HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

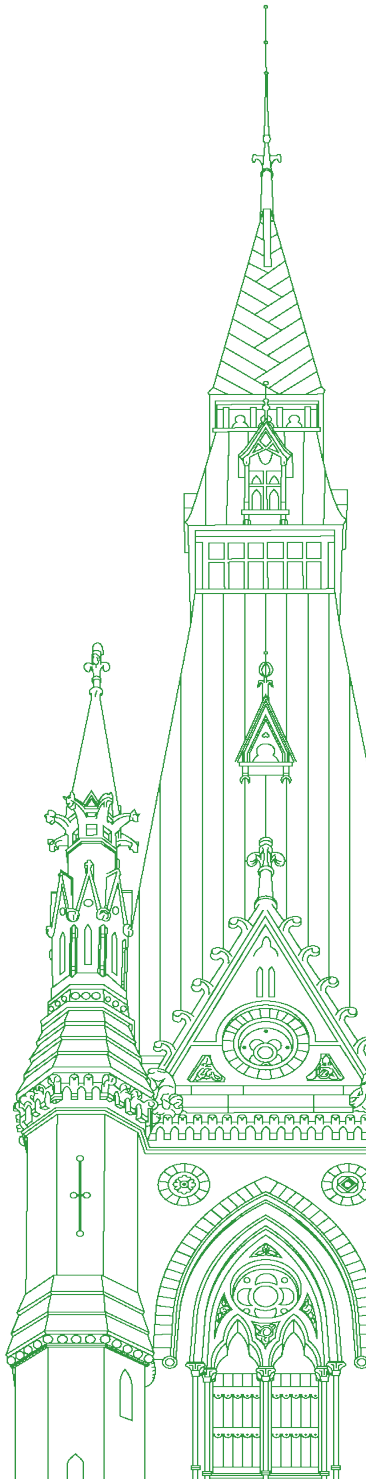
House of Commons Debates

Official Report

(Hansard)

Volume 152 No. 161

Tuesday, November 3, 2026



Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 3, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled "Housing Starts in Canada".

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

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following two reports of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

[*English*]

I table the 14th report, entitled "Public Accounts of Canada 2023", and the 15th report, entitled "Housing in First Nations Communities".

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to each of these reports.

* * *

PETITIONS

HUMAN RIGHTS

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table two petitions.

The first petition was initiated by members of the group Canada-Philippines Solidarity for Human Rights, who have brought to my attention many concerns.

Canada signed the Canada-Philippines status of visiting forces agreement and subsequently committed to over $60 million in security and development assistance to the Government of the Philippines. Canada has policies and commitments that uphold the protection of human rights, gender equality, transparency and accountability, including the voices at risk guidelines and the feminist international assistance policy. By entering into the status of visiting forces agreement, the Government of Canada risks binding our country's reputation to a military establishment accused of corruption and systemic human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings of journalists, union members and indigenous peoples, which violates the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

As of November 2025, the Philippines holds 696 prisoners of conscience, who are subjected to human rights violations and inhumane prison conditions. Continued Canadian support of and co-operation with the Government of the Philippines contributes to more human rights violations, which undermines Canada's stated commitments to peace, democracy and the protection of human rights worldwide.

The petitioners therefore call on the government to conduct a transparent public review of the SOVFA's human rights, corruption and governance implications; suspend or reject the agreement, as it cannot guarantee accountability, civilian oversight and compliance with Canada's human rights obligations; call for the immediate release of prisoners of conscience in the Philippines and urge the Philippine government to end the criminalization of human rights defenders; and finally, reaffirm Canada's independent commitment to peace, human rights and democracy by engaging with peoples and civil society organizations in the Philippines, not through military pacts.

● (1005)

The Speaker: I want to remind all members who are rising to table a petition that they must summarize the petition rather than read it.

The hon. member may continue.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition was initiated by a Vancouver East constituent. They have gathered signatures to raise concerns about cows and their calves that continue to be routinely separated shortly after the calves' birth, often enduring extreme emotional and psychological stress. They note that many Canadians are unaware of this practice and would become concerned about the welfare impacts on these cows and calves if informed and would support regulatory protections accordingly.

The current dairy cattle code of practice permits the separation of cows and calves shortly after birth without requiring consideration of the resulting emotional and psychological distress. Amending the current dairy cattle code of practice with respect to the separation of cows and calves, to extend this to a mandatory six-month bonding period where the cow and her calf are not separated, would better align Canadian dairy practices with public expectations for animal welfare.

As such, the petitioners call on the Government of Canada, through the Minister of Agriculture—

The Speaker: Sometimes it is hard to know if a member is giving a summary of a petition or reading it. In this case, I suspect the member may be reading it.

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I summarized it. The petition is actually much longer. I have gone into the central points, so I am going to wrap it up here.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada, through the Minister of Agriculture, to direct and support the amendment of the dairy cattle code of practice to prohibit the separation of cows from their calves less than six months after birth and to enforce compliance with this standard.

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise and present a petition I had intended to introduce during the last week of October, which was international Disarmament Week. The petitioners in this case, many of whom are from Saanich—Gulf Islands but not exclusively, are calling on the Government of Canada to note that the doomsday clock has now moved closer to midnight than at any time since it was established 78 years ago by the atomic scientists who started it in 1947.

The petitioners note that we are now less engaged in talks toward nuclear disarmament than at any point since Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan put us on the path, through various treaties, toward real nuclear disarmament as a plan we were working on. The petitioners note that at this point, the all-party recommendation of 2018 for the Government of Canada to play a leadership role in disarmament seems to have fallen off the radar. They call on the Government of Canada to make nuclear disarmament a key element of our foreign policy and national defence priority and to assume a leadership role in NATO and globally. They call on Canada to at least participate as an observer in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

I will close there, noting that the matter is increasingly urgent.

ETHIOPIA

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to table e-petition 7556. The petitioners highlight that since early 2023, armed conflict in the Amhara region of Ethiopia has involved Ethiopian government forces carrying out indiscriminate violence and gender-based sexual violence against civilian populations and infrastructure, including through the use of aerial strikes, leaving more than 4.4 million children out of school and hundreds of thousands displaced.

The petitioners also highlight that the Ethiopian government has carried out the arbitrary detention and torture of Amhara journalists, civilian society leaders, members of Parliament and opposition figures. They highlight that the incumbent Prosperity Party administration won 90% of federal parliamentary seats in the June 2026 general election despite ongoing armed conflicts, mass civilian displacement, suppression of civilian society and opposition, and the exclusion of major ethnic communities, making conditions for a free and inclusive vote impossible.

The petitioners note that Canada provides over $147 million in development assistance to Ethiopia and maintains significant diplomatic, commercial and humanitarian interests in the country and the Horn of Africa. They are calling on the government to consider the application of the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act to oppose targeted sanctions on individuals credibly identified as responsible for grave human rights violations in Ethiopia. They demand an immediate ceasefire in the Amhara region and the unconditional release of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience held by the Ethiopian government.

Lastly, the petitioners call on the Government of Ethiopia for strengthened transparency around the June 2026 general election results toward an inclusive democratic process.

● (1010)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mel Arnold (Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of 38 residents of Kamloops. The petitioners are Canadians who are concerned about the changing climate and the results of the droughts, wildfires and floods caused by a warming planet. They call on the Government of Canada, for the love of our children and grandchildren, to honour and ensure Canada's 2030 and 2035 emissions targets and to strengthen the policies that make them achievable.

LITHIUM-ION BATTERY SAFETY

Wade Chang (Burnaby Central, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from Canadians who are concerned about the increasing number of fires involving lithium-ion batteries. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to take national action on lithium-ion battery fire risks, including a national incident reporting system, firefighter safety research, strong safety standards and training, and investments in protective equipment and fire suppression technologies. Battery safety is public safety.

AIRPORT FIREFIGHTING STANDARDS

Wade Chang (Burnaby Central, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also rise to present a petition concerning airport rescue. When an aircraft emergency happens, every second counts. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to strengthen airport firefighting standards by ensuring adequate staffing, faster response times, better passenger rescue capabilities, and the public reporting of the differences between Canadian and international standards. Passenger safety must always come first.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Scott Anderson (Vernon—Lake Country—Monashee, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition highlighting the public concern over the handling of, oversight of and justification for the mass killing of potentially healthy animals. Canadians expect transparency, accountability and humane treatment of animals in all government actions.

PRODUCT LABELLING

Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present e-petition 7510, initiated by Lori Guetre of British Columbia and supported by 681 Canadians.

The petitioners emphasize that Canadians deserve to know the climate impact of products they buy. While internationally recognized standards already allow producers to measure product carbon footprints, that information remains largely invisible to consumers in Canada. Standardizing labelling would help Canadians make informed choices, reward producers who reduce emissions and encourage greater transparency across the marketplace.

The petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to develop and implement mandatory, standardized and comparable carbon footprint labels for consumer products sold in Canada, so that Canadians can make informed choices, lower emissions producers are recognized and rewarded, and Canada can help accelerate global emissions reductions on a meaningful scale.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Speaker's Ruling

POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-41—PROPOSAL TO APPLY STANDING ORDER 69.1—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now ready to rule on the point of order raised on October 28 by the member for Elgin—St. Thomas—London South concerning the application of Standing Order 69.1 to Bill C-41, an act to amend the Criminal Code and an act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying) and to make related amendments to other acts.

In his intervention, the member noted that, in his view, Bill C-41 proposes two separate fundamental changes: to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to people whose sole condition is a mental illness, and to allow advance requests for medical assistance in dying. The member argued that these two principles are sufficiently distinct to warrant separate votes, pursuant to Standing Order 69.1.

While acknowledging that both matters concern medical assistance in dying, the member also asked the Chair to consider the exceptional significance of the bill, drawing on the approach the Chair has sometimes taken in selecting report stage motions on matters of conscience, including on earlier legislation on medical assistance in dying.

[*Translation*]

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons argued in response that medical assistance in dying is the bill's single issue and common element, and that the bill contains no provisions dealing with unrelated topics. The parliamentary secretary further pointed to clause 5 of the bill, where the concepts of advance requests and the prohibition on medical assistance in dying for reasons of mental illness are intertwined, as an example of the connection between the two measures. The parliamentary secretary added that other options remain available to the member to express his views on the measures in the bill.

Standing Order 69.1 gives the Speaker the power to divide the question on a bill that seeks to repeal, amend or enact more than one act, and where there is not a common element connecting all the various provisions. Despite the suggestion that the exceptional significance of the bill's subject matter should be taken into account, the Chair must remain guided by the wording of the Standing Order and focused on whether matters in the bill are so unrelated as to warrant separate decisions of the House.

● (1015)

[*English*]

The Chair has examined Bill C-41 in detail. Notwithstanding a series of related amendments to other acts, the bill proposes amendments only to the Criminal Code. While the bill may address more than one issue, medical assistance in dying is the subject that ties all of its provisions together and constitutes their common element. In the view of the Chair, the bill does not link unrelated matters and therefore does not meet the threshold for dividing the question under Standing Order 69.1. Accordingly, there will be only one vote at second reading.

At the same time, the Chair accepts that members may have strongly held and differing points of view on the various measures that make up a single piece of legislation. The Chair wishes to remind members that the legislative process offers them other opportunities to express those views, including through debate in the House, motions of instruction, amendments at committee stage, and report stage motions.

I thank all members for their attention.

* * *

● (1020)

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED MIS-CHARACTERIZATION OF MEMBERS' REMARKS — SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now ready to rule on the question of privilege raised on October 21 by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands concerning the alleged mis-characterization of members' remarks.

In raising her question of privilege, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands said that, on October 7, the member for Halifax had imputed improper motives to her and other members by accusing them of engaging in a disinformation campaign about Bill C-39, an act respecting certain measures to strengthen the economy. In her view, these comments were a way of indirectly accusing other members of lying, they were therefore an attack on members' honesty and integrity, and they amounted to a breach of her parliamentary privileges. She asked the Chair to rule that the remarks were unparliamentary and to direct that they be withdrawn. The member for Edmonton Strathcona made the same request on October 22.

In response, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said that same day that the comments of the member for Halifax were not directed at any member in particular.

[*Translation*]

The Chair would like to begin by clarifying that this matter is not a question of privilege but rather a point of order. By this, I mean that when a member raises concerns that a standing order may have been contravened, or that certain actions or remarks may have offended the standards of order and decorum of the House, the matter should be raised with the Chair as a point of order. Indeed, in presenting her complaint, the member for Saanich-Gulf Islands specifically referred to Standing Order 18, thereby underscoring that her concern was founded primarily on an alleged breach of the rules, practices or procedures of the House, rather than on a violation of her parliamentary privileges or those of the House.

That said, the Chair takes any allegation of an attack on members' integrity very seriously. As section 13.29 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, fourth edition, states:

> Remarks which question a member's integrity, honesty or character are not in order. A member will be requested to withdraw offensive remarks, allegations or accusations of impropriety directed towards another member.

[*English*]

Having reviewed the speech given by the member for Halifax on October 7, the Chair finds that the language used that day was not contrary to the Standing Orders.

Expressing different points of view or criticizing an opposition position, particularly when the comments are not specifically directed at or made against a member, is not a violation of our rules or a question of privilege. However, the line separating what is acceptable from what is not can sometimes be quite fine. The Chair would therefore encourage members to stay well away from any language that their colleagues might interpret differently. Vigorous debate and disagreement are possible while maintaining a respectful and measured tone.

I thank members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

BUDGET 2025 IMPLEMENTATION ACT, NO. 2

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-31, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

[*English*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: There are 32 motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-31. Motions Nos. 1 to 32 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 32 to the House.

[*English*]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC) moved:

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 51.

[*Translation*]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 282.

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 283.

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 284.

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 285.

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 339.

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 340.

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 341.

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 342.

Motion No. 10

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 343.

Motion No. 11

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 344.

Motion No. 12

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 345.

Motion No. 13

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 346.

Motion No. 14

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 347.

Motion No. 15

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 348.

Motion No. 16

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 349.

Motion No. 17

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 350.

Motion No. 18

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 351.

Motion No. 19

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 352.

Motion No. 20

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 353.

Motion No. 21

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 353.1.

Motion No. 22

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 354.

Motion No. 23

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 355.

Motion No. 24

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 356.

Motion No. 25

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 357.

Motion No. 26

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 358.

Motion No. 27

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 359.

Motion No. 28

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 360.

Motion No. 29

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 361.

Motion No. 30

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 362.

Motion No. 31

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 363.

Motion No. 32

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 364.

● (1025)

[*English*]

James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to rise this morning to talk about the report stage of Bill C-31, part 2.

For everyone watching out there, Bill C-31, part 2, is the budget implementation act from last year. We are talking about 12 months ago when this budget was actually presented to the House. We are only now dealing with it because the Liberals continue to drag their feet. This is not a priority for them in bringing this forward.

They can sit there and heckle all they want, but if the truth be told, Bill C-31 was brought into this House six months ago and we are only getting to report stage now. The Liberals have control of the legislative agenda. If this was a priority for the government, the Liberals would not be here talking about the budget implementation act for budget 2025 when we are just about to hear about budget 2026 later this week. This is just bizarre for the financial planning for our country. The government holds it at such a low priority that we are dealing with legislation that is over 12 months old. We are at the end. We have to keep in mind that the fiscal year for the Government of Canada is April 1 to March 31. The fiscal year ending March 31, 2026, is what this budget actually deals with. We are dealing with a part of a budget that was already passed and dealt with six months ago, so it is just bizarre that here we are, more than six months after the fiscal year has ended, talking about the budget implementation act at report stage.

I am going to target most of my comments around division 16 in the budget implementation act, which establishes the Defence Investment Agency. It is completely contrary to what the Liberals are now doing through Bill C-40, which makes the Defence Investment Agency a Crown corporation.

As colleagues know, the Conservatives have always supported the Canadian Armed Forces. We have supported our sailors, our soldiers and our aviators with the equipment and support that they have needed, going back since the world wars. What we have witnessed after 11 years of these Liberals is that the Canadian Armed Forces was neglected during that entire time. The way that they have tried to pad the numbers and do creative accounting, which I will dig into as we go forward, really does talk about how the government is all about being performative.

If we look at the Defence Investment Agency, which has been operating now for over a year as a part of PSPC, it is all announcements and no deliveries. It is all flash and smoke with no actual fire. We have not seen any kinetic equipment being delivered into the hands of the Canadian Armed Forces since it stood up the Defence Investment Agency.

We do not know why the government moved from Bill C-31 and establishing the Defence Investment Agency as a stand-alone agency under Bill C-31 to where now it needs to have Bill C-40 to establish the Defence Investment Agency as a Crown corporation. What has happened in the last six months since this bill was tabled in the House in May earlier this year?

I can tell colleagues that this really does come down to Doug Guzman, who is the CEO of the Defence Investment Agency, and a BFF of the Prime Minister. They both worked at Goldman Sachs. They are both investment bankers. Here is an individual who has had little to no experience in national defence or defence procurement and is now the CEO. He was frustrated having to deal with the bureaucracy and frustrated with not having the power he enjoyed in the private sector. He was not happy with the checks and balances, and how the Defence Investment Agency had to go through the Treasury Board and cabinet to get approvals for purchases. He threatened to rage-quit. All of a sudden those stories came out and all of a sudden we got a new bill before the House called Bill C-40.

I think it is important to note that clause 47 of Bill C-40 says that if Bill C-31 passes before Bill C-40 does, which is now at the defence committee, division 16 of Bill C-31 will be deleted. It will be repealed even if it is brought into force by the government through the Governor General.

● (1030)

If Bill C-31 and Bill C-40 pass, Bill C-40 being dealt with at committee now and having its first meeting on it on Thursday, unless the Liberals continue to slowly drag Bill C-31 through the legislative process, division 16 will be repealed. Why we are still dealing with Bill C-31 and division 16 is beyond me. I do not know why the government would not have been proactive on this and just removed division 16 from Bill C-31 on its own. It had a chance to do it at committee and now at report stage, and, of course, it has not done that.

We have one concern about Bill C-40. As I mentioned, the CEO and the Secretary of State for Defence Procurement are not happy about dealing with the checks and balances that exist within our parliamentary process. The way the government is supposed to act and protect the taxpayer to ensure that the dollars are being spent wisely is that all industry and competitors are allowed to bid on projects and to procure from all the players in Canada and around the world the equipment that we need to defend Canada and work with our allies. Bill C-40 would bring more power to a single minister responsible for the Defence Investment Agency, power that can be transferred to the CEO of the Defence Investment Agency, whom we assume would be Doug Guzman, which would increase the risk of more political interference and, because it is a Crown corporation, make it less transparent and less accountable to us as parliamentarians.

We have a fiduciary duty and responsibility to the taxpayers of Canada. Yes, we want to buy more equipment for the Canadian Armed Forces. We have to as we live in a dangerous world, but we also need to ensure that we are protecting taxpayers. We have to make sure that we are getting the right equipment, and that means we have to listen to the Canadian Armed Forces. The Liberal government procured equipment that has not been in the best interests of the Canadian Armed Forces. I am talking about the Kingfisher CC-295s, which were sole-sourced by the Liberals before they had the Defence Investment Agency. Because they kind of fumbled along in the replacement of our search and rescue fixed-wing aircraft in B.C. and across the country, they ended up buying a plane through a sole-source agreement that is not fit for purpose. That plane is still not certified as operational. Not all the planes have been delivered, even though this contract goes back several years, and the Canadian Armed Forces is making do with our old equipment, including some of our old Hercules, to get the job done to protect Canadians when we have to do search and rescue operations.

The other one is the GlobalEye. The Defence Investment Agency in May of this year at CANSEC advised the Prime Minister, when he was speaking at CANSEC, to go ahead and purchase the GlobalEye without having a competition. We have three options. All three of them do not necessarily meet the operational shortfalls of the Canadian Armed Forces, but we should have run a competition to see what was in the best interest of industry, Canadian jobs and making sure we have the right platform for the Canadian Armed Forces to do the job it does. Again, there was political interference in sole-sourcing a product that is not necessarily useful to protecting Canada.

We are also seeing political interference from the government on buying F-35s. It is reviewing it and reviewing it. We just learned last week it is putting a pause on buying Black Hawk helicopters for our special operations forces. Every time it does this, it makes Canada less safe. The Liberals like to talk a good game on national defence, but at the end of the day, they have not delivered.

They have done creative accounting to come up with the numbers to meet the NATO target. Their actual expenditure is based upon the Library of Parliament. It was only at 1.05% in the last year under Justin Trudeau. When we look at the last three years of Trudeau, we see that he cut the defence operation budget by $2.7 billion and we know that the government today, despite saying it was spending more on national defence, is actually cutting the operational budget by 10%. That reduces our readiness. That equals over $2.9 billion out of the budget of the Canadian Armed Forces. That has to stop. We need to make sure we properly equip, train and increase the readiness of our forces.

