plant or anything in the energy sector. These facilities use significant amounts of energy to work the machinery, process materials and produce the goods that Canadians and the international markets depend on. During those processes, a huge amount of heat is produced. Some of the heat is useful, but most of it is lost. That heat represents energy that has already been paid for, energy that has already been produced and energy that could be put to another use.

● (1125)

Waste heat to power technology allows businesses to capture some of that heat and convert it into electricity. The technology is commercially available. It can be installed at existing facilities, and the electricity can be used on site or, in some situations, put back into the grid. We are not talking about building an entire new power plant. We are talking about making an existing operation more efficient.

This opportunity is particularly relevant in Alberta. We have an economy that relies heavily on natural resources in industry. These businesses are essential to our provincial economy and benefit Canada as a whole. They also represent opportunities to recover energy that might otherwise be lost. Our energy industry has invested heavily in technology, innovation and operational efficiency. Companies are continually looking for ways to produce more with fewer inputs, improve the environmental performance and reduce operating costs. Waste heat recovery is another step in that direction. It is important to recognize that it is not simply an Alberta issue. This is a national economic opportunity.

I also want to speak about the tax credit itself. This is where I think the bill takes a very practical approach. Canada already has investment tax credits that support clean electricity technologies, including wind, solar and hydro. Bill C-269 proposes to extend an incentive to qualifying equipment that recovers industrial heat and converts it to electricity.

The proposed tax credit would be 30% of eligible capital costs. Something that is very important to me is that it would be non-refundable, which means it is a tax credit that eligible businesses could use against tax they owe. It is not a cheque from the government, and it is not an unconditional grant. The important point is that the business is still investing in its own capital. It is still taking responsibility for the project, and it is still making decisions based on its own operations and commercial needs. We should be encouraging that type of private sector investment. The economics have to work. Equipment has to meet the requirements, and businesses have to make sound investment decisions. Government should establish a reasonable framework and allow businesses to determine where the opportunities exist.

This is a matter of Canadian competitiveness. Canadian companies should not be placed at a disadvantage simply because our tax system fails to recognize an opportunity that other jurisdictions are encouraging. We should want investment to happen here. We should want Canadian workers installing the equipment, Canadian companies supplying the technology and Canadian businesses benefiting from the electricity. We should want the economic activity and tax revenue that comes with a stronger industrial sector in Canada. We should be doing everything reasonable to encourage innovation and investment, rather than creating additional obstacles for the businesses that support our economy.

Ultimately, Bill C-269 is about common sense. It recognizes that we do not always need to build something new to produce more value. Sometimes, we need to make better use of what we already have. Canadians want practical solutions, not announcements of ambitious goals. We need to respect taxpayer money, and we need to create conditions for businesses and communities to succeed. For those reasons, I am pleased to support this legislation, and I encourage all members of the House to support sending Bill C-269 to committee for further study.

Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to support Bill C-269, the heat recovery tax credit act, introduced by my Conservative colleague the member for Calgary Centre.

At its core, the bill is about common sense. It is about making better use of energy that Canada already produces, strengthening Canadian industries and creating the conditions for businesses to invest, innovate and grow. It does not create another government bureaucracy or impose new regulations on Canadians. It encourages private sector investment and gives Canadian businesses an opportunity to turn otherwise wasted energy into an economic advantage. That is the kind of practical, results-driven approach Canada needs.

The heat recovery tax credit act proposes a 30% non-refundable investment tax credit for equipment that captures waste heat from industrial processes and converts it into electricity. Why is my colleague's proposal important? Electricity demand is growing. Steel mills, cement plants, chemical facilities, pulp and paper operations and refineries all use significant amounts of energy to generate heat. Much of that heat escapes through industrial processes and is lost. Estimates suggest that between 30% and 50% of heat generated through industrial processes may be wasted. That is energy Canadian businesses have already paid to produce but cannot fully put to productive use.

The technology exists to recover some of that lost heat and convert it into electricity. It is proven, commercially available and already in use, but upfront costs can discourage investment and uptake, particularly when the tech falls outside of a company's core operations. That means projects that could lower operating costs, improve efficiency and generate electricity may never proceed. Bill C-269 would help close that gap by encouraging businesses to invest their own capital in technology that delivers measurable economic and environmental benefits. It is about unlocking investment, not putting government in charge of it.

As the Conservative shadow minister for infrastructure, I certainly recognize how critical reliable, affordable electricity is to Canadians' everyday lives and, in a major way, for Canada's economic future. Canada needs more power. Advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, data centres, population growth and, of course, new industrial development all increase demand for electricity. Canada's ability to attract investment, develop natural resources, build infrastructure and compete internationally depends on reliable, affordable energy and electricity. The question is not whether more electricity is needed but whether legislators and policy-makers will create the conditions for the private sector to produce and use it.

Canada needs major energy and infrastructure projects, but those projects require significant investment, complex approvals and years of planning and construction. Opportunities to generate additional electricity from infrastructure projects already built and operating cannot be overlooked. Waste heat recovery can be installed at existing industrial facilities without requiring additional fuel. Some systems can be deployed in as little as 12 to 24 months, rather than waiting years for new generating capacity. That means more efficient infrastructure, additional reliable electricity and the value add of potentially lowering operating costs for Canadian employers. Depending on the facility, electricity generated through waste heat recovery can be used on site or supplied to the grid to strengthen local power supply.

Canadians should not be forced to choose between a strong economy and better environmental outcomes. For too long, Liberal governments have approached environmental policy through higher taxes, more regulations and additional costs on the industries and workers that drive Canada's economy.

Conservatives believe in innovation, Canadian ingenuity and practical solutions that deliver results. When a manufacturer can recover energy it would otherwise waste, lower electricity costs, improve productivity and reduce emissions at the same time, that benefits businesses, workers and the environment. Waste heat recovery can generate electricity without additional fuel or additional emissions from the recovery process. It allows businesses to do more with the resources they already have and use. There should not be limits on what Canadian innovation can accomplish when industry deploys productive uses for energy that would otherwise go to waste.

In Lakeland, the County of Vermilion River has demonstrated how natural gas recovered from oil field operations can be put to productive use instead of being vented or flared. That project uses a different technology, but it demonstrates the same principle. Recovering wasted energy can create economic value and deliver environmental benefits.

● (1130)

Bill C-269 would build on that principle by encouraging investment in equipment that converts industrial waste heat into electricity. More than ever, competitiveness must be at the centre of this discussion. Canadian businesses compete internationally every day for customers, capital, contracts and jobs. When manufacturers decide where to expand, they look at energy costs, taxes, regulations and the overall investment environment. When Canadian companies face higher costs and more barriers than their competitors, Canadian workers ultimately pay the price. Investment opportunities are lost, projects are delayed, and jobs and talent move elsewhere.

Meanwhile, other countries encourage businesses to adopt industrial efficiency technologies like my colleague outlines here. The U.S. provides investment tax incentives for waste heat recovery. American facilities have used these systems to generate electricity from energy that would otherwise be lost. Canada should not stand on the sidelines while competitors create conditions that attract investment. Our manufacturers, resource sectors and workers deserve the opportunity to compete and succeed here at home.

Bill C-269 would help address a gap in Canada's tax system and encourage investment that might otherwise flow to competing jurisdictions. There is no doubt this legislation does not try to solve every challenge facing the energy system through another massive government program. Instead, it is a targeted measure built around private sector investment designed to achieve real outcomes. Businesses must make qualifying investments in equipment that produces tangible results. They make the decisions, choose the technology and take responsibility for the projects. Government's role should be to create the conditions for investment and success, not to stand in the way of Canadians who want to invest, innovate, build and work.

Canada already uses investment tax credits to encourage other clean energy technologies, like solar, wind and hydroelectric power. Waste heat recovery has not received the same targeted treatment despite its potential to generate electricity from energy already available. If the objective is more reliable electricity, greater efficiency and lower emissions, this technology deserves consideration too, and the opportunities extend across the country. In Alberta, waste heat recovery could support refining, petrochemicals and industrial manufacturing. In Ontario and Quebec, it could benefit steel, cement and chemical production. In British Columbia and Atlantic Canada, it could help forestry and pulp and paper operations. Across the Prairies, it could support food processing and other energy-intensive industries. This is not a proposal limited to one province or one sector. It has applications across Canadian industry, from coast to coast to coast.

Canada faces a serious productivity challenge. For too long, productivity growth has lagged behind that of our major competitors. Businesses need confidence to invest in equipment, adopt technology, expand operations and create opportunities for workers. That confidence does not come from government announcements or promises. It comes from affordable energy, predictable rules, a competitive investment environment and the ability to get projects built. Sometimes that requires major reforms like cutting red tape, removing regulatory barriers and accelerating approvals, and sometimes it requires a targeted change that unlocks private capital for opportunities already within reach.

That is what Bill C-269 would do. Instead of allowing valuable energy to go to waste, it would encourage businesses to put it to work. Instead of putting another burden on industry, it would create an incentive to invest. Instead of forcing a choice between economic growth and environmental improvement, it would support both. The impacts are clear: more electricity, lower operating costs, stronger productivity, reduced emissions, more competitive Canadian industries and more efficiency all around. Those are results Canada needs.

Canada has abundant natural resources, world-class industries, innovative businesses and capable workers. What Canadians need are the conditions to put those strengths to work. Canada cannot tax and regulate its way into prosperity. A stronger economy cannot be built by making it harder and more expensive to invest and produce in Canada. Energy, investment and opportunities already available cannot be wasted.

Bill C-269 is a practical opportunity to support Canadian industry, strengthen electricity supply and encourage innovation without unnecessary government intervention. I encourage members of Parliament everywhere to support it at second reading so the committee can hear from industry, examine the evidence and consider how this measure could support Canadian businesses and workers.

Again, I want to thank my colleague from Calgary Centre, who has been concerned with ways to increase energy efficiency and productivity across the Canadian economy for years.

● (1135)

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is a pleasure to speak on behalf of the constituents of Skeena—Bulkley Valley, especially when we are talking about something important like Bill C-269, which has been brought here by my colleague. I support it.

I come from a small reserve in Kitamaat Village. For those who do not know, we are basically the heart of industry in northwest B.C. For the last 70 years, we have been the heart of industrial development.

Kitimat has an aluminum smelter, which at one time was one of the dirtiest smelters in Canada if not North America or the world. Our band then supported the modernization of that smelter into one of the cleanest smelters in Canada, or North America, producing a high-quality product for the world. That old smelter was dumping out a lot of CO2, carbon and heat, not just into the atmosphere but into our waters. Heat is a form of pollution. It does, in fact, affect the environment. Nature does not like extreme heat. It does not like artificial heat. If members do not believe me, they should come to Kitimat.

At a time when there were no regulations being enforced, or in existence, the heat itself actually caused a lot of problems in terms of the seaweed, salmon and shellfish going away. Now we are starting to fix that with updated technology and learning more about what heat means.

What is being talked about in Bill C-269 is the capturing of waste heat and turning it into electricity. This is at a time when the topic seems to be reducing our carbon footprint, but also how to make Canada more competitive and how to diversify our economy and try to reduce our reliance on the U.S. economy.

I do not understand why there is opposition to this bill. Members can call it what they like. They can call it value-added or manufacturing. They can call it whatever they want, but it is an efficient way to take something that would normally get into our environment and make use of it.

This is especially true in British Columbia when talking about electricity demand and supply, where the conversation has now shifted to Site C, the multi-billion-dollar dam in northern B.C., not being enough for B.C.'s demand. It is not enough, and given the politics, I doubt I will see another dam being built in my lifetime, so we have to think about other ways to meet that demand.

Vancouver actually put a ban on using natural gas for new home builds. That ban was reversed last year because the electricity demand could not be met. In fact, B.C., at peak times, has a deficit of electricity, so it imports electricity from neighbouring provinces as well as from the United States. The United States still produces electricity from coal. Yes, the electricity we use when we plug into the wall is green, but we have to trace that back to where it comes from. If it is coming from the United States, and the U.S. is using coal, that electricity we are using is not so green.

There are now different conversations about how to use natural gas for electricity. This is a complete reversal of the conversation that was being held 10 years ago, and it all comes down to the demand for electricity. If we are going to become an energy superpower, like the promise made by our Prime Minister, then we have to look at all the components that go into that, including domestic use. If we can make industry more efficient by capturing waste coming from it and turning it into a usable product to make industry's own operations more efficient, then we should seriously consider it. This should be going to committee.

● (1140)

Canadians do want this. They want us to do more, not only to compete with the United States but also to reduce our footprint and be more competitive.

Nobody is looking forward to the blackouts that are going to come when one of our energy sources goes down. We saw that in B.C. when the natural gas pipeline went down. All the demand shifted to the electricity grid, which is in danger of blackouts. There are energy shortages in the United States, where there are rolling blackouts to keep up with the demand.

This might not seem like a big issue with respect to how it is going to affect us, but everything counts. Everything matters when we are talking about energy efficiency. Yes, Canada is doing a good job, but I agree with our Conservative leader, who is saying that we should be looking at technology to reduce our footprint. Here it is, right here.

This would not cost taxpayers anything. It would make industry more competitive with the United States. The government is talking about incentives that are already in place that could be utilized by industry. Why is industry not using them, then? Why is industry going to the United States and making investments in the United States but not here? It is because converting waste heat to electricity is simply not incentivized in Canada. It makes sense for a company to go to the United States, which actually encourages that type of investment. If we do want to compete with the United States, then we have to seriously consider these types of measures.

With respect to industry in Kitimat, we have had pulp and paper mills that distributed a large amount of heat into our environment. We had a methane export facility, and now we have the largest private investment in Canadian history, LNG Canada, which produces a lot of heat.

The bill would not be the cure for everything, but it would be a good step in the right direction. I do like the comments made by our Bloc colleagues, saying that they could support it in principle and that they agree it should go to committee for more review. I agree as well, but we hear the government already shutting this down without giving the public a chance to see the reality of what this could actually mean to places such as Kitimat and other industrial centres.

We want to attract investment. We want to keep investment here. We do not want what is happening in eastern Canada, where all the companies are starting to move to the United States just for competitive reasons. We do not want that, because when it happens, people start to leave, especially our young people. With the way it is going right now, I can tell the House that I do not agree with giving our young people a leaving Canada tax, when the overall economy in all its forms is what is driving people away from Canada. It is the brain drain, and this is just going to keep building up.

This is what is needed in small measures, for all the reasons pointed out by my colleagues as well as by the Bloc, because ultimately what we are talking about is turning waste into value and treating heat as a form of pollution and addressing it seriously. I am sure every centre around B.C., or throughout Canada, for that matter, that has an industrial centre can see this, and they can see it comparable to other issues that are facing industry. We do want to do good by Canadians and industry, in small measures, medium measures and big measures.

Bill C-269 would be a step in the right direction, and I encourage all my colleagues to encourage the government to accept the bill's going to committee.

● (1145)

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a real privilege to rise today on behalf of Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford to speak to Bill C-269, an act to amend the Income Tax Act with respect to a heat recovery tax credit.

Conservatives believe that we need to empower Canadian business, not with handouts but with broad-based taxation measures to give them a leg-up. We have a history in Canada of providing rebates and tax measures for various projects. Here is another great opportunity to give our Canadian companies a competitive edge.

I think of my own riding, which is a major food processing hub and a major food production hub in British Columbia. We have many greenhouses. When people are driving down the Abbotsford-Mission highway and it is about 1°C or 2°C out, they can see these greenhouses just humming. They use a lot of heat, so why not convert that heat into electricity? Why not allow for that in our Income Tax Act? Why not allow for a change to our capital cost deduction measures to give these businesses a leg-up?

This is a common-sense measure that would provide some incentive for companies to be more efficient. When they are more efficient it causes two things: They make more money, and they do more to protect the environment. These are principles that all Canadians agree on. These are measures that, in the past, the government would have accepted. We hope its members will vote with us today, because this is a common-sense measure to take an incremental step to help our Canadian businesses.

Bill C-269 would introduce a non-refundable investment tax credit for equipment that captures waste heat from industrial processes and converts it to electricity. It would correct a gap in existing clean energy incentives, which currently exclude waste-to-heat power, despite its strong environmental and economic benefits. The bottom line is this: It would help Canadian businesses turn wasted energy into clean, emissions-free electricity using infrastructure and technology that already exist.

Across Canada's economy, 30% to 50% of industrial heat is wasted. Technology already exists to convert much of that wasted electricity into better usage. Under the existing technologies, and if this bill is passed, it would recover one-third of lost energy. There would be zero new emissions with the application of Bill C-269, no new fuel and no new system overhaul.

The key point I want to stress today is that this would be one of the simplest, fastest and most cost-effective energy opportunities we can take. It is a good-faith proposal that Conservatives are putting forward to provide a solution that would help many businesses in Quebec, Ontario, our manufacturing hubs and the agricultural sector all across Canada. It is a common-sense measure that would spur investment. It would not cost the federal government any money. It would lead to efficiencies in the operation of Canadian businesses. How can we not get behind such a simple measure?

● (1150)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The honourable member for Calgary Centre has five minutes for his right of reply.

[*Translation*]

Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my Bloc Québécois colleagues, who carefully examined this bill, consulted with their constituents and found constructive ways to implement it to make our economy more competitive. I also want to thank them for agreeing to send this bill to committee so that we can examine the details that warrant further discussion.

[*English*]

I will also address some of the government's responses, insofar as the bill is not perfect. As members know, any private member's bill is drafted with the Library of Parliament to replicate the tax credits that already exist. As much as a bunch of regulations would come forth with the bill, those are to be determined at committee as well. I do question the negativism that was brought forward on that.

What I am trying to do, and I think it is the role of all of us as private members, is to find the gaps that are going to make for a better Canadian economy at the end of the day. Waste heat to power is one of the gaps in our system that the United States is exploiting very fulsomely at this point in time. To get back on par with the United States as far as our competition goes, and to get investment back into Canada for these types of common-sense approaches to less waste and more electricity, this would be a winner for everybody.

I do agree there is overlap with other tax incentives, exactly as there is in the United States. We do need to be competitive with it, even in the stacking that happens in those credits. The bottom line is to get this investment happening in Canada.

Here is one of the riddles on this. I am working with a company, and everybody knows the company I am working with on this, to try to get this moving in Canada. That company is out of Calgary, with a suboffice in Houston. It has received a $50-million U.S. investment from none other than the Canada Growth Fund. The Canada Growth Fund is going to invest, alongside a big U.S. investment entity, another $50 million U.S. into waste heat to power. It is going to give the money only when it is approved for the financial mechanism. That is going to happen at this point in time in the United States, because the returns are better.

Canadian taxpayer dollars, again, are going towards investment in the United States. Talk about cutting off our nose to spite our face, we are actually funding more competition from the United States through Canadian taxpayer dollars. That is a ludicrous approach to what we need to do to build this economy.

The U.S. has had this regime since 2020, and we have been playing catch-up ever since. We have been losing investment in Canada as a result of the U.S. being much more investable than Canada is. We have to get ahead of this. I am trying to get us on par, but the fact is, we have to be more competitive in this Canadian economy.

I can talk about the bill from our last Parliament. The bill in 2021 was called an act to amend the Income Tax Act (capture and utilization or storage of greenhouse gases), and the Liberals voted against that too. Now here we are, five years later, and they have come forward with a bill on enhanced oil recovery and carbon capture that was half as effective as it needs to be in order to be competitive with the United States. These are things we need to move forward with at pace and at the time when they are necessary. We have lost five years, and we are still half as competitive in that credit as we need to be vis-à-vis our major competitor for investment in that sector.

The U.S. has had this, as I said, since 2020. The primary beneficiary of it in the United States is the chemical industry. Think about how much waste heat comes from the chemical industry. It has exploited that in the United States and done a number of retrofits, making sure that it is very competitive in the chemical industry as a result. That is something I think we need to replicate here in Canada to get that investment back in this country so it makes more sense to invest here.

I know that we have spoken about a lot here, but one of the things I always like to talk about is how much the government has spent on environmental measures. This is an environmental measure because it would get more electricity from the same amount of hydrocarbons and other power being produced. We would be capturing that and turning it into something real: less waste and more electricity. It is a cheap way to do that. However, in the last 10 or 11 years, the government has spent hundreds of billions of dollars on its environmental policies, all of which have resulted in almost net-zero reductions in CO2 emissions and a whole bunch of deindustrialization of the Canadian economy.

● (1155)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 4, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1200)

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL PROCUREMENT

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC) moved:

That, given that,

(i) in response to the trade war launched against Canada by the Trump administration, the Prime Minister promised that "whenever the federal government spends, we will select Canadian suppliers by default," and pledged to "ensure the federal government buys from Canadian suppliers",

(ii) when the Buy Canadian Policy took effect on December 16, 2025, the Prime Minister said Canada would become its own "best customer," and the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement declared that the government was "putting Canadian workers and industries first",

(iii) in April 2026, the Prime Minister promised to build Canada strong with "Canadian steel, Canadian aluminum, Canadian lumber, Canadian workers",

(iv) in June 2026, the Canada Revenue Agency awarded a security services contract worth nearly $12 million to Universal Protection Service of Canada Corporation, a subsidiary of the American multinational Allied Universal,

> (v) Allied Universal's subsidiary G4S reportedly holds contracts worth US $83 million with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the agency carrying out the Trump administration's mass deportation agenda, and Allied Universal has reportedly received contracts worth more than US $290 million in 2026 alone from the Trump administration's Department of Homeland Security, ICE's parent department,
>
> (vi) the contract was awarded over a Canadian bidder that is a not-for-profit and the largest employer of veterans, whose offer differed by roughly $80,000, less than one per cent of the contract's value which represents less than half of the $175,248.48 that, according to the government's own response to an Order Paper question, was spent on in-flight catering for the Prime Minister and his delegation during a 10-day international trip to China, Qatar and Davos, Switzerland in January 2026,
>
> the House call on the government to respect veterans, follow its own Buy Canadian Policy, cancel the Canada Revenue Agency's security contract with Universal Protection Service of Canada Corporation and award it to a Canadian supplier.

He said: Madam Speaker, I want to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

Since the beginning of the trade war with the United States, the Prime Minister has made repeated statements encouraging Canadians to buy Canadian and support Canadian businesses. That is wonderful. We obviously have no objection to that. He even promised that the federal government would give preference to Canadian suppliers for its own contracts. However, in June, the Canada Revenue Agency, a federal entity, awarded a security services contract worth nearly $12 million to a subsidiary of an American multinational, at the expense of the Commissionaires, a not-for-profit Canadian organization, formerly known as the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, which is the largest employer of veterans in the country.

I think it is a good time to talk about this because, as we know, it is Veterans' Week. Members know that this is an important annual occasion, but it also ties directly into the matter before us today. We are talking about a $12-million contract, but the difference between the two bids was only about $80,000, or less than 1% of the contract's value. That is a striking example of the contradiction between the Liberal government's promises and its decisions.

I will take a moment to explain what the Commissionaires are, for the benefit of Canadians who are following our proceedings and who might not know what I am talking about. This organization was founded over 100 years ago to provide employment opportunities for military members as they transition out of service. Even today, it helps veterans put their experience and skills to work for the benefit of Canadian society. I myself served in the Canadian Armed Forces for over 20 years and I am aware of the reality of the transition to civilian life. After a career in the military, military members often have to start over again, find a new job and get the skills they acquired within the Canadian Forces recognized. I can say that it is a challenge for military members because, often, civilians do not understand what these people did in their occupations, in their work with the Canadian Forces. Commissionaires play an important role in this transition. That is why I think it is particularly regrettable that an organization like that loses a federal contract under the present circumstances.

I want to come back to the Prime Minister's commitments. We have an expression in Quebec: *se péter les bretelles*. I do not know if my English-speaking colleagues use that phrase. *Se péter les bretelles* is when the Government of Canada says it is going to buy Canadian. The Prime Minister has even said that Canada will be its own best customer, while the Minister of Public Works and Procurement goes so far as to state that the government will give priority to Canadian industries and workers. As recently as last April, the Prime Minister promised to build Canada strong using Canadian steel, Canadian aluminum, Canadian lumber and Canadian workers. Then, just a few weeks later, the Canada Revenue Agency awarded a contract to Universal Protection Service, a subsidiary of the multinational company Allied Universal.

Why do we even have a buy Canadian policy if the government is not going to support a Canadian organization that employs veterans? It always comes down to the same thing. It is not enough to simply make grand announcements. The public hates that aspect of politics. The government says it is going to be strong here at home, that Canada is going to be strong, that it is going to buy Canadian and hire Canadians, but then it turns around and gives contracts to Americans. Did someone not get the message? The government really needs to keep its promises when these kinds of announcements are made.

There is another fundamental issue in the debate that concerns us today, namely the decision to choose a company to replace the Commissionaires. It is important to note that Allied Universal also owns a company called G4S, which, according to reports, has $83 million U.S. in contracts with the U.S. agency ICE, the notorious immigration agency responsible for carrying out the mass deportations ordered by the Trump administration. Allied Universal was awarded a contract worth more than $290 million U.S. from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in 2026 alone.

Where is the consistency? We are not saying that an American-owned company cannot do business in Canada. What we are asking, however, is that the government abide by its own policy of employing Canadians first and foremost. That is where buy Canadian begins.

● (1205)

We also need to put these numbers into perspective. Some may argue that it was cheaper, that it cost $80,000 less. Yes, but that amounts to less than 1% of the contract's value.

To make a comparison, according to information we obtained in response to an Order Paper question, catering services aboard the Prime Minister's plane and for his delegation during a 10-day trip to China, Qatar and Davos last January cost $175,248.48. That was just for catering, for meals on the plane. That amount is twice the difference between the bid that favoured the American company and the bid submitted by the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires. Granted, it is not the same kind of difference, but it is a matter of principle. The principle stands. Approximately $175,000 was spent on a 10-day trip. That is double the $80,000 difference.

This was a contract that supported veterans, people who had left the Canadian Forces and who, thanks to the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, were given a valuable opportunity to work in civilian life and put to use the knowledge and skills they had acquired in the field of security. The decision is incomprehensible.

Remembrance Day will be observed in a few days' time. People across the country will honour the men and women who have worn our nation's uniform. Our respect for them is not limited to November 11. It calls for concrete actions. The Canadian Corps of Commissionaires offers veterans exactly that: an opportunity to keep contributing to society. The federal government should keep that mission in mind when it makes its decisions.

The motion therefore calls on the government to uphold its commitments to veterans, follow the buy Canadian policy, cancel the contract awarded to Universal Protection Service of Canada Corporation and award it to a Canadian supplier.

The Prime Minister promised that Canada would become its own best customer. These are not my words; they are his. Today, we are asking the government to move from words to action. The contract must be cancelled and the decision reversed.

● (1210)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's statements and one of the things I find interesting is how they are trying to draw a comparison between flight expenses. The first thing I get a flashback to is when I was sitting in opposition and Stephen Harper actually paid over $1 million to fly a car to India so that he would be able to drive that particular car. I am wondering if the member could reflect on a comparison where there were dozens of people that had flown over.

I am very much aware of and supportive of the Commissionaires, and I will continue to be so.

[*Translation*]

Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, the Liberals are once again trying to deflect by bringing up a matter concerning the security expenditures incurred by the then prime minister, Mr. Harper. The fundamental issue is what the Prime Minister himself said: buy Canadian first and foremost. In this case, however, a contract is being awarded to an American company, even though a not-for-profit corporation, the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, can do the work. That is what they should be answering for, instead of trying to distract from the issue.

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, it seems obvious to me that, for $80,000, the contract should not have been awarded to a foreign company. That said, I would like to ask my colleague some questions about the flexibility needed to justify keeping a contract in Canada, even when doing so is not the most competitive option from a strictly economic standpoint.

Has my colleague given any thought to that aspect of the issue? As members know, there is a buy Canadian policy, but even that is rather vague in terms of what it actually entails. For example, when we talk about 70% of contracts, are we talking about the number of contracts or the value of those contracts?

I would appreciate some clarification from my colleague on that point.

Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from the Bloc for her excellent question. This sort of ties in with industrial benefits. In defence procurement, for example, there is often a requirement that a certain percentage of the work be carried out by Canadian industry. We can all agree that $80,000 is roughly the average salary of a federal employee. It is not a large amount of money, but the decision itself is important. What does not sit right, what simply does not make sense, is awarding a $12-million contract to an American company instead of to the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires.

Generally speaking, when the Prime Minister says we must prioritize buying Canadian, the government's procurement policies should reflect that commitment. Of course, abuses must be prevented. That is why clear rules and rigorous oversight are essential. So far, we have seen nothing but lip service.

Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like my colleague to answer a very simple question. What are the ministers good for?

We have a Prime Minister who made a big promise. He said we were going to buy Canadian. That was the big promise. He said we were going to be our own best customer, yet now we see that, on such an important issue, at a time as important as the month of November, just a few days before Remembrance Day, the Prime Minister is not keeping his word and is awarding a contract to an American company rather than to a non-profit organization made up of veterans.

What kind of message are the ministers sending to Canadians when they cannot even keep and uphold the Prime Minister's promises?

Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question. Indeed, what message does that send? It sends a highly negative message when a Prime Minister solemnly declares that we are going to fight the Americans, fight Donald Trump and buy Canadian, only for the government to do the exact opposite of what he said.

My colleague is right to wonder what the ministers are doing. What has the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement done to change the rules and bring them in line with the Prime Minister's direction? In fact, absolutely nothing has been done. Again, all we get are words, words and more words. In fact, the reality is completely at odds with what the Prime Minister has called for.

● (1215)

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are here today to put Canada first, as a remarkable group of Canadians did in 1925, almost 100 years ago exactly, when they came together to form the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, an organization that hired First World War veterans to do what they have always done best: protect their fellow Canadians.

A century later, the Commissionaires is still the largest non-governmental employer of veterans anywhere in Canada. It protects our public servants, and for years, it protected the offices of the Canada Revenue Agency. By every account, the agency was happy and satisfied with its exceptional work. Then on June 16 of this year, under the Prime Minister, the CRA handed the nearly $12-million contract to Universal Protection Service, a subsidiary of Allied Universal, an American security giant with ties to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement deportation program, otherwise known as ICE.

How much did Canadians save by elbowing out of this contract our veterans and giving it to the American parent company? It was a measly $80,000, less than 1% of the contract value. Obviously, when we take into account the taxes the commissionaires would have paid on their salaries back to the Canadian government, that amount is probably eliminated altogether. This is not a one-year deal. It runs for two years and can be extended five more after that, for a total of seven. That is seven years that our veterans could be shut out of this important work.

The head of the Commissionaires for the Great Lakes said that he had never seen a contract this size change hands on such a slender difference when the client was happy with the work of the Commissionaires. Here is the part that should make every member of the House stop and think. The government's own tender said, “This solicitation is open only to Canadian suppliers.” If it was only open to Canadian suppliers, how is it that an American-owned subsidiary got the deal? The answer is that the government's so-called buy Canadian rules allow any foreign company to simply open a Canadian address in order to compete for Canadian-based work. As long as someone has a post office box, they can be from anywhere in the world and get a job paid for by Canadian tax dollars.