● (1035)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am sure members would recognize the irony of that, coming from someone who used to be the parliamentary secretary for defence when the government spent 1% of Canada's GDP toward the Canadian Forces. Within six months, this Prime Minister and this government brought it to 2% of Canada's GDP. He can talk to members of the Canadian Forces who have received increases in pay, which were long overdue. This government has done so much more in the first 18 months than Stephen Harper ever dreamed of in the 10 years he was in government.

My question to the member is, because he is so focused on this, will he apologize to members of the CAF for what some might suggest is somewhat misleading information, when this government has provided the supports for CAF that were unheard of in the last 20 years?

● (1040)

James Bezan: Madam Speaker, it is rich coming from the member for Winnipeg North. He knows for a fact that he sat in this chamber when we watched the government, under Justin Trudeau, continue to claw back and not make any procurement choices for the Canadian Armed Forces. We know that the wage increase for the Canadian Armed Forces was well overdue, long overdue, because the government did nothing of the sort for the 10 years under Trudeau. I can tell members that immediately after the government gave the actual increase, it clawed it back. Guys were having to pay more for rent and had their housing allowances decreased, and because of that, their actual take-home pay was less. He should apologize for the shell game and smoke and mirrors that the government continues to play with our forces.

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, first, my colleague is absolutely right. Here we are debating the spring economic statement two days before the delivery of the next budget. It is completely outrageous.

I will talk briefly about an organization in my riding, L'Arche Canada, which has a project called L'Arche Comox Valley. It is trying to get a project going so it can help people with mental barriers, and the government keeps denying any funding for it. The government comes up with obscene and absurd reasons why it cannot fund it, saying that it will not be able to fund it now because the project has started. This is going to be completely out of reach for people. These are people who absolutely need our help.

As well, the Build Canada Homes has not supported people. Nowhere in the world has the free market solved an affordable housing crisis alone. It needs non-market housing.

Does my colleague agree that people with mental barriers and disabilities need special support?

James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague. There is no question that people who are dealing with mental health issues and other disabilities deserve the support of the government. Unfortunately, what we have seen under the Liberals is that none of that has happened. He talks about the Build Canada Homes program. It has not built any homes. Housing starts in this country continue to decline, and that is making it unaffordable for young Canadians to enter the housing market.

Blaine Calkins (Ponoka—Didsbury, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like my colleague to remind the House what exactly it was that Stephen Harper inherited when he became prime minister in 2006. I remember our troops being in Afghanistan in green combat uniforms and Iltis Jeeps. By the end of that combat mission, our troops were some of the best prepared and best equipped in the world.

The Liberals talk about the 1% of GDP, but the GDP grew so much when Stephen Harper was prime minister that actual defence spending grew by over $4 billion a year annually for our troops. This information can easily be searched. At the current rate of economic collapse in this country, 2% of the Liberals' GDP is probably going to be less than 1% of what Harper did.

James Bezan: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Ponoka is completely right. Not only were we growing the budget, we were growing the investments in the Canadian Armed Forces and making sure they had things like new LAVs, new tanks, new TAPVs, new Chinook helicopters, new Hercules aircraft and new C-17s. All that had been bought, and our actual increase in defence spending took us up to over 1.4% under the old system, where we only calculated defence spending and did not add in, as the Liberals have done, everything from the Canadian Coast Guard. We just saw a story in Blacklock's this week that 7,378 Coast Guard employees are now national defenders, even though none of them are paramilitary or trained in the military and have told us at committee over and over again that if they came into conflict, they would leave the scene of the event.

[*Translation*]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, this week, in fact the day after tomorrow, the Minister of Finance will table the 2026-27 federal budget. I sincerely hope that the minister will heed Quebec's requests regarding important sectors like aluminum and forestry.

In Laurentides—Labelle, particularly in the northern part of the riding, the forestry sector is a major part of the economy. It is one of the three economic pillars of the Antoine-Labelle RCM. Some people in our communities are worried. I am talking specifically about wage earners who, because of the tariffs, feel that a sword of Damocles is hanging over their heads. I am also thinking about the entire business community, local merchants, and the vitality and appeal of our region. When we talk about supporting specific economic sectors, it is because they carry a significant economic weight in the region, and any hardship they face will have far-reaching repercussions throughout the broader economy.

The Minister of Finance should be sensitive to this reality, given that he himself represents a region with a strong forestry sector. However, Bill C-31 does nothing to address forestry, despite the Bloc Québécois's offers, requests and proposals. Indeed, we made thoughtful proposals developed in consultation with key stakeholders in the sector.

A year ago, in fact, we asked a number of municipal officials to come to Ottawa, including Daniel Bourdon, reeve of the Antoine-Labelle RCM and mayor of Mont-Laurier, as well as the mayor of Ferme-Neuve. They were here to support the measures we were proposing, alongside a number of softwood lumber stakeholders, including Unifor, Rémabec and Chantiers Chibougamau. The Bloc's proposal made sense then and it still makes sense today. It would have cost the government nothing. The idea was to use the customs duties collected to help support the forestry sector. It was a win-win situation for everyone. Our proposal fell on deaf ears.

Bill C-31 contains no support measures for our small and medium-sized businesses, our industrial sectors or our communities. In recent weeks, the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that Quebec is the province most affected by Donald Trump's American tariffs. I understand the concerns of my colleagues from southern Ontario who are worried that the automotive sector will be decimated by U.S. policies. I understand why people in Hamilton are worried about Stelco. However, I am equally concerned about my own region. I worry that our processing industry will go into a tailspin. I fear that well-paid workers will lose their jobs. I am afraid that Quebec's economy, an economy that is diversified, industrial, manufacturing-based and service-oriented, is not sufficiently dependent on any single industry to be deemed worth saving. That is essentially what we are experiencing. There is a desire to save one industry and ensure that everyone benefits from it. With all due respect to the government, Quebec is more complex than that. Helping Quebec means understanding it, loving it and appreciating it. That way, Quebec will be further ahead than Quebeckers could have ever dreamed. I have no doubt that I will soon be reminded that there are more than 40 MPs in this House who are here to defend Quebec's interests.

What about when it comes to the forestry sector?

What about standing up to talk about aluminum?

What about fighting for our tourism sector so that it has funding to replace its infrastructure?

Not only does Bill C-31 ignore Quebec, but it also further increases oil industry subsidies. It now considers hydrogen production from methane to be a form of clean hydrogen, unlike Quebec City, which maintains that green hydrogen must be produced using renewable energy sources.

Several measures in Bill C-31 open the door to more powers for the government and less transparency, such as restricting who can file a complaint with the procurement ombud and which complaints the ombud can review.

● (1045)

It seems that every time I rise to speak during a debate, I repeatedly ask where we are headed. It is in fact a constant pattern with the federal government. It is clearly seeking to limit transparency, dismantle safeguards, remove checks and balances, and move full steam ahead toward a specific objective while disregarding basic democratic principles. I know that talking about the procurement ombud does not make for a stirring speech. It will not bring the House to its feet, but accountability does not have to be dramatic to be essential. What we are seeing take shape in the government is deeply troubling. There is a slide toward authoritarian control, where checks and balances gradually weaken until they can be silenced altogether. It is a very subtle way of going about it. The government will never openly say that it wants to silence them. No, instead, it creates Crown corporations with mandates that raise questions. It circumvents laws and plays with words. Taken in isolation, these actions may appear technical, but when viewed as a whole, it becomes clear where the government is leading us.

Bill C-31 adopts an excessively permissive approach to public health and pesticides. I am very concerned about these changes because they could weaken oversight of pesticides. In Europe, pesticide approvals are based on scientific study and the precautionary principle. Any risks to health or the environment must be taken seriously. The economy must serve people, not the other way around. We all know that, but the government seems to be dismissing these concerns in the name of efficiency and economic interests.

The government also wants to give the minister more discretionary powers. However, when important decisions are not subject to debate and parliamentary oversight, that is no mere administrative adjustment; it is a big step in the wrong direction. I am extremely concerned. Think about pressure from lobbyists. Think about the agricultural workers who could be exposed to dangerous pesticides. Think about the impact on people and what we want to leave to future generations.

They keep talking about efficiency, but the question remains: Who will benefit from these changes?

Our requests concerning the economic update were clear. As dictated by our guiding principles, we had to take care of our people, as should we all. I will briefly review what we requested. We proposed introducing a wage subsidy program for sectors affected by the U.S. tariffs. We proposed relaunching EI reform with a clear timetable. We have been calling for that since 2015, and we were promised it. We proposed reimbursing Quebeckers for the electoral gift, which people seem to have forgotten about, that the Liberal Party of Canada handed to people elsewhere in the country during the last election campaign under the guise of a carbon tax rebate. We proposed supporting our media through three key measures involving expenditures of $387 million over five years and generating an additional $7.2 billion in revenue over the same period. We proposed locking in a 6% health transfer escalator, which could be easily done. We proposed increasing old age security benefits for seniors aged 65 to 74. We want no more discrimination.

There were other proposals as well. In the end, however, the government chose not to consult us. That is politics. However, when the government ignores us, it also ignores the 1,236,349 Quebeckers who put their trust in us on April 28, 2025.

We will be there and we will stand up for our values.

● (1050)

[*English*]

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, I have a great deal of respect for the member from serving on committee with her, but she said something in her speech that struck me as incorrect, which was that there is nothing in Bill C-31 for small to medium-sized businesses. That was the claim she made in the House here. I know for a fact that this is not true because, obviously, I am the parliamentary secretary, and I helped get the bill through committee.

The bill would extend the productivity superdeduction, which is a tax measure that offers business owners and shareholders the opportunity to receive immediate expensing, which is basically being able to deduct real estate assets that are purchased for the purposes of processing and manufacturing. That would allow new businesses that are in operations today to take some of the money they are putting away for taxes at the end of the year to buy a new piece of real estate for the purposes of processing and manufacturing.

Obviously, there would be significant impacts to manufacturing and processing in Quebec, in the member's province and riding. I think she would be supportive of that measure. Is she supportive of that measure?

● (1055)

[*Translation*]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague because in my speech I was truly talking about small and medium-sized enterprises, SMEs. I am a small business owner, myself.

The measures need to be targeted and very specific to the economic sectors we want to save. When I was talking about Quebec, I was referring to Quebec's economic diversification. If there are measures for Laurentides—Labelle, we should help the forestry industry. What about countervailing duties for the industry, to provide it with the liquidity it needs to survive?

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned Crown corporations. At the Standing Committee on National Defence, every witness we met, whether military personnel or industry representatives, praised the Crown corporation model for military procurement. Major contracts have been awarded in the Mirabel riding, whether to L3Harris or other companies.

I would like to hear the member's perspective on why using a Crown corporation is the best way to provide our military with the equipment and services they need.

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, let us be honest. As a member of the opposition, my question is, how do we hold a Crown corporation accountable?

When we speak with the procurement ombud, he tells us that the more Crown corporations there are, the harder it is for him to do his job. If my colleague tells me that he supports Crown corporations and that they are more effective in meeting economic needs, and if he tells me that the ombud will be able to gather and provide us with the information we need, then it is settled.

[*English*]

Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government is incompetent at managing its affairs.

We are debating here today the second budget implementation act from last year. This means we already passed a first budget implementation act, and then a month later, the Liberals had to table a second budget implementation act, which is 352 pages long. This is another omnibus bill on top of the first one they passed, yet they still did nothing, as the member pointed out, for the forestry sector in Quebec, and they did nothing to actually help the aluminum industry in Quebec. They put forward all of this big, heavy legislation, yet they are not doing anything that is actually beneficial to this country.

I wonder what the member has to say about that.

[*Translation*]

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I have wondered many times whether this is wilful blindness or some form of hypnosis. In all seriousness, my job is to look at all of the potential impacts. However, every person we talk to, including the procurement ombud, tells us that the current omnibus bills, particularly Bill Budget 2025 Implementation Act, No. 2, but also Bill C-39, represent a serious departure from democratic principles.

Yes, we need to continue to do our work because people are not aware of what is happening. I am wondering to what extent the government sees what is coming.

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I cannot say I am too pleased to rise today to speak about air passengers' rights, because this bill constitutes a step backward.

There is a real problem, and that is the copious amount of complaints that are being filed. Air travel complaints are a problem because the regulations are not clear. Airlines have three types of responsibilities: situations within the airline's control, situations within the airline's control but required for safety, and situations outside the airline's control. It is the situations that are within the airline's control but not necessarily required for safety that are causing problems.

For example, when an evening flight is cancelled due to unscheduled maintenance and rescheduled to the next morning, is that the airline's fault or not? This is problematic, and seems to happen a lot in Rouyn-Noranda. Passengers might be wondering how a company that operates just one flight a day can fail to have another plane available. It is a fair question. Under the regulations, however, passengers are not entitled to a refund. In 99% of cases, a passenger will file a complaint. We have also seen other examples in the media. For instance, airlines have been known to cancel a flight in order to reassign a plane to another flight and then claim it was due to unscheduled maintenance. The problem is that unscheduled maintenance should be exceptional cases and only occur during checks carried out right before departure.

We do have an arbitration system. However, consumers are telling us that they do not trust the fact that an independent arbitrator will deal with their complaint. We are talking about the reforms set out in Bill C-31. The arbitrator would not be truly independent because they would be paid by the airlines. The government will likely say that it is going to pick arbitrators it thinks are appropriate, but the bill does not clarify this. Under clause 349 of the bill, the Minister of Transport may designate a person as a person authorized to resolve specified complaints and may impose as part of the designation any conditions that the Minister considers appropriate. Therefore, if there is indeed a desire to have competent people in this respect, there is nothing in this bill to indicate that. There is no guarantee that these people will be evaluated or how they will be evaluated. The minister would simply make a decision. We know that decisions can be biased. I met with Air Canada representatives about this issue last week. I also understand their point of view. For them, having a significant backlog of complaints is harmful to their reputation. Even though Air Canada is experiencing its own issues, they also believe it is important to deal with these cases quickly with their customers.

The proposed arbitration system exists elsewhere, including in Europe. It is not a bad system. However, why did the minister not draw up a list of independent arbitrators whose qualifications could have been vetted through hearings before the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities? That was a key part of the Bloc's proposal. Why not simply remove division 17 of part 4 and have the matter reviewed by the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities? The minister rejected that proposal outright. Why not allow consumers to select their arbitrator from this list? At the very least, they would feel they had some agency in the process and were part of an impartial procedure. Furthermore, to ensure their independence, arbitrators should be paid by the government rather than by the airlines themselves. At the end of each year, based on the number of complaints filed against each carrier, the government could invoice the airline for reimbursement. This would create a degree of distance between the arbitrator and the airline.

This is precisely why we are proposing to remove all clauses relating to this division from the bill. It is not because arbitration is necessarily a bad idea, but because it is obviously poorly thought out.

I urge the government to revisit this division and introduce a separate bill on the subject. With buy-in from consumer advocacy groups, Air Canada, other airlines and other authorities, such a bill would ensure that we have a robust complaints mechanism that would work for everyone, including carriers and passengers.

This can happen if there is the political will to make it happen, and if that political will is brought to bear at the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. I would remind the House that, since April, we have been meeting in camera, bogged down in parliamentary procedure. As a new member of the committee, I am increasingly finding that its government members are completely lacking in good faith.

● (1100)

To understand the problem I am talking about, I would point members to an excellent editorial by Stéphanie Grammond that appeared in La Presse on October 26. The title says it all: “Bowing Down to the Airline Companies”. The author discusses the complaints system overhaul. I will read a few excerpts from the article. I could read it all, because it describes the context, which is crucial. The article starts with a fairly attention-grabbing introduction:

> Stephen Harper, I cast thee out! For all his Liberal credentials, it is remarkable how closely [the current Prime Minister] resembles former Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper on certain issues.

Obviously, I do not disagree with that assessment. Just look at the environment, labour unions or indigenous populations.

Ms. Grammond goes on to say that travellers will be the ones paying the price.

> The federal government is getting ready to transform the air passenger complaints system, which is riddled with problems.
>
> Flights cancelled or delayed, reservations over-booked, luggage lost, and the list goes on, leaving travellers on the hook when the airline refuses to compensate them.
>
> They can file a complaint with the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) under the Air Passenger Protection Regulations (APPR), which came into force in Canada in 2019.

Those regulations are fairly recent. They were introduced under the Liberals.

> However, because these regulations are “complex and ambiguous”, by Transport Canada's own admission, they are triggering a flood of litigation. Unable to keep up with the volume of cases, the CTA is buried under a backlog of 97,000 complaints.

We can all agree that there is a problem.

> As a result, customers have to wait two to three years before a decision is reached, which discourages people from asserting their rights.
>
> [Unfortunately] carriers are all too aware of that. They might be tempted to automatically reject compensation claims, especially since they do not have to pay any interest or penalties if the customer eventually wins their case before the CTA.

We can all agree on the following.

> This flawed system needs to be reformed once and for all, but the solution Ottawa is proposing is not the way to go.
>
> The federal government wants to give airlines the right to choose and pay for their own private arbitrator to settle disputes with their customers. It feels like Ottawa is putting the fox in charge of the henhouse.
>
> Curiously, the federal government's solution is modelled after a pilot project on private arbitration that Air Canada had announced back in April.

Is this a case of insider trading? One has to wonder.

> It almost seems as if the airline industry whispered instructions into Ottawa's ear.
>
> Too bad for the passengers!
>
> The Standing Senate Committee on Transport disagrees [with the government's position]. It believes that carriers should *not* have the right to choose the private company that handles complaints filed against them.
>
> This would raise "concerns regarding independence, impartiality and conflicts of interest", the committee stated in a report presented in early October.
>
> There are good reasons to be concerned, based on experience in the banking sector.
>
> In the 2010s, the banks had a bone to pick with the Ombudsman for Banking Services and Investments (OBSI). The Harper government allowed them to set up their own independent complaint-handling body.
>
> This controversial decision led to all sorts of problems. An investigation showed that the independent arbitrator was slower, less efficient, and less accessible to customers.
>
> Increasing the number of arbitrators made the system inconsistent. It scattered expertise and drove up costs. It also created confusion among consumers, who no longer knew who to turn to.

That is what we may end up repeating if we do not remove the provisions under division 17 of part 4 of the bill.

> Ultimately, Ottawa reversed course in 2024 by once again centralizing complaints at the OBSI.
>
> ...Ottawa is on the wrong track with this proposal, which it deliberately buried in an omnibus bill, Bill C-31. According to the Senate committee, which did not get the opportunity to hear from the Minister of Transport, this regrettable practice reduces parliamentary scrutiny and public debate.

On that note, I want to stress that the Bloc Québécois, with my colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, has put forward solutions, but those solutions have been ignored, and that is one of the major problems. Ultimately, passengers will probably be the ones who pay the price. The Bloc Québécois believes it is important to stand up for passengers.

● (1105)

[*English*]

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, let me start by expressing my respect for the member. Having served on committee with him for a number of years, I can say that we have always had good debates in good faith, and today is another chance to do that.

I disagree strongly with the member's statements in the House. The government is moving forward with changes to the air passenger rights regulations for the benefit of air travel passengers and is looking to resolve the backlog of complaints, which is in the order of 96,000 or 97,000 unresolved complaints.

The minister would be held accountable for that. Essentially, the minister is seeking the authority to be accountable for resolving those complaints in short order by using alternative dispute resolution firms. The minister would consult on designating those firms, put in place regulations to regulate those firms and hold air carriers and airlines accountable for paying compensation to air passengers who have not been compensated and have been waiting a long time. That is exactly what the legislation tries to do. It would also increase monetary penalties.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's skill as a debater. I like the tone he is setting for our exchanges. He wants them to be constructive. We think that being constructive in this context means deleting division 17 of part 4 and going back to the drawing board. I would like to point out that there is an advantage involved. The minister is taking away powers from the Canadian Transportation Agency and granting them to himself, but he is then transferring them to the governor in council and, ultimately, straight to the private sector. In this context, that could create a bias.

There is also the notion of confidentiality. The mandatory confidentiality requirements regarding air travel complaints are being removed. The maximum administrative penalty payable by corporations for certain violations of the Canada Transportation Act or its regulations is also being increased. Ultimately, if the balance of power is upset, it is the passenger or consumer who is likely to pay the price. It is true that the problem was examined and solutions were proposed, but they are not the right solutions. That is why the government needs to go back to the drawing board. We are offering to help.

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech.

As we have seen, Bill C-31 fails to address most of the needs of Quebeckers, such as locking in a 6% health transfer escalator and enhancing old age security for seniors aged 65 to 74. What does my colleague think about that?

Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île for his remarks and for his sensitivity to the issues he mentioned.

With the budget just around the corner, I have high hopes that the government will deliver solutions for Quebec. Since I was elected to Parliament, I have come to realize that solutions are far too often found for Ontario and western Canada, but never for Quebec. However, the health care crisis is becoming more acute with each passing day.

Over the coming years, I hope to see a Quebec government stand up and take on Ottawa, as we saw last week. That would get Ottawa to pay more attention to Quebec's demands. The first round is tomorrow. I am really looking forward to seeing the budget.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that is, quite frankly, not true. Whether it is the spring update budget or, I can anticipate, the budget coming out later this week, what we find is a budget that is fair and that addresses every region of the country, including the province of Quebec.

What we have seen are major developments, like the port of Churchill, worth well over $1 billion. We have seen a mining company, worth well over $1 billion, through the Major Projects Office. Let us think of the small businesses that will be enhanced, with 8,000-plus indirect jobs, because of the port of Montreal.

I wonder if the member would reflect on the many things the government has done. I do not have time to expand on them because of time limitations.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I would be happy to raise my voice to show that I am passionate as well.

The reality is that we can make a point-by-point comparison. Forestry companies receive subsidies to operate in Kapuskasing. A project like the one in Dumont Nickel has not yet been recognized, but a comparable project in Timmins, Ontario, has. There are countless examples where Ottawa does not recognize Quebec, and that is deeply problematic.

[*English*]

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 a pleasure to take part in today's debate on Bill C-31, the budget 2025 implementation act, no. 2.

To dispel some of the myths that have been going around the House this morning, budget implementation acts are almost always omnibus, and they are almost always followed by a second BIA. It is very common for governments to have multiple technical changes that have to be consulted on after a budget comes out and that are split between two different BIAs. It is very common. It is not a big surprise. It is not the government dragging its feet, as the Conservatives have suggested. It is quite the contrary.

As we all know, budget 2026 is only a few days away. While we all will find out the details of the next federal budget in due course, I feel very confident in saying in the House that it will build on our plan to create a stronger and more resilient Canadian economy. It is a plan that, in many ways, was first shaped by budget 2025.

In budget 2025, our government laid out a clear plan to build a stronger Canada. Since then, we have been moving very quickly to turn that plan into action. We are building the infrastructure, the homes and the industries that will grow our economy and create lasting prosperity. We can think of energy, critical minerals, advanced manufacturing, AI, defence, quantum and more.

We are empowering Canadians as well with better careers and a more affordable life. We can think of cutting income tax for 22 million Canadians, cutting taxes on new home purchases, suspending the fuel excise tax, and now extending that, as well as cutting taxes on new business investment. Those are tangible examples.

We are protecting our communities, our borders and our way of life, which we value so deeply here in Canada. We can think of jail and sentencing reform, the stronger borders act, protecting victims and combatting hate legislation. All of those things have been advanced by our government over the past 18 months.

Bill C-31 builds on this momentum by introducing measures to make life more affordable and build a fairer, more integrated and more self-reliant economy, one that creates lasting value for Canadians and stays resilient to global shocks, which we know are coming up more furiously and frequently. Most importantly, it would ensure that government support reaches those who need it most.

To begin, I would like to take a moment to speak to several key measures in this important legislation that demonstrate our government's commitment to fairness, economic resilience and opportunity for Canadians at every stage of life.

Our government knows that Canada is strongest when we look after one another and ensure that everyone has a fair chance to succeed. That is why we are taking action to make everyday life more affordable. In January, the government announced the new groceries and essentials benefit to put more money back in the pockets of Canadians. The benefit is helping more than 12 million low- and modest-income Canadians afford everyday essentials. It replaced the existing GST credit while providing more generous support. First, we boosted it by 25% for five years, starting in July 2026. Then we boosted it again for one year, a one-time payment, for this year, which is equivalent to a 50% increase to the current benefit. Together, these enhancements will provide substantial support to those most affected by rising food prices and essentials.

For example, a person living alone who is eligible for the GST credit could previously receive a maximum of $543. With the June 2026 one-time payment and the 25% increase combined, that person will receive approximately $950 total, which is $400 more than they would have previously received. For a couple with two children, total support will increase from about $1,086 to $1,890, which is an $800-plus increase to that benefit and a significant support to Canadians. It is not the only thing we are doing, of course. It is one of a number of affordability measures, but it is significant support. These increases will make a meaningful difference for households facing higher costs. The benefit is also indexed to inflation, ensuring that payments rise each year with the cost of living.

We are taking these steps, because helping Canadians afford everyday essentials is the right thing to do. The groceries and essentials benefit is part of a broader package of measures to ease grocery cost pressures across Canada. Canada's first-ever national food security strategy will address food insecurity, support producers and strengthen our supply chains to help lower prices for Canadians.

● (1115)

This strategy is backed by $3.2 billion in investments over 10 years, and it includes a $1-billion investment in food infrastructure, including food terminals and food hubs, to help independent grocers buy and move competitively priced products more easily. This strategy also includes a $1-billion investment fund through Farm Credit Canada and a $150-million food security fund to help Canadian businesses grow, produce and process more food in Canada. A further $750 million would go to expanding year-round Canadian fruit and vegetable production in climate-controlled agriculture.

These measures would help address some of the root causes of food insecurity in our country by strengthening domestic food production and improving access to affordable, nutritious food.

Let me talk for a moment about the fact that the government is aware that millions of lower-income Canadians do not file their taxes, either because they do not have the resources to do so or because their incomes are too low to owe any taxes at all. This means that people who most need benefits often do not receive them, causing some Canadians to miss out on things like the Canada groceries and essentials benefit, the Canada child benefit or the Canada's worker benefit, along with many others they would be entitled to.

That is why Bill C-31 proposes to allow the CRA to file a tax return on behalf of certain eligible individuals with lower incomes in simple tax situations who do not owe any taxes and do not file them themselves. This measure would ensure that support reaches those who need it most. When Canadians keep more of their hard-earned money, they can benefit better, and we are able to better support their families, invest in their communities and build the future that we all want to see.

Similarly, the Government of Canada recognizes the importance of creating opportunities through education. Bill C-31 proposes to implement consequential changes to the tax rules that apply to registered education savings plans to support the implementation of automatic enrolment in the Canada learning bond. The Canada learning bond provides direct federal contributions to help children from low- and modest-income families build savings for post-secondary education, yet too many eligible families miss out, not because they choose to, but because of administrative and awareness barriers. Auto-enrolment was introduced because it would remove those barriers. By automatically enrolling eligible children, we would ensure that support reaches those it is intended to help early in life when it can make the greatest difference.

Another measure in Bill C-31, among a number of others that I could focus on, is one that I am particularly passionate about that would help our businesses across the country. It is the productivity superdeduction, which was announced in budget 2025. It is a deduction for businesses on new business investment in a number of different categories. This measure would be extended, through BIA 2, to real estate assets that are purchased for the purposes of manufacturing and processing.

From time to time in the House, we have all asked why Canada does not take some of its raw material and process it here at home. That is something we can do. We could build the capacity to do that here at home to get higher value for our industries, create more jobs and ensure that we are not shipping our raw goods and materials to other countries that process it and then ship it back to us for us to buy it at a premium. Instead, we could capture more of that value in the supply chain here in Canada if we were to develop the capacity to manufacture and process more of those goods here in Canada.

That is exactly what this measure would do. It would support businesses out there that, say, have money they are putting away for their taxes at the end of the year. With this measure, they could immediately expense a purchase of a real estate asset to expand their operations to process or manufacture more goods here in Canada. That would be significant support at a time when uncertainty is at an all-time high.

In closing, Bill C-31 reflects our government's focus on fairness, modernization and resilience. Together, these measures advance a single vision for the Canadian economy, one rooted in confidence in Canadians and the belief that generational investments today can build lasting prosperity for tomorrow.

● (1120)

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Madam Speaker, most recently, according to Statistics Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador's inflation rate was 4.7%, compared with 3.1% nationally. Fuel prices increased 78.6% in one year, and transportation costs increased by 11.6%.

I am curious. How does the member square those statistics with the Prime Minister's claim that affordability is the best that it has been in a decade?

Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, I know that members opposite every day in the House like to blame the government for inflation. Inflation is not controlled by the government. It is not controlled by the Bank of Canada. The stats will show this. We have the Governor of the Bank of Canada coming today, and he will confirm, as the Bank of Canada did in its recent monetary policy report, that inflation in Canada is being driven by oil price shocks from the Strait of Hormuz and the Iran war.

The member opposite is worried, as am I, about families who are struggling with affordability, but unlike her and her caucus, who vote against every single affordability measure, we are putting things on the table for Canadians that provide real support. The groceries and essentials benefit is just one that I mentioned. Automated tax filing is another that I mentioned, which is actually relevant for Bill C-31, but there is a whole host of other measures, such as an income tax cut, cuts on taxes on fuel, new business investment and more.

● (1125)

[*Translation*]

Marilène Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague just said he is concerned about affordability and the cost of living for people. The Bloc Québécois has been talking about employment insurance reform for years, and we asked that this measure be included in the budget update. When will the government propose a reform?

Some people in my riding will still have to deal with the spring gap. Nothing has changed since the Axworthy reform. I believe these people who work in seasonal industries have the right to employment insurance that will cover their needs. By Christmas or early January, some of them will have nothing left to put on the table.

I would like to know why the government is doing absolutely nothing about this, even though it has been promising to reform EI since 2015.

[*English*]

Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, with a great deal of respect, I just have to say to the member opposite that it is not true that the government has done nothing. I have given specific, tangible examples. I know they are making a real difference. I have talked to the families in my riding of Whitby. These measures are for all of Canada. They are all Canadian.

We not only provided an income tax cut, but also cut the excise tax on fuel. We have cut taxes on new home purchases. We have cut taxes on new business investment. We have offered additional federal benefits, including the groceries and essentials benefit, as I indicated in my speech, which provides significant support to families across the country. We are targeting those supports to those who are most impacted by those inflationary pressures.

This is what a responsible government does; it steps up to help people when they need it most.

Eric St-Pierre (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I spent the summer knocking on doors and speaking to a lot of seniors, some youth and a lot of middle-class folks. What I heard was that there are challenges around income tax filing. It is loud and clear that there are some challenges there, but there are also a lot of opportunities.

I am curious if I can hear from the member about the impact of automatic tax filing for the fine citizens of Whitby.

Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, in my riding, for a number of years, as I am sure many of us have done, we have hosted free tax clinics that offer support for simple tax filings to residents, and they have been quite successful. Actually, they have been oversubscribed to significantly.

Now, in Bill C-31, the federal government would be doing this at scale, offering solutions for simple tax filing, not only for automatic filing, which is different, but also for another support that would essentially allow simple tax filings to be filled out so taxpayers can check and submit them themselves. We would be significantly streamlining that process. The idea here is to make sure people who would not otherwise get access to their benefits get access to them through virtue of making the process a lot simpler to file their taxes.

It is a great initiative. It would help millions of Canadians, and I am very, very happy to say that we would be able to target the support in my riding to maybe slightly more complex tax filing situations in the future, because many of the people we have served in the past would be taken care of by this initiative.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to address Bill C-31, the budget implementation bill. It is important, at the very beginning, that we recognize Bill C-31 was put in place to, in essence, bring forward the government's agenda, making sure that we have the finances to deliver for Canadians.

Just over a year ago, about 16 or 17 months ago, Canadians went to the polls and elected a new Prime Minister, a Prime Minister who had huge ambitions of delivering for Canadians in every region of the country. Coming out of the last election, all of us have been very much aware of what those issues are. There was a great deal of concern with regard to the issue of Trump tariffs and trade. I have made reference to that in the past.

The Prime Minister has made a very clear commitment to Canadians that we want to deal with Canadian sovereignty in different ways. The budget implementation legislation, much like the budget itself, is how we deal with the issues that the Prime Minister took out of the election.

Let me give some tangible examples. Since the last election, we have had, I believe, over 24 trade and security agreements with nations beyond the U.S., countries such as England, Indonesia and many others. When I think of the trade file, Canada is the only G7 country that has a trade agreement with all G7 countries, and we are looking at expanding that. I am hoping that later this year we will see trade agreements between Canada and the Philippines and between Canada and India. We will also continue to pursue expanding the relationship between Canada and the European Union.

Let us talk about a specific example. I would like to highlight the pork industry, which is very much alive and well in three provinces in Canada: Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba. If I was to focus on the province of Manitoba and on creating job opportunities and enhancing export opportunities that go beyond the Canada-U.S. border, I would highlight the company HyLife. HyLife employs hundreds of Manitobans in the community of Neepawa, bringing life back to Neepawa in many different ways. As a company, 90% of its product is sold to Asia, in particular to countries like Japan. That is the type of international trade opportunity that allows Canada to grow.

This is the type of company that we could give examples of in every region of our country. When the Prime Minister, the Minister of Industry, the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of International Trade and, to a lesser extent, the Minister of Immigration talk about trade opportunities, it excites all members of the government caucus, because we see the reality and recognize that Canada is very much dependent on trade. That is just one file in a much larger picture.

We can talk about investments and building big projects. Earlier, a Bloc member was trying to give the false impression that Canada neglects the province of Quebec. Nothing could be further from the truth. I gave the example of the port of Montreal in the province of Quebec. That is well over three billion dollars' worth of investments. We are talking about thousands of indirect and direct jobs as a result of major projects and investments.

● (1130)

Over the next five years, we are going to see close to half a trillion dollars in major projects, in co-operation with provinces, municipalities, indigenous leaders and many other stakeholders. That is very real. It is tangible. Back in September, the Prime Minister held a summit, the first of its kind, where we invited investors from around the world to come to Toronto. Historic amounts of money were being looked at to invest in Canada, half a trillion dollars, which is unheard of in Canadian history. These are real, tangible investments.

When we talk about budgets and the implementation of the government agenda, we need to look at the larger picture. That is why it is being forecast that Canada will have the second-highest growth in the G7 this year. We are not settling for that. Through the Prime Minister and this government, we are aiming to make Canada the strongest and healthiest economy in the G7. That goal is achievable. All one needs to do is look at the bigger picture and what the government is putting forward. That flowed from listening to what Canadians were asking not only of this Prime Minister, but of all members of the House. Every Liberal member of caucus understands that and continues to build and work toward a stronger and healthier economy because it matters.

Along with that, on the issue of affordability, we put in place programs that are meant and designed to assist real people in our constituencies. Last Friday, I made reference to the national school food program, which feeds 400,000 children in schools across every region of our nation. I have talked about the dental program. Imagine a senior on a fixed income being provided the opportunity to get dental services. Every member has constituents who have benefited immensely by that. When I say “constituents”, I am talking about hundreds of constituents in every riding across the country.

We can look at the turmoil from Trump tariffs and trade. Even on the unemployment and employment issue, there has been a net gain of over 150,000 jobs in Canada since the last federal election. Some may be able to point to some months being lower than other months and some months having higher employment numbers, but the bottom line is that it is a net gain. People need to appreciate the situation we are in around the world, with a war in the Middle East and what is taking place in Russia and Ukraine, the illegal occupation. We are still able to deliver.

I look at the minister responsible for crime. We have brought forward numerous bills to deal with making our communities safer. We are talking about a generational number of pieces of legislation to deal with that. All of this is being done through collaborative federalism, led by a Prime Minister who understands that we need to work with people in order to make things happen.

There are so many things that one can talk about. Earlier, we had a critic talking about the military. Within six or eight months, we met the target of spending 2% of GDP on military expenses. The Conservatives can try to justify it whatever way they want, but at the end of the day, our military personnel got pay increases. We now have a procurement process being put into place that is very solid and will ensure more accountability and transparency.

I have run out of time. There is so much more I could talk about. I look forward to any questions.

● (1135)

Burton Bailey (Red Deer, CPC): Madam Speaker, Bill C-31 is a massive bill of 352 pages that buries major policy changes behind hundreds of pages. Does the member still stand by the Liberal promise in 2015, which he was here for, to end the use of massive bills that prevent Parliament from proper review and debate, or is this just another political flip-flop that he expects Canadians to believe?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that since the last election, we have had a very long, healthy, substantive legislative agenda. We are talking about 40 pieces of legislation.

The type of legislation we are bringing forward affects the lives of Canadians every day. I made reference, for example, to the legislative agenda dealing with crime. We had a series of budgetary implementation bills, along with other pieces of legislation that would put in place things like Crown corporations, ensuring that there will be more transparency and accountability. There is a move toward getting a balance in our operating budget. We will find many other—

● (1140)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): We need to go to other questions.

The hon. member for Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is always riveting to hear my colleague speak in the House and witness his vibrant spirit and passion after all these years. We can tell that he is just as committed and engaged as ever.

My question is fairly straightforward. One thing is conspicuous by its absence from the bill currently under discussion and from the amendments under debate, and that is seniors. The seniors who built the Quebec and Canada of today are completely absent from Bill C-31, yet they are facing an injustice, because retirees aged 65 to 74 have not received a 10% increase in their old age security.

Frankly, I would like to hear the parliamentary secretary give a different answer than "They got dental care". What do we tell these seniors, who are not getting as much OAS as seniors 75 and older even though they need it too?

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, like the member, I very much care about our seniors.

The government has brought forward a number of initiatives to support seniors. For example, there are a number of affordability measures, such as the groceries and essentials benefit and the way in which we have enhanced it over the last 18 months. One of the biggest beneficiaries is our senior population. It is a significant amount of money we are talking about, going into hundreds of millions of dollars. Also, we are reinforcing the importance of the New Horizons program, making sure that senior activities are being programmed. One could talk about the excise tax as well, which has dropped the price of gasoline. That increases opportunities for travel for seniors, whether they travel on a bus or have their own vehicle.

There are always ways that we can look at additional things. I, for one, am always open to good ideas on how we can be more supportive of our seniors.

Eric St-Pierre (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to wish you a great day on this special day.

I would ask my colleague from Winnipeg North to bring Bill C-31 back home. I am less familiar with Manitoba. I am curious how Bill C-31 could impact the fine citizens of Manitoba, and specifically those of Winnipeg North.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I do not want more time, but I wish you a very happy birthday. If you gave me the time, I would attempt singing part of it. The French-language version of happy birthday is so much nicer to hear than the English. Having said that, enjoy your day.

There are lots of wonderful things in the budget implementation bill. It would take me a great deal of time to go into the details. I like many of the affordability measures. I think the residents of Winnipeg North would benefit from them.

[*Translation*]

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in this debate today and to celebrate your birthday. I wish you a happy birthday today, November 3. I would also like to congratulate my niece, Anne-Audrey, who is also celebrating her birthday today. She was born on November 3, 1988, and was my parents' first granddaughter and first grandchild. Obviously, it was a momentous occasion. I remember it like it was yesterday. I wish a happy birthday to Anne-Audrey and to everyone else born on November 3.

What we are witnessing today is rather peculiar. The bill we are debating right now, which is at the report stage following a committee study, deals with the implementation of tax measures. We are just hours away from the next budget being tabled, yet we are still debating the previous budget. I think that my colleagues on the government side, who are now in charge of leading Canada with a majority secured due to floor crossers, should perhaps do a better job of adjusting their parliamentary agenda.

Nevertheless, this give us an opportunity to debate Canada's current fiscal situation and its future prospects. I would like begin by reminding the House of the commitments that we made and that we want the government to make when it tables its budget in a few hours, which basically boil down to leaving more money in the pockets of Canadian taxpayers. Canadian taxpayers know how to manage their own money better than the government, which takes their money and doles it out to those it deems to be the most deserving. That is not the right approach. Our Conservative approach involves lower taxes and more money in Canadians' pockets. That way Canadians can make their own choices, rather than the government doing it for them. That is our vision.

The same goes for the management of public funds. If the government does not have the money to cover all of its spending, then what happens? We end up with deficits and debt. What is debt? Debt is a bill that we are passing on to our children, our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren, who have not been born yet, but who will have to pay because the public finances are being mismanaged today. I will come back to this a little later.

Let us review the principles that guide Conservatives when making budget choices. Leaving more money in people's pockets means lowering taxes. According to a recent report from the Governor of the Bank of Canada, inflation is being driven in part by rising transportation costs. Obviously, the best way to help bring those costs down is to eliminate taxes. That is what we proposed a few months ago. The government borrowed elements of the Conservative proposal. We hope that it will once again draw on our ideas but that this time, it will implement them properly and in full for Canadian families by eliminating all federal taxes on gas and diesel, suspending the GST on fuel all the way until next summer, and putting more money into the pockets of Canadians, who will put it to good use. The principle is sound, as evidenced by the fact that the Liberal government has already drawn inspiration from it. We believe that the government should go even further and implement our proposal to eliminate federal fuel taxes in its entirety.