The commissionaires themselves were shocked. One said, “Any foreign company can set up an office in Canada” and, in the words of this commissionaire, “poof”, the entire contracting rule goes up in smoke. To use another metaphor, it is maple-washing when an American giant with a Canadian mailing address counts the same as a 100-year-old charity, the largest employer in the country of Canadian veterans.

Do members remember when the Prime Minister said only a few months ago that Canada is “at war” with the United States? Now he is hiring them to protect our tax office. That is not exactly the thing to do.

This is not an accident. The contradictions are a pattern. On the U.S.-Canada file, the Prime Minister says one thing and does exactly the opposite. It is all an illusion for his political benefit. He is all talk and no results. He is out of touch while Canadians, in particular Canadian veterans, are out of money. Let us go through the list of these contradictions.

He promised a buy Canadian policy, and then he increased the amount spent on American firms by 55%, to a total of $7.8 billion, of which the betrayal of the Commissionaires is just one example. In January, he told the world that we are in a “rupture, not a transition” with the U.S. Then he went on to say that our ties with the Americans had become our biggest weakness. Days later, he said that Canada and the U.S. would be “stronger together”. He warned against a world of fortresses in his Davos speech. Then he gave another speech where he said that he was in favour of something called “Fortress North America”. He said that “integration” had become “subordination”. Then he wanted more integration to, in his words, “make America great again”.

● (1220)

In the election, he promised that if the Americans put tariffs on us, he would respond with dollar-for-dollar tariffs. He said that Canadians were in no mood for any concessions. Two months later, he admitted that his government had already moved off of dollar-for-dollar tariffs, and then quietly, he dropped reciprocal tariffs altogether.

His energy minister said that energy was the best leverage we had in our negotiations for a deal. A week later, the Prime Minister said that resources were not leverage at all. At the summer 2025 G7 conference, he promised a deal within the coming 30 days. He missed that deadline, and almost a year and a half later, there is still no deal and there are still no wins.

On the Gordie Howe bridge, the Prime Minister said he had secured a deal to ensure that no tariff revenues would go to the United States until all of Canada's debt to build the bridge was repaid. After all, we had built the entire thing with our money. Then it came out that in fact the Americans were getting half of the net tolls from day one, not waiting until we paid off the enormous debts we incurred to build the bridge.

Last week, the Prime Minister said that he was willing to wait until there was a new president before we get a deal. To be clear, that means two and a half more years of American tariffs killing Canadian jobs. How out of touch was that? However, worry not, because less than 72 hours later, he put out a tweet saying that he had called the president and restarted formal talks for a mutually beneficial trade deal in the coming weeks. We hope he is serious this time. We hope this is for real, but forgive us if we hesitate to pop the champagne until we see the actual results. It is an incredible reversal to say in the span of three days that he is willing to wait two and a half years without a deal and then say that he is kicking off negotiations to complete talks in the next several weeks.

The Prime Minister has a phrase for this. He calls it "the performance of sovereignty while accepting subordination." He was right about this phrase. He just did not realize that he was describing himself, because after all the speeches, all the slogans and all the deadlines, where are the results he promised? His single biggest promise in the last election was that he would deliver a great deal with the U.S, he would handle Donald Trump and he would negotiate a win. There is still no deal, still no tariff relief and still no results. Our economy has flatlined, 110,000 jobs have been lost in two months, there is a 9% increase in food bank demand, homebuilding is down rather than doubled, as the Prime Minister promised, and Canadian veterans have been pushed aside so an American company could guard our tax office.

The Prime Minister will do anything to keep us distracted from his costly failures here at home. That is not leadership. It is political theatre. We do not need more grandstanding over the next month and a half from the Prime Minister. We need him to actually get the deal he promised.

We as Conservatives have laid out a clear plan on how to get that deal. It starts with using the leverage we have. We have the things that Americans need. We have 10 of the 12 NATO-defined defence minerals right beneath our feet. Let us unlock their production and put them in strategic storage facilities, along with a new aboveground oil reserve that we can provide tariff-free to allies on a right-of-first-refusal basis to incentivize them to remove their tariffs. Let us align with our key trading partner to combat China's abuse of our country. Let us use our massive military buildup and our willingness to take on more responsibility protecting our share of the continent as further leverage to get the tariff-free deal that we want.

None of this should stop us from solving the problems we have here at home. Our youth need jobs and homes. Our families need affordable food. Our economy needs homegrown growth. Criminals need to go to jail. Drugs need to come off our street. Government spending must fall, and we must ultimately deliver for the people. All of these things are in our hands.

The Prime Minister likes to say that we want to be masters of our own destiny. We could not agree more, but we cannot be a master of our own destiny if we are constantly making excuses about what we cannot achieve. There is no tweet from the U.S. president that can stop us from fixing our problems here at home. Let us save Canadians money, save their jobs, keep them safe, fix broken immigration and, most of all, put Canada first. Putting Canada first means putting our veterans first and voting for this motion.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, putting Canada first has meant, coming out of the last federal election, as the Prime Minister made very clear, looking for opportunities that go beyond the Canada-U.S. border while we continue to negotiate the best deal. I realize that the best deal might not necessarily be on the same timetable as the leader of the Conservative Party, who thinks he can just tap his heels together and, voila, a deal is achieved. That is dreamland.

At the end of the day, would the leader not agree that as we wait for the best deal we can get for Canadians, it is critical that Canada and the Prime Minister continue to look at other nations as a way to increase our trading opportunities?

● (1225)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, we could not agree more, and that is why we are so disappointed that the Prime Minister got absolutely zero results at his grand summit last week. Zero European countries signed on to ratify the free trade agreement we already have with the EU. Zero of them opened trade to Canadian beef and pork, and there was not one commitment to cancel the planned carbon tariff that that continent is threatening to impose on the already besieged Canadian industry.

Instead, we have a Prime Minister negotiating that in secret, potentially putting our sovereignty at risk. Our message on that is clear. Yes, we want to trade with Europe, and yes, we want to honour our NATO commitment, but we will never support Canadians paying taxes to the EU, following EU laws or accepting EU-style migration. We have our problems to fix here at home, and Conservatives will put Canada first to fix them.

[*Translation*]

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, today's debate is primarily about Canada's sovereignty and the need to ensure that Canadian taxpayers' money is not sent to the United States. s there not a contradiction in the Conservatives' position, given that one of their priorities is to support the oil and gas industry, including by building pipelines using public funds, in other words taxpayers' money, when not only are 80% of the companies in the oil and gas sector foreign-owned, but 60% of them are American-owned?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I do not know how many times I have to say this. We are not proposing subsidies for oil companies. That has never been our position, because the oil industry is extremely profitable on its own. The government just needs to cut red tape and federal taxes so that private investors, private sector workers and private companies can build projects and develop our resources.

[*English*]

I am going to say exactly the same thing in English that I said in French, because I want to make it clear that we do not say one thing in one language and the opposite in the other. We do not think there need to be bailouts, handouts and carve-outs for any industry, including the oil and gas industry. Instead, we believe in getting the government out of the way and off the backs of all industries. Oil and gas is wildly profitable on its own. The government just needs to get out of the way, repeal the antidevelopment laws and taxes, and let builders build, investors invest and workers work.

Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to remind all Canadians that the reason the CRA was able to issue this $12-million contract to a U.S. company is that the Liberal government removed the right of first refusal to the Commissionaires for security contracts, which had been in place since 1945. When I asked the Liberals, in this chamber, why they did it, they refused to answer the question.

Considering the Commissionaires is the largest not-for-profit employer of Canadian veterans in Canada, is the Leader of the Opposition as frustrated as I am with this affront to our Canadian veterans?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, first of all, speaking of Canadian veterans, we should take a moment to thank the hon. member for his distinguished service to the Canadian Armed Forces.

Yes, I do share his frustration. There is a reason many, if not all, of the government departments have had a right of first refusal arrangement with the Commissionaires, and that was so they could focus on protecting our buildings and public servants rather than on fighting back lobbyists for large multinational corporations that are trying to steal the work. We wanted the commissionaires to have job security, and that was the reason for the right of first refusal. The fact that the government has not honoured that in this particular case is really a disgrace. If there is one case where putting Canada first was most necessary, it is for the single largest employer of Canadian veterans.

● (1230)

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is great to be here today on the week of the federal budget, which is coming this Thursday. It is an exciting week for all of us.

I will be sharing my time with the member for Pontiac—Kitigan Zibi.

I want to start by acknowledging the buy Canadian policy of our government. It is a very important feature of the government's strategy right now to build Canada strong. I am pleased to address the questions raised by the official opposition regarding the Canada Revenue Agency's recent security services contract. Each of us understands the importance of supporting Canadian workers, veterans and industries. I would like to provide clarity on points raised about this procurement decision.

First and foremost, let me outline the key facts regarding this procurement. On June 16, 2026, the CRA awarded the security services contract to Universal Protection Service of Canada Corporation, operating as Allied Universal security services. The contract came into effect on August 25, 2026. The contract was awarded to Universal Protection Service of Canada Corporation because its proposal best met the established requirements and offered the highest overall value to Canadians. By using the best value approach, the CRA is confident that contracts are awarded to suppliers that meet the highest standards while minimizing risks to the agency.

Some publicly reported information about the evaluation process and its results does not fully and accurately reflect the procurement approach that was used for this contract. The process balanced multiple factors to ensure the best value for the CRA. The outcome was not driven by political considerations, which we often get lots of in the House, but rather by a fair, transparent and open process. The CRA awarded this contract through a competitive, fair and transparent procurement process that was conducted in line with applicable procurement policies and regulations.

The Canada Revenue Agency Act, adopted by Parliament, provides the CRA with full authority to contract and develop its own contracting policy framework, while considering, of course, Treasury Board policies and regulations. The agency has always awarded contracts for security services competitively, as it did this time around. All the suppliers that met the requirements of the request for proposal were eligible to compete for this contract. We all acknowledge that competition is good. This decision was made independently and in accordance with all applicable policies.

Both Universal Protection Service of Canada Corporation and the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires qualified as Canadian suppliers under the terms of the procurement. Supplier eligibility is determined by established operations and business presence in Canada, consistent with procurement policies and trade obligations. I feel it is important to note that Universal Protection Service of Canada Corporation employs approximately 10,000 people across Canada at 19 locations nationwide, and its Canadian headquarters is in Mississauga, Ontario.

This contract was for 60 security guards, and 33 of them, which is over half, were former commissionaires, with 12 of them having served in uniform previously.

The CRA conducted this procurement process by incorporating a wide range of criteria, as is the case with many procurements. In this case, these included quality, capability, cost and risk. Proposals were evaluated based on both technical and financial merit to determine which company offered the best overall value. The final decision was based on the CRA's procurement process, which again is guided by the best value approach. This means that the contract was not awarded solely based on the lowest price, but to the bidder with the highest combined score in all of the areas.

I would like to emphasize that the CRA values the long-standing relationship it has with the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires. Commissionaires has made significant contributions to providing security services to the agency and has demonstrated a strong commitment to support veterans from the Canadian Forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Like all Canadians, we greatly appreciate its efforts. The outcome of this procurement was strictly the result of a competitive evaluation process conducted in accordance with established procurement guidelines and principles.

● (1235)

While veterans remain an important part of the Canadian workforce, it is worth noting that employment opportunities for veterans have expanded significantly in recent years through initiatives such as the national veterans employment strategy. This strategy has created a more diverse set of employment opportunities for veterans by fostering collaboration between government employers and other partners and, as such, veterans have increasingly been connected with more varied job opportunities as a result.

As previously noted, the Canada Revenue Agency Act provides the CRA with the authority to enter into contracts and manage all matters relating to general administrative policy, including procurement. The CRA has full authority to contract and develop its own contracting policy framework while considering Treasury Board policies and regulations. The CRA remains committed, of course, to upholding its procurement obligations in accordance with its policies and codes of conduct, as well as the Government of Canada's obligations.

The CRA's decision reflects a commitment to fairness, value and transparency in all procurement activities. The government, of course, remains committed to supporting Canadian workers, including veterans, and to upholding the principles of our trade agreements and procurement policies. It is imperative that Canadians have confidence in the CRA's processes and understand that decisions are made in their best interests, with a focus on delivering high-quality services while minimizing risks.

Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question to the member, and he seems to be fairly informed, has two parts. First, the only reason CRA was able to issue this contract to a company other than Commissionaires was that Veterans Affairs removed the right of first refusal to Commissionaires, a policy that has been in place since 1945. The government refused to answer a question about that when I asked during question period. Maybe the member now knows why.

Second, I just want to clarify that, during his statement, the member said, I believe, that Allied Universal has maybe 12 Canadian veterans currently employed by the company. I point out that Commissionaires has over 4,000 Canadian veterans. Which one does he think would actually provide more employment opportunity, especially for older Canadian veterans?

Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, just to correct the record, I said that, of the 60 security guards hired through that particular contract, 33 of them were former commissionaires while 12 of those served in uniform previously. Not all commissionaires served in uniform, apparently, from what I have been told. That is just to clarify for the member opposite what I said, to be factually correct.

As to the member's question about the procurement process, I think we would probably all agree that competition within procurement is a positive thing. A best value approach is probably the best way to evaluate procurement contracts. I will note that, within the buy Canadian policy, we have defined Canadian companies as not being determined by ownership criteria, but rather by the number of employment opportunities in Canada. This particular organization has 10,000 employees in Canada, so it did qualify under those criteria.

Members need to understand that the best value of this contract was weighed between a number of different factors, and this is the decision the CRA made. It stands by that decision. Even though I know it is hard for us and members opposite to accept that decision, it was the one determined to be in the best value, which is a balance of all the different criteria, as I mentioned, of quality, risk, employment and other factors within that procurement process.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, on this, I find myself unequivocally agreeing with the member of Parliament for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and finding the argumentation from my friend, the parliamentary secretary, lacking because the fundamental piece around the best efficiencies, the best competitive bid, omits the commitment to buy Canadian.

The maple-washing point made by the leader of the official opposition would also apply to the $2 billion to General Dynamics for buying military equipment while claiming it is a Canadian company, although General Dynamics is a 100% U.S. company with a branch plant in London, Ontario. Canadians want to see investment in Canadian companies, first and foremost. So-called LNG Canada has not a single Canadian corporation involved. There are also PetroChina and Shell. I could go on.

Canadians really are calling for the government to put Canada first in procurement. I wonder if the parliamentary secretary could give us a sense of where that ranks when there are competing bids.

● (1240)

Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite's question and comments. Just to be clear, the buy Canadian policy defines a company that qualifies as one not determined by who owns the company but rather by its significant operations within Canada, including employment opportunities. As I said, the contract in question here includes 10,000 employees in Canada. That is a significant base that supports the Canadian economy.

In terms of overall numbers, PSPC awarded a total of 1,644 new contracts for $23 billion. Some 1,342 of those contracts, worth roughly $17.7 billion, were awarded to Canadian suppliers. Again, the buy Canadian policy is real, and it is working. I know the members opposite keep pointing out instances, with some contracts, where perhaps there may be no Canadian supplier or a supplier does not have the same operations in Canada, and I think that it is weighing heavily upon the procurement decisions that are made by PSPC and the Treasury Board directives right across the government.

[*Translation*]

Sophie Chatel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with Remembrance Day now only nine days away, today we have a very important opportunity to remind Canadians that remembrance, commemoration and respect for the veterans in our communities have a place not only on November 11, but throughout the year, and for all Canadians. We owe that recognition to the women and men who have served and those who continue to serve our great country and protect our sovereignty.

[*English*]

It is in this spirit that I rise today to address the opposition motion. Respect for veterans and support for Canadian business deserve a serious debate. By treating a single contract as a measure of our government's respect for veterans, however, the opposition overlooks the breadth and the scale of the contribution they can make.

At committee, representatives of several veterans groups and organizations told us that we need to change the narrative about our veterans. We need to talk about their skills, training, experience and all they bring all of that to the civil workforce. Many leave the military at the age of 34. This is the average age of a veteran today, with years of working life ahead of them. What do they bring with them? They bring technical expertise in fields like airspace, cybersecurity and other dual-use technologies, including drones.

They are a tremendous asset in our country, particularly in those sectors where there is an acute labour shortage, yet the opposition motion focuses on their role in security services. Of course, our veterans are qualified for that work, but their opportunities extend way beyond that. They can help advance our industrial strategy, strengthen our defence industry and continue serving Canada in many different ways. That requires a lot more than a procurement decision. It requires the recognition of the skills and qualifications they acquired during their service. They need to put their expertise to work in industries that need them. That is precisely what our Minister of Veterans Affairs is working to deliver.

● (1245)

[*Translation*]

This motion gives me the opportunity to tell Canada's veterans about an important next step our government is taking to address today's realities and tomorrow's opportunities.

All across Canada, companies in many sectors are seeking qualified personnel to fill key strategic positions, expand their operations, and seize new business opportunities. Over the next 10 years, 593,000 new jobs in Red Seal trades will need to be filled. Trade schools will not be able to provide enough workers. In the aerospace sector alone, it is estimated that between 42,000 and 65,000 positions will need to be filled over the next 10 years. According to one study, trade schools will only be able to meet about 25% of that demand. At the same time, nearly 8,000 members of the Canadian Armed Forces leave military service each year, at an average age of 34.

Today, I would like to talk about how our government can bridge the gap between these two realities. In my view, veterans represent one of the largest untapped talent pools in the country. Their hands-on experience in logistics, operations, engineering, and information technology is a valuable asset for Canada as it seeks to diversify and expand its economic relationships around the world. When they want to embark on a new career, we must give them every opportunity to put that expertise to good use. We are doing this for veterans because they have served Canada and protected our sovereignty, but we are also doing it so that they can continue to contribute to Canada. We need them.

One point deserves to be highlighted. As I mentioned, today's veterans are, on average, quite young. They are seasoned professionals whose skills are in high demand, particularly in the dual-use technology sector, referring to technology that can be used both for military purposes and in our strategic industries. In addition to their technical expertise, Canada's veterans bring some even more highly valued assets to the table: strong leadership skills, problem-solving abilities, project management experience and a proven ability to perform under challenging and demanding conditions. Their expertise in logistics, cybersecurity, advanced technologies, human resources, finance and Red Seal trades deserves full recognition.

The challenge is that these fields are not the ones that immediately come to mind when we talk about military service. My colleagues are putting a lot of focus on security services. However, by limiting veterans to jobs in this field, we are missing an extraordinary opportunity to recognize their talent and expertise in leading trades. When a person did not serve in the military themselves and is unfamiliar with the military environment, it can be difficult for them to grasp the diverse range of skills that military personnel have. We are talking about acquired skills that are essential to modern military operations. More importantly, they are completely transferable to a civilian work environment. In many cases, they are exactly the skills that employers are looking for.

Canada, with our Minister of Veterans Affairs, is now taking deliberate steps to strengthen our defence industrial capacity, to invest in major projects and national development initiatives across the country, and to recognize the role that veterans can play in meeting that objective. We are living at a time when the demand for skilled workers will only continue to go grow. Last week, in Victoria, British Columbia, the Minister of Veterans Affairs announced a key initiative to encourage our veterans to contribute to our strategic defence industry following their military career. I am talking about the veteran employer recognition initiative and the new “Veteran Ready” designation, which recognizes organizations that value veterans' skills and that will commit to helping them transition to a successful civilian career in the field of their choice. This strategy sends a clear message to veterans, staff, clients and communities: This organization recognizes the value of military service, experience and leadership.

I therefore call on businesses and the general public across the country to show leadership in their local communities, raise awareness of this designation in their ridings, encourage businesses to take part in the initiative, help employers recognize the value of military experience, and help veterans find employment opportunities that match their skills.

● (1250)

[*English*]

Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, first, I want to say that I agree with 95% of the member's speech. I fully endorse that our younger veterans, whose average age is 35, are capable of filling any job that Canadian industry and the Canadian job market have to offer. From social workers to public affairs officers to electrical technicians, they can do it all.

However, the question I asked the member last week was why Veterans Affairs removed the right of first refusal from the Commissionaires, a policy that has been in place since 1945. The older veteran commissionaires, on average, are in their late forties to early fifties. These are people who are just looking for work. They are already working for the Commissionaires, over 4,000 of them.

Why did the government remove the right of first refusal from the Commissionaires? They are not mutually exclusive. We can have both. We can be encouraging our veterans to work everywhere and helping to set up the right conditions, but at the same time, we should be supporting the Commissionaires, the largest non-profit employer of Canadian veterans.

Sophie Chatel: Madam Speaker, security service are an important part of employment, and they will continue because our military personnel are good at them. They have the training, the experience, the knowledge and the security clearance to carry on in this job.

My point, and the focus of this government, is the much broader challenge that faces our veteran community. It is to find a rewarding career that really reflects the wealth of their experience and contributions and the fact that they are really technically savvy. They work with amazing dual-use technology. We need to have as a priority the recognition of their skills so they can have a rewarding career. They have many years to fulfill that.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the parliamentary secretary on her speech. I have the privilege of serving alongside her on the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Let us be honest. Everyone in this House knows that the right of first refusal currently held by the Commissionaires organization—formerly known as the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, which has existed since 1945 and just celebrated its 80th anniversary—will expire on March 31. Consequently, as of April 1, that right will no longer be on any government tender documents for security guard services anywhere in the government.

It seems to me that this runs counter to the discussions we have had at the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, where we have been exploring ways to help veterans transition successfully into the labour market following their military careers.

My question is quite simple: Does the parliamentary secretary believe it makes sense to allow the right of first refusal to expire on March 31?

● (1255)

Sophie Chatel: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question and for her work on the committee. I want to acknowledge the excellent work she does.

Security guard services are important, but I think this represents a very limiting view of the careers and experience of today's veterans. The average veteran is now just 34 or 35 years old. Our government's priority is not to find security guard positions for these veterans, because they possess extraordinary skills and can contribute to Canada's defence industrial strategy. When they transition to civilian life, they bring expertise in areas such as drones, cybersecurity and aerospace.

Moreover, this is not about the right of first refusal, because there are labour shortages in the aerospace sector, one of Quebec's flagship industries. Over the next 10 years, an average of between 42,000 and 65,000 positions will need to be filled, and there will be more than 8,000 new veterans each year who possess many of the technical skills required for those jobs.

The priority is skills recognition, and I encourage my colleagues to support it.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with the lovely member for Laurentides—Labelle.

What a pleasure it is for me to rise today as the Bloc Québécois critic for veterans affairs on this opposition day, when we are questioning certain government decisions regarding support provided to the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires.

First, let us remember that Remembrance Day is just a week away, and MPs from Quebec and Canada will be invited to participate in remembrance ceremonies by their local Royal Canadian Legion branches. In my riding, the ceremony hosted by the Valleyfield branch in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield will take place on Saturday, as will the ceremony in Beauharnois. The ceremonies in Huntingdon and Ormstown will take place on Friday. It is important for us, as MPs, to attend, but it is just as important to encourage our constituents to take part in these remembrance ceremonies. This is an opportunity to recognize the sacrifices of those who went to war, sometimes at the cost of their lives, their health or their family life. I encourage everyone to attend the ceremonies in their community and meet with veterans. I will be very pleased to attend, and I will take the time to listen to the veterans, because they have a lot to share with us.

The motion before us today is rather long and deals with several subjects, so I chose to focus my remarks on certain issues and on the Liberal government's choice to turn its back on veterans.

I was listening to my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, who argued that veterans are younger, that there is no question of sidelining them, that we need to modernize, that we have to accept this, that many jobs will be available, and that this justifies the right of refusal.

I want her to know that these things are not mutually exclusive. Currently, nearly 3,000 veterans work as security guards for the Commissionaires. They are worried right now. These veterans are used to holding a position that could disappear as of April 1. This could in fact be the case if the government's public tender and specifications do not specify that the Commissionaires have the first right of refusal. This refers to an arrangement where preference is given to companies that commit to hiring veterans for the positions.

This agreement has been in place for 80 years. The Canadian Corps of Commissionaires has been around since 1925. It was created specifically to support veterans, help them transition to civilian life and, above all, find employment. As we know, at the end of one's military career, continuing to be useful and contributing to the development of one's community is important for self-esteem and for what comes next. Now the Commissionaires are being deliberately abandoned. Frankly, I think I am choosing my words carefully, but I cannot put it any other way. The Commissionaires are being told that it is over. Now the government is awarding security contracts, at the lowest possible cost, to whichever company meets the criteria set out by Procurement Canada, and removing the right of refusal.

It is important to remember that this arrangement has been in place for 80 years, as I said, and has never really been a problem. I do not know why the government wants to get rid of it, because there is really no gain for veterans. Alternatively, if we keep it, there is really no loss for the government either.

The government keeps saying that veterans are important. A massive recruitment campaign is under way at the Department of National Defence to meet military targets. That means that a growing number of veterans will be reaching the end of their military careers and arriving at Veterans Affairs Canada. I fail to understand the logic of that, apart from saving on a few costs here and there. It is almost as if some public servant crunching numbers somewhere was told to modernize all that, because it mattered more.

Veterans, especially the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, have taken that as a clear and unequivocal sign that veterans are no longer part of the current government's plans. A lot of people are no longer part of the current government's plans.

The environment might not be either, or Quebec SMEs. Now, it is our veterans' turn to be told that they are no longer part of the plans. As we know, however, the oil companies are part of the government's plans. There are data centres all over Alberta. They are part of the government's plans too, but continuing to support the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires is not.

I have a great deal of respect for the parliamentary secretary, but I hear her saying that this is not a particularly serious problem and that the government actually wants bigger things for veterans. It wants them to be more than security guards. It wants them to get more important jobs, value-added jobs.

I would simply reply that these things are not mutually exclusive.

When I hear the Minister of Finance and National Revenue talk about the loss of the Commissionaires' contract over a difference of $80,000, as stated in the motion, I am offended.

● (1300)

What offended me during this debate in the House was hearing people say that only about 60 employees will be impacted, about half of whom are veterans, and that those who wish to be rehired by the new company that was awarded the contract will have to accept a 14% pay cut. This is serious. The minister argued that this is an agency, that he cannot become involved in its decision-making and that he cannot intervene. He says it is an independent agency that made its own choices. It was the agency that decided not to include the Commissionaires' right of first refusal in its call for tenders.

The Liberal government had no qualms about ordering the CRTC to reconsider its decision to tax the digital giants. It intervened politically because the CRTC had reached a different conclusion than the one the government wanted. Now the Canada Revenue Agency has awarded a contract to a privately owned U.S. company, which does have Canadian subsidiaries, but which has made no commitment to keeping veterans on under the same employment conditions. That response is not only hard to understand; it is totally unacceptable.

If the government were truly committed to our veterans, it would have instructed the Canada Revenue Agency and all government agencies to include a requirement to hire a certain percentage of veterans in their calls for tenders. That is what we call political direction. No such direction was given. That is not surprising, given that the government has chosen to eliminate the right of first refusal altogether. This is a serious concern, and it is one of the issues we are highlighting today, seeing as most Quebeckers and Canadians are unaware of it.

Another thing that concerns me is that the government is just pumping out new agencies: agencies to handle cybersecurity, one to handle crime and money laundering, and yet another to deal with military procurement. What it all boils down to is that these agencies are all independent and the government is washing its hands of responsibility. When things go wrong, it will be the agencies' fault. There is no political accountability. That is what is worrisome today. We are seeing this with our veterans. The CRA's decision to drop the Commissionaires has led to a loss of jobs for our veterans.

● (1305)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will start off by indicating how much I personally value our veterans and the contributions they have made to our community. The government as a whole does too, and we see that in a number of policies that I could easily expand upon.

The question I have for the member is in regard to the CRA as an independent agency with an established criteria when something goes out to tender. Can she give her perspective as to the number of people in the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires who are veterans? Is the member aware of that? She gives the impression that they are all veterans. I am advising that that is not necessarily the case, even though they do outstanding work.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, my colleague's question gives me an opportunity to clarify some things. I know that we are talking about the equivalent of 12 full-time positions for veterans. It is true that, when we talk about this, it seems that it is not a big number. However, that is not what is at issue. It is the principle that is at issue. Indeed, the CRA moved up the April 1 deadline by publishing specifications and exempting itself from the Commissionaires' right of refusal. That is what we are questioning here.

The fact that veterans representing 12 full-time equivalent positions are losing their jobs may seem insignificant to the parliamentary secretary. However, I think it is too many, because they already had a job. Moreover, those who stay will be paid $2 to $4 an hour less to do the same work.

Evidently, I cannot agree with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, who says that it is a small amount. No, it is not, because a right has just been taken away. Moreover, this is the first agency to decide to take this right away. Soon, on April 1, if the government does not change its mind, it would be the entire government, through Public Services and Procurement Canada, that will remove the Commissionaires' right of refusal.

[*English*]

Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her hard work on the veterans affairs committee, which we both sit on. She was very flexible and was able to sub in as the chair recently due to an emergency and some challenging times.

The subject the committee is studying right now is veterans and employment. Does the member not find it absolutely ludicrous that at the time the committee is doing this study, which the Liberals brought forward, the Liberal government is going to be unemploying 3,000 veterans? Also, there was a witness who said out of frustration that this is not the first time we have studied this, and we are doing it again. What are her thoughts on that?

● (1310)

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague. I enjoy serving with him on the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. He is absolutely right. The Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs is looking for ways to improve veterans' employability and the transferability and recognition of their skills as they transition to the civilian workforce. The main issue is access to employment opportunities.

Right now, it seems as though the government is taking a step back. It is turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to veterans who are telling us that they need this historic partnership with the Commissionaires to continue.

We do not understand that inconsistency.

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, having served as vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs for a year, I cannot help but wonder: If veterans are so important, particularly when they return to civilian life, why ditch a decades-long tradition that supported our veterans?

Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, it is hard to understand.

It costs nothing for the government to keep the program, yet it has a significant impact on veterans. As we speak, veterans are shocked and dismayed by the decision.

We hope that the government will change its mind and that, as of April 1, the Commissionaires will retain their right of first refusal.

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, some are attentive, while others are less so. My colleagues would do well to listen and learn from what I have to say today.

Last week in the House I spoke to Bill C-40, which seeks to create a Crown corporation for defence procurement. I was saying that creating the Crown corporation would be the end of transparency, accountability and the disclosure of choices and interests. I was also saying that I was concerned that the government would shirk responsibility for a decision that, in my opinion, was inconsistent and ill-advised.

As far as today's proceedings are concerned, I commend the Conservative Party's initiative on this issue, because this decision highlights exactly what I was talking about last week. Earlier, I mentioned that I had served as vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, but I am also vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. My job as the Bloc Québécois critic for procurement is to shed light on government contracts.

The committee has a mandate to examine the technical aspects and the governance of choices and decisions. I met with some commissionaires this summer. I met with Marc Parent. I was shocked to learn that the government was planning on ending the long-standing tradition of hiring commissionaires for security services.

The Canadian Corps of Commissionaires has a long history, just recently celebrating their 100th anniversary. I was proud to be the critic for veterans affairs for a year, and I know the Minister of Veterans Affairs is passionate and dedicated to helping veterans transition into civilian life. A study on entrepreneurship is currently under way, and prior learning is being recognized. How can we help veterans make the transition easier?