Now, the government also needs to be vigilant when it comes to spending taxpayers' money left, right and centre. We must always bear in mind that there is a big difference between a subsidy and a tax credit. With a subsidy, the government takes money from all Canadian workers and businesses, through taxes and the GST, and redistributes it to the people it chooses. It is the government that picks the winners. That is what a subsidy is. Sometimes it can work. Too often, it does not. That is why we believe that the best way to help the economy is to cut taxes and also to reduce subsidies, because as our leader often says, corporate welfare has no place in Canada.

When it comes to cutting unnecessary spending, consultants are still one of the areas that come to mind. It is shocking that the number of public service employees has increased while contracts awarded to consultants have more than doubled. It should be one or the other, not both. The government has also committed to a massive project, the Alto high-speed train, that could cost as much as $100 billion. We are not the ones saying this; it is the Parliamentary Budget Officer. She says the cost could climb to $100 billion, if not more.

● (1145)

That said, I am not opposed to this type of project in principle, but we still need to know where we are headed, and right now we are headed in entirely the wrong direction. Worse still, the government has gotten it wrong from the very beginning of this project. It began by expropriating land in Mirabel, which is arguably the region of Canada that is the most sensitive on the subject of expropriation.

Do not forget that, for three years, the current leaders led Canadians to believe that this would be a high-frequency rail project. Then, only days before leaving office, the outgoing prime minister announced that it would instead be a high-speed rail project. They completely turned this project on its head. Anyone with even a basic understanding of rail infrastructure knows that the difference between high-frequency rail and high-speed rail goes far beyond a few different letters in the names. There is a world of difference, and the cost is different, too.

We hope that the government and the Prime Minister, who has committed to maintaining both the debt-to-GDP ratio and the deficit-to-GDP ratio at acceptable levels, will act on our request, particularly as the Prime Minister himself once raised this issue.

This leads me to compare the situation as it stood 11 years ago and the situation as it stands today. Why am I talking about the situation 11 years ago? It is because, yes, 11 years and a few days ago, an election was held that brought the Liberals to power. What kind of financial situation is Canada in after 11 years of Liberal governance? I would remind members that there was no deficit and a $1.4-billion surplus in 2015. The deficit is now somewhere between $78 billion and $80 billion. I unfortunately have to add that, just two years ago, the deficit was expected to be around $40 billion, which was unbelievable at the time. Now, 18 months later, the deficit has doubled. I say this with all due respect, because anyone who sits in the House deserves respect, but who would have thought that the Prime Minister, who is recognized around the globe as a world-class banker, would perform worse than the drama teacher? That is the reality.

Everyone thought Justin Trudeau was an irresponsible steward of public funds. Now this internationally renowned banker is doing even worse than Mr. Trudeau, with a deficit that is twice as large. Then there is the debt. Eleven years ago, the debt stood at roughly $616 billion. That was already high, obviously, but today it has climbed to $1,500 billion, pushing it into trillion territory. The debt now stands at $1.5 trillion. Those are the kinds of numbers that would have Captain Haddock shouting “billions of bilious blue blistering barnacles”, but in our case, it would be trillions. That is how big the debt is now. The problem is that debt is a bill that we pass on to our great-grandchildren. The government takes pride in having a Prime Minister with an outstanding international reputation when it comes to finance, yet Canadians are seeing little benefit from that experience.

In closing, I have a question for the Canadians who are tuning in: Has their financial situation improved? Over the past 18 months, when Canadians shop at the grocery store, do they feel they are getting enough for their money? What about those who have children and who want to buy a home? They are facing higher interest rates than before, especially since the Bank of Canada recently announced that inflation and the key interest rate will go up. We are talking about 3% inflation. That is my question for the Canadians tuning in: Do they feel their financial situation has improved? When they go to the market, when they are looking to buy a home or when they are shopping, do they feel they are getting more for their money?

I know very well that most of those Canadians, if not the majority or all Canadians, will reply that, no, their situation has not improved. That is why we want the government to change course with the upcoming budget.

● (1150)

Eric St-Pierre (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed the opposition member's speech. He talked about affordability, a subject that we hear about a lot. When I knock on doors in Honoré-Mercier, that is what people are talking to me about.

However, I am rather surprised, because the member is talking about affordability but voting against affordability programs. I am thinking of Canada's national school food program, which benefits at least 2,000 schools in Quebec, including schools in my colleague's riding of Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk. I am wondering how many schools in Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk are benefiting from the national school food program.

Why are the Conservatives voting against a good school food program?

● (1155)

Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, it is because these programs are not working. That is the problem. If they were working, we would know.

The result of these programs is that there are now twice as many Canadians turning to food banks as there were five years ago. Just last week, I spoke in the House about the situation in Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk and about Amélie et Frédérick, a food bank on Bastien Boulevard in the Neufchâtel area.

Today, people are going to food banks for help, whereas five years ago, those same people were going there to donate. All of the wonderful programs that the Liberals have announced, and that they keep reminding us about with numbers like 1,883 people in this or that riding, are not working.

If they were working, we would know.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy listening to my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk. I think that he is eloquent and experienced. At the end of his speech, he asked a good question: Does anyone feel they are better off?

In my riding, 22% of the population is seniors 65 and over. Every time I go out in my riding, they talk to me about how unfair it is that seniors 65 to 74 are treated differently from those 75 and over. My bill, Bill C-261, will fix that injustice and stop the discrimination between the two groups of seniors.

Can the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk tell me whether he will support Bill C-261 and, more importantly, whether he thinks that seniors deserve to regain their purchasing power?

Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, one of the most disrespectful things that Mr. Trudeau's government did was to divide seniors, and this has not been challenged by the current Prime Minister's government.

I have always believed that the first duty of any government, and particularly of its leader, is to unite Canadians. In this case, not only did the government fail to unite them, but it actually divided them. It drew a distinction between younger seniors and older seniors.

I could never have imagined a government acting in such a clumsy, insulting and divisive way. The government members should visit private retirement residences and nursing homes and talk to the seniors who built the wealth that Canada enjoys today. They should tell them to their faces that some of them are first-class seniors and others are second-class seniors.

No one is happy about that.

[*English*]

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his excellent speech. I always love to listen to him in this House.

One of the things he talked about in his speech was our Conservative plan to cut all taxes on gas and diesel. I wonder if he would like to take the opportunity, particularly with respect to diesel, to expand on why that means more to Canadians, not just with respect to what they pay at the pump, but the overall cost of goods, and why that is so important to Canadians and the cost of living crisis we have right now.

Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I want to pay all of my respects to my colleague from Newfoundland and Labrador. She is one of the key players we have on this side of the House, I would say even in the House itself, since the last election.

The point is, yes, it is important to cut all taxes on gas and diesel. The Governor of the Bank of Canada published a report a few days ago highlighting the fact that, unfortunately, there will be a rise in inflation by 3.5% for a full year. What is that based on? Principally, it is because of the cost of transportation. By the way, when we talk about transportation right now, we are talking about gas and diesel. That is why we urge the government to follow our recommendation and cancel those kinds of taxes.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know my friend was not around when Stephen Harper increased the age of retirement from 65 to 67. However, we did reverse that change, which is important. I am sure he would agree that there is a difference between a senior who is 75 versus 65 with respect to medical and so many—

● (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk has time for a very brief response.

Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, yes, I remember pretty well the increase from age 65 to age 67. By the way, Prime Minister Harper at the time just followed the observations of Bill Morneau, who became, after that, the finance minister under Justin Trudeau—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Humber River—Black Creek.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do enjoy listening to my colleagues speaking in the House.

It is my pleasure to take part in today's debate on Bill C-31, the budget 2025 implementation act, no. 2.

As we all know, budget 2026 is only a few days away. While we will all find out the details of the next federal budget in due course, I feel confident saying it would build upon our plan to create a stronger and more resilient Canadian economy, a plan that, in many ways, was first shaped via budget 2025.

In budget 2025, our government laid out a clear plan to build a stronger Canada, and since then, we have been moving quickly to turn that plan into action. We are building the infrastructure, the homes and the industries that will grow our economy and create lasting prosperity. We are empowering Canadians with better careers and a more affordable life. We are protecting our communities, our borders and the way of life we value so deeply.

Bill C-31 would build on this momentum by introducing measures to make life more affordable and to build a fairer, more integrated and more self-reliant economy, one that creates lasting value for Canadians and stays resilient to the global shocks we are experiencing now. Most importantly, it would ensure that government support reaches the people who need it most.

I would like to take a moment to speak to several key measures in this important legislation that demonstrate our government's commitment to fairness, economic resilience and opportunity for Canadians at every stage of their life. Our government knows that Canada is strongest when we look after one another and ensure that everyone has a fair chance to succeed, especially the people in Humber River—Black Creek. That is why we are taking action to make everyday life more affordable.

In January, the government announced the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit to put more money back into Canadians' pockets. The benefit is helping more than 12 million low- and modest-income Canadians afford everyday essentials. It replaces the existing GST credit while providing more generous support. First, we increased it by 25% for five years, starting in July 2026. Second, we added a one-time payment for this year, equivalent to a 50% increase in the current benefit. Together these enhancements will provide substantial support to the people most affected by rising food prices, especially in my riding.

For example, a person living alone who is eligible for the GST credit could previously receive a maximum of $543 for 2026-27. With the June 2026 one-time payment and the 25% increase for 2026-27 combined, that person will receive approximately $950 in total. For a couple with two children, total support will increase from $1,086 to $1,890. These increases will make a meaningful difference for households facing higher food costs. The benefit is also indexed to inflation, ensuring that payments will rise each year with the cost of living.

We are taking these steps because helping Canadians afford everyday essentials is the right thing to do. The Canadian groceries and essentials benefit is part of a broader package of measures to ease grocery cost pressures all across Canada.

Canada's first-ever national food security strategy will address food insecurity, support producers and strengthen supply chains to help lower prices for Canadians. The strategy also includes a $1-billion investment fund through Farm Credit Canada and a $150-million food security fund to help Canadian businesses grow, produce and process more food in Canada. A further $750 million will go to expand year-round Canadian fruit and vegetable production. These measures will address the root causes of food insecurity by strengthening domestic food production and improving access to affordable, nutritious food.

● (1205)

However, the government is aware that millions of lower-income Canadians do not file their income taxes, either because they do not have the resources to do so or because their income is too low to owe taxes. My office hosts income tax clinics every year, and we have three weeks of people steadily coming in. If people are not filing their taxes, they miss out on the benefits often. It causes some Canadians to miss out on the Canada groceries and essentials benefit, the Canada child benefit and the Canada workers benefit. These are all benefits they are entitled to, but they must file their income tax return in the spring of the year in order to receive them.

That is why Bill C-31 proposes to allow the CRA to file a tax return on behalf of certain eligible individuals with lower incomes and with simple tax situations who do not owe tax and do not file their own taxes. This measure would ensure that support reaches the people who need it most. When Canadians keep more of the money they earn, they can better support their family, invest in their community and build the future they want.

Similarly, the government recognizes the importance of creating opportunities through education. Bill C-31 proposes to implement consequential changes to the tax rules that apply to registered education savings plans to support the implementation of automatic enrolment in the Canada learning bond.

The Canada learning bond provides direct federal contributions to help children from low- and modest-income families build savings for post-secondary education. Too many eligible families miss out, not because they choose to but because of administrative and awareness barriers. Automatic enrolment was introduced because it removes those barriers. By automatically enrolling eligible children, we ensure that support reaches the people it is intended to help, early in life when it can make the greatest difference, when they are ready to go to post-secondary education.

Finally, today's legislation would improve access to justice by making it easier and less costly for taxpayers to resolve disputes through the Tax Court of Canada's informal procedure, while providing tools to address unlicensed and misleading insolvency practices.

In closing, Bill C-31 reflects our government's focus on fairness, modernization and resilience. Together, these measures would advance a single vision for the Canadian economy, one rooted in confidence in Canadians and the belief that generational investments today will build lasting prosperity for tomorrow.

Our plan is clear: build one strong Canadian economy, invest boldly in nation-building infrastructure, put more money back in Canadians' pockets and protect our country's sovereignty and future. The budget 2025 implementation act, no. 2, is more than legislation. It would deliver on our commitment to remove paperwork that prevents vulnerable Canadians from receiving the money they are owed. This is our moment to build Canada strong, and every measure in the bill would move us toward that goal. Canadians expect and deserve absolutely nothing less.

Burton Bailey (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after years of budget deficits that keep growing under the Liberal government, Bill C-31 is another 300-page bill full of Liberal promises that Canadians cannot trust.

Does the member agree that another massive bill cannot wipe away a decade of Liberal failures on affordability?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I have been part of the Liberal Government of Canada for 26 years now. I am very proud of the different programs we have done and the help we have given to many Canadians, especially my constituents in Humber River—Black Creek, who have reaped the benefit of many of these things. Many of the young people I see now at York University and U of T are able to go there because of support from the government in helping their parents be able to save money, and also with student loans and so on, so they can go on to be very successful adults in their future life.

● (1210)

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we know that Bill C-31 fails to address many of the most urgent needs identified by the Bloc Québécois. One really important measure would be to lock in a 6% health transfer escalator, which would amount to $14 billion over five years. We will see if that is in the next budget.

At present, the government has set the escalator at 5%, but if the annual increase is not prescribed, it will drop back to 3%. That would be catastrophic for the health care systems in Quebec and the provinces. We know that, over the decades, the federal share of funding has fallen from 50% to 22%. We want it to be restored to 35%.

[*English*]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, we have a budget coming up at 4 o'clock this Thursday, and there will be a lot of very exciting and much-needed investments that will be outlined through the budget process, so I encourage my colleague to look forward to Thursday at 4 p.m. to hear what our Minister of Finance and our Prime Minister deliver in that budget.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could get my colleague's reflections or thoughts in regard to the fact that Canada has the lowest net debt to GDP in the G7. We have great fiscal capacity, and by using that fiscal capacity, we are able to build a stronger and healthier Canada, a Canada that works for all. I am wondering if the member could provide her perspective on why it is so important that we continue to work diligently on building that stronger economy.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is never absent for finding the words that need to be said in the House.

I think the fact that we have that fiscal capacity is the reason we are able to invest so much money into, as an example, Farm Credit Canada. I met with the Canadian organic group this morning, and we are helping all these different businesses to be able to expand and grow. Organics take up only 25% of the market, yet there is a need for them to grow. Investments that I hope are going to be in Thursday's budget would invest more into increasing the growth of more organics right here in Canada so we do not have to reach outside our domestic portfolio to receive the good organic food we want.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, this week is very exciting because of the fact that there will be a budget coming out. Does the member have any reflections on why it is so important that we continue on in the same stream we have been taking since the last election, when we elected a new Prime Minister?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, we are investing in Canadians. We are helping businesses throughout Canada to expand and to diversify, for Canada to truly come to a level of maturity with the leadership that is being shown now through our Prime Minister, our Minister of Finance and all members of the House who are working to make Canada strong and to build strong.

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me begin with a word about fog. Storms can be dangerous at sea, but fog can be just as deadly, and sometimes even worse. In a fog, one cannot see the shore and other ships. Let us explore Bill C-31, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget, specifically division 16. At more than 330 pages, a bill this size is its own fog bank. Lost inside it is division 16, which would create the Defence Investment Agency and would rewrite the Defence Production Act.

I navigated warships for many years, so let me help guide us through this fog. I speak for the sailors of CFB Esquimalt and CFB Halifax, two ports that I am very familiar with. I speak for the veterans on Vancouver Island, for the workers who build and repair our ships, for the families of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford and for all Canadians whose tax dollars pay for the defence of Canada. I want every ship to get home safely, and I want Canada's defence procurement to be efficient and effective and meet the operational requirements Canada now faces.

I served this country, and the defence of Canada matters to me as much as it does to every Canadian. Procurement is how that defence gets built. A ship that gets home safely depends on a system that gets the right equipment. I do not believe this bill would make that happen. I am worried that a bill like this is much like a ship lost in the fog without a radar, so let me describe that fog.

Division 16 would put the Defence Investment Agency into law. It is the government's second design for the agency, and while this bill has not yet passed, there is already a third design before this House, Bill C-40. There are two bills, one agency and three versions. In fog, the danger is not only the rocks but other ships. When too many vessels are in the same water, none of them is sure where the others are. There are two bills in this fog and three different designs of the same agency, all in less than a year. The government will say it is building on what came before, but it is not. These designs do not build on each other. They collide with each other.

Under Bill C-31, the agency would stand alone and answer to a minister, with the secretary of state somewhere in the chain. Under Bill C-40, it would become a Crown corporation with a new associate minister on top, and who they answer to is unclear. Bill C-31 would keep Treasury Board rules and report to Parliament, and under Bill C-40, it would be exempt from many of those rules. Under Bill C-31, the minister could take over a company's board. Under Bill C-40, the language would change, adding power and stripping accountability. Bill C-40 is bearing down on Bill C-31, and Bill C-31 has barely been afloat. Already, division 16 is obsolete.

Who is in command? Bill C-40 would create a new associate minister, and the agency would do as the minister directs. Above that sits two ministers in the Prime Minister's Office, and who reports to whom is lost in the fog. There would be too much power in one person's hand over too much money, with almost no accountability beyond a single annual report. A government that keeps redesigning its own agencies has lost its rudder and is chasing its own tail.

By trade, I was a navigating officer, so let me use a phrase every sailor knows: “standing into danger”. That is exactly what is happening here. The greater threat is not this bill but Bill C-40, which would offer even less accountability, and here is why. When the government makes a major procurement, it normally comes from a competition. Companies bid, and the best offer that meets operational requirements should win. That protects the taxpayer and fairness, and it provides the best equipment for Canada.

A sole-source contract is the exception. There are times when a sole-source contract is required. Operational needs call for it, and I do not argue otherwise, but the sole-source decision must be answerable to Parliament. This bill would provide little accountability back to Parliament, and Bill C-40 would provide almost none. Bill C-40 would give the minister 13 grounds for sole-sourcing and no duty to report on any individual contract, with only one annual report for billions of dollars. Our allies do not do it this way. In the United Kingdom, an independent regulator oversees the pricing of single-source contracts. In the United States, a sole-source contract must be justified in writing and made public. Bill C-40 would ask Canadians to accept less.

● (1215)

Both bills would let the minister exclude a company from competing on national security grounds without explaining why. Under Bill C-40, the agency would have to do as the new associate minister directs. It is “must”, not “may”. Both would allow up to $1 billion from the consolidated revenue fund, with nothing in either bill noting how often, by whom or what conditions. Normally, Parliament approves how that money is spent. That approval is how the people of Canada keep their hand on the wheel.

These powers are without precedent and without meaningful accountability over some of the most expensive projects in Canada's history. Lost in the fog without accountability and oversight, this ship will soon run aground.

For procurement, it means an announcement that never becomes a contract. To be fair, some contracts have been signed by the DIA. Some of them were already under way before the agency existed and the agency has claimed them, and a few are the agency's own. However, too often, a victory lap comes at only an announcement.

Let us take the Canadian patrol submarine project as an example. In July, to much fanfare, the Prime Minister announced a preferred supplier, but quickly stated that if that did not work out, there was another preferred supplier on standby. This is an announcement lost in the fog, not a signed contract, not a decision and not a delivery.

Take GlobalEye. In May, the government announced a preferred supplier for up to six aircraft. Saab confirmed that no contract has been signed. There is not a contract and not a commitment to buy. The government itself has stated that this aircraft does not meet the air force's operational requirements. This is an announcement standing where a signed contract should be.

Even the F-35 program is lost in a fog, paused twice by the Liberals. Now, 18 months into a six-month review, two aircraft have been delivered while political posturing causes delays, putting the defence of Canada at risk. This is unacceptable.

The Liberals can announce an agency. They can name a chief executive. They can create a board, but until ink touches paper, nothing has been bought. Our members in uniform do not need another redesign of the Defence Investment Agency. They need a decision, a contract and a delivery date.

I do not stand here only to criticize. Let me offer a way forward.

One, the Liberals should remove division 16 from this bill. It is being replaced within months, and no sailor worth his salt would sail this way. They should put effort into the new bill and get that one right.

Two, they should keep sole-sourcing for genuine operational needs, with written reasons published, and when they are classified, they should show them to members who are cleared to see them.

Three, they should report to Parliament on every ministerial direction, and account for what Canada receives for every $1-billion draw.

Four, they should put conflict of interest rules in the bill. All who advise or decide on these purchases must disclose their interests and step aside to avoid conflict.

Five, they should publish the decision process, with who decides the criteria and the scores each bid receives, and set real timelines.

Last, they should put the defence of Canada first. Industry and jobs are important, but when it comes to the defence and sovereignty of Canada, operational requirements must take priority. A government patting itself on the back and waving around announcements with no contract signed does nothing for the defence of Canada, putting our sovereignty at risk.

These are six steps and none is partisan. These are the standards we should expect, regardless of who holds government.

When I navigated warships, we transitioned from paper charts to electronic ones. The tools changed completely, but the principles never did: keep the ship safe and defend it from the enemy. With Bill C-31's division 16 soon to be overtaken by Bill C-40, it is not only the tools that are changing, but the principles of accountability.

The safe passage through the fog is not this bill, and it is not Bill C-40, which would offer even less accountability. The defence and sovereignty of Canada are a pillar of this country and the first duty of any government. Today, that pillar is lost in the fog, rudderless, and the government has shown no way out.

If the government cannot find its way out of the fog, we stand ready to do the work. Our sailors, soldiers and aviators defend the sovereignty of Canada every day, and they deserve a government that does the same.

● (1220)

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite's speech used the sailing analogy very well, I find, but the only fog that I see in the House is the Conservative plan, because there is no plan. Our plan is clear. We are going to build this country. We are going to invest in our industries, and we are going to make sure that our sailors and army people have what they need.

The member across the way likes to talk about shipping. I would like his comments on two huge projects, one that is under way and one soon to be under way. Contrecoeur, along the port of Montreal, is being built as we speak so that shipping is even better, and on the western side of the country, the port of Vancouver is going to be expanded. What does he think of those investments?

Jeff Kibble: Mr. Speaker, Montreal and Vancouver are not part of the Defence Investment Agency. I am not sure what the member is talking about.

As far as the fog goes, the Liberals say they have a plan, but their plan is slogans. I have laid out very clearly that they are failing on the defence and sovereignty of Canada, and I also laid out some steps. I must remind the member opposite that the Liberals are in government. They have a majority. It is their job to do it, and they are presently failing.

● (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-31 contains several measures that open the door to more government power and less transparency, such as limiting who can file complaints with the procurement ombud and which complaints the ombud can review.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

[*English*]

Jeff Kibble: Mr. Speaker, my colleague made an excellent point. As I said in my speech on Bill C-40, it is as if the government is building an oligarchy. There should be accountability. There should be a way to bring forward challenges to the ombudsperson.

Absolutely, I agree with him. This bill, soon to be replaced by Bill C-40, has a complete lack of accountability back to Parliament.

Burton Bailey (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, year after year, the budget deficits grow and Canadians continue to pay higher prices. After a decade of promises from the Liberal government, what do Canadians have to show for them?

Jeff Kibble: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent work in this House.

He asks what Canadians have to show for them. Well, there are some projects that are signed, and some are going to be completed and delivered, but they are few and far between. While I remain loyal to this country, it is my job to ask challenging questions. I know it is uncomfortable for the members opposite, because they like to revert to slogans, but I offer challenging questions to point out that for the amount of money being spent, the majority of what we are getting is announcements. As I said very clearly, this is putting the defence of Canada's sovereignty at risk, as we see that aircraft are not replacing ones that are soon to be expired, and that is unacceptable.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I genuinely believe that the member is wrong on a number of assessments in regard to the Canadian Forces. Since Canadians elected the new Prime Minister, there have been substantial investments in the Canadian military, virtually all aspects of it.

The member is also wrong in regard to the issue of transparency and accountability with respect to Bill C-40. Having a Crown corporation has proven to be very effective. Provinces, municipalities and the federal government have ample examples of that. Why does the Conservative Party not understand that Crown corporations can ensure a better procurement process for our military?

Jeff Kibble: Mr. Speaker, fortunately, I am not really concerned about what the member opposite thinks is right or wrong. I suggest that he read the bill closely with a lens of accountability. He will find that there is a lack of accountability there.

Despite what spin the member decides to put on the bill, I have read it closely. I understand the industry and understand defence procurement, and this bill, as well as the follow-on replacement bill, Bill C-40, is clearly failing Canada. It is failing our defence procurement and ultimately the sovereignty of our country, something that should be as important to the member opposite as it is to me.

[*Translation*]

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in today's debate at the third reading of Bill C-31, the budget 2025 implementation act, no. 2.

Budget 2025 set out our detailed plan to build Canada strong at a time of great uncertainty. We all see it every day: The global economy is undergoing a profound transformation. After decades of growth driven by globalization and free trade, a fundamental change is under way, shaped by economic nationalism, geopolitical uncertainty and fast-paced technological advances.

We can clearly see that these changes are generating a lot of concern in our communities. I must say that I see it in my riding. We cannot simply stand idly by while these changes happen. We must respond to them with meaningful measures. Above all, we must rely on our strengths to ensure that Canada not only withstands the global upheaval, but also makes the most of any opportunities it creates.

Canada has everything the world wants. We are a superpower in both green and conventional energy, and we are among the world's top five producers of many critical minerals. Canada is also a leader in AI and quantum computing. We have a highly educated workforce, and we can attract the best international talent. By investing in our strengths, particularly through projects of national interest, our government will stimulate the growth of these industries and help businesses thrive in today's economy.

Since this budget was tabled, our government has acted quickly to build the major infrastructure, homes and industries that drive Canada's economic growth and create lasting prosperity. In doing so, we are giving Canadians what they need to succeed with more rewarding careers and a more affordable life. We are also protecting our communities, our borders and our way of life.

Through Bill C-31, we are implementing several of these important measures from budget 2025. As we all know, we live in a rapidly changing world, and the global economy is in a state of high uncertainty. Now more than ever, it is vital that we adapt and take steps accordingly here at home. It is also vital that our government invests in Canada so that we can build our industrial production capacity and enable all of our workers and industries to compete on the world stage. There are many measures in Bill C-31 that will help with that. These truly are measures to build Canada strong.

One of the measures in Bill C-31 provides for immediate expensing for manufacturing and processing businesses. Simply put, this means that these businesses will be able to write off 100% of their investment in the first year. Through this measure and the productivity mega deduction, our government is encouraging capital investment and long-term economic growth by allowing businesses to immediately write off more of the costs of their new investments. This measure will make it easier for businesses to invest and grow from now on.

Another noteworthy measure in Bill C-31 is the expansion of the eligibility criteria for the clean hydrogen investment tax credit to include methane pyrolysis. As members know, Canada aims to build a future based on clean energy, and hydrogen is part of that equation. I would like to note that this expansion of the tax credit will be available retroactively as of December 16, 2024.

Our government fully understands that a competitive labour market fosters innovation and productivity. However, the use of non-compete agreements that prevent workers from moving to rivals or starting a competing business reduces competition and undermines the efficiency of the labour market. That is why Bill C-31 amends the Canada Labour Code to restrict the use of non-compete agreements in employment contracts for federally regulated businesses. That way, we will protect workers' rights, promote labour mobility, strengthen competition, and empower workers to move to a higher-paying job or start their own business.

● (1230)

This is an important measure to support all our workers and to give them more freedom to act in their own best interests.

Finally, the government is aware that millions of lower-income Canadians do not file their taxes, either because they do not have the resources to do so or because they think their income is too low to owe taxes. This means that people who most need benefits often do not receive them, causing some Canadians to miss out on the Canada groceries and essentials benefit, the Canada child benefit, the Canada workers benefit, and more benefits they are entitled to.

That is why Bill C-31 proposes to allow the CRA to file a tax return on behalf of certain eligible individuals with lower incomes in simple tax situations who do not owe tax and do not file themselves. This measure ensures that help gets to the people who need it most.

When Canadians keep more of the money they earn, they are better able to provide for their families, invest in their communities and build the future they want.

We live in a rapidly changing and uncertain world. Now more than ever, we need to adapt to improve make our great country more competitive. Our government proposed several measures to enhance competitiveness in budget 2025, and Bill C-31 will implement many of them. With these measures, we are helping our businesses, our industries and our workers be even more competitive on the world stage. In this uncertain world, our government is acting quickly and decisively. That is how we are going to build Canada strong.

In conclusion, Bill C-31 includes many measures that will help make our economy even stronger, and I urge all my colleagues to support it.

● (1235)

[*English*]

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite made reference to housing and housing affordability. In fact, the Prime Minister has told Canadians that housing affordability has improved every single month since his government has been in office. I am just wondering how the member opposite squares that with a recent report released by Statistics Canada. In Newfoundland and Labrador, there has been a 9% increase in the average rent cost in our province.

What is the member's response to that and to the Prime Minister's claim that affordability has gotten better every single month?

[*Translation*]

Tim Watchorn: Mr. Speaker, I can just say that, in Les Pays-d'en-Haut, there has been some work that was made possible thanks to Build Canada Homes. A co-op in Saint-Calixte, in my riding, has been able to build 30 housing units for vulnerable people. Construction has begun, and Build Canada Homes is the entity that made it possible. Without Build Canada Homes, the project would never have seen the light of day. There are a lot of projects worth building, and Build Canada Homes is really the vehicle to get them built.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member is aware, there are numerous affordability policies or positions that the government has taken to support Canadians, even though the Conservatives tend to vote against them. One of the ones that should be highlighted is the development of the Canada groceries and essentials benefit. That is an ongoing program. Its initial announcement saw substantial increases as we converted the GST rebate.

Can the member provide his thoughts on how that is literally helping millions of Canadians in every region of our country, either that or the tax break—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Les Pays-d'en-Haut.

[*English*]

Tim Watchorn: Mr. Speaker, we see that every day in my riding. People are benefiting from this tax credit and also from the dental program. My mother actually uses the dental program and finds it very useful. I have been speaking with dentists all across my riding. Everybody is on board with this program. Everybody realizes how beneficial it is because dental programs are health programs. If we have dental health, we have general health. I think all the affordability programs the government has put into effect are very beneficial and it shows up for the people of Les Pays-d'en-Haut.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for his speech.

As a member from Quebec, he knows that health and social services need some love, some additional resources, because the needs are dire, whether we are talking about homelessness or frontline services. Could Bill C-31 not have included some good news for Quebec's health and social services, by removing the cap on federal transfers to the provinces, for example? After all, services are not really delivered by Ottawa, but by Quebec and the provinces. Unfortunately, across Quebec and in the other provinces, there is a problem with financial resources, because the federal government has cut its transfers.

Does my colleague think that this would have been a good measure to include in Bill C-31?

● (1240)

Tim Watchorn: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, whom I hold in high regard.

She brought up homelessness. This is indeed a problem that was once unheard of in many rural communities, but we are beginning to see it there as well. As we know, budget 2026 will be tabled on Thursday. In light of the announcements made by Quebec and by the federal government, I believe that it will contain measures to address homelessness across Quebec and throughout Canada.

[*English*]

Matt Strauss (Kitchener South—Hespeler, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we are debating Bill C-31, the second part of the budget implementation act of 2025.

I am sure everyone watching at home would agree that this is a little bit ridiculous, given that budget 2026 is coming out on Thursday. They would agree even more strongly if someone forced them to read Bill C-31, as it is 350 pages of mishmashed measures, many of which do not immediately seem to pertain to the budget at all. For instance, division 13 of the act before us would end automatic, mandatory, periodic re-evaluations of pesticides; division 12 would reduce mandatory review of the Tobacco Act from every five years to every two years; and division 10 would abolish the deputy chief commissioner position at the Human Rights Commission.

It is, of course, a pleasure and a privilege to stand in this House and debate the budget implementation act from last year, two days before the new budget comes out, which does not have much to do with the budget, actually, but gosh, allow me to remark, this is a strange place. This is not what I thought I would be doing when I came here.

I have reviewed the 350 pages of the budget implementation act because I think that is what the people of Kitchener South—Hespeler expect of me, to see if there was anything sneaky or dangerous pertaining to the nation's finance to debate with my colleagues opposite today. Many of my colleagues on the Conservative side have zeroed in on division 16 on defence procurement, which indeed is problematic, but as they have spoken so well on this issue, I would like to focus my remarks on division 7.

Division 7 would increase the guaranteed loan ceiling of the Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation to $1 trillion. It is one clause that would increase the ceiling to $1 trillion. That is an eye-popping figure. What does it mean?

The CMHC guarantees mortgages. If I want to buy a home and I do not have a 20% down payment, my bank will not give me a mortgage because it is high risk and I might default. Another word for high risk in the mortgage world is sub-prime. I hope some ears are perking up at that. If I only have 10% for my down payment, CMHC can step in to say that although it knows the bank will not give me a mortgage, the Government of Canada will guarantee the mortgage. That means if I default on my mortgage, the bank will not take the haircut, but the taxpayers of Canada will.

Division 7 of this bill would allow CMHC to put taxpayers on the hook for $1 trillion of relatively high-risk mortgage. This is on the same order as the national debt, which stands at $1.4 trillion. I would ask the Liberal members, is this prudent? Is this the direction Canada's housing policy should go in? Is this the direction they meant to take it in?

Canadians have been clear for a decade: We need housing. There is a housing crisis. The Liberals promised to build Canada strong, to build at speeds not seen at generations and to get homebuilding starts up to 500,000 units per year. They have failed in each of these promises. Housing starts are down this year from last year. They are going nowhere near 500,000. CMHC, the agency under question, in fact projects that they will continue to go down. Now, having failed all of these promises, their reaction is to raise the mortgage debt ceiling. We wanted houses and they have brought us more housing debt.

The distinction here is between demand-side measures and supply-side measures. Imagine a town where 12 families want to buy a home, but there are only 10 homes available. If the Government of Canada swoops in and provides cheap financing to all 12 families, they will be able to bid more for a home. The price of homes will go up, but two families will still be left out in the cold, frozen out of the Canadian dream. That is a demand-side measure. That is almost entirely what Liberals have been up to with respect to their housing policy for the last 11 years.

The Prime Minister, compared to Justin Trudeau, I will concede, is able to use more sophisticated language to hide the financialization of our housing market that he is perpetrating. He is able to blow more hot air, and hotter air, into the housing balloon, but it is just hot air and not houses that he is generating. The numbers do not lie. Again, I say housing starts are down this year compared to last.

At every turn, the Prime Minister and his housing minister favour bigwig bureaucrats, high-flying bankers and fat-cat condo developers in Vancouver, with giant bailouts and other forms of gravy on the public dime. All of these demand-side measures have the effect of increasing asset prices and inflating investor portfolios, instead of putting dollars into the pockets of construction workers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, electricians, stonemasons, drywallers, roofers, and my friends and neighbours in Kitchener South—Hespeler, and it does not put houses on the streets of our cities and towns.

● (1245)

Our Conservative plan is focused on supply-side measures. I do not have time to review them all in this speech, but our every effort would be focused on building houses so that all 12 families would be able to bid on 12 homes at a fair price and no one would get left out.

I often think of housing policy like the board game Monopoly. That is why the inventors of that board game created it. There are only so many properties on the Monopoly board. Once a group of players has bought up St. James Place, Boardwalk and Park Place, injecting more cash into the system by handing out $200 just because they passed Go allows the four players to bid up the price of each other's homes. If a fifth player joins the game in progress, they will not be able to afford anything. This is the situation Canadians under 40 find themselves in today. The game of Monopoly has been going on too long with no new or sufficient properties being brought to the market. They have been frozen out of a game of Monopoly that has not been fair to new players since the 1990s.

The Conservative supply-side plan is to put another fresh board into play by opening up federal lands to development, reducing taxes and increasing permitting.

The Liberals know that what they are doing has failed. I have searched the Hansards. I think that is why none of them have ever mentioned division 7 in this House. Can members imagine that a clause that increases the ceiling to $1 trillion was snuck into a 350-page document that none of them have had the time to mention? We have been debating this bill for a year. They have not had the good graces to even mention in the people's House this sneaky clause that puts the people on the hook for $1 trillion of high-risk mortgage debt.

As my time is coming to an end, I very much look forward to hearing the Liberals finally speak about this clause. Maybe they could start by explaining to Canadians why they failed to mention it in the first place. Why is it hidden in an omnibus bill? Then perhaps they could explain to Canadians whether this is really prudent. Is $1 trillion of mortgage debt, inflating the cost of our houses, not building any homes and failing on their housing promises the direction they meant to take our housing market in? I am listening.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the member is somewhat misinformed and does not quite understand the housing market. Even Stephen Harper increased it by over $200 billion. This increase, I believe, is less than what Stephen Harper would have done.

Let us look at what the Conservatives are saying today: They do not want CMHC to guarantee mortgages. Do they know how many people rely on CMHC? Chances are, the member's own parents went through CMHC, as literally millions of Canadians do. Why does he want to put restraints on CMHC today when Stephen Harper did not have any problem increasing it by over $200 million?

Matt Strauss: Mr. Speaker, once again my friend from Winnipeg North did not listen at all to what I said. I did not say that I am against CMHC mortgages. I am against the Liberals sneaking a $1-trillion increase in the total mortgage debt allowed in this country in contravention of their stated campaign promise—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Winnipeg is rising on what I hope is a point of order.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is not a $1-trillion increase.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The member knows that is a point of debate, not a point of order.

The hon. member can conclude his comments.

Matt Strauss: Mr. Speaker, I misspoke. An increase to $1 trillion is not the direction the Liberals promised to take Canadians in. I wish the member would spend less time on semantics and more on policy and the general direction.

The other thing the member for Winnipeg North does with literally half the speeches I have ever given in this House is stand up and say, "but Stephen Harper...". Stephen Harper was my dad's prime minister. I think I was 18 when he became prime minister. I did not come here to defend the record of Stephen Harper. I like him. We are talking about 11 years ago. I do not take the criticism at all.

● (1250)

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, housing is extremely important to this country. I would absolutely agree that we have a generation of young people who are losing the hope of home ownership in this country.

The member talked about our Conservative approach with respect to increasing supply. One of the things I think is also important within the context of that conversation is how much goods and services in this country cost right now, which is also adding stress on the construction side of new housing. I wonder if the member would like to expand on why our approach restores the dream of home ownership for the next generation.

Matt Strauss: Mr. Speaker, I think I am picking up what the hon. member put down regarding goods and services. A cornerstone of the Conservative plan has been the elimination of the GST on new homes up to $1.3 million, GST, of course, being the goods and services tax. As usual, the Liberals have sort of done a half-measure to meet us halfway on that part. Half measures only work by half.

Then, to the member's larger point about the price of everything going up, housing just being the most extreme, and perhaps important and close-to-home example, the price of everything continues to go up, because the Liberals keep printing money in the form of deficits. I imagine, on Thursday, we will find out that the deficit is even more out of control than they promised.

The Liberals will continue their weird accounting tricks about operating versus capital, putting what are obviously operating expenditures into the capital budget. I think the phrase is, "Micturating on someone's leg and telling them it is raining."

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague is very interested in issues related to privacy, the protection of disclosed information, and transparency.

Could Bill C-31 have included a provision that better protects the privacy of Quebeckers and Canadians?

[*English*]

Matt Strauss: Mr. Speaker, the list of things the Liberals could have done in Bill C-31 is literally endless.

As I explained, it is a mishmash of totally unrelated measures. I cannot find any thread that connects them. If the question is whether they would they do that, the answer is obviously not. The Liberals have taken steps again and again in this House and in forthcoming bills to restrict privacy rights of Canadians on the Internet and otherwise. They have taken actions related to the Emergencies Act in the last Parliament that obviously were against our civil liberties. If the question is whether they could, the answer is yes, of course they could improve our civil liberties and privacy rights. If the question is would they, the answer is no, they have not. The leopard does not change its spots.

Fred Davies (Niagara South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House to contribute to the debate today on Bill C-31. The bill is back from committee at report stage, and it is our last chance to amend it before third reading.

A budget implementation bill is where promises meet the actual commitment in law, and the test is rather simple. Would it make life more affordable? Would it build what the country needs? Would it respect the House's duty to examine how money is spent and how power is used? On every count, the answer is, sadly, no.

Budget 2025 is the costliest budget outside the pandemic, with the biggest deficit, at least for the next two days. What did it buy? It bought record food bank usage and rising insolvencies. This morning, the Welland Tribune reported that one in 10 Welland residents used a food bank last year. That is one in 10. This Saturday is the Welland food drive, and I urge residents to give generously. It is likely that one of their neighbours needs some help because of food insecurity.

The government's so-called affordability plan is fundamentally a plan to stabilize the problems it created in the first place, and herein lies the difference between Conservatives and Liberals. Liberals have spent a decade ignoring the structural inefficiencies of government and failed to recognize that we need to actually fix the machinery of government rather than subsidize the problems it creates.

The government cut 10¢ off a litre of fuel and called it relief. We asked to remove all federal fuel taxes for a year, which would save a typical family about $1,200. Ten cents is a gesture, but $1,200 is a month of groceries.

At second reading, our critics moved a reasoned amendment naming what is missing: full fuel tax relief; less tax and red tape on homebuilding; an end to the industrial carbon tax, which touches everything in the food chain right to the family at the checkout; and an end to the waste that feeds inflation. Conservatives voted for it. The government did not.