Now veterans, the ones who are commissionaires, are being told that they do not matter, that they are not important enough to the government and that the government no longer believes in the core mission. They are being told that this contract is ending and that the government has decided instead to award it to an American company that has branches in Canada.

We need to be careful. How far does the buy Canadian policy go when it comes to doing business with Canadians?

The Liberals are telling us that this was an independent decision by the CRA and so no one is accountable. No one is responsible for this.

This just goes to show that the government wants to create corporations and agencies so that it can wash its hands of responsibility for decisions. That way, if people are unhappy, then it is not the government's responsibility. That is what is happening here.

This decision has serious consequences in terms of the message that it sends not only to our veterans but also to all legislators. That is a big part of our role.

I often talk about my role as a legislator because I do not think that people really understand it. Parliament is made up of elected officials from the government party and from the opposition parties. Our role, as the opposition, is to hold the government to account on behalf of the people we represent. We must ensure that the use of tax dollars and the government's decisions and policies are in keeping with the best interests of citizens. The government is taking away parliamentarians' ability to do their job for the sake of efficiency, but efficiency should not come at the cost of a loss of democratic oversight. That oversight is at the very heart of who we are.

It is the same thing with Canada Post. Canada Post is a Crown corporation. When we ask questions, the government tells us that the board of directors is responsible for decisions. That is an easy and convenient answer. However, Canada Post is in an untenable financial situation and has been for many years. We all know that.

● (1315)

Meanwhile, bonuses continued to flow freely even as the government was being called upon to cover the deficits.

The lack of transparency at Canada Post prevented parliamentarians, Quebeckers, Canadians and employees from obtaining a true, clear and accurate picture of the situation facing the Crown corporation.

It was under my leadership that the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates launched a study of Canada Post. Despite our responsibility for overseeing public funds, we have been learning about changes at Canada Post through press releases and push notifications. That is not normal. It shows a blatant lack of respect for Parliament and for our democratic institutions.

The same can be said of the Crown corporation responsible for defence procurement. The government will tell us that decisions to purchase a particular aircraft, vessel or tank will be made by its board of directors. Billions of dollars will be invested in strengthening Canada's defence capabilities as the federal government seeks to meet NATO's target. Such procurement decisions must be subject to rigorous oversight. Let me be clear: taxpayers' money is not private money. When I spend money in my own businesses, I am free to do so and I bear the consequences. When it is my money, it is my business. That is not the case here. Public funds come from taxes and are entrusted to government through a social contract between citizens and the state to support the core functions of government.

When a government shirks certain democratic responsibilities in the name of efficiency, it is our duty to sound the alarm, ask questions and spark the necessary debates. The government is constantly running ads across all platforms, and that worries me greatly. Constituents regularly raise the issue when I am back in my riding. Slogans such as “build Canada strong” are everywhere. We are told that Canada must become its own best customer. The trouble is that it increasingly appears to be little more than a slogan, an ad campaign. Canadians are constantly being encouraged to believe they are the best, yet the government continues to award contracts to the lowest bidder.

In committee last week, the procurement ombud told members that it is imperative to ensure that government measures do not undermine Parliament's ability to do its job. He is concerned, and said so a number of times. Any such measures must respect the responsibilities entrusted to members of Parliament.

It will come as no surprise to anyone that the Prime Minister is running Canada like a business. A government is not a business. A government has obligations, including the obligation to be accountable to its citizens and carry out its moral duties. I am seriously concerned about these abuses. Our role as parliamentarians is to bring things to light and hold the government to account. Our role is also to ask hard questions and demand answers. That is why I am calling on members not to look away, but to pay attention to what is happening and to what the government is doing.

● (1320)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have said a great deal about our veterans and how much we value them and will continue to work to support them.

My question for the member is in regard to subsidiary companies in general, and it is more on the principle of them. Does the member recognize that there is a lot of crossover between the United States and Canada on subsidiaries and that it works both ways? There are subsidiaries owned by American companies that have a large footprint here in Canada, and vice versa. Does the member believe in principle that companies with subsidiaries that are located in Canada and have a substantial footprint should be incorporated into any form of buy Canada policy?

[*Translation*]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, because I did not have time to say everything.

The procurement ombud told us last week that enough data is available to evaluate the buy Canadian policy and determine where things stand. We need to look at the criteria to determine what is working well and what would be worthy of the buy Canadian stamp.

For the time being, however, the focus is on maximizing participation and access for Canadian businesses, which need opportunities to work in light of the current geopolitical environment. We will get the documents from the procurement ombud, and the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates will study them before coming back to the House on this issue.

[*English*]

Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, someone I spent some time with at the veterans affairs committee. She is surely missed, but she has been well replaced.

My colleague from across the aisle asked a question about principle. It was a very good question to ask. The principle of this is why we brought this motion forward as an opposition day motion. It is the principle of putting veterans first, those who have sacrificed their lives for the freedoms we have and for us to be able to speak freely in this House.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on the principle of this opposition motion.

[*Translation*]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, the point is not only to speak out, but also to correct course. If we truly want to support veterans, the Prime Minister must start by listening to his minister, who is trying to do the right thing, and take action. Right now, veterans are being left behind, and that saddens me greatly.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Madam Speaker, I hope that the member for Winnipeg North is listening to my question, because I am going to give him the figures he asked me for earlier. I have them in front of me. The Canada Revenue Agency chose not to maintain the Commissionaires' right of first refusal. What has been the result? The government keeps talking about 12 veterans, but that figure actually represents a volume of work equivalent to 12 full-time positions. In reality, the decision affects about 50 veterans. Most of those who were selected chose either to retire or to transfer to other Commissionaires contracts rather than accept the pay cut imposed by the new private-sector provider. Does the member believe that is acceptable?

● (1325)

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, people are focusing on critical mass, but I think we need to step back and look at the quality of the program and what we are actually trying to achieve. Yes, there is a number involved. To take the example of Cúram, one could argue that only 33,000 seniors were affected among millions, but that is not the point. The point is that we had a legitimate model that supported veterans in their transition to civilian life. What is happening now is unacceptable, which is why I welcome the Conservatives' opposition day motion.

[*English*]

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to this important motion. I note that I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague, the member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, who is a veteran. Like other veterans in the House, I want to thank him for his service.

I want to take this opportunity to remind and encourage Canadians to wear a poppy. It is a very small but really important gesture that we can take as we lead up to Remembrance Day. October 24 is now designated as the date we are going to start wearing our poppies every year. The Royal Canadian Legion has set it, so it should be easier for us to remember than the time change.

It is so important that we engage in the act of remembrance. In fact, it is an obligation we have, one that I know all members of the House take very seriously. When we find areas of common agreement, we should really lean into those and take them as an instruction on how we should carry things all the way forward.

That leads to the subject of the motion we are considering today. It has two broader contexts that I want to address. I have spoken to the importance of remembrance, the duty we have to the men and women who have done their duty for us, for Canadians. They have afforded us the privilege of living in a democracy and a free and fair country, and in a place where when we have elections, power is changed without a shot being fired. This is done on the backs of the men and women who have put on the uniform to defend our basic freedoms. This is the first thing.

Once they are done with their service to us and once they have taken the uniform off for the last time, what do we owe to them? I would say the dignity that comes from employment is one area where we can fulfill our obligation to our veterans. Another is that we deliver on making sure we help them get well from any injuries or illnesses that arise from their service. This is not something we do a great job of in this country. It is something we need to do better on, and I am committed to that work, along with my colleagues. Employment is something we can work on. As legislators, it is something we can do in this place. How can we create opportunities for veteran employment?

The second thing I want to talk about is the current time we are in. We are in the midst of a trade war with our neighbours to the south, and it has come as a result of President Trump, frankly, starting a trade war with us while we had a trade deal with the U.S. In the face of that, the Liberal government has said that we need to buy Canadian. I agree. I agree that we need to prioritize buying Canadian now more than ever. We should be making sure that Canadian firms are fulfilling federal contracts.

Should we do both things at the same time? Should we be making sure that we create employment opportunities for our veterans at the same time that we are buying Canadian? I would say yes. I think that is a pretty natural fit.

We have the case of the security contract of $12 million for the CRA. The contract was awarded to a subsidiary of an American company that is affiliated with and linked to Trump, to the U.S. president. The company is carrying out work for the Trump administration and for ICE. ICE is in the headlines for all the wrong reasons. We do not necessarily need to get deeply into that issue. We generally get it, and I do not think we want it. I do not think we want to import that here.

● (1330)

The CRA had the opportunity to award this contract to the firm in question, the Trump-linked company, or to a Canadian not-for-profit, the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires. It is the largest non-governmental employer of veterans in Canada. It employs more than 4,000 veterans. How do I know that it is the largest employer of veterans? I checked and the Canadian War Museum provides that figure for us.

The difference in the bids for these two companies, the American firm and the Canadian not-for-profit firm, was less than 1%. I am talking about $80,000. What are our obligations here? Are we buying Canadian? Are we creating employment opportunities for veterans? When we first pointed this out to the government, I expected its response would have been muted, but it would have done the right thing. I was frankly quite surprised that it doubled down on it.

What we want to do with this motion is give the government the opportunity to get it right. I think the timing is really important. We want to signal to veterans and to their families that we are going to prioritize employment opportunities for Canadian veterans. We need to look at the timing of this in the face of this ongoing trade dispute with the U.S. We should be sending a message to Canadian businesses that we are going to prioritize government contracts to Canadian firms.

The government has the opportunity to do what I would say is the right thing. I think we would agree that it is the right thing to do. That is what we are asking for today. We are asking for the government to reverse the decision to award this contract to a firm that has questionable ties and instead award it to a Canadian company.

Does that need to be the Commissionaires? I have spoken to its bona fides as an employer of Canadian veterans, but I think the first principle we should be applying here is buying Canadian, and then we need to be giving consideration to the employment opportunities that we are creating for veterans. Let us commit ourselves to that. Let us recommit ourselves to the opportunities that we are creating for Canadian veterans.

I am not asking what is the most we can do, but as a country and as legislators, when we are setting the direction and the priorities for the federal government, I do think that this is probably the least we can do. The least we can do is buy Canadian in the face of this trade dispute. I think that creating these employment opportunities for veterans is the least we can do for the men and women who have served our country with unlimited liability.

With that, I want to take one more opportunity to encourage Canadians to engage in an act of remembrance, to attend a cenotaph service in their community or to thank a veteran. They do not need to want to be thanked for someone to thank them. I encourage Canadians to wear a poppy, and to keep in their thoughts the families and the brothers and sisters in arms of those who were killed and injured in the tragic events in Wainwright of late. If someone is a person of faith, I encourage them to say a prayer for them.

I encourage Canadians to reflect on the fact that we do live in the greatest country in the world, and we owe so much of that to the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces and our veterans.

● (1335)

Caroline Desrochers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his service.

I am just wondering if the member is aware that, under our government, we have done so much in support of veterans, including over these last few months, such as the disability benefit, which we have invested in for over four years. Just last week, we launched a veteran employer recognition initiative, which is going to help veterans with finding a job. We are making health care more accessible.

[*Translation*]

The parliamentary secretary has done a great deal of work on this file during her tenure.

[*English*]

How does the hon. member feel about the fact that when the Conservatives were in power, they closed nine Veterans Affairs offices across the country? We reopened them under this government.

I would like to know how he feels as a former member of the Armed Forces.

Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, as a legislator today, who has committed himself to serving veterans and to serving all Canadians, I can tell members that what I am hearing from veterans is that they are not interested in focusing exclusively on the rearview mirror. If we want to compare outrages on where the government has fallen down over the last 11 years, I think it is a damning indictment of the government and our service to veterans. If we want to compare the government before that, I think it is a damning indictment of how this place has served our veterans, and the government before that as well. I think that we can commit ourselves today to doing better for veterans. That is what I am asking for.

Is there some good news for veterans that the government has announced? Sure, there is. Is there more to do? Do we need to get wait times down? Do we need the government to meet even just its own service delivery standards, which are far too long? Absolutely, we do. Let us commit collectively to doing better today.

[*Translation*]

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my Conservative colleague on his speech.

I find today's motion particularly compelling for a number of reasons. First, the national poppy campaign is in full swing. Nearly every member of the House is proudly wearing a poppy in remembrance of those who fought, and those who gave their lives, for our freedom and our values.

Against that backdrop, we are confronted with a situation that, in my view, is nothing short of an insult to our veterans, whom we have pledged to honour and whom we are sincerely honouring, I would hope, during this special week.

Can my colleague tell us a bit more about the fact that, during the last election campaign, the parties generally agreed to implement a buy Canadian, buy local policy and to implement measures that promote buying from local companies and groups?

What message does it send to veterans that they were passed over in favour of an American company with ties to ICE and a questionable track record? I would like to hear my colleague's comments about the sensitivity that should have been shown to this group of individuals whom we are honouring during this special week.

[*English*]

Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, we can see quite plainly that this decision does not align with what are plainly Canadian values. It is not aligned with what Canadians expressed in the last election. Most importantly, I think the motion and the discussion today measure the Prime Minister's words against his actions. We want him to make good on what Canadians expect him to do. They expect him to do it because he said he was going to. We want the government to buy Canadian. We want it to honour our veterans.

I think that this choice, frankly, is diametrically opposed to what Canadians want. It is antithetical to what the government says it believes and what it will do. We want to create opportunity for Canadian firms, but we also need to send a message. What are Canadian values? What do we believe? Who are we going to stand up for? If we are not standing up for Canadian businesses and if we are not standing up for the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces, what are we doing here?

There is an opportunity for the government to do the right thing. The Liberals can reverse the decision and award this contract to a Canadian firm because it is the right thing to do and it is what they said they were going to do.

● (1340)

Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Madam Speaker, from my perspective, to start off, I would like to acknowledge the generational remembrance that we have. Not too many people can see this, but in the gallery we have some young girls who are wearing poppies right now and they are sitting with their family of many generations. That is heartwarming. I will not name them because I do not know them, but I just want to thank them for wearing a poppy and for supporting our troops, and that is what we are here to talk about.

I am proud to rise in support of this motion. In a few days, we will gather at cenotaphs in every town in this country. In Moose Jaw, in Lanigan, in Watrous and in Outlook, people will stand in the cold to keep two minutes of silence. Remembrance is about a promise. We promise those who serve that we will not forget them and that we will keep faith with them.

In 1945, Canada made a simple commitment. When Ottawa needed its buildings guarded, it would call the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires first, because the corps hired the people who came home. That policy was created under Mackenzie King and kept by 12 prime ministers after him, Liberals and Conservatives alike. A Conservative government reaffirmed the policy in 2006 and widened it to include RCMP members. It took this Prime Minister to end it. This year, the Liberals ended the policy with a letter, but with no real explanation, no meaningful consultation and no replacement.

We are talking about roughly $350 million a year and about 8,000 guards at federal sites. More than 3,000 of them are veterans. The government's own briefing notes said it was engaging with stakeholders. The Commissionaires say they were never consulted. They have had to go to Federal Court just to be heard. The government says veterans are not working enough of the hours, but the government sets the wages on those contracts and the Commissionaires say that they have drifted toward minimum wage. The government sets the wages, then blames the court. If the target is broken, they should fix the target. The Commissionaires' court filing says a former deputy minister proposed exactly that. Instead, the government scrapped the program and kept the excuse.

This year, the government is breaking that promise. It is ending an 80-year commitment to give veterans a job when they come home, and it is handing their work to a lower bidder, even when its buy Canadian policy says otherwise.

Then came the Canada Revenue Agency contract. When the Trump administration launched its trade war, the Prime Minister promised that whenever Ottawa spends, it would select Canadian suppliers by default. In April, he promised to build Canada strong with Canadian steel, Canadian aluminum, Canadian lumber and Canadian workers. Then in June, with the CRA security contract, nearly $12 million went to the Canadian subsidiary of an American multinational over a Canadian not-for-profit that is the country's largest employer of veterans. The difference between bids was $80,000, less than 1%.

To put that in perspective, according to the government's own answer to an Order Paper question, the Prime Minister's delegation spent $175,000 on in-flight catering during one 10-day trip to China, Qatar and Davos this January. The gap in the cost to veterans is less than half of that.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Fraser Tolmie: I know where you're going with that. I will deal with it later.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I am not going anywhere.

Fraser Tolmie: Madam Speaker, this is not about one company. The question is what the government asked for, and keeping veterans on was not part of it. The government says that 12 veterans kept their jobs under this contract. Twelve is a number they found after the fact. Nothing in that contract required a single veteran to be hired. Canadian steel, Canadian aluminum, Canadian lumber, Canadian workers; apparently not Canadian veterans. A slogan is not a policy.

● (1345)

Every time we have asked about this contract, the government has given the same answer. The Secretary of State told the House, “Politicians are not involved in these decisions.” It is hands off. However, this fall, the House has been debating Bill C-40, the government's new defence procurement agency. Under that bill, the minister would be able to direct the agency's procurement, and it would have to comply, as an associate minister would get direction over a $1-billion fund that can lend money and buy shares. The bill would give the government 17 ways to skip open competition.

When it is $1-billion defence contracts, the government wants both hands on the wheel. When it is veterans' jobs and its own buy Canadian policy, suddenly it is hands off. That tells us where its priorities are.

Bill C-40 would rewrite how Canada buys for its military, and it does not contain a single target for veteran-owned businesses nor one credit for companies that hire veterans. The United States sets goals for veteran-owned businesses in federal funding contracting. The Canadian government already knows how to set procurement targets when it wants to. Veterans do not get one. In one year, the government ended the right of first refusal, let veterans lose the CRA contract over $80,000 and wrote a defence procurement with no place for veterans. That is not an accident. It is a pattern.

I have sat on the veterans affairs committee since 2021. In that time, we have come back to debate veterans' work transition over and again. Every one of those studies lands in the same place: Meaningful work after service is one of the biggest factors in veterans' well-being. Therefore, what I cannot square is that at this very moment, our committee is studying how to get veterans into good jobs, but the government is ending the one federal procurement policy built to do exactly that, and there is no plan to replace it. Nothing says how many veterans would be hired, or where, or how anyone would know.

When I was the mayor of Moose Jaw, we had a rule: If we cannot measure it, we cannot manage it. The government is scrapping the one veterans jobs program it could actually measure and is replacing it with nothing.

Conservatives believe that a promise to a veteran is a promise we keep. The motion before us asks the government to do three simple things: First, respect veterans; second, follow its own buy Canadian policy; and third, have the Prime Minister reverse the CRA security contract.

None of this is complicated. It is a question of whether the government means what it says. In a few days, at the cenotaph in Moose Jaw, the last post will sound, and we will fall silent. We will remember the people who kept the promise they made to this country. The least we can do is keep ours to them: a job when they come home and a government that means what it says.

We want to thank the veterans of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan who are serving at 15 Wing and at Dundurn, those across our country and those who serve alongside them, as well as their families. Veterans kept their promise to Canada. Conservatives will make sure Canada keeps its promise to them.

I would like to recognize a lot of people within our community and in Parliament who are veterans. I would like to thank my colleague who is the critic for Veterans Affairs for his service, and a few other fellow members. This means a lot to us. That is why we brought the motion forward. It means a lot to Canadians. We are pleading with the Prime Minister to make the decision to change his mind on this and recognize that it is okay to humble himself and say that he was wrong.

● (1350)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not believe it was intentional, but I wonder if the member recognizes that he somewhat misled the House earlier when he implied that 3,000 veterans would be affected or fired. Could he provide clarification on the actual number of veterans, if he actually knows?

Fraser Tolmie: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from across the aisle. I know he served in the military, and I respect his time in service. It is obviously something he is very passionate about and understands.

The fact that the government is cancelling this contract to support a company that is supporting Trump's ICE detention program is distasteful. Canadians want better and expect better from their government.

Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think most Canadians have heard the debate today and they go back to the Prime Minister's having made promises about buying Canadian and supporting Canadians. That is why most of us find it very strange that the CRA did not give a security contract to a top patriotic organization, arguably the most patriotic organization, in Canada, the Commissionaires, but to what Newsweek called a top patriotic company in the U.S.

I will ask the member whether he thinks it is appropriate to give the contract to the most patriotic Canadian company, or to the most patriotic American company.

Fraser Tolmie: Madam Speaker, obviously I am pro-Canadian. We should be supporting our troops and our veterans. When they come home, they want meaningful employment.

One of the things not being touched on here is that veterans who come home, when they leave the military, go through a bit of an identity crisis. Giving them meaningful employment is something that helps with their mental well-being. Therefore, it is a complete slap in the face to Canadian veterans when they come home and find fewer opportunities for employment in the workforce in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by commending my colleague on his speech.

On the issue of respect for our veterans and our armed forces, we are on the same page. I think it is important to acknowledge that today.

On the issue of buying local, I cannot get over it. The government's decision not to make good on the commitments made by the Prime Minister himself is quite troubling. I do not understand it. I still cannot make sense of it.

That said, I have a serious question that is kind of underlying all of this. In his opinion, have any studies been conducted on safety issues? Has any study been conducted to determine whether or not it is safe to transfer such significant responsibilities, which affect all Canadians and Quebeckers, to a private agency under U.S. jurisdiction? I must admit that I am quite concerned about this.

Fraser Tolmie: Madam Speaker, that is a good question.

[*English*]

I am not aware of any study, but that is a big concern and a big red flag. I ultimately trust veterans who have put their life on the line for our country, including for the province of Quebec. I have served with many Quebeckers who are very proud. This is a big concern and a big red flag I would have. What happens in a few years if we find that something has gone wrong and the agency has not been properly vetted?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise and to address the issue of our Canadian Forces, and indeed of our veterans.

As did a number of members of the House, I had the honour of serving in the Canadian Forces. I served for just over three years. One of the things I reflect on in a very positive way is when this time of the year came around and our regiment, members of the Canadian Forces posted in Lancaster Park, participated in parades. Among the people I had the honour of marching alongside were the World War II veterans in particular. We understood the value of and gained an appreciation for the sacrifices they had made. After the parade, we would go to other destinations, and they would talk about some of the things that had taken place during World War II.

I have the deepest respect for the people who served and who gave the ultimate sacrifice of their life, and for those who have served in the Canadian Forces in whatever capacity, as well as for their supporters, whether it is DND or the families and so forth.

I know I am not alone. Whether it is the Prime Minister, any member of the Liberal caucus or, I would suggest, all members of the House of Commons, we recognize the contributions of our veterans in the past, in the present and going into the future.

We have seen that, to a certain degree, government actions over the last 18 months are setting a positive trend towards our Canadian Forces. We would have to look back generations to find the last time when there were as many Canadians wanting to join the Canadian Forces. When it comes to our veterans, we have put policies in place. A specific example is that in 2025, we put a significant amount of money in the budget so we could advance IT services so veterans would be able to receive their disability benefits more quickly.

We do not need a lesson from the Conservatives on veterans and services. I would remind my Conservative friends across the way that there was a day when I was in opposition, and those were the days when Conservative policy was made that led to the shutting down of nine Veterans Affairs offices in the country. Fortunately, with the change in government, those offices were reopened. That was something that meant a great deal to me personally and to a vast majority of members of the House of Commons in 2015.

We can think about the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires. I understand that the history, in good part, of that organization is as a non-profit. We need to recognize that when it was brought in during the late 1920s or the 1930s, around the time of World War I, it was because of those veterans. If we go to the 1920s, before it was really identified as a national organization, it started off in Montreal. By the time we got into the mid- or late-1930s, that is when it became well established as a national organization, and it was because of our veterans. Let us look at World War II and the number of veterans who were engaged, involved and employed. Governments back then saw the merit of the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires.

However, let us do the comparison. I will say that I am a very strong fan of the Commissionaires. I have met with Commissionaires in the past, both at the Manitoba legislature and in my MP constituency office, and I can say that the work they do is incredible.

● (1355)

Today, we will find that about 20% of them are veterans, but do not quote me on that. Contrast that with the day the Commissionaires came into being. When it came into being—

● (1400)

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the member. The debate will continue after question period, and the hon. member will have 14 minutes and 41 seconds.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

HAAHUUPAYAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to recognize the 50th anniversary of Haahuupayak Elementary School, located on the traditional territory of Tseshaht First Nation. Since 1976, Haahuupayak has been far more than a school. Its name comes from the Nuu-chah-nulth word meaning "teaching with love". It has been a place where generations of children have grown up surrounded by indigenous culture, language and community and a strong sense of identity and belonging. For five decades, this remarkable school has helped preserve and strengthen cultural knowledge while empowering young people through education.

I want to thank the elders, knowledge-keepers, educators, staff, families and community members whose dedication has made this possible. I am incredibly proud to support Haahuupayak and its important work.

On behalf of the people of Courtenay—Alberni, congratulations on 50 extraordinary years of education, culture and language. *Klecko klecko*.

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MUNICIPAL AND PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Jake Sawatzky (New Westminster—Burnaby—Maillardville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been a very busy few weeks in B.C. with both municipal and provincial elections. I want to take a moment to congratulate all newly elected and returning MLAs and mayors, as well as all city councillors and school board trustees elected across New Westminster—Burnaby—Maillardville.

First, in New Westminster, I congratulate mayor-elect Daniel Fontaine, who will be sworn in today, as well as returning MLA Jennifer Whiteside. I also want to recognize Mayor Patrick Johnstone for his 16 years of service to the city of New Westminster.

In Burnaby, I congratulate Mayor Mike Hurley and returning MLA Raj Chouhan.

In Coquitlam, I congratulate newly elected mayor Craig Hodge and MLA Matt Liang. I want to thank MLA Jennifer Blatherwick for her service to Maillardville.

Lastly, I want to congratulate Premier-elect Lorne Doerkson on his decisive victory.

These elections bring new ideas and perspectives to our communities. I look forward to working together with all on shared priorities like affordability, infrastructure, education, health care and public safety. Congratulations.

[*Translation*]

PROSTATE CANCER

Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, November, also known as "Bowvember", is a perfect time to talk about men's mental and physical health, especially prostate health.

I want to acknowledge QUB columnist Richard Martineau, who had the courage to speak openly about his prostate cancer. I was moved by his frank, uncensored and very detailed account, and it convinced me to share my own experience as a cancer survivor in great detail, I must say.

I am familiar with the worries, questions and emotions that come with such a diagnosis. I know I am not alone. Constant, Marc, Mario and hundreds of others have been through this. More and more men are surviving thanks to science, but my thoughts go out especially to the families of those who sadly lost their fight.

As I proudly wear this bow tie today, and I will be wearing the Procure one when I receive it, I want to send a simple message to all men. They should take care of themselves and not hesitate to consult experts, share their concerns and ask for help. This is also true when it comes to mental health and suicide prevention.

Let us be brave and have the courage to speak with our doctor or a loved one about it. It is easier when we are not alone.

I want to thank Richard Martineau.

* * *

CHOCOLATERIE HEYEZ

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba (Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to mark the 40th anniversary of the Heyez chocolate factory, a wonderful company located in Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie.

This business has been bringing joy to people in our region since 1986. It is part of our lives, our celebrations and our special moments with family.

Behind this wonderful story are passionate people and a hard-working team. I especially want to commend Karolanne Pomerleau and Jérôme Savoie-Lemay for their hard work and dedication. The Heyez chocolate factory is a true pillar of Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie. It is helping to build a vibrant community, create jobs and attract people to our region. It is also a fine example of how local businesses play a vital role in our communities.

I want to congratulate them on 40 years in the chocolate business and wish them continued success.

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[*English*]

WOUNDED SERVICE MEMBERS AND VETERANS

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as Remembrance Day approaches, we pause to honour those who never came home while also remembering those who did. Some returned carrying wounds we can see. Others carry wounds we cannot. More than 2,000 Canadians were wounded during the Afghanistan mission. This year, 39 more were injured in the tragic fire at CFB Wainwright.

Behind every injury is a life forever changed, a family forced to adapt and a burden carried long after the headlines fade. A damaged limb, a lingering burn, chronic pain or the invisible weight of post-traumatic stress can alter a life forever, yet our veterans and serving members continue to show remarkable courage through recovery, rehabilitation and daily struggle.

As we gather in remembrance, let us honour not only the fallen, but also the wounded. Their sacrifice did not end when the battle was over. It lives on, quietly and courageously, every single day.

* * *

● (1405)

[*Translation*]

VALORA

Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to mark the 18th anniversary of Valora and commend its founder, Maria Larosa Napolitano, for her commitment to women who are the victims of domestic violence. For 18 years, Valora has been rallying the community and raising funds to support women's shelters in the Lanaudière, Laurentian and Laval regions. These shelters give survivors a safe space and the support they need to rebuild their lives. Valora's next event will take place on November 8 in Rosemère.

[*English*]

Every woman deserves to live free from violence, with dignity and hope. Supporting survivors is a collective responsibility that requires lasting community commitment.

[*Translation*]

I want to congratulate Maria Larosa Napolitano, the volunteers and all those who contribute to this essential mission.

* * *

[*English*]

THE COMMISSIONAIRES

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 1925, the Commissionaires were founded on one commitment: that those who served Canada would come home and not be forgotten. Today, it is the largest private sector employer of veterans in Canada, standing watch at federal buildings across the country.

This year, that commitment was betrayed. With the single stroke of a pen, the Minister of Veterans Affairs ended the right of first refusal instead of working with the Commissionaires to modernize the agreement. Despite that order not taking effect until next year, the CRA awarded a security contract to the subsidiary of an American company that holds contracts with ICE and the Trump deportation program.

At election time, the Liberals wrap themselves in our flag, and at contract time, they pay Americans. The Prime Minister promised that Canada would be its own best customer. Veterans were promised that they would not be forgotten. Both promises are broken. I call on the government to restore the right of first refusal, to work with the Commissionaires and to support our opposition day motion.

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SUPPORTIVE HOUSING MODEL

Karim Bardeesy (Taiaiako'n—Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, housing with health care supports attached means more health, more dignified living and safer communities for all. In south Parkdale, it is happening.

Dunn House, a project of the University Health Network, in partnership with Fred Victor, United Way Greater Toronto, West Neighbourhood House, 51 residents and their neighbours on Dunn Avenue and across south Parkdale, is delivering health care. Emergency room visits are down 52%, and hospital stays are down 79%. Behind these numbers are people like Jason Miles, whose powerful story and continued advocacy remind us that a safe home offers more than shelter. It offers dignity, stability and the opportunity to rebuild a life.

I want to thank Dr. Kevin Smith, Dr. Andrew Boozary, LP Pavey and all the people at UHN and beyond whose advocacy and leadership have helped turn this vision into a reality. I also thank Build Canada Homes and the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure.

What began with 51 homes in Parkdale is now growing into a model for hundreds more, including 83 units in south Parkdale. Supportive housing does not just save public dollars. It saves lives and brings dignity. I look forward to seeing this model, which began in Parkdale, continue to expand across the country.

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CANADA-U.S. TRADE

Fred Davies (Niagara South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Niagara, trade with the U.S. is not just a talking point. It is a paycheque and a lifeline for tens of thousands of workers. My riding is home to the Peace Bridge, the third-largest commercial border crossing in Canada. The Welland Canal bisects my riding and is literally the beating heart of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Every truck, every ship and every job depends on a working relationship with the United States.