There is a better way: repeal Bill C-69 so major projects only take a few years, not decades; repeal Bill C-48, and if the Prime Minister is serious about his pipeline memorandum, put it in law; eliminate the industrial carbon tax; and cap spending. The government cannot fix affordability by subsidizing scarcity.

I want to turn to a few things closer to my home, my riding of Niagara South. My riding is an economic zone where this budget could have a real impact. There is a gap between an announcement and actually building, and it sits right along the Welland Canal. I will take the government's own words. Division 16 would create the Defence Investment Agency. Clause 12 would require the minister to consider the efficiency of defence and security procurement and the promotion of investment in the defence and security sectors. By this bill's own test, the Welland Canal corridor belongs in it. It was left out at tabling, and the bill came back from committee with it still left out.

At the north end of the Welland Canal sits the Port Weller Dry Docks, with a sister yard in Hamilton. Both are run by Ontario Shipyards, the largest Canadian-owned ship repair and construction company on the Great Lakes. Port Weller has built more than 80 vessels, including icebreakers. The company has invested $107 million there and already fabricates components for federal ships built on the west coast. The company has struggled to get a reasonable share of federal work.

A Globe and Mail piece from about a month ago reports that its bid to join the national shipbuilding strategy failed, with Davie being chosen instead. Its hopes now rest mainly on federal corvette work. If the company does get that contract, the CEO says, the corvettes will be built at the Port Weller Dry Docks in Ontario, on the Welland Canal. This is a shipyard with a proud history and a promising future, but it needs to be integrated into the federal shipbuilding strategy.

In February, Hanwha Ocean signed an agreement with Ontario Shipyards to bring large-scale shipbuilding back to Ontario, with a training hub in the Hamilton yard alongside Mohawk College. The province has put $11 million into Ontario Shipyards and more than $8 million into Allied Marine in my hometown of Port Colborne. Everyone has stepped up except Ottawa.

● (1255)

The government's own defence industrial strategy promises 70% of defence acquisition to Canadian firms. The navy will need yards to build, maintain and refit its fleet. Right now, coastal yards carry order books measured in decades, and Port Weller is able to step up. Capacity in Niagara and Hamilton would not be a favour to this region. It would be an insurance policy for the navy. The bill would give the new agency up to $1 billion in standing authority and says nothing about these yards or the canal that connects them.

At the south end, in, again, my hometown of Port Colborne, which I love to talk about in the House, sits Wharf 18. Ottawa built it, Ottawa owns it, and it has been out of service for close to 20 years. In January 2023, the government announced $22.7 million to rehabilitate it, but there was a catch. It was dependent upon a private sector partner to ante up the next $20 million. Three years on, that money still depends on a match no one will provide. A seaway official confirmed to me at the transport committee that there are no plans to rebuild the wharf, and now the funding is at risk.

I have been looking for examples where the St. Lawrence Seaway required the private sector to invest in wharf rehabilitation on property it can never own. There seems to be an evolving plan to move in this direction, but inherently, there are incredible barriers to moving to a P3 business model. The conundrum here is that we cannot ask the private sector to rebuild a dock it can never own. It probably cannot finance it. Ottawa does not ask the private sector to co-fund repairs to federal bridges.

The engineering on Wharf 18 is done. It is shovel-ready, and the balance of capital needed could actually lead to year-round shipping through the Great Lakes. The money needed is the equivalent of a rounding error in the billions of dollars allocated to major projects. Sometimes minor projects like this can turn into game-changing opportunities, particularly in short sea shipping. Here is where the government has looked at this project with limited scope rather than at the long-term economic development opportunities, including year-round shipping. However, this also illustrates that many of the problems could be fixed through this legislation like stubborn bureaucracy. I will give an example.

The City of Port Colborne needs to acquire about a half-acre along the canal to be merged into a parcel it already owns. The land is useless, both to the seaway and to Transport Canada, which has refused to reclassify the land so it can move through what might be a 10-year disposal process and then be acquired by the city. The city has been waiting decades to move forward with economic development projects but continually hits brick walls with federal bureaucracy, including duelling departments and agencies.

The absurdity of bureaucracy drives me crazy. If we could get the seaway and transport to fix this silly problem, the City of Port Colborne could move ahead with a multi-use facility that would dramatically improve tourism, including berthing for over 100 cruise ships per year and expanding industrial and commercial activity along the waterway. This should be easy, but everyone knows dealing with Transport Canada often takes more than a career timeline can handle.

A working Wharf 18 would add about a million tonnes of capacity to Port Colborne, and Port Colborne is the only point on the canal that has the potential to move to all-season shipping. Put together, a federal wharf with the engineering done, dry docks that are working and expanding, a training hub on the way and a fabricator backed by the province are not a wish list that needs another study. This is a corridor that needs a federal commitment. Every tonne moved port to port inside Canada does not pay a tariff.

Here is my ask, and I admit that it is close to home for me: delete division 16 at report stage, send defence procurement to the defence committee and include Great Lakes shipping and repair capacity in the study; bring back a budget bill that lowers the cost of living, with full tax relief, full fuel tax relief, no industrial carbon tax on food, fewer taxes on new homes and a spending cap; fund Wharf 18 in Port Colborne, with a construction schedule and a completion date; and treat the Welland Canal corridor from Port Weller to Port Colborne to Hamilton as the defence and trade asset that it is. If we do that, we will start to make progress that puts Canada first.

● (1300)

Philip Earle (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recognize that my hon. colleague has been here for the same amount of time that I have been here. I wish him good luck with the food drive this weekend. I would also observe that the food drive has been going on in his community through seven prime ministers, since 1992, as well as the importance of making assistance available to Canadians in Niagara South who may need it.

I want to ask the hon. member if he believes we should be offering assistance to people like those in Niagara South who depend on the food bank.

Fred Davies: Mr. Speaker, it is a sad reality in the country that we have come through so many years where we have government subsidizing the problems it created in the first place. Do we need to help people with food insecurity? Absolutely we do, because they have food insecurity, but we cannot continue to throw cheques at people without dealing with the underlying structural failure of government to deal with the underlying components of what produced that food insecurity.

Yes, we need to help people in need. Conservatives will always have that point of view. We will always help those who need a hand, but we need to focus, fundamentally, on looking at restructuring the problems at the granular level of government, to fix those fundamental structural problems, so that Canadians will not need to have cheques mailed to them once a month.

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the remarks by my colleague, with whom I serve on the all-party border caucus.

Speaking of borders, Bill C-31 could have included tools and additional resources for the Canada Border Services Agency to better equip border communities to clear small containers through customs or to manage people's personal belongings more adequately and efficiently.

Could he tell us what he would have liked to see in Bill C-31 regarding this issue?

● (1305)

[*English*]

Fred Davies: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the work that we have done on the all-party border caucus. The caucus is non-partisan, for the most part, and we talk about issues like this.

The allocation of resources from CBSA among border communities is a continuing problem across the country. I guess there are CBSA resources that are going to come to the port of Hamilton soon, but we could have expanded economic development opportunities along the Welland Canal and the St. Lawrence Seaway. If CBSA would provide resources, it would stimulate millions and millions of dollars of investment in industrial and commercial activity, particularly in short sea shipping. Absolutely, the CBSA should have been included in the bill. Additional resources would have an enormous impact on my community.

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's passionate and very poignant speech was about economic opportunities for his riding that are not being acted on. I would like him to expand a bit. I believe he was in the chamber when the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader mentioned the quiet part out loud, that all the grocery tax rebates and benefits are really just a repackaging of the GST rebate. It is a shell game that the government has been playing to try to obfuscate the circumstances and the systemic problems that have created an affordability crisis. I wonder if my colleague could comment on that.

Fred Davies: Mr. Speaker, where do I begin? What concerns me as a relatively new member of the House is coming here and looking at a budget document like this, where we have repackaged problems into subsidies. I do not believe that Canadians want to have continual subsidies thrown at them for problems that the government has refused to, has failed to or will not solve.

As I said a minute ago, we have fundamental structural issues with how the government operates in the country. That costs billions of dollars. The interest we are paying on the debt next year exceeds what we spend on health care transfers to the provinces. That is an outrageous amount of money. That means the only way we can pay for additional programs is to raise taxes on Canadians. We raise their taxes, and then we send them back a cheque for all the pain those taxes have caused.

[*Translation*]

Marilène Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by acknowledging a few people from my riding, Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan. We are talking about the economic statement and, of course, its implementation. A budget will be presented on Thursday, and many members across the way have told us that Thursday's budget contains some real gems. In the meantime, there are people in my riding who are struggling right now. Obviously, we are constantly talking about the cost of living, the crisis with the United States and tariffs, as well as housing.

I am also thinking of the folks who work for Parks Canada, for example, who have just learned that their jobs are being eliminated because the government has decided to make arbitrary cuts, just like that. Entire communities are going to suffer, and we are not getting any answers from the minister.

I am also thinking of correctional officers. There is a penitentiary in my riding, Port-Cartier Institution, and officers there do not have all the tools they need to keep themselves, the inmates and the public safe. Many people back home are already suffering as a result of several measures introduced by the Liberal government. Meanwhile, members on the government side keep going on and on about how they are looking out for Canadians and they understand that there is a cost of living crisis and a tariff crisis.

In fact, the Bloc Québécois made a number of requests to the government, all of which were dismissed out of hand. These requests were in line with what the public wanted. Again, on the ground, this is what people are telling us. When we talk to people, they do not talk about creating another agency, for example, or about some of the other measures set out in Bill C-31, which seem to be very out of touch with the public. Some measures might be worthwhile, but I think it has been shown that many of them are not. When the government introduces too many bills that create Crown corporations, or when it seeks yet another mechanism to concentrate more power in its own hands while reducing accountability, I think that is a sign that it is short on good ideas and is simply making things up as it goes along. What is more, it is doing so through a succession of bills, each one amending the last. That suggests the government itself has not yet settled on a clear course of action.

Let me get back to the Bloc Québécois's requests, which are in line with what the public wants. We are here to represent our constituents. Personally, I am here to represent the people of Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan. One of the first things the Bloc Québécois asked for was to establish a wage subsidy program for sectors affected by the U.S. tariffs. In my riding, the forestry sector is a backbone of the economy, as is aluminum. My region has abundant natural resources. It is a forestry and mining community. People back home would have liked to see wage subsidy programs put in place to support them.

I am thinking, for example, of the workers at the Outardes sawmill in my riding, which had to close its doors. I am talking about this sawmill in particular, but other devastating events have taken place before this. Entire families are being affected. I am talking about 300 families. In a region like mine, which is made up of small communities, 300 families affected means that not only is the industry itself shutting down, but so is the entire community. Sometimes that is what it comes down to. It is a vicious circle. We would have liked to see this measure put in place. Governments have acted in that way in the past whenever a crisis arose. This time, however, there is not even a willingness to help the people who will find themselves without a paycheque. Beyond the closure itself, there is also the question of the development opportunities that have been lost as a result. This is truly devastating. The government could have helped these people if it had wanted to do so.

I want to talk about another measure that is also important to me. We keep raising it because it remains unresolved. People will tell me that this is the case for many things in this Parliament. I am referring to EI reform. Once again, the government tells us that it is going to change it at some point, and once again it makes promises. I have run in several election campaigns, and every time, there were candidates who told me that, yes, they would fix it this time. Some even told me that they would not change it and that they would have to be in government to do so. I figure that they are the ones in government now, and they would be able to change it if they wanted.

We have been calling for this reform for decades. I am repeating myself, and we are tired of doing so. At the same time, we keep hoping that one day the other side of the House may finally see reason. EI currently covers 40% of workers, which means that 40% of workers who pay into EI will be able receive benefits.

I spoke about this earlier today, but my thoughts are particularly with the seasonal workers in my riding. I spoke about natural resources, but I did not talk about fisheries, which is also a part of my riding.

● (1310)

There is thus the whole issue of the fishery. The benefits of fish processing workers, for example, will run out at the beginning of winter or around Christmas, depending on their situation and the number of hours they accumulated. As members know, fishing is not something that people can do year-round and, unfortunately, we cannot make the fishing season last longer, because Mother Nature prevents us from doing so. Nevertheless, it is vital that we support these workers and this industry. There are several measures that could be put in place. I am not saying that this is just about employment insurance, but the issue of the spring gap has never been resolved. This is about supporting industries located in so-called remote areas, like mine, where the economy is built on natural resources, some of which are more lucrative than others. The mining industry is one example. The fact remains that many fishers are once again being abandoned

I would like to talk about other sectors. I talked about forestry, but tourism is equally important back home. Why not resolve this issue once and for all? It is still possible to do so, but this issue has been completely left out of every bill. Again, I do not know what will happen on Thursday, but I hope there will be a thought for the people in my riding, who have very real needs. Much is being said these days about the crisis and the cost of housing, but the issue I am raising regarding employment insurance has existed for a long time. It is not a new problem. For those people who really struggle to make ends meet at certain times of the year and who are often skilled workers who want to work, we need to ask ourselves what message we are sending them. That message is that, even in times of crisis, we do not want to help them. They are being completely ignored.

Earlier, one of my colleagues opposite said that the government has not forgotten about them at all, and yet the government has been promising to change things and reform the system for 12 years. I have been hearing the same promises since I was elected in 2015. However, after 11 years, soon to be 12, the government has done absolutely nothing. I therefore strongly disagree with him. Fortunately, organizations like Action-Chômage Côte-Nord and the Interprovincial Employment Insurance Alliance continue to drive this message home to the government. There is actually a petition going around right now, and I would encourage all of my colleagues to sign it, if they so desire, so that the issue of employment insurance can finally be resolved once and for all, so that discussions can take place and so that the government keeps its word, if it is capable of doing so.

I have several other examples in mind. I had planned to discuss eight of them, but I think I have only two minutes left. Even so, I would like to remind the House of a request the Bloc Québécois has been making since 2025. There was an election that year, but the Prime Minister, who had not yet been elected, made a promise on April 25. Election day was April 28. On April 25, a carbon tax rebate of $814 million was promised to residents of the Canadian provinces, but not to those in Quebec. We were not asking for a rebate, since we would have preferred that the money be transferred to Quebec. However, every other province received compensation in respect of the carbon tax. It was a nice election gift, a gift that Quebec did not receive. We asked for the same thing. After all, giving money back to someone who did not pay anything is not a rebate; it is a gift. This gift was announced on April 25, no less. We, too, want our share of that $814 million. The people in my region, in Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, need it. The needs are real. As I said, some people are struggling to make ends meet. Why was the government able to hand out this election gift to part of the country while denying it to Quebec? I find that unacceptable, and this situation should be corrected.

There are several issues that could be resolved quite easily. It is simply a matter of common sense, fairness and justice. Let me mention one final example, an issue we have been raising for years because it, too, deserves to be addressed: the existence of two classes of senior citizens. The government continues to discriminate by providing an increase in OAS benefits to one group of seniors while denying it to another. I cannot understand why we must continue to point this out year after year, whether during the economic update, pre-budget consultations or the budget debate itself. The inequity is obvious. In my constituency, which has an aging population, seniors need this support. However, the government continues to deny it to many of them by maintaining this distinction. There is plenty more I could say about this, but we will no doubt have the opportunity to return to it in the next budget.

● (1315)

All that to say, there is nothing for the riding of Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan in this economic statement.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoy hearing my colleague talk about her part of the country. It is indeed very special. I do not know whether you have ever had the chance to visit. I have only been to Sept-Îles, myself, and I was totally impressed by the strength of the community.

I hear the members opposite saying that seasonal workers should find work elsewhere once the season is over. What we really come to understand, however, is that these are not seasonal workers; they are workers in seasonal jobs.

Perhaps my colleague could explain the difference and explain what it means for a region to have seasonal jobs. What would happen if everyone who works in seasonal jobs found work elsewhere, while waiting for the season to return?

Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question gives me an opportunity to dispel a stereotype about workers in seasonal industries. Words matter. Workers are not the ones who are seasonal; it is the work.

Earlier, I gave fisheries and tourism as examples. We might like to have more snowmobiles on the north shore, but that does not always happen. Sometimes there are winters with no work in tourism. The same is true of fishing, because people do not fish in winter. Investment is obviously needed to extend those seasons so that people can work more. Production needs to be diversified. That could lead to a much broader discussion, but the fact remains that these people are the lifeblood of coastal communities with populations of 200 to 300. I am thinking of the lower north shore, where some communities are 200 to 300 kilometres apart and are not connected by road.

What do we do about these communities? We need to support them because the support they receive through EI helps ensure that they can continue to develop. It may sound unbelievable, but that is the situation in my riding.

● (1320)

[*English*]

James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her intervention on Bill C-31 at report stage. Included in Bill C-31 is division 16, which deals with the Defence Investment Agency, which would now be replicated in Bill C-40. This actually was the second iteration of the BIA. We would now have, under Bill C-40, a federal Crown corporation.

Is the member at all concerned that what the Liberals are trying to do is put more power into the hands of a minister, unnamed at this point in time, who would be able to exercise more political interference in procurement, stop competitions and ultimately undermine our Canadian Armed Forces by not buying what it actually needs?

[*Translation*]

Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, this may come as a surprise, but I completely agree with what my colleague just said. I would add, for the first part, the whole issue of the bill. The government is introducing another Crown corporation. This feels like lack of planning to me.

It amazes me how the government introduces something and, at the same time, introduces a new bill because it may not have fully thought through what it wanted to do in the first place and is working on two things at once. It seems to me the government is doing things on the fly. As for the second part, I think giving more power to a small group or an individual is a total non-starter.

We want to see accountability. We are here to work for the people, and they want us to be transparent. This is about trust, so I agree with my colleague.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member was talking about immigration, and I want to pick up on that particular point. When we think of open work permits or people who are studying in the province of Quebec and have been there for an extended period of time, does the member have any sense that they should ultimately be allowed the opportunity to become permanent residents? What is the Bloc's position on issues of that nature?

[*Translation*]

Marilène Gill: Mr. Speaker, if my colleague across the way wants to talk about immigration, then I would like to make a request on behalf of my constituents. Right now, in my riding of Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan, the whole labour market impact assessment process is very problematic.

The government is not putting enough resources into processing these applications, so it is jeopardizing certain industries, certain public health care services and, above all, the people who decide to come work in our region. If the government wants to act fast, it can simply provide more resources so that applications can be processed quickly.

[*English*]

Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been looking closely at what the government is doing with the Defence Investment Agency in Bill C-31, and I have to say that the more I look into it, the more questions I have.

Imagine my skepticism last October when the government announced it was creating a new Defence Investment Agency. We were told that it would speed things up. Creating yet another level of bureaucracy to fight bureaucracy seemed like a bad idea to me. Then they brought in Doug Guzman, a former senior banker and friend of the Prime Minister, to run the agency, promising procurements at speeds not seen in generations.

Now, barely a year later, the government is back with another plan. Apparently, the agency it just created is not structured the way it would like, so now the government wants to turn it into a Crown corporation. I have spent a good part of my life in business, and I can say that when something is not working, the last thing anyone wants to do is add another layer of management. We should find out where the problem is and fix it. If people are sitting around waiting for approvals, we should figure out why those approvals are taking so long. We should not build an entirely new organization around the problem and hope things will somehow improve. However, that is what the government seems determined to do.

What exactly have we accomplished over the past year? When Mr. Guzman appeared before committee, I wanted to understand what had actually changed since the DIA was created. Had it eliminated unnecessary approvals? Had it reduced the number of signatures required to get a contract approved? Could he point to a major procurement that had moved faster because of this new agency?

When I hear the government celebrating another announcement about submarines or aircraft, I want to know whether our military is any closer to getting that equipment. It turns out that he admitted all of those projects were already under way long before the Defence Investment Agency existed, in 2016 or something like that.

Believe me, I understand the frustration with government paperwork. I have dealt with enough of it as a farmer to know how ridiculous the requirements can be sometimes. Maybe people find themselves filling out forms to prove something that the government already knows, and then they wait weeks for someone to say they should have filled in a different form.

I am all for getting rid of unnecessary red tape, but when we are talking about spending billions of dollars of taxpayers' money and changing the agency to a Crown corporation, I think we need to be very careful about which of the rules we will be getting rid of as we make those changes. Some of those approvals exist for a very good reason. They are there to make sure contracts are awarded fairly, public money is accounted for and somebody can be held responsible when things go wrong. I am particularly concerned about what happens to parliamentary oversight when we move these decisions into a Crown corporation.

Just a couple of weeks ago, the Parliamentary Budget Officer released a report showing that over the next five years, the federal government is projected to run about $333 billion in deficits, but borrow almost $733 billion. That is a difference of roughly $400 billion. Honestly, Canadians must be shocked to hear that the government can borrow that much more money than what shows up in its reported deficits. It turns out that when government borrows money to make loans or investments through a Crown corporation, for example, those transactions do not necessarily count as expenses in the annual deficit. Will we know why one company received a contract instead of another? When something goes wrong, will the minister be responsible, or will we be told the Crown corporation is to blame? When government decisions go badly, Canadian taxpayers are the ones who bear that cost.

That brings me to another part of this legislation that I find particularly troubling. The government is proposing broad powers to award defence contracts without going through a competitive bidding process. I understand that there are circumstances where that makes sense. If our military needs something urgently, or if there is only one company capable of providing a particular piece of equipment, obviously we need to move very quickly. However, when I read through the proposed exceptions, I was gobsmacked by how broadly some of them are written. I have to ask where Parliament fits into all of this.

● (1325)

If the government can decide that a contract does not need competition, how are we supposed to know taxpayers are getting the best value? How are Canadian companies supposed to know they have been treated fairly? What safeguards will prevent political favouritism from influencing decisions that should be based on what our military actually needs?

Let me give another example of why these safeguards matter. Canadians recently heard the Prime Minister talking about how Canada needs millions of military drones. I could not help wondering who was going to build all these drones and how that contract would be awarded. Well, it turns out that a fellow named Eliot Pence, who sits on a trade advisory board with the Prime Minister, conveniently started a company a little over a year ago called Dominion Dynamics. That company has since raised $139 million from an investment firm called Georgian. A man named David Court serves as chair of the advisory board of Georgian, is a member of the board of directors at Brookfield and was previously corporate director of Brookfield when the Prime Minister was chair of Brookfield. Coincidentally, Georgian has recently acquired defence contracts to produce drone vehicles, which will likely be in the millions of dollars, maybe billions.

If the DIA turns into a Crown corporation, these kinds of shenanigans will all become so much easier to do. Contracts will be awarded to brand new companies with basically no track record because somebody happens to know the right people. Does this sound familiar? If the government wants to expand sole-sourcing powers while moving procurement into a Crown corporation, should we not be demanding more accountability, not less?

I raised a similar concern when Mr. Guzman appeared before the committee earlier this year. I asked him whether defence dollars were at risk of being spent for market outcomes rather than giving our troops the right gear at the right time. His answer was that defence spending will be used to create Canadian economic growth. He said that National Defence needed to be "accepting of more than one solution". Does that mean it might not get what it needs because a friend of a friend is opening a new business building knock-off night-vision goggles? Is that what he means by being accepting of more than one solution?

I certainly want Canadian businesses to benefit from defence procurement. We have some remarkable manufacturers in this country, and I would love to see more of the equipment our armed forces use being made right here at home. If we are sending young Canadian pilots into dangerous situations, mothers want to know that the aircraft they are flying was chosen because it was the right aircraft for the job. They do not want political connections or investment announcements getting in the way of buying the right equipment. The government says there will still be oversight, a board of directors, audits and reporting requirements, but I want to know what happens before these enormous contracts are signed, not simply when it gets reported afterward.

Sometimes the problem is not that we need another organization; it is that the organizations we already have are not working together efficiently. As with any business, we know what happens when too many people are involved in making a decision and nobody wants to take responsibility. Everything slows down, costs start climbing and eventually someone has to step in and sort it out. We do not fix that problem by handing someone the company's chequebook and telling them they can make the decisions with fewer questions being asked.

Our armed forces have waited long enough for the equipment they need, and we want to see it delivered as quickly as possible, but we also want to know that when billions of dollars are being spent, somebody is keeping an eye on the money. If the government can create a new agency one year, decide it needs replacing the next and then ask Parliament to give the replacement even more powers, we have every reason to ask whether we are solving a problem or being told, as in *The Wizard of Oz*, to pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.

So far, the only thing moving at speeds not seen in a generation seems to be the creation of more government bureaucracy. How many times does the Liberal government expect Canadians to fall for the same line? It is another agency, another reorganization and another promise to cut red tape, and now the Liberals want even more power to spend billions. When does someone finally have to answer for the results?

● (1330)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives want to debate Bill C-40 more and more it seems, and I get it. They do not like Crown corporations, even though Crown corporations in Canada have done, from a national perspective, exceptionally well, as they have done in many provincial jurisdictions, including the member's home province of British Columbia, where there are many Crown corporations.

Crown corporations are, in fact, held accountable, because even though they are at arm's length, there is usually a minister tied to a Crown corporation. There are annual reports. There is a litany of things to ensure accountability and transparency, but the Conservative line seems to be to oppose Bill C-40 at all costs.

Here we are on Bill C-31. Why does the member want to talk about Crown corporations—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City.

● (1335)

Tamara Jansen: Mr. Speaker, I have spent enough time in business to know that when something is not working, we do not automatically fix it by changing the org chart. We have to identify the problem first.

The government created the Defence Investment Agency promising procurement at speeds not seen in generations, but barely a year later, it is already proposing another restructure. I think it is reasonable to ask about that. What went wrong with the original plan? Which approvals were causing the delays? What actually improved? How will another reorganization solve the problems?

At the end of the day, our soldiers, sailors and aviators do not need another org chart. They need equipment that actually arrives.

Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member made a comment toward the end of her speech about how the government is not moving with speed. Here we have Bill C-31. It is from the budget last year, yet on Thursday, the Liberals are tabling the budget for the next year.

The Liberals run the calendar themselves. They set the agenda, yet here we are. They passed one budget implementation act, and now we have a second budget implementation act because they messed the first one up so badly that they had to put in a second one.

I wonder if my colleague has any further thoughts on how the government is moving at speeds so slow that this is what we get.

Tamara Jansen: Mr. Speaker, what frustrates me most is that we have heard these promises before. We were told that the Defence Investment Agency would eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy, speed up decision-making and finally get equipment into the hands of our armed forces. Now, barely a year later, we are being told that the agency needs to be restructured.

Taxpayers want to know what they actually received for the money already spent. Have procurement timelines improved? Have unnecessary approvals been eliminated? Are troops getting their equipment sooner? Announcements and signing ceremonies make a wonderful press release, but they do not protect Canadians or defend our sovereignty.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, this is very simple to understand. The government, since the last federal election 18 months ago, has evolved military procurement into a Crown corporation. Crown corporations have proven to be exceptionally effective at delivering tangible results.

The Prime Minister and this government increased military expenditures to 2% of Canada's GDP. If the member wants to support our men and women in the forces, I believe the Conservative Party needs to reverse its positioning on Crown corporations and recognize that Crown corporations are able to deliver in a timely, more efficient manner.

Tamara Jansen: Mr. Speaker, it seems that what the government wants to do is avoid transparency by putting all of this money, as the PBO mentioned, into Crown corporations. It is very important that we demonstrate for Canadians that taxpayers are getting a fair deal.

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what does my colleague think of the fact that the Liberals have created two classes of seniors: those aged 65 to 74 and those aged 75 and over? The older group's OAS went up, but the younger group's did not.

[*English*]

Tamara Jansen: Mr. Speaker, with the interpretation, it did not seem like there was much of a question there, but I appreciate the question.

As always, I am very concerned about the situation facing our seniors, especially with affordability issues. I hear so many in my riding say they are challenged just to put food on their own table and are using food banks. It is a shame.

[*Translation*]

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska—des-Sources, PCC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-31, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025.

The first thing that a budget bill should address are the concerns of Canadians, which centre on the cost of living, economic growth, job creation, housing and the sound management of public finances.

If we look more closely at Bill C-31, however, we see something else. We see a government proposing to transfer more decision-making powers in a number of areas to its ministers and to the government apparatus. These include powers for the Minister of Finance and National Revenue, powers for the Minister of Transport, additional powers for defence procurement and even new federal powers over mining rights in the north.

My concern is not only about increased powers. I am also concerned about who will oversee their use, ensure accountability and protect Canadians when bad decisions are made. At the end of the day, this is about taxpayers' money, rights and trust in their institutions.

Today, I want to focus on an especially troubling example of this trend. I am talking about clause 51 of Bill C-31, which gives the Canada Revenue Agency new powers to file income tax returns on behalf of certain Canadians without obtaining their express consent. During clause-by-clause consideration at the Standing Committee on Finance, I presented an amendment to protect taxpayers from any errors in the tax returns filed by the CRA.

I will read my amendment, as proposed:

> That Bill C-31, in clause 51, be amended by replacing lines 11 to 19 on page 66 with the following:
>
> (b) for greater certainty, the individual is not responsible for any erroneous statement or omission in the return filed by the Minister.

This was a very simple amendment. It sought to establish a fundamental principle. When the government files an income tax return on behalf of a citizen, that citizen should not be held responsible for any erroneous statements or omissions in the return, since they did not file themselves or expressly approve it.

To understand why that amendment was necessary, we need to look at what is currently provided for in clause 51.

The government wants to allow the Canada Revenue Agency to automatically prepare income tax returns for certain low-income individuals so that they can access the benefits that they are entitled to.

I want to be clear that we all support Canadians being able to receive the benefits they are eligible for. However, the problem is how the government intends to proceed. Under the proposed mechanism, a taxpayer would receive a notice from the CRA and have 90 days to verify the information, report any corrections, or opt out of having a return prepared on their behalf. If they do not respond in time, the CRA would be able to file their return on their behalf without their explicit consent.

What is even more concerning is that under this bill, taxpayers may be held responsible for any errors or omissions that they failed to report. In other words, the government prepares the return, but taxpayers may be held responsible for inaccurate information that they never personally approved. That is precisely what my amendment sought to prevent.

Let us take a very concrete example. A senior receives a notice from the CRA and does not necessarily understand all the tax implications of the notice. Maybe the senior believes that it is just an administrative notice and does not realize that they have to look over the information that the government already has. Another example involves a low-income individual who moves frequently, is going through a rough time or does not yet have reliable Internet access. These people could miss the notice, not understand the steps that need to be taken, or simply not know that some information is incomplete.

● (1340)

After 90 days, the agency would be able to file the person's return. If an error or omission is not corrected, that person could then have to face the resulting tax consequences.

Holding an individual responsible for errors contained in a return they did not file and never expressly approved is unacceptable. Since when does failure to respond to a letter from the government constitute informed consent? Why should the government be able to transfer responsibility for the information it used to prepare a declaration to citizens?

Our amendment aimed simply to protect Canadians from that risk. However, when we presented it in committee, the Liberal members voted against it. They rejected a provision that would have made it clear that taxpayers are not responsible for errors or omissions in the returns filed for them by the minister. What makes this decision even more concerning is that we are not the only ones who have raised these concerns.

Canada's taxpayers' ombudsperson, François Boileau, has himself expressed significant reservations about this mechanism. In his brief to the Standing Committee on Finance, he recommended against adopting the provisions on the proposed deemed filing approach. Indeed, there are risks of error, confusion, and interruption of benefits. The ombudsperson emphasized, in particular, that a system in which taxpayers review and confirm the information before filing their returns would offer better protections. He also proposed additional safeguards should the government decide, despite everything, to move forward. We are talking here about the taxpayers' ombudsperson. His role is precisely to defend citizens' rights in their dealings with the Canada Revenue Agency. When someone tasked with overseeing the fairness of tax services warns us of the risks posed by a new mechanism, we have a duty to listen to him.

There are other issues that also deserve our attention. The government is presenting this measure as one way to facilitate access to the benefit, but the ombudsperson has also pointed out that the anticipated delays could lead to interruptions in payments.

Let us think about that. The government is proposing a system that is supposed to help people with low incomes access their benefits, but which could, in certain circumstances, delay the payment of those benefits. We therefore need to ask ourselves whether the government has really designed the most effective and secure system for Canadians.

A much more reasonable approach does exist. The CRA can prepare the information in advance. It can simplify the forms. It can contact eligible taxpayers. It can help them get the benefits they are entitled to. Before a tax return is filed on their behalf, they should receive a clear confirmation.

We certainly support helping Canadians, but we do not support making decisions on their behalf and shifting the risks onto them.

I would now like to draw the attention of the House to a second problem that we tried to fix in committee. Clause 51 also provides that the Minister of National Revenue may, at his or her discretion, designate any other conditions for determining which taxpayers the CRA may file a tax return for. In other words, Parliament is being asked to give the minister the power to add eligibility requirements without these being clearly and precisely defined in the act.

While the bill was being studied, I asked government officials to provide concrete examples of what those additional conditions might be. I was met with radio silence. They were unable to offer a clear definition. They were unable to provide a single example. Nevertheless, we are being asked to allow for any other conditions.

I still have a lot to say about Bill C-31, but so far, the Liberal government has shown no willingness to listen, pass amendments or consider the ombudsperson's proposals.

● (1345)

Steeve Lavoie (Beauport—Limoilou, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, whose speech I enjoyed a great deal.

The recent monetary policy report clearly shows that the Governor of the Bank of Canada, in his analyses, uses the mega deduction provided in the bill as an example.

The mega deduction will give businesses greater access to capital and enable them to make additional investments at a time of uncertainty in our relationship with our neighbours to the south.

This mega deduction is worth highlighting; it is a Canadian monetary policy with a significant impact on our businesses and on investment.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Eric Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. I also hold him in high regard. He has spent more than 20 years in the banking sector, and I am fortunate to serve alongside him on the Standing Committee on Finance.

What struck me this morning was the testimony of the Governor of the Bank of Canada. He told us that, so far, businesses have mostly absorbed the cost increases associated with higher gas and diesel prices. However, those higher fuel costs are expected to remain higher for years to come and, unfortunately, taxpayers will have to foot the bill for the rise in gas and diesel prices.

That is why, on our side of the aisle, we are calling for the tax on diesel and gas to be scrapped to give taxpayers some breathing room.

● (1350)

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on an important measure that is missing from Bill C-31: health transfers.

Let us recall that the federal government once covered 50% of health care costs. Today, its share has fallen to 22%.

With Bill C-31, we had asked to lock in a 6% health transfer escalator, but nothing has been done. Consequently, next year, that figure could fall to 3%. Our health care system is already struggling. If it were to fall to 3%, it would be catastrophic.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

Eric Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, we see it in the interest on the debt. The debt was $700 billion when the Liberals took office; it is now $1.4 trillion. We are paying $58 billion in interest on the debt. That is more than the federal government invests in health care.

If public finances were managed more responsibly, we would be paying less in interest and we could invest that money in Canada's health care system.

[*English*]

Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated my colleague's speech.

Further to the last question, I will say that the government brought in $130 billion more in tax revenue in 2025 than it did in 2020. When I look at what Canadians got for that $130 billion in extra taxes being taken in, the answer is “nothing”. There is absolutely nothing that Canadians got any benefit from other than paying higher taxes.

I am wondering if my colleague could think of something that the government could be doing differently rather than taxing Canadians to the tune of an extra $130 billion.

[*Translation*]

Eric Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal culture of spending without restraint needs to change. That is how the Liberals are managing the country's finances right now.

Government revenues have increased significantly, but spending continues to rise unchecked. That is how they operate. As those of us on this side of the House have been saying, the government keeps getting bigger without ever providing more services to Canadians.

[*English*]

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces serving at Garrison Petawawa to speak to Bill C-31, the Liberals' omnibus budget legislation. This bill would establish the Defence Investment Agency as a standalone agency.

Now, for Canadians following at home, this is a different bill than Bill C-40, which turns the Defence Investment Agency from a stand-alone agency into a Crown corporation. If Bill C-40 passes, then the entire section of Bill C-31 on the Defence Production Act would be repealed. If this seems confusing to Canadians, it is just because the Liberal government is making things up as it goes along.

The Prime Minister campaigned on a promise to build at a pace not seen since World War II. Since the election, it has been a nonstop parade of announcements to create the appearance of action. Rather than undertaking the hard work to reform how the government procures anything, the Prime Minister took the easy path and announced a new bureaucracy. He convinced his personal friend to lead this new bureaucracy and then made his friend the highest-paid government worker in the country.

Now, when the Prime Minister's friend got started, he discovered how hamstrung he was by the government's broken procurement system, so the Liberals cooked up the legislation we are debating today to create a stand-alone agency. When the Prime Minister's buddy learned how, even as a stand-alone agency, he would still be mired in the Liberals broken procurement system, he threatened to quit. Desperately, the Liberals scrambled for a solution.

Having a close personal friend of the Prime Minister quit after one year would call into question the competency of the Prime Minister. Having built his entire brand around being the competent technocrat, the Liberal Party's greatest fear is that Canadians will come to see the Prime Minister as just another finance bro pushing a self-interest investment scheme. Canadians were hoping for a Winston Churchill. They got the wolf of Wall Street instead, and only prime minister Brookfield can turn defence procurement legislation into an investment portfolio.

This legislation would allow the designated minister to issue sole-sourced contracts. It would allow the minister to purchase stock in companies. It would allow the minister to issue sole-source contracts to companies he bought stock in. When the government becomes the owner, the regulator and the customer, it goes beyond conflicts of interest. It is a conflict of purpose.

Conflicts of purpose are the reason our defence procurement system is so broken under Liberal rule. The defence minister's purpose is to equip the Canadian Armed Forces with the equipment, the weapons and the ammunition they need to train and fight. The procurement minister's purpose is to get the best value for taxpayers. The industry minister's purpose is to divert the contracts to Liberal ridings. During the debate on Bill C-40, the Liberal members were literally bragging about how much money was going to their ridings. What these members always forget is that this is where the tax dollars came from in the first place. This bill and Bill C-40 would combine the worst aspects of Liberal defence procurement into one unaccountable Crown corporation.

We have already seen how the Liberal government operates. Last March the government announced it had issued a sole-source contract for a concrete slab in Canso, Nova Scotia. The so-called spaceport contract is worth $200 million. Worst of all, the government backdated the lease, meaning we paid rent for a full year before even deciding to lease the slab. No rockets were ever retroactively launched. The taxpayers received no value whatsoever. That cannot be explained away.

After the Liberals issued the press release announcing the sweetheart deal, the company's stocks surged. The largest shareholder of the so-called spaceport sold some of his stock and then used government cash to exercise his stock options. He pocketed over $1 million, kept all his shares and taxpayers had to foot the bill.

We cannot get more Liberal insider than a spaceport company with a former Liberal premier on the board, while prime minister Brookfield is taking $200 million out of the defence department for his spaceport friends and cutting the CAF's operational budget by 10%. After Bill C-40 passes, we can expect more of the same with even less accountability.

● (1355)

Unfortunately for the Liberals, the Auditor General's latest report touching on defence procurement drives home the point why nothing in this bill would change defence procurement in Canada. The Auditor General looked at the defence department's management of ammunition. The report found that ammunition for regular use in training was not aligned with current demand while the strategic stockpile was severely depleted. This passage from the report is very revealing:

> The Government of Canada, through Public Services and Procurement Canada, had 4 strategic source agreements with Canadian companies to produce ammunition and/or explosives that are available through the Munitions Supply Program. These agreements are to be reviewed and renewed at least every 5 years. We found that 2 of the 4 agreements had expired over 3 years ago. Public Services and Procurement Canada officials told us that a lack of staff contributed to the delay in reviewing and renewing the agreements.

The Liberal government has bloated the bureaucracy faster than any Canadian government. It grew at a pace not seen since World War II. In fact, it added more bureaucrats in the last 11 years than had worked for the government during World War II.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[*English*]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the climate crisis is the defining challenge of our time. It is existential, and our response will shape the legacy we leave for all those who come after us.

This month, I will attend COP31, where countries from around the world will gather to advance solutions. I will go with a simple message: All politicians of all stripes have a duty to protect our precious planet. This is a sacred trust, and Canada has the talent, resources, and responsibility to lead.

By investing in renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure and good green jobs, we can respect our environment and strengthen our economy, but leadership requires courage. Instead, the Liberals are rolling back essential climate measures, expanding fossil fuel pipelines and subsidizing oil and gas giants. New Democrats believe there is a better path forward. If we meet this moment with ambition and resolve, Canada can help build the sustainable world Canadians desire for all generations to come.

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INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OF CANADA INNOVATION AWARD WINNER

Hon. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Regional Municipality of York works extremely hard to improve the lives of people experiencing homelessness. It launched a no fixed address pilot program, an integrated, data-informed, people-centred approach that helps vulnerable residents navigate complex support systems with wraparound services. The pilot produced a significant improvement in outcomes and it recently received the Institute of Public Administration of Canada's national award for innovation here in Ottawa. The award recognizes an individual or organization that has produced an exceptional change or new way of doing things that addresses the public interest.

I send my congratulations to the chair of the regional housing and homelessness committee, Newmarket mayor, John Taylor, for his leadership, and to the staff at York region for their remarkable work. I also send a special acknowledgement to Cristina Taglione, director of homelessness community programs, who served as my chief of staff at Queen's Park. I thank the entire team.