Canadians are tired, and they need a trade deal now. Time is not our friend, but all we hear is talk and no action.

This weekend, the Prime Minister called six by-elections and then called Donald Trump. It is time the Prime Minister did what he said he would do. Canadians did not elect a performer. They were promised a negotiator. We need a good deal for Canadians. He needs to get the deal done, and he needs to get it done now.

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● (1410)

[*Translation*]

SUZANNE GUITÉ

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Listuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this year we are celebrating the 100th birthday of Suzanne Guité. This great, internationally renowned artist from the Gaspé was born in New Richmond and based in Percé. Suzanne Guité was a sculptor, painter and muralist who trained under international masters. In 1956, she founded the Centre d'art de Percé. She made a name for herself in North America and Europe, from Expo 67 to the Venice Biennale.

Admitted to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 1975, she was recognized this summer as a historical figure of Quebec. From the mural *La Justice est l'Espoir de l'Homme* at the New Carlisle Courthouse to her work *Terre des hommes* along the Rideau Canal here in Ottawa, Ms. Guité's presence still fills our spaces.

Let us pay tribute to her and remember a woman who left us far too soon under horrific circumstances. I join the people of the Gaspé in calling for a postage stamp to be issued in her honour.

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[*English*]

NATIONAL SECURITY

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the world is changing, and so are the threats facing our country. Last week, our government launched the plan for a stronger Canada, our first national security strategy in more than 20 years. It starts with a simple truth. Today, economic security is national security. That is why our plan is focused on securing our supply chains and strategic industries; rebuilding our Canadian Armed Forces; protecting Canadians from foreign interference, espionage and organized crime; and modernizing our intelligence capabilities.

In London West, we know what this means. Our workers, our manufacturers and our innovators help power Canada's economy, and they are part of how we keep this country strong and keep this country moving forward.

National security is not just about protecting our borders. It is about protecting our people, our jobs, our livelihoods and the future that we want to build together. That is why this plan is really important at this particular moment, and this plan is going to deliver exactly what Canadians are needing in this moment.

CANADA-U.S. TRADE

Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, homebuilding is down, food bank lineups are up, growth has flatlined, and the Prime Minister has broken his own fiscal anchors, piling on more debt that our children will pay for. That is the record, so he plays a trump card.

Last week, he told Politico he could wait two and a half more years without a trade deal. Then, moments after calling the by-elections, he changed his tune. He called the by-elections and then he called Trump. What a coincidence. We have seen this by-election movie before. Canadians do not need more theatre. They do not need another month-long circus designed to distract from Liberal failures here at home. They need results.

The Prime Minister promised Canadians a great deal. He campaigned on it, so he should deliver it. We need tariff-free trade with our biggest customer so our workers can get to work, not more photo ops, not more grandstanding and certainly not more cynical phone calls timed to by-election campaigns.

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NATIONAL SKILLED TRADES AND TECHNOLOGY WEEK

Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we kick off National Skilled Trades and Technology Week. The aim is to raise awareness about skilled trades and technology careers among youth, parents, educators and the public.

Our government is committed to building a stronger economy, and a large part of that includes young people choosing skilled trades and careers in technology. In my riding of Sudbury, skilled trades power our economy, but we need to ensure that young people see the trades as a viable career choice. We know we cannot build strong without a skilled workforce.

I invite everyone to join me tonight at a reception hosted by the Pearson Centre and Skills Canada at the National Arts Centre, where featured guests will share their insights on how to engage young people in the trades.

* * *

AFFORDABILITY

Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what could a six-year-old boy's birthday teach us about the struggles facing Canadian families? This weekend, we took our grandson to Canadian Tire to buy his birthday present. I saw his little eyes light up as he picked out his hockey stick, helmet and gloves. He could hardly wait to get home.

There we were, out on the street, Grandma in goal and David's little legs racing after the ball, shouting “goal” every time he got one past me. It was such a simple and wonderful afternoon. Later, around the dinner table, the conversation changed. My daughter talked about how even these little extras were becoming difficult to afford. My son-in-law, a schoolteacher, told us that his total mortgage cost had just increased by $6,000 following last week's interest rate hike.

How many young families are having these same conversations around the dinner table? They are making difficult choices to live within their means, while the Prime Minister continues running massive deficits, with inflation eating away at their paycheques. Why must Canadians live within their means when the government refuses to do the same?

* * *

● (1415)

RECOGNITION OF SERVICE IN MEDICINE

Jacques Ramsay (La Prairie—Atateken, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the tireless work of Dr. Anas Al-Kassem. A surgeon, Dr. Al-Kassem came to Canada to complete his medical residency. When he was about to return to Syria in 2011, war broke out in his country. He then decided he could be more useful to Syrians by organizing relief efforts from Canada.

Along with two colleagues, he founded UOSSM, the Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations, with the goal of providing much-needed medicine and equipment to hospitals under constant bombing and overwhelmed with a war that went on for 15 years. He personally carried out around 20 humanitarian missions in Syria, operating on hundreds of trauma patients at Bab-al Hawa and many other underground hospitals, even as doctors and medical staff were being targeted by the Bashar al-Assad government.

Dr. Al-Kassem is a great humanitarian and a true Canadian hero.

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SHOOTING IN BELLEVILLE

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, as Kol Nidrei began at the Sons of Jacob Synagogue in Belleville, a gunman arrived with a shotgun, explosives and a plan. Inside, about two dozen people had gathered to ask for forgiveness on the holiest night of the year. When the shots rang out, they pushed the tables together and lay on the floor, not knowing if the doors would hold. They held because of two constables, not policy: Jeff Smith was shot multiple times, and he kept fighting, and Michael McCurdy ran toward gunfire to stand beside him. Constable Smith just came home from the hospital.

Because of them, those families are here with us in Ottawa today. They came to remind us that hatred does not happen to faceless strangers. It happens to neighbours in small cities, people who came only to pray.

No one should need to arm guards to worship in Canada, and meeting the rising tide of extremism means acting before the next congregation hits the floor to listen. We will keep saying it until the last person with the power to act finally does.

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INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY CONSORTIUM

Vince Gasparro (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to recognize members of the Intentional Community Consortium who are in Ottawa for their annual day on the Hill. Representing 85 agencies across Ontario and Quebec, the ICC is celebrating its 10th anniversary. That is 10 years of advocating for supportive housing solutions for individuals with developmental disabilities across Canada.

Earlier this fall, we celebrated the opening of the Frankfort Family Reena Residence in the heart of my riding of Eglinton—Lawrence with chair Gary Gladstone. Because of the $44 million in funding from Canada's government, that project has delivered 111 new affordable units, giving 168 people with diverse needs a place to call home.

I would like to thank the Intentional Community Consortium for the important work it does to build stronger, more accessible communities, and I invite all hon. members to join us in the Speaker's dining room following question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the number one priority in the budget must be to save Canadians money. Saving Canadians money is essential because, after 10 years, the Liberals have driven up the price of gas, groceries and homes.

The quickest way to reverse this inflation is to eliminate all gas taxes. Eliminating all gas taxes would cut the cost of gas by 20¢ a litre and save every family $1,000.

Will the Prime Minister accept our idea to save Canadians money?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working hard on affordability for Canadians. One example is the heat pump program, which will help Canadians across the country lower the cost of heating their homes.

I also want to talk about opportunities, because everyone wants to have a good job. People in the member's riding are benefiting from biodiesel and canola subsidies. Farmers in his community will make more money thanks to what we are doing for that region.

● (1420)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, heat pump subsidies may be helping Brookfield, the Prime Minister's company, which invested in that. Biodiesel subsidies paid for by Canadian taxpayers are going to American companies.

The top priority should be to save Canadians money by eliminating all taxes starting now until July. That will also lower the cost of all the products arriving by truck.

Why does the Prime Minister insist on taxing Canadians, who cannot pay more?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, why is the member not interested in working for the farmers in his riding?

Imperial is currently producing biodiesel at the Strathcona refinery. It uses 50% of Alberta's canola. The member represents a riding that produces a great deal of canola. It makes a lot of sense to carry on with what we are doing. It is helping his constituents.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, job one for the budget is very simple: save Canadians money. It needs to save Canadians money on their groceries, save Canadians money at the pump and save them money on the materials that go into building homes. The fastest way to save Canadians money is to get rid of all taxes on gas, get rid of the so-called fuel standard tax and the GST on gas and diesel, and get rid of the excise tax until Canada Day.

Will the Prime Minister accept our idea to save Canadians money by axing taxes on gas?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will say it once again, because it is so astonishing. The member opposite represents the second-largest canola-producing riding in Alberta, has a canola crusher in his riding and is right adjacent to Imperial Oil's Strathcona refinery, which actually produces biodiesel supported by the clean fuel regulations. This is good for canola farmers across our country. It is good for his own constituents, and I would hope that he would stand up with them.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is no wonder Canadians are out of money. The Liberal government is out of touch. Yes, the farmers in my riding say the single biggest expense this year is the cost of diesel. Some of them are spending $25,000 or $30,000 on diesel. One farmer spends $5,000 a day during the harvest. All of it gets passed on in higher food costs. The Liberal government continues to add 20¢ a litre in taxes. The best way to save Canadians money is to scrap all those taxes.

Will the government accept our idea to save farmers, small businesses, seniors and Canadians money?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have great news for Canadians and great news for that party across the House. On Thursday, we will table our second generational budget, budget 2026. We will build Canada strong. We will invest in our country from coast to coast to coast. We will make sure nobody is left behind. We will continue with the groceries and essentials benefit and fight for affordability measures for Canadians. On this side of the House, we deliver on affordability. They continue with the rhetoric.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC: Mr. Speaker, this will be their second generational budget in one year. Canadians cannot afford another generation of Liberal taxes. They are out of money. The member is out of touch to say they have delivered on affordability when food bank demand is up 9% year over year, with 2.35 million record-smashing visits to the food bank and the largest number of people who cannot believe they will never be able to afford a home is in this country, of any of the 22 countries polled by Habitat for Humanity.

Why will they not stop wasting time and save Canadians money?

● (1425)

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as always, on that side of the House, it is hands up, no plan and no focus. There is nothing on that side of the House.

On this side of the House, we are going to table budget 2026. We are masters of our own destiny. We are going to build Canada strong. We are going to build a strong, resilient economy. We are going to invest and build Canada while looking after those who need help the most. We just paused the excise tax on fuel.

We are going to continue to deliver affordability measures for Canadians. That side continues with nothing.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member had trouble following what is a very clear and direct path to make life affordable. The shortest distance between two points is a straight line, and the straight line is this. They get rid of all taxes on gas and immediately start saving people 20¢ a litre. They cancel the reinstallation of the excise tax and it goes up to almost 30¢ a litre. That will save a Canadian family $1,200. This is an immediate action the government can take to save money for Canadians.

Will it do it in the budget?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me help the member opposite. He could have voted for the groceries and essentials benefit and saved a family of four $1,900. He could have voted for the child benefit and saved families $7,000 a year. He could have voted for child care and saved families $16,000 a year. He could have voted for a tax cut and saved families another $840 a year.

He voted against every single one of those affordability measures. We will take no lessons from him on affordability.

[*Translation*]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada and the European Union have announced initiatives that may, or may not, lead to associate membership status. They discussed critical minerals, energy, regulatory alignment in trade, cultural exchanges, wildfire management and much more. All these areas fall under Quebec's jurisdiction. Not only does the federal government lack the constitutional authority to act in these areas, but it will also be unable to fulfill its commitments without Quebec's support.

Moving forward, will the federal government ensure that Quebec has a direct seat at the negotiating table?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Quebeckers, like all Canadians, are very proud that we are moving forward toward a much more structured and much deeper relationship and, yes, toward diversifying our trade beyond our dependence on the United States.

I believe that Quebeckers can look forward to a much more promising and prosperous future in which we collaborate with our European counterparts in a wide range of areas. This is good for Quebec, and it is good for Canada.

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government is discussing a potentially major agreement with Europe that would cover areas where it has no jurisdiction. The government never asked Quebec for its opinion, the Liberals never consulted the public in an election, and there was never a debate in Parliament. Everything is happening behind the Prime Minister's closed doors. This matter is important enough to warrant at least basic transparency.

Will the government convene a debate in the House this week?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to be more transparent than holding a meeting in Montreal in front of all stakeholders, including six former premiers of the province of Quebec.

We are obviously delighted to have Quebec and society as a whole involved in the talks. The discussions began in Montreal, and they will of course continue.

We will continue to be totally transparent as we sign very promising agreements with the European Union.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, excluding Quebec from the discussions with Europe is not the right approach. The Prime Minister said that he recognizes doctrines that work. Well, the Gérin-Lajoie doctrine works. That is how Quebec got its own seat at the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. It is how Quebec was able to negotiate a carbon market with California. It is how Quebec got a seat at the table for the negotiations leading to the free trade agreement with Europe.

Since it works, will the Government of Canada officially recognize the Gérin-Lajoie doctrine today?

● (1430)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will of course continue to consult Quebec and all the provinces on matters within their areas of jurisdiction, including workforce training, portability, procurement and all things labour. We will certainly continue to initiate and pursue discussions with all the provinces on matters that fall within their jurisdiction and capabilities.

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[*English*]

TAXATION

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister stood in the House and said affordability is the best it has been in decades, and we know that is not true. The government said that the debt-to-GDP would go down, and we know that is not true. After a decade of runaway Liberal spending, Canadians cannot keep up. Food banks saw a record 2.35 million visits in a single month, and inflation is above the bank's target range. Instead of easing the pressure, Ottawa keeps adding to it. Federal taxes still add up to about 20¢ for every litre of gas.

Nobody is telling the Prime Minister to change things that are out of his control. He found billions for everything else. Will he find 20¢ a litre for every Canadian on Thursday?

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, we can all recognize that Canada has the strongest fiscal position in the G7. We have the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio by far, given it is at 40.7%, with the G7 average, excluding Canada, at over 100%. We found $60 billion in savings, and we are on track to balance the operating budget one year ahead of schedule. Also, we topped the G7 in second quarter growth and have seen a large spike in new business investment.

Our plan is working, and budget 2026 will build on that plan to build the strongest economy in the G7. Just wait until Thursday.

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think he read the wrong piece of paper. That was not at all my question. Pausing one tax until January is not relief for Canadians. Canadians need to work and eat all year round. Relief for a portion of the tax for a portion of the year, as the Liberals pad their coffers with windfall profits from the high price of oil, is not actually relief for families.

The only thing standing between Canadians and saving them money is political will, so I will ask again slowly: Will he find 20¢ a litre for every Canadian on Thursday?

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, let me say it slowly. We know the economy is going through shocks, tariffs and energy price shocks, and we know that that has put pressure on Canadian households.

Unlike the opposition, who are only full of manufactured outrage, we are actually doing things to help Canadian families. We cut income tax for 22 million Canadians, suspended the excise tax on fuel, introduced the groceries and essentials benefit and cut taxes on new home purchases, saving families up to $50,000 right across the country. That is how we help Canadians with affordability. It is not by claiming we care and then opposing every possible solution in the House.

Jasraj Hallan (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the out-of-touch Liberal Prime Minister said affordability is the best it has been in a decade. I would say that too if I owned shares in Brookfield. While he is hiking gas taxes, families are struggling with whether they can afford groceries or gas this week. We know the Prime Minister does not control world prices, but he does control Liberal taxes on gas, like the clean fuel standard and the excise tax, and the GST on top of that.

Will the Liberals listen to Conservatives and remove all federal fuel taxes off gas in their upcoming budget this week, yes or no?

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, this is the government that, from day one, has cut taxes for more than 22 million Canadians and reduced the fuel excise tax on Canadians as well. Despite the uncertainty that our economy is facing, GDP growth picked up earlier this year and is going to continue next year. The Bank of Canada expects growth to increase as a result of the government's measures, measures such as our productivity mega deduction, investment in major projects and business investment that is at its highest in 20 years. This is part of an economic plan for Canadians that is building prosperity, building growth and creating jobs. It is going to help that member and his constituents every step of the way.

Jasraj Hallan (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, stalling the economy for two quarters is success to these guys. I would hate to see what failure looks like.

Canadians want relief at the pump right now. Conservatives know every dollar that Canadians save at the pump on gas means more money that they can spend on groceries. That is why Conservatives are calling on this incompetent Liberal government to remove all Liberal fuel taxes off gas, including the clean fuel standard, the excise tax and the GST.

Will the Liberals grow some compassion and do it, yes or no?

● (1435)

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, I cannot help but pick up on that member's comment about compassion.

I will talk about compassion. Compassion is a national school food program that is available in 63 public school jurisdictions in that member's province, a program that helps nearly 60,000 kids not go hungry at school. That is compassion. That is what this government stands for, and what we are going to continue to deliver every single day.

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a tax on gas is a tax on everything. It is a tax on driving to work. It is a tax on getting groceries to the store. Despite the Prime Minister's claims that affordability is the best it has been in over a decade, ordinary Canadians are feeling the pinch. Necessities of life are starting to feel like luxuries.

The government can control taxes. It can take all federal taxes off fuel, and it can do it on Thursday. Will it?

Hon. Adam van Koeverden (Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians watching back home must think this is question period rerun hour, because the Conservative leader is back on his “axe the tax, no facts” rhetoric. It did not work three years ago.

We removed the taxes on fuel, removed taxes on housing and reduced income taxes. As a result, families and farmers are experiencing a little bit of relief. The Conservatives voted against all of those measures. Why does the Conservative leader not come clean with Canadians and tell them how he plans to pay for his empty promises? Canadians have already made up their mind on how their plan is going to affect their pocketbooks. They voted against it.

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians back home are well aware that this is not called “answer period”, and that secretary of state has demonstrated exactly why.

The only people better off in this Canada, with these Liberal budgets, are the Prime Minister's banker buddies. The interest on the debt is $58.7 billion. Now that is money spent on nothing. That could build 60 hospitals. That could build 120,000 housing units. That could give tax relief to Canadians of $6,000.

Why are the only ones who are getting ahead the Prime Minister's buddies?

Hon. Adam van Koeverden (Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I implore the Conservatives to tell Canadians how they plan to pay for all of these empty promises.

I have a couple of ideas, though. They have already said that they are going to cut the Canadian child benefit. They already said they are not a fan of the groceries and essentials benefit. They already said that affordable housing is too Soviet for them. Perhaps they will do what they did when they were in government, which was to cut funding for veterans affairs offices and reduce the support that they give to veterans.

Canadians are well aware of what the Conservatives have in store for them.

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[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska—des-Sources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bank of Canada forecasts that growth will be just 1% in Canada in 2026, compared to 3% globally. Half of this meagre growth comes from government spending. This shows just how much our businesses are struggling. Under the Liberals, the economy is idling, and it is workers who are paying the price. On Thursday, the Liberal Prime Minister will have a choice to make: keep spending, or leave more money in Canadians' pockets. That same Liberal Prime Minister once promised to reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio.

Will he keep his promise?

Hon. Nathalie Provost (Secretary of State (Nature), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my kind colleague for the question.

We have been working to boost Canadians' purchasing power for a year now. In the upcoming budget, we will continue to pursue this vision because it is clear that Canadians need help and support. We need to boost their economic well-being. That is the purpose of our programs, such as the groceries benefit and dental care for children. These are the kinds of measures that our colleagues do not support. I am curious to see what the budget holds. We will help Canadians even more.

Oral Questions

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mario Simard (Jonquière—Hébertville—Pays-des-Bleuets, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the entire planet is wondering how to use AI while keeping the environment in mind, given that data centres consume huge quantities of water and energy. Well, it is not the entire planet. One country of die-hard polluters still holds out against the modern era. That country is Canada. Seeing the immense amount of energy that data centres need, Canada has decided that if it builds data centres in Alberta, it would be able to power them with gas. Imagine how much gas will be sold.

Is there anything the Liberals do not view as an opportunity to sell more oil and gas?

● (1440)

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we talk about energy, we are talking about clean energy. What are we doing? We are making sure that we will continue to have a large electricity grid. We are going to double its capacity by 2050.

When it comes to AI, it is fair to say that we have put guidelines in place to clearly explain how we are going to work hard to ensure that we can protect Canadians while maintaining AI sovereignty.

Mario Simard (Jonquière—Hébertville—Pays-des-Bleuets, BQ): Mr. Speaker, seriously, a researcher at Utah State University calculated the potential emissions from a mammoth data centre in Grande Prairie, Alberta. That one centre would release the equivalent of 23 Hiroshima atom bombs of heat waste every day. It is not easy to reconcile that with the fight against climate change.

The Liberals look at projects like that and their first thought is that they could power them with gas. Only a Liberal could come up with such a lousy idea. Are they deliberately trying to sabotage their climate targets?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Bloc Québécois cares about greenhouse gas emissions and their effects on the environment, I have good news for its members: They have an opportunity to support the most transformative emissions-reducing project of all, a project that would revolutionize mobility in Quebec while generating 51,000 jobs and several points of GDP, not to mention sales tax revenues for the province. I am talking about the high-speed rail project that will run from Quebec City to Trois-Rivières, Laval, Montreal and Gatineau.

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[*English*]

JUSTICE

Roman Baber (North York, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Toronto was horrified by the Bridle Path home invasion in which a father and two daughters were shot and a mother injured. This was the 119th invasion in Toronto this year. That is a 32% increase from the same period in 2025.

It is clear that the Liberal government's bail and sentencing reform is a failure. The bail principle of restraint, to let an accused out at the earliest opportunity, remains. Conservatives wanted mandatory minimum sentences for armed home invasions. Instead the Liberals gutted all mandatory minimum sentences.

Will the Attorney General own his failure and work with Conservatives to pass real bail and sentencing reform?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we had a choice of who to listen to when it came to actually developing measures that were going to promote public safety in this country: Conservative members, who would simply yell and make noise on the floor of the House of Commons, or those who have dedicated their lives and careers to demand better public safety outcomes for Canadians.

We chose to work with police who work on the ground to improve public safety. We chose to work with provincial governments that have the responsibility to administer the justice system of their province, and we worked with advocacy organizations that defended the interests of victims. I think we made the right choice.

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to the Toronto Star, home invasions are up 50% in Toronto. Canadians want action. That is why we have two bills before the House. We have the proposed safe at home act, which would create a stand-alone offence for home invasions and carry with it a mandatory minimum of five years and a maximum of life imprisonment. We also have the proposed stand on guard law, which would strengthen provisions for self-defence so Canadians can defend themselves in their own home.

I have a very simple question for the minister. On these two bills, will the Liberals stand with us and support them so that we can protect Canadians in their own home, yes or no?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, protecting the ability of Canadians to defend themselves in their own home is absolutely a priority that we share. Thankfully, that is what the law provides for today, but we took it a step further by implementing changes to the Criminal Code, which are now the law of Canada, that ensure there is a reverse onus when we have violent home invasions for someone seeking to have bail. It ensures that there is potential for tougher sentences when there are violent home invasions, particularly when they are tied to organized crime.

We are seized with the issue. We are working, and as a result of the measures we put in place, we are seeing progress across the country. The job is not done, but we are trending in the right direction.

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot understand for the life of me why the minister cannot answer the very simple question.

The father of the family who just suffered the violent home invasion in Toronto said the following: "It is difficult to put into words the trauma of experiencing something so horrific in the one place where everyone should feel safest: their own home." That is why we put these two bills before the House.

This is a very simple question. Canadians deserve a very clear answer. Will the Liberals support these two pieces of legislation that we have before the House so we can protect Canadians, yes or no?

● (1445)

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, we send our deepest condolences to the family impacted by this horrific incident. All of us in this House share the need for safety and security in someone's home.

However, I will be very clear: We brought forward significant legislation, the most comprehensive criminal justice legislation in a generation, including stronger sentencing as well as bail reform and including protection of victims' rights. These are critical pieces of legislation that will ensure the safety and security of Canadians over the long term.

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently a Toronto family of four was terrorized by three masked men who entered their home with hammers and guns. Three people were shot and two people were hit with hammers. The family will never be the same. People should feel that they are safest when they are in their homes. Therefore, will the Prime Minister support our legislation to get tough on home invaders so people can feel safest in their homes?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have brought forward transformational legislation to protect those who are suffering from the scourge of issues such as home invasion. We have in place Bill C-14, which strengthens bail as well as sentencing. We have Bill C-16, which ensures victims' rights are protected. These are transformational pieces of legislation. Unfortunately, the party opposite did not give us its support. It is important that these pieces of legislation are implemented and that is what we look to the provinces to do.

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister speaks about transformational legislation. The Liberals can tell that to the family of four who are now in the hospital.

We have to ensure that people are safest when the are in their own homes. Reforms are absolutely needed. One of the answers is our safe at home act that was put forward by the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

How many more families need to suffer in their own homes before the Liberals take the time to act?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I repeat: We have brought forward significant legislation that will protect Canadians in their homes and on the streets, as well as those victims who have been impacted by the criminal justice system. What we need right now is collaboration from the opposition. We do not need piecemeal pieces of a private member's bill that does not look at the bigger picture. That is why we have brought forward the most comprehensive criminal justice legislation in a generation.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year, 1,600 families face the unimaginable tragedy of the loss of a child while on parental leave. Last week, this House unanimously passed Evan's law, which would allow those affected to maintain their parental benefits while reducing unnecessary red tape. It is something that members from all parties have worked towards, and I thank everyone in this House and outside it for their efforts in making this happen.

Could the Secretary of State for Labour comment on the impact of this legislation and the importance of implementing it as soon as possible?

Hon. John Zerucelli (Secretary of State (Labour), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Burnaby North—Seymour for his advocacy on this very important piece of legislation. No parent should have to navigate government red tape while grieving the loss of a child. That is why we are moving quickly on Bill C-222 to ensure grieving parents can continue receiving their parental benefits without unnecessary paperwork and administrative burdens. When parents experience unimaginable loss, they deserve compassion, financial stability and the time and space to grieve.

* * *

HEALTH

Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General released a scathing report on the Liberal government's mismanagement of Canada's emergency medical stockpile. These supplies are critical to saving lives during pandemics, natural disasters and nuclear emergencies, and yet for years the Liberals have not known what supplies Canada needs, how to manage what we have or how to coordinate with provinces. They have wasted hundreds of millions of tax dollars. This mismanagement poses a serious risk to our national security.

The Liberals have governed for over 10 years, including during a pandemic. When are they planning to fix these problems?

● (1450)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question. Once again, I would like to assure her that the Public Health Agency of Canada is ready to deal with any future challenges. One of the reasons I can say this is that we were able to fulfill 81 requests from the provinces. The stock levels in the warehouses were normal. Yes, some masks went to waste, but that is bound to happen from time to time.

[*English*]

Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, safeguarding Canadians is the fundamental responsibility of the federal government and yet this Auditor General report reveals that the Liberals are failing at basic governance. They threw out over $300 million of medical supplies that could have been used at our local hospitals before they expired. Another $20 million of critical pharmaceuticals were destroyed because somebody left a freezer open. The Liberals have known about these problems for years.

What is it going to take for that minister and the Liberal government to deliver basic governance on emergency management? What is it going to—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want my colleague to know that we learned lessons from the pandemic and that we are prepared. Of course, we will occasionally have to deal with the fact that certain products have to be discarded because they have reached their expiry date. However, we are prepared and will be ready to meet the needs of Canadians.

* * *

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, steelworkers are losing their jobs. Four in 10 manufacturers have moved production south or plan to. That will mean over 100,000 jobs lost in two months. Those workers cannot wait another two and a half years for a deal.

Will the Prime Minister deliver a better deal than he was looking at in August or should we be waiting for the next public opinion poll to find out what a good deal is?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs, Internal Trade, and One Canadian Economy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think our colleague on the other side of the House is confusing our government with the weak-kneed approach of the Conservative Party in dealing with the Americans. We know they would have accepted any deal at any time to just get a deal that would not be in the interest of Canadian workers, the Canadian economy or the sovereignty of our country.

We are going to do that difficult work that is necessary to protect our economy, and when that deal is available we will accept it.

Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is weak-kneed is concession after concession for over a year and a half, rather than building the strength of this country. Two straight months of zero growth and now the economy is shrinking. Parents are skipping meals so their kids can eat. We have another $733 billion of debt, with $6,000 per family just to pay the interest. Canadians did not elect a performer. They were promised a negotiator.

Will the Prime Minister finally get the great deal he promised, or will this just be another month of political theatre while Canadians suffer?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs, Internal Trade, and One Canadian Economy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that Canadian businesses and Canadian workers are facing extraordinary pressure because of these unjustified and illegal tariffs, unlike the Conservatives who resisted our government's strong decision to put in place retaliatory measures to protect sectors of our economy facing these unfair tariffs.

Our government has said we will do whatever it takes for as long as it takes to protect Canadian workers but we are also talking to the Americans about getting the right deal for Canada.

Harb Gill (Windsor West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister said he was prepared to wait out the President for two years. Then he suddenly called six by-elections and suddenly getting a deal with the Americans is back on the agenda. As a member of the gill caucus, I can tell members that a fish out of water flip-flops less than the Prime Minister.

Canadians were promised a master negotiator. When will he put Canadian jobs ahead of his political agenda, or are Canadian workers simply pawns in these by-election campaigns?

● (1455)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs, Internal Trade, and One Canadian Economy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was Minister of Fisheries and Oceans for two years. I understand what a fish out of water looks like. Mr. Speaker, perhaps if you look to your left, you might have seen one.

However, what is important is that all Canadians know, even the Conservatives should acknowledge, that our government will do everything it takes for as long as it takes to support Canadian workers and Canadian businesses facing these unfair and illegal tariffs. Yes, we will talk to the Americans and we will do the hard work necessary to get the right deal for Canada and Canadian workers.

Ned Kuruc (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the economy has stalled with two straight months of zero growth and now it is shrinking. Manufacturers are packing up and heading south. Four in 10 have already moved production to the United States or are planning to. Stelco workers are still out of a job. Last week, the Prime Minister said he could wait two and a half more years without a trade deal. This week, he called the by-elections and he announced he is ready to start talks again.

Will the Prime Minister finally get the deal he promised or will this just be another month of political theatre?

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the deal we will get will be the right deal for Canada, not just any deal. Our first priority has always been the future and well-being of Canadian workers.

As for Stelco and all the other steel companies around, we will continue to support and work with companies that believe in Canada and that continue to invest in Canada. As for those that do not, we will not support them. By the way, there are five days left for Stelco.

Ned Kuruc (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are some facts: Homebuilding is down, food bank lineups are up and growth has flatlined. Now the great economist has broken his own fiscal anchors, piling on more national debt. This is the debt that our children will have to pay.

The Prime Minister promised Canadians a great deal. He said he was the man to deliver it, and we are still waiting.

He calls the by-elections, and then he calls Trump, so I will ask this again: Will the Prime Minister finally get the deal he promised, or is this just some more by-election political theatre?

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, we will not take lessons from the Conservatives on political theatre, because that is all they do in the House.

We are standing up to support Canadians. Conservatives can promote falsehoods all they want and string as many of them together as they want, but they do not constitute a truth. We have cut taxes on income, housing, fuel and new business investment. We have saved over $60 billion on government operations. We have the strongest fiscal position in the G7 and topped the G7 in the second quarter in terms of GDP growth. We have seen a spike in new business and foreign direct investment, and we have used our fiscal space to help Canadians—

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Canada, the economy is in decline and food banks are overwhelmed. The Prime Minister is using an old trick to try to cover up his failures: He is creating a smokescreen.

Last week, he said that he could wait two and a half more years without a deal with Donald Trump. On the weekend, he called six by-elections, and then what did he do? He picked up the phone and called his good friend Donald. Then, he announced that he is resuming negotiations. That is quite the coincidence. This is another political diversion tactic.

My question is this: Does the Prime Minister actually think that he can fix the trade issues with Donald Trump, or is this just another smokescreen to sway voters?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs, Internal Trade, and One Canadian Economy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that our Conservative friends are worried about the by-elections, and with good reason. I think it is important to note that nothing has changed since last week. We obviously called by-elections because these ridings need people to represent them in the House. The reason we are holding these by-elections is because members of the Conservative caucus have stepped down.

At the same time, yes, we are having conversations with our American counterparts, and we will continue to work until we have an agreement that is in Canada's best interests.

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are starting to figure out their tricks.

Last summer, the government was about to reach an agreement, but just before the election and the advance voting for the by-elections, it suddenly withdrew from the negotiations. What did that do? It influenced the public, who was afraid of Donald Trump.

Now, six by-elections are coming up, and what is the government doing? It is calling its friend Donald and saying that it wants to negotiate.

What is that if not a way to influence voters through twisted political games?

● (1500)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs, Internal Trade, and One Canadian Economy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that our Conservative friends are afraid of the by-elections. I have said this before. By the way, it was their members who triggered some of these by-elections by leaving their caucus. We hope that voters in those ridings have an opportunity to elect strong members to this Parliament.

At the same time, yes, we are working with our American counterparts. We are trying to get the unjustified and illegal tariffs removed. We are also supporting Canadian industries with our friends in the provincial governments.

That is what a responsible government does.

* * *

HEALTH

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for too long, we have waited until men and boys reached a crisis point before offering them help. In February, the Minister of Health took an important step toward addressing this issue by launching a national conversation on men and boys' health.

With International Men's Day approaching on November 19, can the minister tell us what the next steps will be in developing Canada's brand new men and boys' health strategy?

Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. Today, we released the "What We Heard" report on our national conversation on men and boys' health. Nearly 6,000 Canadians and numerous organizations from across the country shared their perspectives. These contributions will help shape Canada's first-ever men and boys' health strategy. This strategy is intended to improve well-being not only for men and boys, but for all communities and all Canadians.

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[*English*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister vowed to make Canada its own best customer. He promised that when his government spends, it will select Canadian suppliers and Canadian jobs first. When it comes to election time, the Prime Minister is elbows up, but when it comes to contract time, he chooses America first.

He awarded a U.S. security firm with ties to Trump's ICE a $12-million contract over the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, the largest employer of veterans in Canada. Why did the Prime Minister sacrifice Canadian veterans' jobs to put America first?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and to the Secretary of State (Defence Procurement), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our priority is to put Canadian content, Canadian companies and Canadian workers first, and to use our purchasing power to grow production here at home. That is companies contributing substantively to our economy, employing people, creating good jobs here in our communities and paying taxes here in our communities. That is what we are doing to build Canada strong and build Canadian innovation.

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, actions speak louder than words, and the government did exactly the opposite of what the member just said.

The Canadian Corps of Commissionaires is a not-for-profit that prioritizes the hiring of Canada's veterans. For generations, the Canadian government has provided it the right of first refusal for security contracts. The Commissionaires put in a competitive bid, but the America-first Prime Minister chose Trump's favourite security contractor, Allied Universal, for the job.

Was this yet another concession by the Liberal government? Why is the Prime Minister putting the interests of American corporate profits over job opportunities for our courageous veterans?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and to the Secretary of State (Defence Procurement), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we are working hard to attract more investment into our country, investment that delivers tangible results and lasting benefits to Canadian communities and supply chains.

They want to talk about results. I point them to the contracts that have been awarded. I look at General Dynamics as an example—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I let it go as long as I could.

The hon. member may continue.

Hon. Jenna Sudds: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we can point to the results and the impact that this policy has been having already in just a few months. We have seen, most recently, a contract awarded to General Dynamics.

Those are tangible results. Those are jobs in communities that matter to Canadians.

Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Commissionaires is a not-for-profit organization, Canada's largest private sector employer of veterans. What commissionaires earn goes back to veterans, not shareholders.

Justin Trudeau once told veterans that they were asking for more than he was able to give. That was a slap in the face. Now the Liberal government has handed a CRA security contract to Allied Universal, an American company tied to Trump's ICE deportation machine, just to save $80,000. That is a backhand to the face.

When will the Prime Minister stop beating down on veterans?

● (1505)

Hon. Jill McKnight (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his military service and for raising his concerns.

Let me be clear again. Veterans Affairs Canada does not award guard services contracts on behalf of other departments or agencies. I, of course, share the view that we must ensure that veterans have the right opportunities to find rewarding employment of their choosing when they are ready. It is fundamental to the national veterans employment strategy.

Our government has worked with and will continue to work with veteran employers as we build the strongest economy in the G7.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has not recognized any conflict since Korea as wartime service, despite the fact that veterans of the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and other conflicts participated in operations that can only be described as war. This reality must be recognized. Too many veterans and their families do not see their hardship and sacrifice reflected by the term “special duty service”.

Can the minister tell the House what the government is doing to recognize wartime service?

Hon. Jill McKnight (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I support my colleague's dedication to advancing this important matter. I also want to recognize the parliamentarians who served our country in uniform.

Canada must ensure that the recognition of service and sacrifice reflects the evolving nature of military service. Meaningful recognition must honour those who have served, reflect our diverse military history and inspire future generations.

In the coming months, consultations with veterans, serving members, historians and experts will ensure we get this right. The work has started, and we look forward to sharing more in due course.

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HEALTH

Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a recent government decision under the non-insured health benefits program is limiting access to mental health services in Lloydminster, Canada's only border city. Councillors have been told they can no longer serve indigenous patients because of where their clinic is located in the city and their provincial registration. For patients, many of whom are residential and day school survivors, losing an established therapeutic relationship is deeply disruptive.

Will the minister cut this red tape to ensure that indigenous patients can continue to access the care they need in the city where they live?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this critical service is available, but we want to be sure that service providers are able to respond to clients' needs, whether they are living in a city or providing a service from another province. We want to be sure that they are able to provide the best and most adequate service to the clients who are going to them and that they are able to be served in the spaces they live in.

If my colleague wants to work together, I am more than willing to give her the answers she needs for her riding.

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LABOUR

Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, workers and their families need good, safe, rewarding jobs across Canada. In the construction sector, these jobs come from unionized companies powered by skilled labour. The government can support them by requiring labour agreements on all taxpayer-funded infrastructure projects. This is smart economics. Productivity from unionized labour is 17% higher than for open-shop contractors.

Will the Liberals mandate project labour agreements for all infrastructure deals to generate the high-quality results that unionized building trades deliver?

Hon. John Zerucelli (Secretary of State (Labour), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the BC Building Trades is in Ottawa this week, and I welcome it here.

We are building right across this country. We are building with Canadian steel, Canadian lumber and Canadian unionized workers. Nowhere do we see this building more than in British Columbia with LNG one and LNG two.

We are going to stand up for our unionized workers. I was proud to announce $420 million under the union training and innovation program, which will support union training centres.

We are building this country. I hope the member joins us.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1510)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Shannon Miedema (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, entitled "Statutory Review of the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act".

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker. I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in relation to Bill S-233, an act to amend the Criminal Code, assault against persons who provide health services and first responders.

The committee requests an extension.

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 requested and deferred until Wednesday, November 4, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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SPECIAL ECONOMIC MEASURES ACT

Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.) moved that Bill S-214, An Act to amend the Special Economic Measures Act (disposal of foreign state assets), be read the first time.

Mr. Speaker, today I am honoured to introduce Bill S-214, an act that would amend the Special Economic Measures Act, SEMA, regarding the disposal of foreign state assets. This enactment would amend the Special Economic Measures Act to allow the Governor in Council to dispose of a foreign state's assets seized under the act if the seizure occurred without a judicial order.

I would like to acknowledge former senators Dasko and Omidvar for their work in passing this bill in the Senate. I would also like to thank the very many people who have played a part in getting the bill to where it is today.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

PETITIONS

ENERGY

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

I have two petitions to present today.

The first is on behalf of 70 signatories from Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola. The signatories exhort the Canadian government to invest in renewable and clean energy. The petitioners also ask for a broad electrical grid and nation building. They again exhort the Canadian government to provide leadership in this area in commitment to the 2030 and 2035 targets.

● (1515)

RED BRIDGE

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the second petition, I rise for, I believe, now the fifth time, to ask for federal funding for the fast-tracking and rebuilding of the iconic Red Bridge in Canada.

The bridge was a landmark that was destroyed by arson. It is something that the people from the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc area and the people of Kamloops have asked for. Federal funds are needed so the bridge could be rebuilt. Hopefully we will see it in the November 5 budget.

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table five petitions, followed by a sixth. I will quickly read the first one, which has to do with Canada Post. Thousands of people have signed it because they are concerned about the budget cuts and are afraid of losing the services to which they are entitled.

I am therefore tabling these five petitions.

Mr. Speaker, the other petition is, in fact, a response requested by Minister Lightbound to look for new ways to—

The Speaker: I would like to remind everyone in the House that mentioning a minister by name is not permitted. I believe the hon. member was referring to the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement.

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, that was a quote, but I apologize. I was talking about the minister responsible for Canada Post.

This is the sixth petition I am tabling.

[*English*]

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions today.

The first one I do not agree with but present in good faith on behalf of my constituents who are concerned about the proposed west coast oil pipeline project. They do not want it built, and I do, but I said that, in good faith, I would present the petition.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I would like to present today is about the greener homes loan. I am tabling the petition on behalf of residents who are concerned about the affordability of home energy efficiency upgrades, such as heat pumps, and the role those play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The petitioners indicate that the Canada greener homes affordability program has helped thousands of households reduce emissions and improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to reinstate the program as soon as possible and to provide interest-free financing to help Canadians undertake home retrofits aimed at reducing carbon emissions and home efficiencies.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise to present e-petition 6929. I mention the number because very close to 28,000 Canadians signed this petition. It is an honour to present it.

The petition deals with really painful disabling diseases that Canadians suffer from in large numbers, yet these particular diseases, despite long diagnostic delays, medical complications and barriers, are not publicly funded and have not been recognized by Health Canada as diseases that are disabling.

The diseases of which I speak, and the petitioners are particularly concerned with, are endometriosis and adenomyosis, which are chronic, painful and disabling yet are not covered in the same way other disabilities are.

The petitioners call on the House of Commons to officially recognize endometriosis and adenomyosis as conditions that qualify as disabilities federally and provincially. The federal government can only really resolve the federal disability program, but it certainly is the case that the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and related agencies play a large role in evidence-based decision making and can help the provinces also recognize this.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to table a petition today on behalf of the petitioners.

The petitioners highlight that Canada continues to permit live horses to be exported by air for slaughter for human consumption; that horses are transported from feedlots to Canadian airports and flown overseas in wooden crates, with journeys potentially lasting up to 28 hours without feed, water or rest; that horses are highly sensitive animals with strong fight-or-flight responses, and prolonged transportation and confinement can cause significant stress and expose them to injury, illness and death; that existing federal regulations govern the conditions under which horses may be transported but do not eliminate the inherent welfare concerns associated with long-distance transport for slaughter; and, last, that Canadians have repeatedly called upon Parliament to end this practice through petitions, public advocacy and proposed legislation.

Successive attempts have been made in Parliament to prohibit the live export of horses for slaughter, and the Government of

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Canada previously committed to ending this practice, yet these exports continue. The petitioners are calling on the government to act without further delay to permanently prohibit the export of live horses from Canada for slaughter for human consumption, including horses exported for fattening before slaughter, through all necessary legislative and regulatory measures.

* * *

● (1520)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

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[*Translation*]

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

CANADA-EUROPE PARTNERSHIP

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that I have received notice of a request for an emergency debate. I invite the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean to rise and make a brief intervention.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am speaking to you today without a shred of cynicism.

I stubbornly refuse to believe that everything governing the functioning of the House is always partisan, and that we can still have essential discussions about the future of Quebec and Canada. If these discussions are urgent, we will recognize their urgency and be willing to discuss them.

As everyone knows, a summit on a new partnership between Canada and Europe was held in Montreal last week, on Thursday and Friday. At the close of the summit, both President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen and Canada's Prime Minister stated that Canada will become an associate member of the European Union. It was with that designation that President von der Leyen set off for Europe. Soon, today or tomorrow, European countries will be discussing the status of associate membership.

That is also what the Prime Minister called it at the conclusion of the summit. Meanwhile, how many hours of debate will we have devoted to the status of associate membership? How can Europe discuss the future of Quebec and Canada without the democratically elected men and women of the House having the slightest opportunity to debate it, to share their comments, their position or their concerns? How does the government define "associate membership"? What does this mean for Quebec and the provinces? What are the implications for first nations? What are the implications for the House?

The future of Canada, and therefore of Quebec, may now be unfolding in Strasbourg. The House must debate this matter urgently. I therefore ask that you grant our request and call an emergency debate this evening on this issue.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean for his remarks, but I do not find that the request meets the requirements of the Standing Orders.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL PROCUREMENT

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, as I indicated at the outset of my comments, it is always a pleasure to rise and talk about important issues, like our veterans and the way in which governments or arm's-length organizations such as CRA procure and do contracts on a wide spectrum of different things. These are all important issues, and there is no doubt about that. I have a number of things that I would like to say.

First, I would like to make a correction. I might have said that the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires was founded in 2025. It should have been 1925. It was 100 years ago. It actually started in the community of Montreal. The "thirties" I was talking about was obviously the 1930s.

I want to recognize that at the time, there would have been a great deal of discussion about veterans coming home from abroad, whether it was from World War I or World War II. The incredible service provided by the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires was absolutely outstanding, second to likely no other organization. I am not familiar with all the organizations from back then, but I suspect that there would have been a number of non-profits, like the Legion and so forth. There was infrastructure put in place and it was very welcoming. There were many wartime houses being built in our nation in order to accommodate veterans and ensure there was housing for them.

I made reference to the fact that all members of the House, I believe, have an interest in our veterans. This is a very important week. We are all wearing poppies. We wear poppies for a very good reason. It is to recognize past, current and ultimately future serving members and, in dealing with the past, those who made the ultimate sacrifice in regard to their life, among the many other forms of casualties. It is a time at which all Canadians should reflect on the valuable role that members of the Canadian Forces have played for generations.

Having said that, I want to spend some time talking about the issue we have before us. The Conservatives are raising it to try to make it look as if the government is not being sensitive to our veterans. I do not believe that to be the case one iota. In fact, if we look at some of the things we have done since the last election under the leadership of our current Prime Minister and current minister responsible for veterans, I think we see a caring attitude, plus resources.

I can talk about the commitment that was made back in the 2025 budget to enhance veterans' services by improving IT infrastructure. That was an investment of well over $150 million. The purpose of that investment was to ensure that veterans with disabilities who require services are being served in a quicker fashion. The idea was to speed up the process. This was brought forward shortly after the last election.

We had that particular announcement. An announcement also took place last week. The minister labelled it as "veteran-ready". It is a veteran employer recognition initiative. I believe that type of initiative is going to make a difference and support our veterans in a very real and tangible way.

● (1525)

We need to recognize not only the skill sets that are acquired while serving in the military, but also the education that many members of our forces bring to the military. There are ways we can enhance, amplify, do some fine-tuning or go beyond fine-tuning in order to support our veterans and at the same time recognize our businesses in the community. Not all veterans have PTSD. At the end of the day, there are opportunities for employers to hire outstanding Canadians who have put their lives on the line and have served our country. There is absolutely nothing wrong with promoting that.

In terms of the Commissionaires, I made reference to the late 1920s going into the late 1930s as a time in which life in Canada was very different. We had many veterans, people retiring from the war, from the forces, looking for opportunities. It was a very difficult situation. One can only imagine the horrors of war, whether it was World War I, World War II, the Korean War or what took place in Afghanistan. These are individuals who sacrificed a great deal.

That is why I posed a question in regard to the numbers. The Commissionaires is not quite what it was 30, 40 or 50 years ago. That is not to take anything away from the Commissionaires, but there are not as many veterans for a number of reasons. Veterans do not make up the majority of commissionaires. In fact, I believe it might even be around 20% or just a little higher. Again, that is not to take anything away from the Commissionaires, and I would hope that members would not try to suggest that.

There are many other ways in which we can look at how to support our veterans. I would like to see investments in entrepreneurs, businesses and so forth. There are many companies hiring veterans today, some of them dealing with security.

CRA is the arm's-length, independent corporation responsible for Canadian revenue taxation. At the end of the day, this decision was made based on a number of different factors. However, when we look at the Universal Protection Service, the company that ultimately prevailed on that particular procurement, my understanding is that with the contract, we are talking about 60 individuals across the country. The contract is for 60 positions, if I can put it that way. Out of those, 33 have been rehired. Out of those 33, a dozen are veterans.

I do not want to do a comparison between one company and the other, but I will acknowledge the efforts of the Commissionaires and the role it has played with CRA. I suspect it will be in a good position going into the future to continue to do the fine work it does with veterans.

● (1530)

When I look at the motion we have before us and listen to some of the questions that have been put forward, I question the motivation. Let me give an example from the member who represents the community of Moose Jaw, a beautiful city that I lived in for a couple of years. That is where I had my first job. In many ways, it is a fantastic community.

I would like to quote him because I did write it down and was careful to ensure that I got the actual words he said. The member said, “the Liberal government is going to be unemploying 3,000 veterans”. At the very least, it is misleading. I would like to think that it was not done intentionally, because that would be against the rules of the House. Every member knows and understands that the CRA contract has nothing to do with 3,000 veterans becoming unemployed.

If we look at statements of that nature and then look at the content of the motion before us today, I would pose the question of why the Conservatives have tied in a trip that was made by the Prime Minister and dozens of others to promote Canada and build our economy beyond the Canada-U.S. border. Why did they choose to make reference to that trip and some of the costs? For the Conservatives who were in government in the past, surely to goodness they would recognize that these are not negotiated prices. These prices are set. We are following the same pattern as previous governments. There were a number of people who accompanied. It was a number of different days. There is a certain requirement for security today, for example.

Why did they incorporate that aspect into the motion? In my opinion, it is because they are trying to do two things with it. One is that they are trying to give a false impression that the government does not care about veterans and veterans getting employment after they have been released from the Canadian Forces, which is just not true. The other deals with the issue of something we saw in question period, and that is to try to use character assassination, as opposed to dealing with issues of substance.

I had the chance to ask a couple of questions at the very beginning of the member who introduced the motion and the leader of the Conservative Party. When I asked a question of the member who introduced the motion, I made reference to the latter point that it is very political what the Conservatives are doing. That is the reason they put the flight information down. I used the example of Stephen Harper. The current leader of the Conservative Party was sitting in cabinet when Stephen Harper paid $1 million to fly a car from Canada to India. There are cars in India.

An hon. member: It was for the RCMP, Kevin. You know that.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member across the way says it was for the RCMP. In one sense, he is starting to make the point. At the end of the day, as I just said, they are trying to assert blame or assert irresponsible spending, and the member opposite just recognized that it would not be fair to say that. The Conservatives have done that and have incorporated it into the motion itself. That is why, from my perspective, it is a politically motivated motion to take shots at the government.

● (1535)

This motion has nothing with regard to our vets, because if it had something to do with vets, where they could get support in a tangible way from the House or challenge the government, there are many ways they could do that. They could challenge the government in what the government, not the CRA, is doing to support our veterans. I would be able to talk about, in detail, the veterans ready initiative, which was just launched last week—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The member will have to find another time to talk about that.

With questions and comments, the hon. member for Saskatoon South has the floor.

Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with today's opposition motion, we simply want to put Canada first in procurement. We want to honour our veterans. The Corps of Commissionaires in my province of Saskatchewan has been around for decades. I want to salute Lorne Gelowitz, the CEO of northern Saskatchewan, and Dean Rae, the CEO of south Saskatchewan. These are important employment opportunities for Canadians.

In 10 days, Saskatoon will once again host the largest indoor Remembrance Day service in the country. We will have between 7,000 and 10,000 people at 11 o'clock at SaskTel Centre. The Corps of Commissionaires is a vital reason for this.

I just want to say this to the member for Winnipeg North: Let us respect our veterans and reverse this contract.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I do respect veterans. I myself am a veteran. The Prime Minister respects veterans. Every member of the government supports and respects our veterans.

We will attend a multitude of different events that will recognize the many sacrifices made by our veterans in a multitude of different wars, recognizing our veterans, whether they made the ultimate sacrifice or came back with all sorts of health-related issues, in physical health or mental health.

I think it is absolutely critical that we all respect our veterans. I like to think we all do. I myself will go to Brookside, where thousands who lost their lives are laid to rest. I think there are different ways. One of the things is to wear a poppy and support our vets.

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has adopted a buy Canadian policy. The Prime Minister has told Canadians that he wants to make Canada its own best customer.

Despite this, the government's actions tell a very different story. Since the Prime Minister took office, six of the 10 largest contracts have been awarded to federal suppliers headquartered in the United States. The Toronto Star reported that the Liberal government has awarded billions of dollars' worth of contracts to American companies. The total now stands at $7.8 billion, according to their data, and the share of contracts going to U.S.-based firms continues to increase.

How does my colleague explain that?

● (1540)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I do not necessarily know the details. The member just brought it forward to the House, at least as far as I have heard.

At the end of the day, I believe that we need to look at the company that received this. It is a subsidiary of an American company. There are many subsidiaries here in Canada with headquarters in the United States, and vice versa. We have headquarters here in Canada where they have subsidiaries in the United States. What is important is the footprint that the subsidiaries have. My understanding is that we are talking about thousands of employees, some of them in Winnipeg.

[*Translation*]

Marianne Dandurand (Compton—Stanstead, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want draw on what my colleague on the other side of the House said.

Approximately 4% of government contracts are awarded to U.S. companies. By contrast, a great many contracts are now awarded to Canadian companies.

I would like my colleague to tell me a little about what we are doing with the Davie shipyard, because this will have a significant impact here at home. There is the Davie Shipyard, but there is also the contract for the icebreakers.

I think these are two particularly interesting projects. What is the government's position on these sorts of projects, which are creating jobs here at home?

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, that was an excellent question. The Davie project is a major project. The province of Quebec and other areas of Canada will benefit from that, much like they will from many other major projects where we see Canadian labour; Canadian steel, lumber, aluminum; and things here in Canada being used to advance those projects.

Canadians themselves are responding. Take a look, for example, at the number of visitors going down to the United States. Take a look at the number of Canadians today who, when they do their shopping, are looking at where that product was manufactured.

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, Commissionaires is still the largest employer of Canada's veterans, and it is a not-for-profit. The government has been meeting with GardaWorld as recently as July, but Commissionaires cannot even get a meeting with the minister, who has not met with Commissionaires since the spring.

I am hoping my colleague can share a bit of insight on why the government is refusing to meet with the Commissionaires. If there is an issue about needing to increase the amount of veterans who are working for Commissionaires, that should be a conversation the minister is having. Taking that away and giving it to a private company instead is privatization that has crossed the line. It is over the top.

When the member talks about veteran employment, I will tell him what it is like in my riding. In Courtenay, where the Commissionaires is, 60% of those who work for Commissionaires are veterans.

I am hoping my colleague can explain why the minister refuses to meet with Commissionaires.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I have, and I have said this in my comments, an immense amount of respect. I acknowledge the incredible work Commissionaires has done through the years. I believe Commissionaires will continue to be able to provide employment opportunities for veterans. I look to it, as a non-profit organization, to continue to grow. I also recognize there is a genuine attempt by the Commissionaires to employ even a higher percentage of veterans.

When I think of those war veterans from World War II who I marched with, side by side in parades, there are many things they talked about regarding freedoms and the type of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, earlier in his comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg North said something with which I completely agree, and I would like him to underscore the point. I wonder why he did not make the same point to my question of personal privilege, where he disagreed. He said just now, and he is absolutely right, that if there was a misleading statement but no intention to mislead, that was different. It was misinformation, but misinformation with an intent to mislead would violate the rules of this place.

The Speaker is still considering my question of personal privilege, so I ask my hon. friend from Winnipeg North to pitch in here and confirm what he just said, which was correct. “Disinformation” is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and any other dictionary, as “deliberately false information” for the purpose of deceit and deception.

Would the hon. member agree that, when an hon. member here accuses other members of deliberate deception by using the word "disinformation", as he just said, that violates the rules of this place?

● (1545)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I think it is in Beauchesne's sixth edition where it talks about the Speaker's ability to use discretion as there is not any given word that is parliamentary or unparliamentary. Often, it is the context in which someone says something. For example, I can say, "It is absolutely misleading when members stand up in this chamber to say something that is just not true." I would be very careful in terms of using the word "lie," but I could say that. However, if I were to attribute it to an individual specifically, there is a chance the member might stand up on a point of order and ask me to apologize.

I think it is not quite as simple as the member opposite says. I am sympathetic to what she is saying, but I do not believe that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

[*Translation*]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know why the government is creating so many new agencies and why, every time we ask about the reasons for a decision, we are told that it was not a government decision. The procurement ombud has said that this has got to stop.

Is the government, which keeps creating new agencies, prepared to give the procurement ombud the authority to oversee their procurement activities in the same way that he oversees other government contracts?

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am not 100% sure that I understand the question. I do believe it is important that the government has set up corporations and agencies, and there is great value to that. We have seen provinces use them as arm's-length organizations. There are procurement processes and procedures often recommended by governments, no matter what level they might be, and there is a sense of accountability to that. I would like to think that the CRA, which is independent and arm's-length from government, is making the decision based on the criteria it established and set out when it put it out for tender.

[*Translation*]

Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Airdrie—Cochrane.

"Sensitivity" is a word that I would like members to remember because I am going to come back to it in my speech.

I want to talk about the word "sensitivity" because, in a few days, Canadians will gather for Remembrance Day ceremonies. They will wear a poppy, just as we are all doing right now here in the House. In each of our regions, we will honour our veterans and soldiers who have been deployed to various missions abroad. We will also thank their families for the sacrifices they have made throughout Canada's history in times of war by entrusting a member of their family to the service of our country in order to protect Canada and the freedoms that we now enjoy.

The people who devoted years to serving our country are the reason for these ceremonies. Some of them have been deployed far from their loved ones. Others are still living with injuries sustained while on duty. When they leave the armed forces, these people need to continue to earn a living and take care of their families. That is something that the public is not often aware of. A soldier is not always a soldier. A person does not remain a soldier their whole life, except maybe in their heart. They have to make a living and get back into the swing of everyday life. That is exactly what many members of the Canadian Armed Forces have to do.

The respect we owe them extends beyond the poppy we wear at a certain time of year or the speeches made by dignitaries on that day. One of these groups that deserve a lot of respect is the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, which provides veterans who, like I said, always stay soldiers at heart, with the opportunity to keep working.

For people who may not know, we sometimes see commissionaires when we stop by federal offices. We sometimes see the word "commissionaire". People may wonder why they are called by this name. Does it mean they take commissions? No, they are the people in charge of security on the premises. In French, the name can be especially confusing. Many commissionaires are veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces, working to earn a living after their military service ends. The Canadian Corps of Commissionaires is the largest non-governmental employer of veterans in the country and has been in operation since 1925.

In June, the Canada Revenue Agency awarded a security contract worth nearly $12 million to a company controlled by American interests and owned by Allied Universal. The problem is that this contract had previously been held by the Commissionaires, who had been providing those services for many years with the support of veterans. The Commissionaires also submitted a bid for the nearly $12-million contract, but their proposal was $80,000 higher, representing less than 1% of the contract's value. Over that small difference, the tired old Liberal government chose to set aside a Canadian non-profit organization that provides employment for veterans and instead award the contract to an American company, which I will return to later.

Just days before Remembrance Day, this is where the notion of sensitivity comes into play. When we learned that the government had awarded the contract to an American company, we could not help but wonder what message it was trying to send: Thanks for your service to Canada, but the contract is going to the Americans.

The problem is that we have a Prime Minister who spends a great deal of time making speeches. He says one thing and does the opposite, often at the same time. It all depends on the day and on his audience. One day, he tells us that Canada must stand up to the United States, only to lift retaliatory tariffs shortly thereafter. One day, he says that his government will not negotiate with the United States for years because Canada can afford to wait; then, on the very day the by-elections are called, he announces that he has spoken with the U.S. president.

He also promises to buy Canadian. We thought it was easy for a Prime Minister to make such a promise, since he and his cabinet have the power to follow through on a commitment to buy Canadian, particularly in a challenging situation like the one we are currently facing with the United States. Despite that promise, his government still awarded the contract to a company under American control.

● (1550)

The rhetoric changes often, the promises are piling up and Canadians want consistency. No one knows where the government is heading. In the end, with a particularly important opportunity up for grabs, the government decided to push aside the Commissionaires to make way for an American company. All that to save $80,000, which is less than 1% of the contract's value.

The Liberals announce a measure, change course and reverse their decision. Then they wonder why people are finding it increasingly difficult to believe them. Businesses are having a hard time keeping up with the government, and workers are having to adapt.

We know that the government does not control the decisions made in Washington, but there is one thing it can control, if it is a real government, and that is the contracts it awards here in Canada. The Prime Minister promised to prioritize Canadian suppliers. He needs to keep that promise. That is entirely in his control.

When the Prime Minister was in Halifax in March, he explained that some of our former strengths, based on our close ties with the United States, had become vulnerabilities. Three months later, he chose an American-controlled company over the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires. Is anyone having a hard time following my logic? In any case, Canadians are having a hard time following the government's logic. It makes promises it does not keep.

We keep hearing about the need to build Canada strong and sign agreements. The government promised an agreement with the United States. We see grand summits, lofty speeches and headline-grabbing announcements. However, when it actually comes to signing agreements, where is the Prime Minister? He is nowhere to be seen; he is not there. He is not signing anything that lives up to the promises he has made.

Last October, when talking about Canadian steel, the Prime Minister kept saying it was time to become our own best customer. Despite that, steel remains one of the sectors hardest hit by countertariffs. On top of that, Canada is now being flooded with dumped imports from countries that have also been shut out of the U.S. market.

Why does this tired old Liberal government not keep its word to our veterans? It says it respects veterans. I can believe that, but, once again, these are just words. Respect can be expressed through action, for example by signing the contracts that would allow the largest non-profit organization, and the one that employs the most veterans, to secure the contracts it needs to continue providing the services it delivered until very recently.

The Prime Minister is not alone in this. There are ministers too. What are they doing? What is the Minister of Public Services and Procurement doing? Why did he not change the rules so that when there is less than 1% difference between bids, as is the case here, the contract would be awarded to a Canadian company?

Allied Universal, the company that was awarded the contract instead of the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, has significant business ties with the U.S. administration. It holds more than $80 million in contracts with the United States, including with Immigration and Customs Enforcement—or ICE, as it is called, even on the news—the agency responsible for carrying out deportations on behalf of the Trump administration. This is the company that was entrusted with providing security services for the Canada Revenue Agency. In 2026 alone, it also secured $290 million U.S. in contracts from the Department of Homeland Security.

When we are told to stick our elbows up for Canada, it is not so that American companies can be given preference over the Commissionaires. Sometimes standing up for Canada means preventing exactly that from happening. Above all, when a promise is made, it should be kept.

Conservatives want to put Canada first, put the Commissionaires first, secure contracts for Canadians, support jobs, build more housing and help families save money. It is time that buy Canadian finally move from rhetoric to procurement decisions, and that the Liberals back up their words with signatures. We owe it to veterans and to Canadian companies that do business in Canada and that believed the Prime Minister when he said he was going to implement a buy Canadian policy.

● (1555)

Marianne Dandurand (Compton—Stanstead, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the speech by my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière was very interesting.

I am particularly interested in the fact that the company we are discussing, while admittedly American-owned, employs Canadian workers, including veterans. In my colleague's neighbouring riding, Tafisa, a company that awards contracts and employs local workers, is owned by a Portuguese corporation.

At what point should a company that employs Canadians and creates jobs in Canada be considered eligible for government contracts? Could a company such as Tafisa be regarded as a suitable recipient of a Government of Canada contract?

Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I was talking earlier about sensitivity, and this question is a perfect example of why.

I am talking about veterans. I am talking about veterans of our Canadian Armed Forces. I am talking about an American company at a time when the Prime Minister himself has described the situation as a trade war with the United States.

The Prime Minister promised that he would award contracts to Canadian companies first. It is not my fault if the member did not listen to her Prime Minister's promises. I think that even the Liberals stopped listening to their Prime Minister's promises because they know he does not keep them.

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a very simple question.

Last week, at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, we asked the procurement ombud what he needed to properly perform his role of holding the government to account. He told us that he would need the authority to do his work within government agencies.

He also made another point, and I would like to know whether my colleague agrees. He told us that, after more than a year of contracts being awarded to Canadian companies, it is time to conduct a comprehensive analysis to determine what went right, what went wrong and what needs to be fixed. Is this motion not just the tip of the iceberg? What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

● (1600)

Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, the best way to describe this tired old Liberal government's approach is a lack of transparency. When it has gotten to the point where the Liberals are even preventing someone like the procurement ombud from getting access to the information he needs to give his opinion on what is happening, that is worse than simply refusing to answer the Conservatives' questions or trying to sidetrack or distract us.

There is no doubt that this government lacks transparency and does not live up to its word when it comes time to keep the promises that it made to all Canadians. The government is great at making fancy speeches around the world, but it is terrible when it comes to telling Canadians the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Jonathan Rowe (The Eastern Peninsulas, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague. Would he agree that it is particularly sad that the Commissionaires lost this contract to save less than 1%?

Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, the key word in relation to what we are discussing today is “sensitivity”. Yes, it is sad for the veterans. It is especially sad for the Commissionaires, who have been carrying out this kind of work since 1925 and who have been there for veterans leaving either the armed forces or a conflict zone, often without knowing what comes next. Canada had an organization that allowed them to continue to live with dignity and find work. They felt like they were still part of a group. Folks in the military know how important that sense of camaraderie is.

Yes, it is sad that the government attaches so little importance to the Commissionaires. Above all, I do not understand why, despite all the time it had, the government could not put measures in place to allow a Canadian non-profit company to secure this contract, when its bid was only 1% higher than that of its American competitor.

[*English*]

Blake Richards (Airdrie—Cochrane, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we approach Remembrance Day, Canadians across the country will gather, of course, to honour the men and women who have served this country in our armed forces and who are willing to give of their lives for the freedoms that we all enjoy. In my own communities of Airdrie and Cochrane, I will have the privilege of spending time with veterans, their families and the volunteers who work so hard to make sure their sacrifices are never forgotten. I can tell my colleagues that these are some of the finest people we will ever meet. They are proud of their service and their country. They are not looking for special treatment, but they do expect to be treated with respect and to have a government that gives them what they are owed.

Thanking our veterans should not be something we do only once a year. We should not just pin a poppy on our jacket and then forget about them for the other 11 months of the year. These are men and women who stood up for Canada when their country needed them. The very least their government can do for them is to stand up for them when they need it. That is what makes the issues we are discussing here today so frustrating.

When we look at the way the Liberal government is treating our veterans, we see a real disconnect between what it says and what it does. Before I get to the very important issue at hand today, I would like to get into a couple of examples that highlight some of the concerns about those differences between the words and the actions of the Liberal government when it comes to showing respect and appreciation for our veterans and what they have done for our country.

I think of the issue of military chaplains, for example. For generations, prayer has been a part of military life here in Canada. It has offered comfort to soldiers facing unimaginable circumstances, to families who are grieving their loved ones and to our veterans who are remembering those who never came home. Nobody is suggesting that every Canadian must share the same religious beliefs. Of course not, but surely we can at least respect those who do find strength in their faith, just as we respect those who do not. Instead, the Canadian Armed Forces issued a directive restricting faith-specific prayer at official military functions. In fact, any reflection that might in any way be faith-based or spiritual is banned, and often the messages that a chaplain has to craft almost become meaningless. That is not what anyone would want to see. When I look at that, I have to ask why that is necessary.

Our soldiers have faced enemy fire, they have lost their friends and colleagues, they have made sacrifices that most of us will never even be able to comprehend, and now we are telling military chaplains that they cannot even offer a traditional prayer at certain official ceremonies. These are people who have stood beside our troops in their darkest moments. We should be supporting them, not telling them how to practise their faith and not taking away that opportunity for our men and women who serve.

Now I will get to the issue of this contract we are discussing today. I find this particularly difficult to understand. Not that long ago, fairly recently, in fact, the government ended the right of first refusal that has existed for the Corps of Commissionaires for decades. I would argue it is important that any Canadian organization or business that employs veterans at an adequate level should have an opportunity for that contract, but at the time the government came out with this, it was a surprise to everyone, including the commissionaires themselves.

I remember warning at the time that we could see Canadian veterans lose opportunities and jobs as a result. Here we are, just a few short months later, and we can look at what has happened. It is exactly what we warned would happen by taking away that right of first refusal without replacing it with anything that would guarantee veterans have chances to get those jobs.

● (1605)

Here we go. We have a Canadian not-for-profit organization with a long and proud history of providing employment opportunities to veterans. It has helped thousands of former military members transition into civilian life. It has helped them continue to serve their communities and continue to earn a living after leaving the armed forces.

However, what the government did was award a nearly $12-million CRA security contract to an American multinational corporation. The difference between the two bids was reportedly less than 1%. Let us think about that for a moment. The government has spent months telling Canadians that we need to buy Canadian, that we need to support Canadian workers and that we need to become our own best customer. Well, here is an opportunity to do exactly that and to be able to support our veterans at the same time. That sounds like it should be a no-brainer, does it not? Apparently, that was not the case for the Liberal government.

Our veterans, who have already paid a price for our country, a price most Canadians will never be asked to pay, should not have to keep paying for the failures of the Liberal government. They should not be struggling to afford groceries, worrying about housing or fighting through government bureaucracy just to receive the support they have already earned. They have done their part; it is time the government did its part. We have seen time and again how this works. We have seen significant delays and problematic denials in terms of veterans' ability to get the services and supports they are entitled to.

Veterans often talk about a triple-D policy: denial, delay and death. Essentially, this is because the government has set up a situation where the delays are so long and arduous and the bureaucratic process is so difficult to fight their way through that it ultimately becomes a denial just by delay. Even if it is not that, then it becomes an actual denial. They have to fight through a bunch of other bureaucratic processes, if they can find a way to do that, to hopefully end up getting a positive result in the end. At the end of the day, what the government really seems to hope is that they will just go away and stop fighting for those benefits. They earned them. They deserve them because of what they were willing to do for our country and what they did do for our country.

What troubles me about all this is it should not be particularly controversial. Supporting veterans in finding meaningful employment should not be controversial. Respecting the role of faith and tradition in our military should not be controversial. Making sure veterans can afford to live with dignity should not be controversial, yet here we are. Time and time again, the government finds a way to make simple things complicated with more bureaucracy, more excuses and more broken promises. When it comes time to deliver, our veterans are left waiting.

Respect for our veterans is not measured by how many wreaths a government lays or how many speeches its ministers give on Remembrance Day; it is measured by what that government does when the cameras are gone, whether it protects their traditions, supports their employment and makes sure they get the help they have earned. This is the standard our veterans deserve and should expect, and it is the standard the Liberal government needs to start being held to.

I will continue to stand up for the men and women who have served our country and those who continue to serve our country today. They have earned our gratitude. They have earned our respect. Above all, they have earned a government that is prepared to back up its words with actions, but that is not what they are getting right now. As a Conservative, I will continue to fight for them, and that is what we are doing here today.

● (1610)

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we head into Remembrance Day, I think it is important to put on the record the actual investments this government has made into Canada's military and veterans, including increases to defence investment and modernization, which was $9 billion just this year, reaching NATO's 2% of GDP target; historic pay increases for military personnel, including a 20% increase for regular forces privates; a $2.6-billion investment into recruitment and retention, reaching record levels of recruitment in the armed forces; $3.7 billion towards military housing and infrastructure; and an over $200-million investment committed to services and benefits.

These are historic investments in Canadians' military and historic investments to support veterans. Would the member opposite agree?

Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, what I find incredibly frustrating is that the only way the Liberal government ever measures anything is how by much money it can can spend. We should instead measure the results and, frankly, the results have not been there.

Our men and women in uniform will tell us, to this day, that they continue to struggle with not having the equipment they need to be able to do their jobs. We hear lots of talk about procurement and we hear lots of talk about spending money, but we do not see the results on the ground. When it comes to talking about veterans, whom we are here to talk about today, what they will tell us is they wait months, if not years, for the benefits that they earned because of their service for this country. That is because of the bureaucratic processes put up by that government, and it is time that is put to a stop and we start seeing some results.

[*Translation*]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge all the work my colleague did during the year that we served together, as well as the work he did alongside my Bloc Québécois predecessor. My colleague genuinely cares about the treatment of veterans and is deeply committed to recognizing their service.

Indeed, my first thought when I joined this committee was to wonder why no action was being taken, even though people wanted what was good for veterans. Since 2015, there have been nine veterans affairs ministers. That says something.

Does my colleague agree with me that an announcement like that is deeply hurtful to veterans?

The government cannot claim to be supporting veterans when its actions send the message that they are no longer needed and can be readily replaced.

Does my colleague agree with me?

● (1615)

[*English*]

Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I would agree. We see so many of these kinds of things. We see it in what we are talking about today with this contract, when the Liberals were warned that this would be the result. We see it in the lack of action towards building a monument to the mission in Afghanistan and the 158 Canadians who gave their lives there. We see it in the denials and delays when it comes to the benefits that veterans are entitled to. We see it throughout so many things. We remember that the Liberals tried to take away the Remembrance Day wreaths. They have taken away the ability for prayer at Remembrance Day services. The list goes on and on. I always say we judge someone not by their words but by their actions. If we judge the current government by its actions, it is clearly failing our veterans.

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do owe our veterans a debt of gratitude that probably we can never repay. However, we can recognize it in terms of what the federal government has done through the contract that has been issued through a technicality to an American company. The people of Canada have to realize that the only reason this contract was given was that an American company gave a Canadian address but was not located in Canada like the Veterans Association that has been here since 1945.

Can the member talk about that technicality, and what it means to buy Canadian?

Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question because the reality of this situation is that not only are the Liberals failing our veterans with this, but they are also failing to live up to their own words. They talk about wanting to see buy Canadian. They want to make sure that Canadians are getting the opportunities. This goes absolutely contrary to all of their words.

Again, their actions are not lining up with their words. This was an opportunity not only to do right by our veterans and ensure veterans have the opportunity of employment, but also to ensure that Canadian companies have the opportunity to prioritize Canadian employment over American. In this case, the Liberals failed at all of the above, just like they always do.

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and to the Secretary of State (Defence Procurement), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the member for Compton—Stanstead.

It is an honour and a privilege to rise in the House today to reaffirm the Government of Canada's commitment to the buy Canadian policy. I am incredibly proud of how this initiative is transforming government procurement, giving Canadian businesses, workers, manufacturers and suppliers greater access to opportunities, and delivering real results for Canadians. As the member of Parliament for Kanata, and Canada's largest technology park with over 800 companies, this policy has a meaningful impact.

Our government will always stand with Canadian workers and Canadian businesses, and that is how we will build the strongest economy in the G7. We remain as committed as ever to prioritizing Canadian suppliers and Canadian-made goods and services in federal procurement. This is a pledge that we have made to Canadians, and it is unwavering.

Since it came into force in December of last year, the buy Canadian policy has been reshaping how the federal government spends by prioritizing Canadian content, materials, suppliers and workers at every opportunity. From steel and aluminum to wood products, the government's purchasing of goods and services is being used as a powerful tool to back key industries and strengthen domestic supply chains. The rollout of the buy Canadian policy marked a major step towards building a more resilient Canadian economy. It is designed to ensure clear advantages are available to suppliers who invest, innovate and produce here at home.

By prioritizing Canadian suppliers, Canadian materials and Canadian content in federal procurement, we are becoming our own best customer. By reducing reliance on any single trading partner and building resilience through strong domestic demand, we are bolstering Canada's economy. The policy on prioritizing Canadian suppliers and Canadian content in strategic federal procurements initially applied to procurements valued at $25 million and above. However, in June, we lowered that threshold to $5 million, significantly broadening its reach.

We are also putting Canadian materials at the centre of major federal construction and defence projects. For procurements of $25 million or more, the policy requires Canadian-produced steel, aluminum and wood. We are also making it easier for Canadian small businesses to compete for federal opportunities through the small business procurement program, which will simplify procurement processes and introduce new digital tools.

Ultimately, the test of this policy is whether federal spending creates economic activity here at home. In the spirit of the buy Canadian policy, the government continues to identify opportunities for Canadian suppliers to benefit from federal procurement policies, and ultimately support Canadian workers, businesses and communities. This includes attracting investments that deliver tangible and lasting benefits to Canadian communities and supply chains. This is all about driving growth, creating opportunities and enhancing prosperity for Canadians. In a more dangerous and volatile world, this has never been more important, particularly when it comes to protecting Canada's sovereignty.

We know that the world has changed and Canada must change with it. That is why Canada is also making generational investments to rebuild, rearm and reinvest in the Canadian Armed Forces. These investments are guided by Canada's first-ever defence industrial strategy, a whole-of-government approach to transform Canada's defence industry. This strategy will prioritize Canadian suppliers and materials, invest in Canadian innovation and commercialization, and streamline defence procurement. It is supported by the new Defence Investment Agency. This is yet another tool with which we are delivering greater strategic autonomy and economic benefits for Canada.

● (1620)

These efforts are already making a difference. Between December 2025 and October 1, 2026, Public Services and Procurement Canada, the government's central purchaser, awarded a total of 1,644 new contracts worth about $23 billion. Of those contracts, 1,372, representing about $17.7 billion, were awarded to suppliers operating in Canada. That is the kind of progress we want to build on.

With regard to today's motion, the Canada Revenue Agency, following a fair and open procurement process, decided to award this contract to a company that operates extensively in Canada and employs Canadian security guards, supervisors and managers. This brings me to an important point about what we mean when we talk about Canadian suppliers. Being a Canadian supplier is not simply a question of who owns the shares of a company. We also need to look at where the economic activity takes place.

Under the buy Canadian policy, the definition of a Canadian supplier is based on substantive economic activity in Canada. That includes having a place of business here, being registered and filing taxes here, and conducting ongoing activities and employing people in Canada to deliver goods and services. That distinction matters.

A company can be part of a global enterprise and still employ thousands of Canadians. It can pay taxes here. It can operate facilities here. It can conduct research and development here. It can purchase from Canadian suppliers and invest in Canadian communities. Those jobs are Canadian jobs. Those investments are investments in Canada. That economic activity matters to Canada.

That is why our approach looks not only at the name or nationality of a parent company, but also at the economic value being created right here in Canada. In fact, Canadian content under the policy can include salaries and services delivered in Canada; research, design and testing carried out here; Canadian software development and systems integration; and Canadian installation, maintenance and training.

That approach also sends a powerful message to international companies. If they want to do business with the Government of Canada, they need to invest in Canada, build in Canada and create value in Canada. That is an important part of what buy Canadian is intended to achieve. Buy Canadian is not simply about where a company's headquarters are located. It is about where the jobs are, where the investment is, where the innovation happens, where the supply chain is built and ultimately where the economic benefits land.

We continue to work closely with businesses, suppliers and stakeholders to develop and refine procurement measures that support Canadian industry, strengthen supply chains and drive our country's economic growth. Our government will always stand with Canadian workers and Canadian businesses. We will build the strongest economy in the G7. We will always support our veterans with job opportunities.

I want to assure this House that we are fully committed to our buy Canadian policy, the substantial opportunities it is providing for Canadians and the powerful benefits it is providing to our country. We have shifted from an approach of “best effort” to a clear obligation to support Canadian industries, and we are transforming our economy while we do it. Through buy Canadian, we are supporting our industries today while keeping a clear focus on a sustainable future. That is our promise to Canadians, one that we are delivering on.

● (1625)

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the issue of chaplaincy and the ability to pray at ceremonies, I note that under the government's policy, it has a specific section regarding indigenous cultural practices. This policy says that an indigenous person is not allowed to share their spiritual practices. In fact, that has to be religiously neutral. There could be a situation where an indigenous person mentions the word “Creator”, and under the Liberal government's policy, they would not be permitted to share their indigenous spirituality.

How is it reconciliation when the government is actively suppressing indigenous spirituality?

Hon. Jenna Sudds: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity, as I answer the member's question, to acknowledge the service of veterans and the sacrifice they have made on our behalf and for our country. Their contributions are lasting and recognized.

I look forward, on November 11, to attending the local ceremony in my community, where we include prayer that is inclusive. I expect it will be the same as colleagues across this chamber visit and participate in ceremonies in their communities as well.

I will be at the ceremony the Legion puts on in Kanata on that day, and I look forward to thanking the veterans who will be there for their service.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on October 20, we found out that the Canada Revenue Agency awarded a $12-million contract to the U.S. company Allied Universal, choosing it over the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, a non-profit organization that employs many veterans. In fact, veterans make up 15% of its workforce, according to Radio-Canada.

I am a bit sick of this Liberal hypocrisy. They say we need to fight back against the United States, yet contracts continue to be awarded to American companies. The clearest example concerns oil exports. After all, 90% of Alberta's oil and gas exports go to the United States and are not even subject to tariffs. Meanwhile, Quebec is left bearing the cost of this trade war

The RYAM plant back home in Témiscamingue is a case in point. Because cardboard is not subject to tariffs when exported to the United States, the company lost a contract in western Canada. Those tariffs should have applied. This is a clear double standard, and it is extremely frustrating.

When will this end?

● (1630)

[*English*]

Hon. Jenna Sudds: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the Canada Revenue Agency followed a fair and open procurement process when awarding this contract, but it is an important point, as we drill down on the buy Canadian policy, to talk about what we mean when we say “Canadian supplier”. A supplier is not simply a question of who owns the shares of a company. We need to look at where the economic activity is taking place. That means having a business registered in Canada, creating jobs in this country, paying taxes and generating economic output. That is what we expect from Canadian suppliers, and that is what we will continue to uphold.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments regarding the different ceremonies that take place across Canada. Sergeant Tommy Prince was a war hero. He was of indigenous background and was looked upon in a very wonderful way. Many of our veterans are buried in the Brookside Cemetery. We could go to the Legion or the Tommy Prince park.

I would ask the member to provide her thoughts on how important it is, come November 11 at 11 a.m., that everyone take a moment to reflect on the sacrifices made by our men and women in the forces.

Hon. Jenna Sudds: Mr. Speaker, it is incredibly important that each and every one of us takes the time on November 11 at 11 a.m., as the member stated, to ensure that we pause to celebrate and thank veterans, who have served our country with such distinct honour, and their families, who have made such big sacrifices in them doing so.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): 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 Winnipeg Centre, Indigenous Affairs; the hon. member for St. Albert—Sturgeon River, Health; the hon. member for York—Durham, Natural Resources.

Marianne Dandurand (Compton—Stanstead, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the motion we are debating today raises two very important questions. First, how does the government use its purchasing power to support Canadian businesses? Second, how do we recognize the contribution of veterans, including by providing them with employment opportunities after their military service? I agree that both of these questions deserve careful consideration.

I will begin with something I think we can all agree on: When the Government of Canada spends taxpayers' money, those investments should, to the greatest extent possible, help support Canadian businesses, workers and supply chains.

The Government of Canada is a major purchaser. Its procurement decisions can make a real difference for Canadian companies that may wish to increase production, invest in new equipment, hire employees, expand their operations and contribute to our economic vitality. That is precisely the objective of our buy Canadian policy.

In an unstable global economy, our businesses need certainty, and they need contracts such as those awarded by the Government of Canada. Our goal is for Canada to become its own best customer. The buy Canadian policy came into effect just before the holiday season last year, on December 16, and it marks a significant shift in the way we use public procurement to support our economy.

In practical terms, what the buy Canadian policy does is prioritize Canadian suppliers and Canadian content in eligible federal government contracts. It includes requirements to promote the use of Canadian materials, including metal, steel, aluminum and wood, sectors that are currently on the front lines of a trade war with our neighbours. These materials will be used in major construction and defence projects, among others. These are priority areas for the Government of Canada and will see significant investments over the coming years and even decades.

We also want to make these contracts much more accessible to small businesses. In June, we lowered the threshold for the buy Canadian policy from $25 million to $5 million, which opens the door to much smaller businesses, such as those found throughout regions like mine. Our policy does not just apply to very large companies. It also applies to small businesses that can bid on contracts worth $5 million. To help these businesses gain access to Canadian contracts, we launched the small business procurement program, which streamlines the process, tailors requirements and helps small and medium-sized enterprises navigate a federal system that, I admit, is not always the simplest.

These changes are tangible. Between December of last year and October 1 of this year, Public Services and Procurement Canada awarded nearly $18 billion in contracts to Canadian suppliers. These contracts support jobs here at home, support investment, and support business production across Canada. A policy is not worth much if businesses do not know it exists or do not know how to take advantage of it.

I would now like to talk about what we are doing in my riding of Compton—Stanstead to ensure that local businesses can access these contracts. As soon as we started discussing the buy Canadian policy, I invited the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement to my region. He delivered a presentation to business people. Roughly 75 stakeholders attended the presentation, during which his staff also explained the Canadian procurement process and how businesses, like the ones in my riding, can access it. Many organizations, economic development stakeholders and businesses have come to understand the policy changes, the opportunities these may present to their businesses, as well as how they, in turn, can become suppliers to the Government of Canada.

● (1635)

In my view, this is essential. It is not enough simply to announce policies in Ottawa. They need to be promoted on the ground. That is how businesses can take advantage of them.

My team and I support businesses that wish to better understand federal procurement opportunities, identify relevant opportunities and learn how to participate in the bidding process.

We serve as a bridge between the government's needs and the expertise that exists in my riding, which the government is not always aware of. We have manufacturing companies, we have many agri-food producers, technology firms, construction contractors and environmental specialists. They may not all provide the same products and services, but they all have something to contribute.

When we talk about buying Canadian, we are talking about recognizing the expertise of local businesses. I am thinking in particular of the La Station de Compton cheese factory, which recently won four awards at the 2026 Sélection Caseus competition, including two of the highest honours: Caseus gold for its Alfred le Fermier Grand Cru, which was named the best cheese in Quebec, and the Caseus bronze for its Raclette de Compton au poivre.

I must say I have a soft spot for the second one. It holds a special place in my heart. I will go out of my way to eat grilled cheese sandwiches at Compton's cheese factory.

That being said, when the Prime Minister came to town, I presented him with some Alfred le Fermier Grand Cru cheese. I will have to ask him what he thought about it.

As I said, two of the best cheeses in Quebec are made in my riding. That, too, is what buying Canadian is about. It is about showcasing outstanding products and the expertise of the local artisans who put us on the map.

The motion also raises the matter of the service contract awarded by the Canada Revenue Agency and where veterans fit in when it comes to employment opportunities. Let me be very clear: We recognize veterans' contributions and the importance of offering them meaningful career prospects after their service ends. The Canadian Corps of Commissionaires plays a very important role in helping us do that. It deserves recognition for its history and its contribution to employing veterans.

We also need to consider how the contract was awarded. The CRA ran a competitive bidding process. Businesses were evaluated based on predetermined criteria. Technical merit counted for 60% of the score, price counted for 40%, and the contract was ultimately awarded to the bidder with the highest overall score. The successful supplier has significant operations in Canada and employs thousands of people across the country.

According to information provided by the CRA, of the 60 employees covered by this contract, 33 are former security guards who have been rehired and 12 are veterans. This in no way diminishes the importance of supporting the Commissionaires and the veterans they employ, but it does serve as a reminder that we must also take into account the Canadian workers who continue to provide services.

Since this motion relates to veterans, and with Remembrance Day approaching, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the contribution that service men and women from my region have made to the defence of our country.

The Eastern Townships have a rich military history. In East Clifton stands what is considered to be the oldest cenotaph in Quebec, and possibly in all of Canada. It was erected in 1920 in honour of the soldiers of the First World War.

● (1640)

[*English*]

During the Second World War, the municipality of Bury had one of the highest enlistment rates per capita in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Even today, our four reserve units in Sherbrooke, namely the Sherbrooke Hussars, the Fusiliers de Sherbrooke, the 35 Signal Regiment and the 52 Field Ambulance, are recognized for their significant contributions to Canadian Armed Forces missions.

I would therefore like to encourage people in our region to take part in the upcoming Remembrance Day ceremonies. There will be nearly 20 of them in my riding of Compton—Stanstead alone, in addition to many others throughout the Eastern Townships. It is important to pay tribute to those who fought in defence of our country.

Ultimately, the issues raised by this motion remind us of the same responsibility: to recognize the contributions of the people who build our country and defend it.

[*English*]

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this issue about the contract with the Commissionaires and Allied Universal is not just about veterans' jobs. The Corps of Commissionaires is a non-profit corporation, and the excess revenues that it produces beyond wages are primarily sent toward benevolent funds and charitable causes. These include its national bursary program as well as sponsorship for veterans' organizations like the No Stone Left Alone Memorial Foundation, military family resource centres and the Royal Canadian Legion. When this government saves a buck by going with a for-profit company, it is actually undermining many charitable causes in this country. I am hoping the member can address that concern.

[*Translation*]

Marianne Dandurand: Mr. Speaker, we continue to recognize the contribution that an organization like the Commissionaires makes to veterans' employment opportunities. We also recognize everything they do for the Royal Canadian Legion.

On that note, I would point out that many legion branches are celebrating their 100th anniversary this year, making this a truly special occasion. I would like to highlight the various ceremonies that will be held across Canada, including the one at the Sherbrooke War Memorial, the angel on King Street hill that everyone knows. The legion is marking its centennial this year and continues to organize countless activities to honour the contribution of our military personnel. Legion branches play an exceptionally important role in our communities. That is yet another reason to take part in Remembrance Day ceremonies over the coming days and weeks.

● (1645)

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I find it somewhat disheartening to see the Liberals justify hiring Allied Universal instead of the Commissionaires, formerly known as the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires. Why is that? The government is shirking its responsibilities by saying that the decision was made by the CRA rather than by the Liberals themselves. Given the proliferation of agencies we are seeing these days, that is worrisome. The Commissionaires, a non-profit organization that already provides security for federal buildings, has 22,000 employees, including 3,500 military and RCMP veterans.

What does buy Canadian mean to my colleague, exactly?

Marianne Dandurand: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is giving me the opportunity to talk about a number of contracts that are having an impact in my riding. I would like to talk about IBM, an American company that has been operating in Canada for nearly 110 years, including next door to my riding, in the riding of my colleague from Brome—Missisquoi. It is one of the companies that receives many of the contracts awarded in the United States, but that have a major impact in Canada. Many people in Bromont work for that company.

These are excellent jobs, and this is the type of business that the government wants to support because high-quality, high-tech jobs in our communities are extremely valuable.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, much like myself, the member is a very strong advocate in recognizing the importance that the Corp of Commissionaires has played over the years. It is a very important role.

However, it is not appropriate to attempt to mislead or give a false impression that the government does not support veterans. We do many different projects. One that I am very grateful for is that we are expediting disability benefits. Shortly after the last federal election, our new Prime Minister put into place about $150 million to speed that up through IT development.

I wonder if the member can provide her thoughts on why the government, all of us, continues to recognize the importance of our veterans—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Compton—Stanstead.

Marianne Dandurand: Mr. Speaker, since I only have a few seconds left to answer that very comprehensive question from my colleague, who did a great job of explaining our objectives, I will say that people leaving the military have talents, knowledge and skills that are extremely important to employers. Many employers can benefit from the talent of employees who served in the military and who can continue to contribute to our society in a second career.

I urge companies to hire people who have served in the military. They have skills that can really help all of our businesses.

[*English*]

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House of Commons to speak.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Riding Mountain.

Today I am proud to support our Conservative motion on the issue of veterans hiring. In this country, people who serve in our military oftentimes will leave that service with challenges. One of those challenges is finding meaningful employment. The Canadian Corps of Commissionaires is one such organization. It has existed since 1925. It is a not-for-profit whose mandate is to provide job opportunities for Canadian veterans. In fact, the Corps of Commissionaires is the largest employer of Canadian veterans in Canada.

It is disturbing to see that over the past number of years, the Liberal government has been moving to erode the very privileged position that the not-for-profit Corps of Commissionaires had. It has removed its right of first refusal, which means that it will not get as many opportunities to provide that employment for veterans. Most recently, a contract was awarded by the Canada Revenue Agency to an American-based for-profit company, Allied Universal, over the Corps of Commissionaires.

What I find hypocritical about this recent decision by the government is that we have a Prime Minister who was elected on a "support Canada, elbows up, buy Canadian" platform, and yet when it came time to award the contracts, the government chose a for-profit company over Canada's largest employer of veterans, a not-for-profit, all for a measly $80,000 contract difference. If $80,000 is all it takes for the Liberal government and the Prime Minister to favour an American company over a Canadian non-profit, then we are in a very bad situation in this country.

Throughout this debate, I have seen Liberals talk about this and say that they respect veterans, and I believe they do, and that they respect the work of the Corps of Commissionaires. However, it is also not just about the jobs that the Corps of Commissionaires provides to veterans. The Corps of Commissionaires is a not-for-profit, so the excess revenues that it raises outside of wages and benefits and the operations it conducts are primarily redirected back into our communities. I gave some examples, but I will share them again.

Members can go to a Legion event anywhere in this country and they will see sponsorship from the Corps of Commissionaires. There is No Stone Left Alone, a veterans' organization educating young Canadians about the sacrifices of Canada's veterans. There is a national bursary program, which provides educational bursaries for the children of veterans, and a crisis and benevolent fund that supports veterans and their families who have fallen on hard times or had illnesses or injuries. These are just some of the wonderful programs that the Corps of Commissionaires is able to provide because of its privileged connections to government funding programs. I do not think the government could point to Allied Universal and say that that company is providing the same level of community benefits to our country that the Corps of Commissionaires has.

It is hypocritical, but it is also undermining the social fabric of our country. This organization, for over 100 years, has supported our communities and supported veterans, and the government is undercutting the financial viability of this organization. It is undercutting job opportunities for veterans, and it is undercutting community supports.

Now, in the second half, I want to raise the issue of chaplaincy and prayers. Over the summer, a new policy was released that dictated to military chaplains about what kind of prayers or spiritual reflections they were allowed to give at military-sanctioned events. One of those very important military-sanctioned events is Remembrance Day. This policy has sought, as the government has tried to do on a number of occasions, to introduce a so-called religious neutrality rule for chaplains.

● (1650)

Chaplains are people who come from a wide variety of faiths. We have chaplains from Islam, Judaism and Christianity. We have chaplains who are humanists. I support pluralism because members of our military come from all faith backgrounds, including no-faith backgrounds, and it is critically important that they have access to chaplaincy services. What the government has tried to institute is a policy that says that at Remembrance Day ceremonies and other ceremonies that military members are asked to attend, chaplains cannot say anything, a prayer or a spiritual reflection, that reflects their faith.

I raised this earlier, because it was asked of me by one of the chaplains, "What about the faith of indigenous Canadians?" In this country, we have sought to reconcile with first nations and the terrible past of suppressing indigenous spirituality and indigenous culture, which we saw through residential schools, yet we have a policy by the government that seems to run against the grain of its reconciliation rhetoric by telling indigenous people that their spirituality will not be welcome at these events. The policy of so-called religious neutrality will apply fully to indigenous people who are asked to provide spiritual reflections. I have gone to many indigenous events, and it is quite common for elders to talk about the Creator. In many cases, I have elders who talk about their deep Christian faith. To have a government policy come forward to say that those reflections are not welcome undermines reconciliation in this country.

I also want to raise that I have been approached by chaplains who are very concerned about this issue. They tell me that there was no consultation, that this policy was rammed down their throats and that there was no opportunity for them to work with the government to meaningfully shape this legislation in a way that could respect religious freedom and people of all faiths. In fact, the chaplain organization in the Canadian Armed Forces has not even had the opportunity to meet with the Minister of National Defence since the Harper government. That is over 10 years ago. The chaplains were supposed to have access to the Minister of National Defence, but they have not had an opportunity to meet with the minister during the entire time the Liberal government has been in power, which is over 10 years.

The government does not consider the very important work that chaplains do. It does not consider their opinions. It does not consider their feedback. If the Liberals were to sit down with these chaplains, they could have worked out a very agreeable solution to all parties. However, what is happening now, and what these chaplains are telling me, is that they feel a religious view is being imposed upon them, because by being forced to give a very humanistic, very religiously so-called neutral spiritual reflection or prayer, they are having their religious freedom imposed upon. They would rather not participate in such an event, but they know how important it is that they be involved.

It is very interesting, because this policy seems to apply only to the Canadian Armed Forces, but there are chaplains in the RCMP. I was approached by a constituent of mine who has been a long-standing chaplain with the RCMP, and he is deeply concerned that the Liberals will seek to expand the policy. I do not see why they would not. It would be consistent.

What is very special about this man, and very tragic, is that he is a chaplain and his son was one of the four Mounties murdered in Mayerthorpe, in my riding. He came to my office and asked me, "If I am up to pray out of remembrance for my son, will I be told by my government that I am not allowed to pray to my God? Will I not be able to give a spiritual reflection that reflects the journey, challenge and crisis that my family went through when we lost our son?"

I would only ask that the government go back to the table, talk to chaplains and work out a policy that can work for everyone, because there are a lot of people who feel very deeply about this, and this controversy is not necessary. In fact, the House of Commons voted unanimously that we not proceed with this policy, yet it is being put forward.

● (1655)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me address the member's comments in regard to chaplains. I have mentioned before that I served in the Canadian Forces. I have been here since 2010, and I can honestly say that I have never been approached by a chaplain raising the issue that the member has raised. I have never have been approached by anyone from Manitoba, or anywhere period.

If the member is aware of any chaplains or indigenous leaders who are genuinely concerned about what can take place at armouries or gravesites, I would be more than happy to have that discussion personally with them. I have attended events. I have always seen respectful prayer.

Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I would tell the member to reach out to the Interfaith Committee on Canadian Military Chaplaincy. This organization has a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Canada that it is to have annual meetings with the Minister of National Defence. It has not had a single meeting since the Liberal government took power in 2015.

The member says that he has not heard from any chaplains, but it is because the Liberals are refusing to meet with chaplains. It is ridiculous.

● (1700)

[*Translation*]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a very simple question.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: I will let the members finish their argument. When they are ready—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Order.

The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, thank you for maintaining order in the House. There are so few of us here and yet it can still be quite chaotic, but you are doing a great job.

My question is very simple. If the government can increase the number of agencies by saying that it is a lot simpler and more effective, then it is entirely appropriate for us, as parliamentary legislators, to call for accountability. Right now, there is no one left to hold the government to account. Even the procurement ombudsman told us that he can no longer do his job of pointing out what is going wrong. Are members aware of that?

I would like to know whether my colleague agrees with me. Are we going to have to use opposition days like this one to shed light on the current government's failures and lack of transparency?

[*English*]

Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, that is what Parliament and the House of Commons are here for. They are here to hold the government accountable. I take pleasure in doing that. I hope that we can get better results for Canadians.

This is just one such case. I think if we had not shed light on this issue, it would have gone by unnoticed. Day after day, year after year, as the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires loses contracts with the government because of its policies, we really see a diminishment in our society. We do not want to see that, so let us reverse course right now.

Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think all Canadians would agree that, since the government won back in April, 18 months ago now, we should be putting Canada first. That was the intent of the motion: to put Canada first in procurement. In this case, a small amount of money, $80,000, was the difference between choosing an American company, Allied Universal, and the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, a non-profit that, quite frankly, has done a wonderful job with veterans in every community in this country.

I would like the hon. member from Edmonton's thoughts on the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, as it has been stymied. The contract by the CRA has pretty well decimated the company once and for all.

Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, it is critically important to note that the government claims its hands were tied and that another company had a competitive bid. It came in at $80,000 less. I know for a fact that the government does not just consider the financial value of an award. It has to consider a broad spectrum of factors in making a decision. For the government to hide behind an $80,000 contract decision to not support a company that has been the largest employer of veterans and has supplied countless charitable benefits to our communities does not hold water with me.

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 1541, Jacques Cartier sailed up the St. Lawrence River on his third voyage to Canada and made camp at Cap-Rouge, just upstream from where Quebec City stands today. His men looked down at the riverbank and could not believe their eyes. The rocks were glittering. They thought they had found more gold than they could carry. They filled their barrels with it. Cartier was so eager to get back home that he left in the middle of the night and sailed for France. The treasure was tested in France. The diamonds were quartz and the gold was iron pyrite. It was fool's gold.

Canada has a long history of fool's gold, dating back to the earliest European explorers. Today, the fool's gold glitters from the Prime Minister's promise to buy Canadian. Last year, the Prime Minister promised, “we will select Canadian suppliers by default”. He promised Canada would become “our own best customer”. Canadians believed it because they wanted to, but there is a simple way to tell real gold from fool's gold: rubbing the stone across a piece of white porcelain. Real gold leaves a yellow streak, and fool's gold leaves a black one.

Let us put the Liberals' buy Canadian policy to the streak test. Last year, the government posted a tender for security guards at the Canada Revenue Agency. For years, that work had been done by the Commissionaires, a Canadian not-for-profit founded in 1925 to employ veterans. Written on the government's tender was the statement, “This solicitation is open only to Canadian suppliers.” However, in June, the Liberals awarded the contract, worth nearly $12 million, to the Universal Protection Service.

The Universal Protection Service is a subsidiary of Allied Universal, which is an American company with headquarters in Pennsylvania and California. The difference in price between the two bids was about $80,000. On a $12-million contract, that is less than 1% of the contract's value. For less than a penny on the dollar, the Liberals chose an American multinational over Canada's largest private employer of veterans.

As I said earlier, the Liberals' buy Canadian policy was nothing more than fool's gold. The policy is so fake that under the government's own definitions, the Chinese-owned company Huawei would count as a Canadian supplier. The Prime Minister promised that when Ottawa spends money, it will choose Canadian suppliers by default, so the first question is a simple one: What does the Liberal government think makes a company Canadian?

If someone wants to put a “product of Canada” label on a jar of strawberry jam, the government says that around 98% of the main ingredients and virtually all the processing and labour have to be Canadian. However, if someone wants to be a Canadian supplier, under the Liberal government's buy Canadian policy, they simply need to register a business in Canada, meaning they essentially only need an address. There is no requirement to have a Canadian headquarters, Canadian ownership or even a minimum number of Canadian workers. That means that the strawberry jam on our toast is held to a higher standard of being Canadian than the American firm that was just awarded a $12-million contract over Canada's largest private employer of veterans.

Let us take the Liberals' definition of a so-called Canadian supplier one step further and apply it to the suppliers the government itself calls a threat. Huawei, a Chinese-owned firm, has a Canadian office in Markham, Ontario. The government banned Huawei from our 5G networks on national security grounds. However, under the Liberals' buy Canadian policy, Huawei would be considered a Canadian supplier because it registered a subsidiary with the CRA. In the eyes of the Liberals, foreign-owned companies like Huawei are just as Canadian as a local hardware store on main street.

● (1705)

We have seen this failure before. Indigenous business leaders called it “renting a feather”, when a non-indigenous company was putting an indigenous person's name on the ownership papers to win federal contracts set aside for indigenous businesses. Earlier this year, the procurement ombudsman warned that non-indigenous businesses may use indigenous businesses as shell companies. If the government could not stop businesses from pretending they were indigenous-owned, why would anyone believe it would stop them from pretending they are Canadian?

I was just in Sarnia, where a local business owner told me he was surprised to learn that several corporations were registered on his local residential street with no sign of an office or any operations. The Prime Minister cannot pretend he did not see this loophole coming. After years at Brookfield, a company with dozens of subsidiaries registered in offshore tax havens, he knows exactly how corporations exploit loopholes to game the system. He knew that his policy was fool's gold, but he sold it to Canadians anyway.

Next week, Canadians will remember the people who served our country in uniform, so it is fair to ask why the government chose to end an 80-year promise to Canada's veterans. Many Canadians walk past a commissionaire without knowing the story behind their uniform. The Canadian Corps of Commissionaires was founded in 1925 to provide employment to soldiers coming home from the First World War. In 1945, as hundreds of thousands more soldiers came home from the Second World War, Ottawa made them a promise: When the federal government needed guards for its buildings, the Commissionaires would get the first right of refusal.

That promise was kept by every government and every party for 80 years, but in February of this year, the Liberal Minister of Veterans Affairs wrote to tell them that the promise was over. Her letter said that the government was confident the corps was positioned for “continued success in this new procurement environment”.

Less than four months later, the Commissionaires found out what that new environment looks like under the Liberals. The government awarded the security contract the Commissionaires had held to a subsidiary of an American company, Allied Universal. Allied Universal reportedly took more than $290 million U.S. in contracts from the Trump administration's Department of Homeland Security this year alone. That is who the Liberals chose over Canada's veterans, while they told Canadians to put their elbows up.

When Cartier got his barrels of treasure back to France, it did not take long for the truth to come out. With a simple test, everyone could see that it was fool's gold. The Liberals' buy Canadian policy has been tested now, too. It has failed the test. What frustrates me the most is that the real gold in the story was right in front of them the whole time. For 100 years, the Commissionaires have been standing guard at the doors of our federal buildings as Canadian veterans. That is the real gold in this, but the government shamefully traded it for fool's gold.

● (1710)

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker,

> Jacques Cartier, right this way
> I'll put your coat up on the bed
> Hey man you've got the real bum's eye for clothes

It was interesting hearing the member opposite talk about fool's gold. I guess he is an expert in that, especially in conspiracy theories.

We are doing this study right now in the government operations and estimates committee, and the definition of what is Canadian has been explained to the member, I do even know how many times. It is a physical presence in Canada, tax registration and sourcing of Canadian goods and labour. It is pretty straightforward. It also follows well-established practices.

Would the member opposite agree that Canada's buy Canadian policy is important in the context of a global trade war?

Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe the member actually just stated that. He is telling me that the government actually supports dealing the buy Canadian policy to companies such as Huawei. It simply has corporate affairs in here. It has been registered and identified as a national threat to our country, and it is okay for our government to be buying products from Huawei. Is that what the member is telling me?

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we in the Bloc Québécois agree with the part of the motion that deals with the buy Canadian policy. However, there is another part that runs counter to secularism or that supports the use of religious language by chaplains. There is also a part that mentions steel, aluminum and lumber in the preamble, but the motion does not address them further.

What exactly is the overall message of this motion?

[*English*]

Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, the global message from the Liberal government is that it values veterans less than it values American companies, which is absolutely shameful and disgusting. I cannot imagine being a veteran here, going to defend our country and then coming back to a slap in the face. It is absolutely deplorable.

● (1715)

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are two issues we are talking about. One is an American company's getting a contract that is normally reserved for the veterans of Canada, those who served in our armed forces. However, more importantly, the non-profit Commissionaires uses the revenue to help veterans from the armed forces who otherwise would not have it. The company in question, Allied Universal, a United States-based company, is not going to provide that same service to our veterans. Can the member please comment on that?

Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, the member asked a very good question. What kind of government that is supposed to be looking after our country and our veterans would consider that to be a good, very sound decision and as standing up for Canada? I can tell the House that a Conservative government would never make that kind of decision.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, gross exaggeration is probably one of the ways I would describe many of the comments made by my friend across the way. The company he is shooting down employs Manitobans. The footprint in Canada is significantly large. The Commissionaires defend the commissionaires until the end. At the end of the day, I believe in the support they give.

However, the member should not give the false impression that the commissionaires are 100% veterans. They are not. It is probably closer to about 20%, and the company that has taken over the contract has rehired 30, maybe 33, of the 60 who were working there, a dozen of whom are veterans. Let us not grossly exaggerate the situation. Would the member not agree?

Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, the member said “false impression”. My gosh, it is smoke and mirrors. The Liberals are masters at this. They are absolutely outraged. How dare we question one thing about this policy?

I went on for 10 minutes explaining to the Canadian public and to all those attending here today how much the government is misleading Canadians. It has to stop.

The bigger question is, what kind of government would do this to the Canadian people?

Doug Eyolfson (Winnipeg West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by saying I will be sharing my time with the member for Surrey Newton.

I welcome the opportunity to debate the motion from the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot. At a time of open challenges to our economic security and sovereignty, I can think of few more pressing public policy issues than the question of where and when key government contracts go to Canadian firms and suppliers. This is at the root of the motion put to us today, and I can assure all members that the government shares this concern.

Since last December, the buy Canadian policy has been at the centre of a suite of measures introduced by the Government of Canada to stimulate the growth of Canada's builders and suppliers. Last September, we launched Build Canada Homes, a new federal agency that is building affordable housing at scale, fuelling a new and thriving housing industry. With an initial investment of $13 billion over five years, Build Canada Homes is investing in the development of public lands sites in partnership with Canadian builders, suppliers, other levels of government and indigenous communities. That investment is already making a difference, with multiple direct-build projects across multiple cities delivering up to 4,000 new homes on federal land, with at least 40% at below market rents.

There is also the Defence Investment Agency. The need for a more strategic and responsive approach to defence procurement has long been acknowledged in Canada, but only in the last year has real action been taken. Since its inception last October, the Defence Investment Agency has been delivering for the Canadian Armed Forces while driving investment, innovation and industrial growth by targeting procurements that support strategic defence sectors such as aerospace and advanced manufacturing. The agency is driving the creation of high-quality, skilled jobs to communities across Canada and bolstering our country's industrial capacity and technological competitiveness.

Finally, the Major Projects Office was introduced last year to put transformative, nation-building ideas on a viable path to fruition through the co-operation of federal departments, provinces and territories, indigenous peoples and industry. The goal is to identify projects with maximum benefit for Canadians. For example, just last month, the government announced that the new west coast pipeline, known as Pacific link, would be listed as a project of national interest.

Whether it is the need for affordable housing, state-of-the-art defence capabilities or major infrastructure, these initiatives do not simply recognize the great reservoir of talent and experience within Canadian industry. They bank on it, and so does the buy Canadian policy. In fact, the policy is something of a common thread that runs through all these initiatives. The buy Canadian policy prioritizes Canadian suppliers and materials, strengthens supply chains and incentivizes Canadian content in strategic federal procurements. It applies to the ongoing work of the Major Projects Office, the Defence Investment Agency, Build Canada Homes and Crown corporations and their subsidies, as well as the hundreds of federal grants and contributions programs.

In just over eight months, between December and October, Public Services and Procurement Canada awarded over 1,600 new contracts, worth approximately $23.8 billion. Of these, roughly 1,340 contracts totalling $17.7 billion were awarded to suppliers operating in Canada. These efforts are transforming local communities across the country with long-term, well-paying job opportunities for skilled workers.

Last February, Kitchener's Colt Canada was awarded a $307-million contract to supply the Canadian Armed Forces with assault rifle systems under the Canadian modular assault rifle project. By investing in local expertise, we are ensuring that the forces are ready for the challenges ahead.

In August, the government awarded a $768.6-million construction services contract to PCL Constructors Canada for the full construction of a new federal regulatory science facility at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's Ottawa laboratory in Nepean, Ontario. On average, the site will employ about 250 workers a day.

Also last summer, the government announced an investment of $2 billion over four years to General Dynamics Land Systems-Canada to build 190 armoured combat support vehicles. This strategic partnership is truly a pan-Canadian feat of co-operation, with several companies supporting the effort.

● (1720)

Ryan Manufacturing in Richmond, BC, will supply military-grade cable and wire harness assemblies. InterPro in Regina, Saskatchewan, will supply advanced armour. Thales Canada in Saint-Laurent, Quebec, will supply thermal imaging systems. IMP Aerospace and Defence in Enfield, Nova Scotia, will supply other specialized components. The difference under the buy Canadian policy is that Canadian suppliers are now prioritized as a matter of practice. Suppliers must demonstrate that they meet the policy requirements, including through eligibility and Canadian content attestations, and the government has put compliance and monitoring mechanisms in place.

The buy Canadian policy goes beyond giving preference to Canadian suppliers. In strategic federal procurements covered by the policy, bids receive additional evaluation points for higher proportions of Canadian content and value added activities, such as manufacturing and research development. This encourages businesses to source more from Canadian partners, extending opportunities to Canadian firms that supply components, materials and expertise. Our goal is to create an incentive for businesses to do more in Canada and to have more Canadian workers, more Canadian suppliers in their supply chains, more Canadian manufacturing, more Canadian research and development, and more investment in Canadian facilities and communities.

In conclusion, it was said once that the world needs more Canada. With these policies and programs, the government is taking the position that Canada needs more Canada. International cooperation with trusted partners, both public and private, will always be a part of our efforts as a responsible federal government, but if the last two years have taught us anything, it is that our future is best placed in our own hands. We have made significant progress in less than a year, but this is not the finish line. We will continue expanding opportunities for Canadian businesses, strengthening Canadian supply chains and ensuring that federal government procurement serves as an economic lever for this country, because federal procurement is more than just purchases; it is an opportunity to build Canadian capacity, support Canadian workers and invest in Canada's economic future.

This is the essence of the buy Canadian policy, and I look forward to seeing where it takes us in the years ahead.

● (1725)

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member from Winnipeg for outlining, in general terms, the buy Canada policy. In reality, many small businesses across our country do not know where to start or where to go to apply for a government contract. In addition to that, the red tape to enter into an agreement is still very challenging for many of the small businesses that are facing the uncertainty referenced in his speech.

In good faith, what areas can the government improve in procurement to actually see small businesses take up the government contracts? Since the announcements from the secretary of state for small business have come into force, we have not seen the increase in those contracts going to Canadian firms.

Doug Eyolfson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question is a very good question. It is a very timely question. We do know that, when a new program is introduced, there are questions. We need to be expanding what we are doing and the information we make available, but the offices of members of Parliament are already available. My own office, and I am sure the hon. member's office as well, is assisting small businesses in the riding to take advantage of these important government programs.

[*Translation*]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. He is well aware that the government has a long-standing relationship with this organization, whose social mission is to help our veterans transition to civilian life is. The response we are hearing is that this decision was a matter of efficiency, taken in response to the current context, and that few thousand people is minor. The government upended an arrangement that had existed for over a hundred years.

How does my colleague think a veteran would react to hearing that?

[*English*]

Doug Eyolfson: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's valuable work with me on the health committee.

Yes, we do have a social contract with our veterans, and there are established practices, but of course we talk about things that have been going on for over 100 years. A hundred years is a long time. There are going to be changes in our processes. Our government procurement decisions have to be made with the best decisions for all stakeholders in Canada at the time.

[*Translation*]

Marianne Dandurand (Compton—Stanstead, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on a question from the opposition regarding the claim that the government does not support small businesses and that they do not have access to federal contracts.

I believe that the small business procurement program, which was introduced over the summer, helps by simplifying procurement processes, scaling contracts for SMEs and supporting small businesses in gaining access to contracting opportunities.

I would like to ask my colleague whether he himself takes steps in his riding to assist businesses seeking to obtain contracts with the federal government.

If so, what exactly is he doing?

[*English*]

Doug Eyolfson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely right. The process is being streamlined. I, like I am sure almost every MP in here, have people working in my office who work directly with constituents, including constituent companies. When they call us, they want to know what is available. We make sure that they know the programs that are available and exactly how the process works. If they have problems with the process, we can help them navigate those and call the relevant departments for clarification.

● (1730)

Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to reaffirm the Government of Canada's commitment to the buy Canadian policy. We are incredibly proud of how this initiative is transforming government procurement, giving Canadian businesses, workers, manufacturers and suppliers greater access to opportunities and delivering real results for Canada.

The government will always stand with Canadian workers and Canadian businesses, and that is how we will build the strongest economy in the G7. We remain committed to prioritizing Canadian suppliers and Canadian-made goods and services in federal procurement.

This is a pledge we have made to Canadians and it is unwavering. Since the buy Canadian policy came into force in December 2025, it has been reshaping how the federal government spends by prioritizing Canadian content, materials, suppliers and workers at every opportunity. From steel and aluminum to wood products, the government's purchasing of goods and services is being used as a powerful tool to back key industries and strengthen domestic supply chains.

The rollout of the buy Canadian policy marked a major step toward building a more resilient Canadian economy. It was designed to ensure clear advantages are available to suppliers who invest, innovate and produce here at home. By prioritizing Canadian suppliers, Canadian materials and Canadian content in federal procurement, we are becoming our own best customer by reducing reliance on any single trading partner and building—

The Deputy Speaker: I have to interrupt the member.

[*Translation*]

The member for Laurentides—Labelle is rising on a point of order.

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, I am very sorry to have to interrupt my colleague, but the interpretation has stopped. It is important for me to be able to understand what he is saying.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: I believe the member has a mobile device, perhaps either in his pocket or on the table, that is interfering with interpretation. I will ask him to put it away or put it on airplane mode.

The member can restart, and we can give him back about 20 seconds' worth of time so that interpretation can work again. I will ask him to keep the mobile device away from the speakers.

Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, by prioritizing Canadian suppliers, Canadian materials and Canadian content in federal procurement, we are becoming our own best customer. By reducing our reliance on any single trading partner and building resilience through strong domestic demand, we are bolstering Canada's economy. The policy on prioritizing Canadian suppliers and Canadian content in strategic federal procurements initially applied to procurements valued at $25 million or more. In June, we lowered that threshold to $5 million, significantly expanding its reach.

We are also putting Canadian materials at the centre of major federal construction and defence projects. For procurement of $25 million or more, the policy requires Canadian-produced steel, aluminum and wood. We are making it easier for Canadian small businesses to compete for federal opportunities through the small business procurement program, which will simplify procurement processes and introduce new digital tools.

Ultimately, the test of this policy is whether federal spending creates economic activity here at home. In the spirit of the buy Canadian policy, the government continues to work to identify opportunities for Canadian suppliers to benefit from federal procurement policies and ultimately support Canadian workers, Canadian businesses and Canadian communities. This includes attracting investments that deliver tangible and lasting benefits to Canadian communities and supply chains.

This is about driving growth, creating opportunities and enhancing prosperity for all Canadians. In the current situation we are in, this has never been more important, particularly when it comes to protecting Canada's sovereignty. We know that the world has changed and that Canada must change with it. That is why Canada is also making generational investments to rebuild and reinvest in the Canadian Armed Forces. These investments are guided by Canada's first-ever defence industrial strategy, a whole-of-government approach to transform Canada's defence industry. The strategy will prioritize Canadian suppliers and materials, invest in Canadian innovation and streamline defence procurement. It is supported by the new Defence Investment Agency.

Between December 2025 and October 1, 2026, Public Services and Procurement Canada awarded a total of 1,644 new contracts worth roughly $23 billion. Of these, 1,342 contracts, representing about $17.7 billion, were awarded to suppliers operating here in Canada. That is the kind of progress we want to build on.

With regard to today's motion, the Canada Revenue Agency, following a fair and open procurement process, decided to award the contract to a company that operates extensively in Canada and employs Canadian security guards, supervisors and managers. This brings me to an important point of what we mean when we talk about a Canadian supplier.

Being a Canadian supplier is not simply a question of who owns the shares of a company. We also need to look at where the economic activity takes place. Under the buy Canadian policy, the definition of Canadian supplier is based on substantive economic activity in Canada. That includes having a place of business here, being registered here, filing taxes here, conducting ongoing activities and employing people in Canada to deliver goods and services. That distinction matters.

● (1735)

A company can be part of a global enterprise and still employ thousands of Canadians. It can pay taxes here. It can operate facilities here. It can conduct research and development here, and it can purchase from Canadian suppliers and invest in Canadian communities. Those jobs are Canadian jobs. Those investments are investments in Canada, and that economic activity matters to Canadians and Canada.

Buy Canadian is not simply about where a company's headquarters is located. It is about where the jobs are, where the investment is, where the innovation happens, where the supply chain is built and ultimately, where the economic benefits land. We continue to work closely with businesses, suppliers and stakeholders to develop and refine procurement measures that support Canadian industry, strengthen supply chains and drive our country's economic growth.

Our government will always stand with Canadian workers and Canadian businesses, and we will build a stronger economy in the G7. We will always support our veterans with job opportunities.

I want to assure this House that we are fully committed to our buy Canadian policy, the substantial opportunities it is providing for Canadians and the powerful benefits for our country. We are transforming our economy through buy Canadian. We are supporting our industries today while keeping a clear focus on this sustainable future. That is our promise to Canadians, which is one that we are delivering on.

● (1740)

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member outlined, in reference to some of the criticisms of the program, namely, the change of threshold from $25 million down to $5 million, but there are still certain policies related to the buy Canada policy at large that need to be addressed, largely related to subcontracting. Some have labelled it a superficial economic illusion that dilutes the intended benefits of this policy we all support.

Is the government open to changing some of the subcontracting policies to allow for that work to stay in Canada and not be sent offshore to non-Canadian entities when the policy in and of itself is to support Canadian small businesses and Canadian companies?

Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, the member understands very well that I come from a small business, and 85% of the businesses in my constituency, in fact even in his constituency, are small businesses. That is where our government's focus is: lowering that threshold from $25 million to $5 million, and now we are looking at other ways the government can provide support.

He and I have to keep advocating and making sure that our government does what is necessary for small businesses to succeed. That is what I will continue to fight for, and that is what I have been fighting for in the many years I have been in Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the Prime Minister took office, six of the top 10 federal suppliers are headquartered in the United States. It has been reported that billions of dollars in contracts are still going to American companies, contracts worth a total of $7.8 billion, according to the Toronto Star. It has been reported that the percentage of contracts awarded to American companies is increasing. IBM was cited as an example of buying Canadian earlier because that company has a subsidiary in the member's riding.

How are these contracts divvied up? In my colleague's opinion, what criteria should be used to ensure the government actually does buy Canadian?

[*English*]

Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, most of these projects have gone to Canadian companies. If we look at the numbers I talked about, between December 2025 and October 1, 2026, Public Services and Procurement Canada awarded a total of 1,644 contracts worth roughly $23 billion. Of these, 1,342 contracts, representing about $17.7 billion, were awarded to suppliers operating in Canada. That is the kind of progress we want to build on, and we will continue to build on having more contracts going to Canadian suppliers in the coming days, weeks, months and years.

Hon. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I first came to the House in 2015, I remember that the defence budget was less than 1% of GDP. Now it is over 2%. Of course, the economy has also grown in that perspective, which means it is actually a tripling of the defence budget. We have similarly seen increases in the Veterans Affairs budget. I think everyone in the House agrees we need to build Canada strong, we need to hire more Canadians and we need to buy more in Canada.

Would my friend, like to comment on the significant investments and the improvements we have made both for Canadian defence and for Canadian veterans?

Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has already answered the question that he asked. There was a promise made by our government and a promise kept when it comes to veterans and making sure that we take good care of veterans. Every member of the House, irrespective of the side of the House they are on, respects the sacrifices they made, and we will continue to work hard for those veterans and—

● (1745)

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Vernon—Lake Country—Monashee.

Scott Anderson (Vernon—Lake Country—Monashee, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

There is an increasingly familiar pattern emerging from the Liberals. The Prime Minister of this 11-year-old government makes grand new announcements about Canadian sovereignty, and Canadians are assured that a bold new era of government is about to arrive. Unfortunately for the government, somebody always pulls back the curtain to see what is behind it, and that is where the troubles start.

This truly is a government of loud announcements and empty promises. For example, the Liberals backslapped each other over reaching our nation's 2% NATO commitment. Only later did we discover that it includes an unarmed, unionized civilian Coast Guard. Projects like the F-35 are stalling amid political games. The PBO cannot provide a clear picture of what the future holds, and, increasingly, it looks like the Liberals cannot either.

There is a difference between grandstanding and governing. Grandstanding is convincing Canadians that they believe in something. Governing involves showing them when decisions actually have to be made. The Prime Minister seems more interested in Brussels and Middle Eastern controversies than Canadian veterans.

We are talking about the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, an institution that has served veterans for a century. I served as a captain in the Canadian Army Reserve, and that experience gave me an appreciation for the military that goes well beyond government documents. One thing people learn in university is the ethics of duty. They also learn that the military does not disappear from our lives the minute we take off the uniform.

My father passed away many years ago, but I want to revive an argument we had when he was alive. I think, looking back, he would be okay with that. My dad was a young air force officer who later scoffed at veterans attending military functions in uniform after retiring. He said that they were living in the past. He called them old soldiers who kept reliving their glory days. I heard my dad then. I disagree with him now.

I think veterans carry what they have learned in the military forward in life, regardless of whether they retire after one tour or after most of their working lives. Here is what my father learned, and I do not think he would mind me sharing it. He was a farm boy who joined the air force to become a pilot, because pilots were cool. That is pretty much the only reason. Here is what happened. He failed. He became a bombardier instead. He completed one tour of duty, and then he largely avoided military events afterward.

However, he learned something in the military. He learned that he did not like failure. In fact, he apparently made the grandiose promise to my mother that he would never fail again. Now, I do not know what my dad's win-loss column was in life, and I do not think it matters that much, but he learned a lesson, admitted it and moved on. He went on to earn a Ph.D., become an internationally famous biologist and later in life received the university gold medal as the most accomplished graduate of his undergraduate class. I suspect that hard work brought him more success than failure.

Other veterans take different paths, and many of them stay in longer and need help making the transition to civilian life. That is why we need organizations like the Commissionaires. The Canadian Corps of Commissionaires was created in 1925 to help returning soldiers with employment. Today it employs about 22,000 Canadians, including thousands of veterans. It is a Canadian not-for-profit organization, and it is our country's largest employer of veterans. It recognizes military experience, and it offers veterans a way to keep contributing.

One would think that an organization like that would pretty well fit into the Prime Minister's buy Canadian economic sovereignty plan. Of course there is this enthusiasm for telling the rest of us to buy Canadian. In response to President Trump's trade war, he first promised a deal. When that failed, he promised federal spending would default to Canadian suppliers. When his buy Canada policy took effect in December 2025, he declared that Canada would become its own best customer.

Unfortunately, when it came to an actual procurement decision, the Canadian content of his political record turned out to be greater than his appreciation of Canadian ownership. Let us look at the CRA contract. In June, the Canada Revenue Agency awarded a contract worth nearly $12 million, not to the Commissionaires, a Canadian non-profit dedicated to helping veterans. Nope. It was awarded to UPSSC, a Canadian subsidiary of an American multinational, Allied Universal.

● (1750)

The difference between the bids was about $80,000, which is less than the cost of the Prime Minister's banquet bill. It is a 1% difference between a Canadian veteran organization and an American multinational. So much for buy Canadian. So much for Liberal promises.

Obviously, governments have to get value for taxpayers' money, and I am not arguing that the Commissionaires should automatically win every contract by virtue of just being Canadian, but the government should be able to tell us why it did not value Canadian ownership and veteran employment more than the cost of a prime ministerial banquet. If the assessment was fair, it should release the criteria and explain the decision to Canadians.

The $80,000 gets interesting when we examine government spending priorities. According to a government response to an Order Paper question, catering aboard an aircraft carrying the Prime Minister and his entourage during one trip to China, Qatar and Davos cost well over $100,000. I am not suggesting the Prime Minister should go hungry abroad, but apparently there is considerable flexibility when it comes to expenditures at 35,000 feet.

Apparently, veterans ask too much of the government. The government explanation is that Allied Universal operates through a Canadian subsidiary. I have no criticism of its Canadian workers, but that is not really the point. If an American-owned multinational with a Canadian address is the same thing as a Canadian not-for-profit dedicated to veterans, what exactly does buy Canadian mean?

There is nothing wrong with hiring American companies, but this is a Prime Minister who has made anger at Donald Trump central to his government, and his government awarded a federal contract to an American-owned company with substantial business ties to the Trump administration. Apparently, his elbows are up for the camera but down when the contracts are signed.

What is buy Canadian supposed to mean? If we treat Canadian not-for-profits no differently from foreign-owned companies, ministers should say so. They should also explain to Canadians why they say one thing and do another. Maybe the procurement process did follow the rules, but if those rules do not recognize the value of Canadian veteran employment in a period the Prime Minister himself calls Canada first, then it is the rules that need changing.

We should demand a remedy, not another excuse. Quite honestly, what is the message that Canadians are supposed to get from this fiasco? The Prime Minister wants to sell Canadians on buy European. His ministers want to sell us on buy Canadian, and the groaning bureaucracy of procurement buys American.

I will finish with what my father taught me. He wanted to be a pilot and failed, but he did not spend his life redefining success or explaining away that disappointment. He accepted it, learned from it and went on to accomplish extraordinary things. I still disagreed with him about those "old soldiers", but he was absolutely right about failure.

As Remembrance Day approaches, ministers will again solemnly tell Canadians how much they respect our veterans, but respect is demonstrated through deeds, not speeches. The government should begin by admitting that passing over a centuries-old veterans institution while campaigning on buy Canadian is at least a decision worth revisiting.

My father understood that failure was not something to disguise with an excuse. It was something to learn from. What matters is what we do afterward. He learned from failure and went on to an extraordinary life. The Prime Minister still has that opportunity with the government, but first, he will have to do something that seems remarkably difficult for the government: He will have to admit that he made a mistake.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout the day, the member has heard different types of arguments that provide the answers to many of the questions he posed, but of course, the Conservatives do not want to listen to the answers. Rather, they have their spin and speaking lines to try to give a gross exaggeration of the reality of this.

For example, the company that won the award has thousands of employees, some of them in my own province of Manitoba. It has a very significant footprint. CRA is independent of the government in putting out tenders. The Commissionaires, which is a fantastic organization that I have been saying nothing but positive things about, has evolved.

Does the member know what percentage of the Commissionaires is made up of veterans?

● (1755)

Scott Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Liberal logic that goes into this.

Let me talk about the F-35 for a minute. It is from an American-owned company. It would create between 2,500 and 5,000 Canadian jobs and thousands of indirect jobs, and it just happens to be the only airplane that could provide deterrence in the Arctic. By that logic, we should pick the F-35, yet we cannot do that. We will not do that. For some reason, we are just going to wait for a while.

If Canadian jobs and American ownership are not an issue, why do we not have the F-35?

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that there is a rather blurred line between buying Canadian and buying from American subsidiaries. Earlier, a member gave IBM as an example of buying Canadian because IBM has had a subsidiary in her riding for a long time.

What criteria does my colleague think should be used to determine whether a business is Canadian, as opposed to an American business with subsidiaries in Canada?

[*English*]

Scott Anderson: Mr. Speaker, my job is not to determine the exact makeup, but I will say that when we have something as glaring as an American-owned company and a Canadian-owned non-profit, we do not need to take it to a large jury to find out which one we should be picking.

Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize my colleague's service and his father's service. It was very nicely woven into his speech today.

He was just speaking about the not-for-profit organization, where money is reinvested into veterans. I would like to hear his thoughts on that as an excuse. Why would the Liberals not want to keep a contract with the Commissionaires, which does such great work and supports veterans?

Scott Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I think it is fairly obvious that we should be, and it is unfortunate that the Liberals refuse to admit the mistake. It is a simple mistake. They should just change it. Let us buy Canadian again if we are going to buy Canadian.

Unfortunately, with the Liberals, the logic seems to shift a lot. It shifts one way for the F-35, but if we are talking about something else, it will shift another way. We have competing logics that run around, and whatever applies at any given time is the logic they are using.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I have good news. We do have the F-35s. We have Canadian pilots being trained on the F-35s. Would the member acknowledge and express his appreciation for the fact that we have them?

Scott Anderson: Mr. Speaker, 88 have been scheduled, but we do not have 88, nor do we have a go-ahead on those 88.

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of our motion on federal procurement. I rise to speak about our flag and the Canadians who fought under it. I rise for the veterans of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford on Vancouver Island. I rise for the commissionaires who stand watch at our federal buildings. I rise for all the families who have been handed a folded flag.

I served under that flag for 28 years. I have conducted many burials at sea, and I have handed that flag to grieving families, including a father and his two sons. I know the cost those who serve under that flag pay.

The motion before us may be about one contract, but veterans will tell us it is about much more than just one contract. It is about a pattern of betrayal. We can consider that just this year, with respect to Bill C-11, the government waited until the last minute to reverse amendments agreed upon in committee and ignored the survivors of military sexual trauma. They told me it felt like the government had spat in their faces. We can consider new restrictions on military clergy of every faith, even on Remembrance Day; or veterans poisoned by mefloquine in Somalia, fighting their own government in court for over 25 years; or veterans who asked for help and were instead offered euthanasia by Veterans Affairs Canada.

Now let us consider the Commissionaires.

I will remind the Liberal members opposite, who seem to have forgotten, who the commissionaires are. In 1915, in the middle of the First World War, the governor-general proposed a corps to give returning soldiers meaningful work. In 1925, the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires was founded with one commitment. Those who served Canada would come home and not be forgotten. For more than 100 years, that commitment had been kept. For generations, Ottawa stood behind it with a right of first refusal. Before a federal government department's security contract was opened to bidding, it was first offered to the Commissionaires, yet in February, with a single stroke of a pen, the Minister of Veterans Affairs ended that right. Though veterans affairs officials said the department wanted to reassess the right of first refusal, it simply cancelled it.

Then came this contract. The CRA posted it as open only to Canadian suppliers. Here is what most Canadians do not know. Under the current government's new buy Canadian rules, a supplier needs only a place of business in Canada. No one asks who owns the company or where its headquarters are. That is how the Canadian subsidiary of Allied Universal, an American company, qualified. By the company's own numbers, just 1.3% of its 700,000-strong workforce is in Canada. It won the CRA contract by undercutting the Commissionaires by less than 1% of the contract value, or only $80,000.

Now let us hold the government to its own words. Again and again, the Prime Minister has promised that Canada would become our own best customer. He said, “we will select Canadian suppliers by default.” In January, he told Canadians yet again, “We'll buy Canadian. We'll build Canadian.” Well, the CRA had a Canadian supplier, a not-for-profit built for veterans, and when the moment came to be our own best customer, the government went shopping in America.

The Secretary of State for the Canada Revenue Agency says politicians are never involved in the CRA's decisions, and that is true of the contract scoring but not true of the rules. The CRA runs the competition, but the government writes the rules for the CRA to follow, and the government chose a buy Canadian policy with no test of ownership. Those were not the CRA's choices. They were the government's choices.

Last November, the Prime Minister declared that Canadians must honour our veterans' patriotism with our own, and for once, I agree with his words, but his actions ring hollow. Patriotism is not a line in a statement. In this case, it is a choice in that contract.

The government also defends this decision by claiming the Commissionaires could no longer meet its veteran hiring target. Here is what the government will not tell us. The Commissionaires knew the target was a problem. The organization raised it itself. It asked veterans affairs to reassess the target and to update it. Instead, the door was closed. The Commissionaires, which is a not-for-profit, reportedly could not get a meeting with the minister. Meanwhile, senior officials found time to quietly meet with for-profit competitors. Lobbying records prove this.

● (1800)

Allied Universal has had a registered lobbyist working the Canadian government since at least 2023, pursuing federal security contracts exactly like this one, yet only three years ago, the department's own briefing said that the right of first refusal was still aligned with the Government of Canada's priorities. What changed? It is not the veterans but the government. The government called it a competitive procurement process, but this is not competition. This is a retreat.

Here is the kicker. Allied Universal's Canadian subsidiary is suing the Government of Canada for $420 million. It lost a federal airport screening contract and took the government to court. Let us consider what the Liberals have done. In a courtroom, Allied is fighting the government. Meanwhile, in an office, the government is handing an American company a contract taken from our commissionaires, who should be protected by the right of refusal that is not set to expire until next year.

Let us look at Allied Universal's work with the Trump administration. According to public reporting, it has received more than $290 million U.S. from the Department of Homeland Security this year alone, and its subsidiary received $83 million U.S. from ICE, the agency running the Trump deportation program. This summer, Newsweek named Allied Universal one of America's most patriotic companies, and I do not doubt that it is. It is an American company, and it should be proud of that honour. However, I would ask the members opposite this: Since when is it the Canadian government's job to reward America's most patriotic companies? Canada already has its own patriotic organization, and has had for more than 100 years, called the Commissionaires.

Eighteen months ago, the Prime Minister asked Canadians to trust him to stand up to Washington, and many Canadians gave him their trust and their vote for the first time in their life. They believed he was the only one who could handle the president and get a deal. They did not vote to send the veterans contract to a company tied to an American deportation program.

Every Canadian who trusted the Liberal slogans should know this: They did not misplace their patriotism. The government misplaced their trust. At election time, the Liberals wrapped themselves in the flag, but at contract time, they pay Americans. At election time, they stand at the cenotaph, but at contract time, they leave the commissionaires standing at the door. At election time, the government promises to put Canada first, but at contract time, it puts Canada second. I can assure the members opposite that veterans from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland are watching the government closely.

It is not enough to expose the illusion, so let me set out plainly how a government that keeps its word to veterans would restore that promise.

First, it would give the CRA contract back to the commissionaires. Second, it would have Veterans Affairs restore the right of first refusal and update the promise made generations ago to reflect the veterans of today. According to court filings in 2025, the department's own deputy minister suggested renewing that policy with new measures strengthening our commissionaires, not cutting them down. Third, it would lift the restrictions on clergy, the priests, imams, rabbis and other faith leaders, who serve in uniform, so they may pray in their own faith at public ceremonies, Remembrance Day included. Fourth, it would stop fighting veterans in court, sit down with them, hear them and come to an agreement.

Let us end where we began, with the flag I handed to the father and his sons. Veterans define what it means to be Canadian. They come from every province and territory and every faith background and walk of life. From Vimy to Juno Beach to Kandahar, our veterans raised their hand and swore to our flag. They never asked what the flag would give them. They asked what it needed.

I am proud to have served. I am proud to be Canadian. I say to the government and to every member opposite plainly, be Canadian. Be Canadian when the cameras are gone and the contract is signed. Be Canadian in the courtroom, at the cenotaph and at the chapel. Be Canadian for veterans who put Canada first. Keep your promises, honour your own words, and if you cannot be Canadian, then for the love of this country, step aside for those who will. Our flag is not a costume for election time. It is a sacred promise. Our soldiers fought and died for it, and our veterans kept that promise. It is time the government did the same.

● (1805)

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact that the Liberal government has not only taken jobs away from veterans but has decided to give them to a company that is involved with ICE in the United States is absolutely appalling.

There are a lot of veterans living in Winnipeg Centre who are houseless and do not have a livable income. I have talked to many veterans organizations in Winnipeg that support my idea of a guaranteed livable basic income. Veterans make a sacrifice for whatever reasons they find in their spirit, but when they come back, we do not look after them. It is not only through employment but also if they are unable to work for whatever reason.

I am wondering if the member supports my idea of putting in place a guaranteed livable basic income for veterans.

● (1810)

Jeff Kibble: Mr. Speaker, the homelessness of veterans is a horrible crisis this country faces. In fact, I was just at a home for veterans in Ottawa serving Thanksgiving dinner to them not too long ago. If the government was running the economy the way it pretends it does and was giving and protecting veterans' jobs, that would not be necessary. Our veterans would have jobs, would be working for the Commissionaires and would not be homeless.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but share his dismay as we watch the government create more and more agencies and Crown corporations. We can certainly add the Allied Universal contract to that list.

This removes accountability from the minister. It reduces transparency. It takes democratic power away from this House.

I would like to hear my colleague's views on this trend. Is he as concerned about this as I am?

[*English*]

Jeff Kibble: Mr. Speaker, indeed, a common trend is not just betraying veterans, as I outlined in my speech, but a lack of accountability. We see that with the Defence Investment Agency. Absolutely, I am outraged at some of the accountability issues, the irresponsible spending and the claims that their programs are helping people. They are not helping.

Canadians are drowning under 11 years of the government, and occasionally it lifts Canadians' heads above the water for a breath of fresh air and expects them to be happy because the program it is spending too much money on is working. That is the problem.

Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's service.

I was just sitting in the veterans affairs committee, which is meeting with the Commissionaires. In his speech, the member highlighted that the Commissionaires were never invited to the table, and that can be confirmed from our meeting.

I would like to hear his thoughts about what I asked earlier. The Commissionaires is a non-profit organization that invests in veterans and has confirmed that it has never received any complaints. In fact, it has an 86% approval rating from clientele. I would like to hear what the member's thoughts are with regard to that information.

Jeff Kibble: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the excellent work he does supporting veterans on the veterans affairs committee.

It was confirmed not only at committee but in court papers that the Commissionaires attempted to contact Veterans Affairs to resolve this issue, but clearly that has not happened. The Liberals are contracting out security services for veterans to American companies. What are the Liberals going to present to Canada next, that they are going to contract out to American companies to provide our military services? This is ridiculous.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we wind up the debate, I want to recognize not only the valuable role but the very existence of our veterans and what they have done in the past. November 11 at 11 o'clock is a very special moment in time when we should all take time to pray and give thanks to our veterans, both past and present. I suggest that all members recognize the true value of that. I would ask them to recognize and appreciate that there are many different things the government does for vets and that all members support veterans in Canada.

We continue to look forward to the fine work that the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires does every day in serving in different capacities, many of whom, 20% plus, are veterans.

Jeff Kibble: Mr. Speaker, indeed, I am sure that all members of this House will say they support veterans, but the members opposite show it in a pretty funny way. If we look at this contract and how they are betraying veterans, or at the other examples that I laid out in my speech, they certainly have a very different way of supporting veterans.

The member mentioned praying. Right now, there are restrictions on the prayers that clergy from all faiths in the military can say. They are not allowed to give religious speeches while in public, which is another way the Liberals are backstabbing veterans.

● (1815)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:15 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 as follows.

The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be 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.

The hon. member for Langley Township—Fraser Heights.

Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, I would ask for a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Tuesday, November 3, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to call it 6:30 p.m., to begin the late show.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on October 26 of this year, I asked the resources minister if he really respected indigenous rights and, if so, whether he would withdraw Bill C-39. I asked that in response to the BCAFN, UBCIC, Treaty 6, Onion Lake, NAN, COO, APNQL and the Iroquois Confederacy requesting the withdrawal of Bill C-39.

Those organizations represent hundreds of thousands of first nations people. Not only did the minister refuse to respond to me, he had the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations respond to me.

I was not quite sure that particular day why the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources refused to respond. I thought perhaps he was starting to agree with me that all the government was doing was building a pipeline to the courts. Then I found out today that more nations are coming forward in opposition to all the new projects that are being designated, nine today alone, nine from the St'át'imc Chiefs Council that consist of and represent, again, hundreds of thousands of first nations, because of the government's failure to exercise its power under the Building Canada Act consistently with the statutory imperatives arising from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. They argued that the government rushed the consultation, provided insufficient information about the project and failed to adequately consider its potential impacts on first nations treaty rights.

Cold Lake First Nations is another first nation that has also put forward an application for judicial review. It has also stated it was not properly consulted or engaged at all by the Major Projects Office. It was asking for a designation of the Pacific link as a national interest project to be reversed and for a declaration that Canada has a duty to consult on the project.

Now, I am starting to put things together, and I am hoping to get some clarification today. Whether it is violating the constitutional rights of workers, gutting environmental protections or brushing aside the rights of indigenous people, the government believes that it is above the Constitution and above the rule of law. I am starting to believe that, for the government, perhaps the reason is that when there is a bunch of former CEOs leading the country, they think that they are above our Constitution and human rights.

● (1820)

Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 26, first nations leaders met with the Prime Minister and premiers at a historic first ministers' meeting, the first of its kind in 20 years. One of the main topics of discussion was how first nations can develop, own and share in the economic benefits of major projects.

We know we cannot build a stronger Canada without indigenous peoples. That is why we have taken steps to support indigenous ownership and partnership in major projects. We have opened new consultation resource centres to help communities participate in project reviews. We have provided funding so that indigenous communities have the expertise and capacity to engage in discussions about projects that impact them.

We are supporting the growing role of indigenous ownership so that communities can have a stake in what is being built and can share in long-term economic benefits. This includes support using new revenue tools, like the potential creation of a first nations sovereign wealth fund, on which the Prime Minister committed to initiating discussions.

Building on these efforts, the Prime Minister also announced plans to expand the First Nations Finance Authority's lending authority, making it possible for first nations to work together as special purpose vehicles to finance investments in major projects and share in the returns. He also announced $260 million over four years for a new partnerships for indigenous workforce readiness fund. This will help connect indigenous people with jobs created by major projects. These are steps toward greater indigenous ownership, more job opportunities and a direct share in Canada's economic future.

However, creating these opportunities also means getting the federal review process for major projects right. Indigenous peoples must have a meaningful role in decisions about projects that affect their lands and communities and a fair opportunity to benefit from them. That is what the building Canada strong act aims to do. We want to make project reviews more efficient and more predictable while maintaining indigenous rights and environmental protections.

The bill proposes a more coordinated approach, including a Crown consultation hub to bring federal departments together. This would reduce duplication during project assessments and help communities focus their time and expertise on the issues that matter to them. It would also benefit indigenous proponents of economic projects. Under the legislation, when more time would be needed for consultation, timelines could be extended or paused.

I recognize that first nations leaders have raised concerns, but I want to be clear about the government's obligations. Canada's legal duty to consult remains in place. Our commitments under modern treaties and self-government agreements remain in effect, and indigenous rights remain protected.

Building major projects and advancing reconciliation must go hand in hand. Indigenous peoples must have a meaningful role in decisions that affect them and a fair opportunity to share in the benefits. When indigenous peoples are true partners, projects are stronger, communities are stronger and Canada is stronger.

● (1825)

Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is absolutely right. We will not be able to build Canada strong without first nations' free, prior and informed consent, something that the overwhelming majority of first nations across the country have indicated the government is failing to do. They are asking the government to withdraw Bill C-39, which violates the Constitution. Just because the government says something, that does not make it true.

It is very clear to workers, environmental organizations and first nations across this country that the government does not respect the Constitution. It is building nothing more than a pipeline to the courts.

Anthony Housefather: Mr. Speaker, I recognize that the hon. member has raised concerns, and I recognize that first nations leaders have raised concerns. We take those concerns seriously.

At the historic meeting between first ministers and first nations, we discussed those concerns, along with how first nations can own major projects and share in the economic benefits they create. The building Canada strong act would help projects move forward while supporting meaningful consultation and protecting indigenous rights.

Let me be clear. Canada's legal duty to consult, our constitutional commitments, our commitments under modern treaties and self-government agreements, and indigenous rights remain protected. Economic development and reconciliation must go hand in hand. When indigenous economies grow stronger, Canada grows stronger too.

HEALTH

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to follow up on a question I posed to the Minister of Health regarding the PrescribeIT scandal. I have to say that a week and a half ago when I participated in an adjournment debate on this scandal, I was astounded that the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources had the audacity to say that the way the Liberals have handled PrescribeIT is what good governance looks like.

Is it really? We are talking about a failed IT solution to digitize prescription services that cost taxpayers $300 million for a service that almost no one used. Even more concerning is the fact that of that $300 million, 200 million tax dollars are missing and unaccounted for.

There are also the Liberal insider executives who got rich padding their pockets with exorbitant bonuses. Let us take the CEO, Michael Green, for example. He padded his pocket with in excess of $600,000 in bonuses in just three years, between 2023 and 2026. Then he was awarded $1 million on his way out the door after the Minister of Health claimed she had fired him. I can only say that most Canadians would love to have $1 million in compensation upon being fired.

There are at least five other executives who received between $70,000 and $90,000 in bonuses in the same three-year period. We are talking about millions of tax dollars that went out the door by way of bonuses to reward Liberal insider executives who presided over what was a complete and total debacle, if not something much worse.

Then, there is the Minister of Health. Where was the Minister of Health through it all? The minister had completely turned a blind eye. She turned a blind eye as millions of dollars continued to flow to PrescribeIT. Officials testified at the health committee that the minister asked no questions about PrescribeIT. She had no questions about where 300 million taxpayer dollars had gone. The parliamentary secretary says that is what good governance looks like. If that is what good governance looks like, I would hate to see what bad governance looks like.

It is time for the Liberals to stop gaslighting and begin to answer some basic questions such as where the oversight was as 300 million tax dollars went up in smoke as the health minister was asleep at the switch.

● (1830)

Maggie Chi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I appreciate a lot of the late show speeches. Monday is a good start to the week. As we go through the session, we have a lot of great legislation going on in the House, including Bill C-39 and a lot of the safe social media bills we are trying to advance also.

As the minister announced in June, our government wants to be sure we are getting accountability and value for money for taxpayers. This why she launched the independent review of Infoway's governance and structure, and a third party audit of the organization's findings. I want to make sure my colleague is aware that the review and the audits are both under way, and we are looking forward to seeing and sharing the results once they are available.

The Auditor General herself felt this was a very strong response, and the last time I checked, my Conservative colleague still respects the work of the Auditor General. She said that any additional work on the file by her would be “duplicative and therefore of limited added value for Parliamentarians and Canadians.” Especially seeing that the member opposite's Conservative colleagues on the health committee were some of the people who asked for the Auditor General's thoughts on the matter, I hope it is a good enough response for my colleague across the way as well.

Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, it is a totally inadequate response. What we just heard from the parliamentary secretary was more gaslighting. Her answer was very much in line with the ridiculous answer provided by the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Since she will not answer basic questions, such as where the oversight was, perhaps she will answer a very specific question: Why did Mr. Green receive a $1-million golden parachute on his way out the door, and why did the minister fail to disclose this?

Maggie Chi: Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that there is work under way, and we need to allow the independent auditors to do their work, work that I hope the member will also allow. There is work under way, an internal review of the governance and structure of Infoway. Maybe my colleague did not get the updated QP card from his leader.

Canadians deserve a modernized health care system, and we will always make sure that that is built on the best possible information. Allowing for that third-party review and audit to be completed will do that work, and it will give Canadians the confidence that our money is being spent appropriately.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to follow up on a question that I posed to the Minister of Natural Resources not that long ago about the Liberal government's failure to remove antidevelopment laws from our oil and gas industry that are hindering our ability to become, in the government's own words, an energy superpower.

We still have, as I pointed out to the minister, a west coast shipping ban. We still have an industrial carbon tax. CEOs have come out and said that Canada is a tough place to invest in this industry because of these issues.

Energy security is fundamentally a geographic issue. Members can think about the news and the Strait of Hormuz, which is a geographic issue.

One place that does not have a geographic issue is the Pacific west coast. Before TMX, exports of Canadian crude to Asia were basically negligible. Today, exports of Canadian crude are reaching Asian markets in significant amounts. In fact, the Asia Pacific Foundation estimates that it is over $500 million per month in exports, which is half a billion dollars of new Canadian exports, because of one pipeline. That is not the only issue.

The barrier is not just getting exports to tidewater. That is only part of the challenge. Canadian crude is a distinctive type of heavy crude. Refineries around the world cannot always switch from one blend of crude oil to another without investments in upgrading equipment, storage, transportation, processing and refining infrastructure.

Canada has another barrier that it has put in front of our oil and gas industry, one barrier that the Liberals are entirely responsible for, because Canada has chosen to restrict one of the tools that could be used to develop these new Asian markets.

When the Prime Minister was the UN envoy for climate action and the financial adviser at the United Nations Climate Change Conference, commonly referred to as COP, or COP26 to be specific, in Glasgow, countries around the world, including Canada, signed what is called the Glasgow statement.

The Glasgow statement, among many other things, forced countries to ban their export promotion agencies from supporting new investments in oil and gas development. Therefore, as an agency of the Government of Canada, Export Development Canada had to adhere to the Glasgow statement.

If we go on their website, they have a policy from 2023, when the government signed on to the Glasgow statement, saying that they are now going to follow this and prohibit investment in those industries. That means that Export Development Canada and other Canadian export promotion agencies can no longer fund or invest in the kind of infrastructure that would facilitate the export of Canadian crude oil, in particular, to Asian markets.

My question to the parliamentary secretary is whether the government will repeal that prohibition so that Canadian export agencies can once again support strategic international infrastructure that expands markets for Canadian industry to, in its own words, make Canada an energy superpower.

● (1835)

Claude Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the words of our finance minister, I have good news for my colleague. There are projects moving forward in this country.

A pipeline is being built from Taylor, British Columbia, to Gordondale in Alberta. There is a major expansion of the sunrise natural gas pipeline system in British Columbia as well. I am also pleased to remind the member that the LNG Canada phase two expansion has achieved a final investment decision and is moving forward. There is significant investment, billions of dollars, going into energy infrastructure in Labrador, and there is a new transmission line being built to connect Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, which will improve the reliability of interprovincial power grids and respond to the growing demand for electricity.

What does that mean? It means workers are on the job site, equipment is on the ground, communities are seeing the benefits and Canada is building again. However, projects do not move forward just by accident. Canada is also changing how our projects move forward. Through the Major Projects Office, we are bringing together federal decision-making, reducing duplication and giving proponents a clearer path from proposal to construction.

The member asked when the next pipeline will be built, and the Prime Minister delivered the clearest possible answer—

Jacob Mantle: I didn't ask about the next pipeline.

Claude Guay: You did last time.

Mr. Speaker, on October 1, the Prime Minister confirmed that the Pacific link pipeline is of national interest. Pacific link is critical to Canada's ambition to become a global energy superpower. Over the next year, the Major Projects Office, supported by the Canada Energy Regulator, will lead the project's federal review process and consultation. By September 2027, the goal is to finalize conditions for this project and advance Pacific link toward construction.

Canadians expect us to build, and they expect us to build responsibly. That means respecting our duty to consult indigenous people and ensuring that consultation helps shape the project, not just reacting to it. It means working with provinces, including British Columbia, because these projects cross jurisdictions and require cooperation to succeed. It means linking new infrastructure to real emissions reduction. In this case, Pacific link advanced with industry commitment to the Pathways project, a major carbon capture and storage project designed to significantly cut emissions while supporting jobs and growth.

Yes, we are moving forward. We are doing it in a way that is durable, economically, environmentally and socially, and that matters.

Jacob Mantle: Mr. Speaker, I am not asking the member about news today. I am asking him about a policy from 2023, which the government refuses to change. I am not asking about LNG or when the next pipeline will be built because it does not matter if someone gets a pipeline built if their customers cannot refine the product. That is the problem with the Glasgow statement. It prohibits Export Development Canada from investing in those types of refinery capabilities around the world, which would increase the market for Canadian oil and gas. This is, as I said in my original question, just one more Liberal policy that the Prime Minister refuses to change, because he was the one at Glasgow pushing these statements. I do not think a tiger can change its spots.

I will repeat my question to the parliamentary secretary. Will the Liberals repeal the Glasgow statement and let Export Development Canada and other export agencies promote Canadian oil and gas development infrastructure around the world?

● (1840)

Claude Guay: Mr. Speaker, there is, in a way, common ground here because everyone in the House wants projects built. Everyone wants jobs created. Everyone wants Canada to succeed. There is no point living in the past.

Our job is to move from discussion to delivery, and that is exactly what Canadians are seeing through the Major Projects Office, through new infrastructure, through projects already moving forward across the country, including pipelines. We are seeing projects advance. We are seeing partnerships built early and built to last. That is how we deliver, and that is what Canadians expect.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:41 p.m.)

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