* * *

1984 ANTI-SIKH RIOTS

Amanpreet Gill (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, Sikh Canadians marked the anniversary of the 1984 Sikh genocide, when thousands of Sikhs were killed in state-sponsored violence in the country they called home.

In November 1984, Darshan Singh Grewal and his pregnant wife, Tejinder Kaur, were living in Indore with their two children. Their home was stormed by an armed mob and set on fire. Darshan Singh was murdered. His children survived because their Hindu neighbour hid them under their bed. This was the story all over India. Thousands of Sikh men were dragged from their homes and burned alive. Women were assaulted and gurdwaras were attacked. Tejinder Kaur lost her husband and everything they had, yet she bravely raised her daughters, and today this family proudly calls Calgary home.

Forty-two years later, the families are still being denied justice. Today, we honour Sardar Darshan Singh Grewal and all the victims who were brutally murdered in the 1984 Sikh genocide.

SYRIA

Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently, while in Syria with the Canadian team, we visited Yarmouk, where, block after block, every single building is a bombed-out shell. There we came across three smiling children coming home from school. When asked, two of them said they wanted to be engineer and one of them, a doctor. At first, I thought that was unrealistic, but then I remembered that, after the Second World War, much of Europe looked like Yarmouk, and it was rapidly rebuilt thanks to the Marshall plan.

Syria needs similar help. The civil war killed over a million people and left over 80,000 with amputations. Bombs are cheap. In a split second, they kill, maim and destroy lives, but it takes an immense amount of resources to rebuild. Furthermore, many things cannot be rebuilt, undone or forgiven. The Nuremberg trials held that war was “the supreme international crime” because “it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.”

Although many current global leaders wish it otherwise, these words remain true today, and the day will come when, once again, those who commit war crimes will be held to account.

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RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for more than 40 years, he battled wildfires and faced off against raging floodwaters, but every single time he was called to action, he did not flinch. Dean Vincent spent more than 40 years running towards danger to ensure that he helped protect his friends and neighbours of High River.

Last week, Dean announced his well-earned retirement after 40 years at the High River Fire Department. His career reflects the very best of service: community, compassion and commitment. His commitment earned him honours such as the Alberta Emergency Services Medal and the prestigious Governor General's Exemplary Service Medal, which all recognized his incredible career as a firefighter, but it was not that recognition that motivated him. It was his need to help the most vulnerable.

Dean was always someone people could count on in a time of need. On behalf of the House and of all of the residents of High River, I thank Dean for his time and his service. I congratulate him on his retirement and urge him to spend time with his grandchildren. He has earned it.

● (1405)

[*Translation*]

SOVEREIGN'S MEDAL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Daniel Gobeil (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday, I had the great privilege of accompanying Robert Dufour, who was awarded the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers.

Robert always wanted to help others. This calling led him to become a paramedic. He won over the hearts of all the residents of the Saguenay region, one emergency call at a time. After a 47-year career, he still finds it important to always be there for those who need it most.

Aside from his work in responding to emergencies, he has been involved with the Caserne de jouets Saguenay in Chicoutimi since 1988. His presence in the community never goes unnoticed. His zest for life is contagious. Even standing next to him makes people feel energized.

I congratulate Robert Dufour on receiving this well-deserved medal. He has humbly dedicated his life to helping others. I want to thank him for his great impact on our community.

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[*English*]

DIWALI AND BANDI CHHOR DIVAS

Dalwinder Gill (Calgary McKnight, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on November 8, members of the Hindu, Sikh, Jain and Buddhist communities across Canada will celebrate Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas.

Diwali is a festival of lights. It celebrates the victory of light over darkness and good over evil. It is a time for new beginnings, for hope and for bringing communities together. This weekend, families across the country will light up diyas, offer prayer and share sweets with their neighbours.

For Sikhs, Bandi Chhor Divas is the day of liberation. In 1619, Shri Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji refused to leave prison unless 52 of his imprisoned colleagues were freed with him. His example reminds us that we must do what is right even when it is hard, and we must always stand with those who are struggling or in need.

I wish everybody in northeast Calgary and across Canada a happy Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas.

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CHARLES NOVOGRODSKY

Danielle Martin (University—Rosedale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the beautiful life of Charles Novogrodsky.

Charlie and his wife Myra came from the U.S. as war resisters in the 1960s and fell in love with multicultural Toronto, where they could be rooted in their Jewish identity and engaged with the incredible diversity of languages, cultures, sports and foods embraced by their neighbours.

Charlie's lifelong commitment to human rights, social justice and community service included his leadership at the Toronto Board of Education and the Miles Nadal JCC, the co-founding of Amistad Canada, and his work as a consultant on human rights and equity.

Charlie was a gentle soul with a twinkle in his eye who never stopped learning. He will be deeply missed by Myra, their sons Noah and Tobias, their grandchildren and the community they built together, of which I feel privileged to be a part.

May his memory be a blessing.

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THE ECONOMY

Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister came to power promising affordability and responsible spending. Twenty months later, Canadians are paying the price for his broken promises.

Amid economic uncertainty and U.S. tariffs, the Liberals are only making things worse. The government is spending money at a record pace and running the largest deficit outside of the COVID pandemic in Canadian history.

What are Canadians getting in return? Higher costs for everything, interest rates hikes and record food bank use.

The Salvation Army reports that nearly one in three Canadians is skipping and reducing meals because they cannot afford groceries, while half are dipping into their savings just to cover basic needs.

Conservatives will scrutinize Thursday's federal budget and fight for measures that will save Canadians money, protect jobs, put Canada first and reward hard work. That means reducing the debt and deficit, extending fuel tax relief and permanently scrapping the clean fuel standard tax.

Canadians need relief, not more Liberal broken promises.

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● (1410)

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL CAREGIVER WEEK

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today the Bloc Québécois is marking national caregiver week.

t is an opportunity for us, as a society, to thank those who care for loved ones who have lost their independence for all the unseen work they do out of love. It is also an opportunity to remind caregivers, the vast majority of whom are women, of the importance of looking after themselves. I encourage them to look after their own well-being because, ultimately, the reason they are able to help others is because they themselves are in good health.

I would also like to thank all the organizations that support caregivers, including peer-support networks, respite care providers, home care services and so on. This week should also serve as a reminder of the need to combat the isolation and lack of understanding that many caregivers experience. In fact, 62% of caregivers feel that their employer does not fully understand the challenges they face, and many choose not to disclose their caregiving responsibilities in the workplace.

This week, let us show them our solidarity and, above all, listen to them. We stand with them.

* * *

[*English*]

PACIFIC SALMON FOUNDATION

Wade Grant (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, wild salmon are essential to the ecological, cultural and economic health of British Columbia and Canada. They sustain ecosystems, nourish wildlife, support coastal communities and hold deep significance for indigenous peoples, including myself. I grew up fishing on the Fraser River for food, social and ceremonial purposes, yet wild salmon face growing pressures from habitat loss, climate change, warming waters and other threats.

Protecting these remarkable fish requires urgent collaborative action to restore habitats, safeguard migration routes, strengthen conservation efforts and ensure healthy salmon populations for future generations. I want to thank the Pacific Salmon Foundation for being on Parliament Hill today and championing the protection and recovery of wild Pacific salmon. Their leadership, science and commitment to bringing communities together, which help raise awareness and drive meaningful action, are not going unnoticed. By working together, we can protect wild salmon and the ecosystems and communities that depend on them.

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LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Corey Tochor (Saskatoon East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised to be different, that he would stand up for Canadians and our future, but instead, he has proven time and time again that he is just like the same old Liberals, making the same old decisions. His Liberal government has doubled deficits. Yes, Canada has the largest deficit outside of COVID and the highest spending as a share of GDP since the 1990s debt crisis. Who was in charge during those years? It was the same old Liberals, who have driven up the cost of living through higher taxes, doubled deficits and inflationary spending, leaving regular Canadians unable to cover the basics.

If they want to pretend they are not just like the old Liberals, it is time for them to prove it by reducing debt and deficits, eliminating federal diesel taxes until Canada Day, suspending the GST on fuel until summer and permanently scrapping the fuel standards tax. Otherwise, it is the same business as usual with the same old Liberals, and Canadians cannot afford anymore.

DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH

Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, November marks Diabetes Awareness Month in Canada. Around 3.9 million Canadians are presently living with diabetes. Every three minutes, one person in Canada is diagnosed with diabetes. Diabetes has serious impacts on our health.

Six years ago, I introduced Bill C-237, which established the national framework for diabetes. I want to recognize organizations like Diabetes Canada, Breakthrough T1D, NIDA, Diabetes Action Canada, Diabetes Québec, PDGN and many other organizations that are doing great advocacy work. Canada is the birthplace of insulin, and our researchers continue leading the way to advance diabetes treatment through groundbreaking research.

On November 14, I will be hosting the sixth annual World Diabetes Day flag raising in Brampton to bring the community together to raise awareness. Let us continue working together to combat this disease so we can extinguish the flame outside Banting House.

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LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are calling our budget "Masters of our Destiny", but with Canadians facing mass layoffs and struggling to afford the basics, and the flatlining economy, it sounds more like the Liberals are the masters of our decline. The Liberal Prime Minister promised to spend less. Apparently he meant Canadians needed to sacrifice more, because while Canadian families are choosing which groceries to put back on the shelf, the Liberal Prime Minister is choosing whether he wants the sirloin or the tenderloin at 30,000 feet.

Reducing the cost of government would reduce the cost of living. That means cutting bureaucracy, consultants, wasteful foreign aid, DEI spending, deluxe taxpayer-funded benefits for fraudulent asylum claimants and corporate handouts to the Liberal club. Canadians cannot afford groceries while monthly food bank visits hit 2.3 million, but the Liberals have millions more for affordable housing projects overseas. Cancelling this waste would save Canadians almost $200 billion over the coming years.

Conservatives demand relief. That means eliminating the gas taxes until Canada Day, suspending the GST on fuel until next summer and permanently scrapping the Liberal fuel standard tax.

The Prime Minister is out of touch, his costs are out of control and Canadians are out of money.

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● (1415)

[*Translation*]

CENTRE D'ACTION BÉNÉVOLE DE QUÉBEC

Steeve Lavoie (Beauport—Limoilou, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year, the Centre d'action bénévole de Québec is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Founded in 1976, this non-profit organization's core mission has always been to promote volunteerism throughout Quebec City.

For half a century, the centre has served as a vital link between community organizations and citizens who want to help. The centre has helped thousands of volunteers get involved and contribute to the well-being of our community. The Centre d'action bénévole strengthens our social fabric every day by supporting organizations, volunteers and the people of Quebec City.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication of the board members, employees and volunteers who have helped fulfill this mission for the past 50 years.

I congratulate the Centre d'action bénévole de Québec on this milestone anniversary, and I am grateful for its essential contribution to making our society more caring and compassionate.

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[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government recently called Canada's trade arrangement with the United States the best of any country in the world. Then, at the eleventh hour, negotiations collapsed and the tariff war escalated, yet there was no emergency recall of Parliament, no first ministers or cabinet meetings convened, just more rhetoric and posturing.

Meanwhile, let us consider the facts:110,000 fewer people are employed in Canada through August and September alone, 42% of Canadian manufacturers have already moved or are considering moving production to the United States, and more than $1 trillion in net capital investment has left Canada over the past decade.

Now, suddenly, the Prime Minister called by-elections, and then he called Trump. Will there be a deal or no deal? Will he deliver real results for Canadians this time?

For New Brunswickers, over 90% of our exports go to the United States. Nationally, it is over 70%. From forestry to farming and energy, we need a deal. Canadians are demanding a deal. They want a deal now.

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OAKWOOD TERRACE POPPY PROJECT

Hon. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Chantal Beaulieu and the extraordinary volunteers behind the Oakwood Terrace poppy project. Since 2020, Chantal's vision has brought together Oakwood Terrace

residents and community volunteers to crochet, knit and sew thousands of handmade poppies in honour of Canada's veterans. What began as a small but impactful tribute has grown into a remarkable community tradition, featuring a signature display of these special handmade poppies near Dartmouth's Sullivan's Pond cenotaph, walls of honour, a remembrance youth expo and an annual poppy tribute concert.

This project is about more than poppies. It is about bringing generations together, honouring those who served and ensuring their sacrifices are never forgotten. Chantal and these volunteers are incredibly humble and their contribution is extraordinary. Soon 20,000 handmade poppies will be displayed throughout our community.

On behalf of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, I thank Chantal and every poppy project volunteer whose dedication helps ensure the sacrifices of Canada's veterans are never forgotten.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. mid-terms, and that reminds us the Prime Minister promised in the election he was going to negotiate a victory for Canadians, a big win. Since that time, he has done nothing but lose, with American tariffs doubled and vastly broadened.

While workers are losing their jobs and single mothers can no longer pay their bills, the Prime Minister said he could wait another two and a half years to get a deal, and then said that he would get a deal in the next few weeks. Enough with the headlines. We need deadlines.

When is he going to negotiate the big win to protect Canadian jobs?

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 the Leader of the Opposition may be frustrated, because that is precisely what our government is doing: protecting jobs in Canada, supporting Canadian industries and Canadian workers, and discussing and negotiating with our American counterparts to reach an agreement that will be in Canada's economic interest and that will strengthen Canada's sovereignty.

These are things that the Leader of the Opposition would not acknowledge, but they are things that our government is doing and will continue to do.

● (1420)

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask when.

Today is the mid-terms, and that reminds us the Prime Minister promised in the election he was going to negotiate a victory for Canadians, a big win. Since that time, he has done nothing but lose, with American tariffs doubled and vastly broadened. While Canadians are lined up at food banks, businesses are leaving and Canadians are losing their jobs, the Prime Minister said he could wait another two and a half years to get a deal. Then suddenly, on Sunday, he put out a headline-grabbing tweet saying he would get a deal in the next few weeks.

When will the theatrics be over? Will the Prime Minister get back to the table, fight the tariffs and negotiate the promised win?

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, the Leader of the Opposition would probably be the leading expert in the House of Commons in terms of theatrics.

I think what is important for Canadians is to know that their government will always be there to support workers and industries that are facing the effects of these unjustified and illegal tariffs. One point where we perhaps agree with the Leader of the Opposition is that this is causing economic hardship for Canadians. That is why we are supporting Canadians and we are not going to rush into any old bad deal that the Leader of the Opposition would have accepted a year ago because he would not have had the guts to face—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is an easy one. If the member had the guts to face down the Americans, he would be at the negotiating table right now, but he is not. He is not, because the Prime Minister's tweet on the weekend was not about getting back to the table. He is not at the table; he is doing photo ops. It was, once again, theatrics designed to distract from his disastrous record here at home. Just today, Daily Bread Food Bank in Toronto is saying that demand is up 333% since 2019.

When will the Prime Minister stop the theatrics and get a deal?

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, again, the Leader of the Opposition is the expert in theatrics from trying to cover up a disastrous record. There is no better expert in the House than the Leader of the Opposition.

He is right. We are not at the negotiating table right now. Do members know why? It is because we walked away when it was in Canada's interest to show the Americans that we were not going to accept a bad deal. The Leader of the Opposition would never have walked away. He would have accepted a bad deal that would have undercut our sovereignty and hurt Canadian workers.

That is not what we are going to do. We are going to continue to pursue those conversations with the Americans to get the right deal.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he has accepted a bad deal. He has accepted 50% tariffs on steel, aluminum, mould makers and others. For the 100,000 people who lost their job in the last month, it is a bad deal. It is a bad deal right now for the one in three Canadians who is skipping meals because they cannot afford to eat, and for the 50% of Canadians who are plunging into their savings just to pay for the basic essentials of life.

When will we get the good deal that Canadians demand so Canadians can afford to eat and to pay their bills?

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, the Prime Minister has been very consistent from the beginning: We are going to do the difficult work Canadians expect of their government to get the deal that is in the best interest of Canadians.

Meanwhile, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we are not going to neglect to support Canadian workers and Canadian businesses, and to work with provincial governments to support those sectors of our economy that are facing these unjustified and illegal tariffs. We are going to do both, and we are going to stick with it for as long as it takes to get the job done.

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MAJOR PROJECTS OFFICE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are two economies after 11 years of Liberal government. There is one for the Canadians who have to follow the rules, and another economy for those who make the rules. Can we imagine a scenario where there is a government regulator that employs people who are simultaneously paid by the corporations it regulates? Imagine if the Major Projects Office, for example, employed people who were paid by the same companies whose applications it approves.

How many corporate-paid employees are working in the Major Projects Office?

● (1425)

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, the Leader of the Opposition should be careful not to assert a series of imagined conflicts of interest when he knows very well they do not exist.

I am surprised that the leader of the Conservative Party would be shocked that people, men and women, who work in the private sector want to come to work in the government to support an ambitious building agenda, to put Canadians to work and to make our economy more resilient. We are proud of the women and men who have decided to serve our country in the Major Projects Office. He should be careful before casting aspersions on these hard-working people.

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THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that corporate power brokers would simultaneously like to get a paycheque from a company and go work for the regulator that approves that company's applications. It is too bad that kind of arrangement does not work out for single moms, seniors and small business owners who cannot afford to eat.

One in three Canadians is skipping meals, according to the Salvation Army today, because they cannot afford groceries. Nearly half of young people fall into that category, and 50% of Canadians are digging into their savings to pay their bills.

Will Canadians at least get a budget on Thursday that will save them money so they can afford to eat?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remember when the Conservative Party actually used to care about jobs. Let us talk about what the Major Projects Office is doing: 8,000 new jobs at the port of Montreal, 1,000 new jobs at Nouveau Monde Graphite, 10,000 new jobs at Darlington and 18,000 jobs at Pickering.

Why does the Leader of the Opposition not support the hard work of the MPO, which is creating jobs where men and women can work hard and feed their family in this country?

* * *

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, under this government's policies, Americans may at times find themselves masters in our own house.

They are when it comes to the Prime Minister's cultural surrender to the Internet giants. They are through his betrayal of the climate and through the use of Quebec taxpayers' money to fund pipelines and subsidies benefiting the American owners of oil companies. They are through the concessions this government was willing to make on supply management.

Will the budget put an end to these attacks on the interests of Quebec, or will the Americans call themselves masters of our house?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question from the leader of the Bloc Québécois covers a lot of ground. I would like to point out, however, that we made historic investments of $750 million in culture in the last budget. We added $600 million to that amount before the Bloc Québécois even requested a dime for Quebec culture. The government is not about to take lessons from the Bloc Québécois.

Now, I invite him to stay in the House until Thursday for the tabling of an excellent budget that is going to benefit Quebec and Canada.

Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, perhaps it is time for this government to start delivering on the priorities of Quebeckers.

Take the cost of living. What is the government waiting for to double the grocery benefit, which would provide up to nearly $300 for a family of four, scrap the GST on used goods, and increase old age security by 10% for seniors between the ages of 65 and 74?

It is of course easier to ignore Quebeckers when they are not even allowed to speak, but these are the real needs of Quebeckers.

Will the government finally address them?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to affordability, this government has delivered with a tax cut for 22 million Canadians, the Canadian dental care plan, the Canada child benefit and the Canada groceries and essentials benefit.

What is the Bloc Québécois waiting for to get behind these initiatives?

Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are waiting for them to work.

This morning, we presented the Bloc Québécois's expectations for Thursday's budget. We invite the Minister of Finance to act on them.

Will he respond to the tariff crisis, set aside a $2-billion reserve for job losses and offer an advance to offset the countervailing duties paid for by our forestry companies?

Will he respond to the housing and homelessness crises and really help tenants?

Will he extend the Reaching Home program to combat homelessness and finally respond to Pauline Marois's demands?

Will the government finally grant our requests and finally provide real solutions to real crises?

● (1430)

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past year and a half, our government has been working for Quebec.

In case the member missed it, I would like to remind him that we reached a historic $10-billion infrastructure agreement with Quebec, for housing in particular.

I want to point out that Quebec was the first province to partner with Build Canada Homes, which will build housing across Quebec.

As for homelessness, we are on the same page as the Government of Quebec in our efforts to put an end to homelessness across the country once and for all.

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked this question twice last week but did not get an answer. It is an important question because it speaks to the fiscal credibility of the Prime Minister , so again I will ask it.

Last budget, the Prime Minister established a fiscal anchor of a declining deficit to GDP. The PBO projects that the government will not keep to this fiscal anchor. Will the government keep to this fiscal anchor in the upcoming budget?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last election, Canadians elected a leader with economic and business credentials that can lead our country and can rebuild, retool and pivot our economy. Let us look at some economic signs, despite the fact that the Conservatives do not want to hear them. We have the best net GDP in the G7, wages are outpacing inflation, and we have one of the fastest- growing economies in the G7 and the best credit rating in the world.

On this side, we are laser-focused on building a strong economy. The other side of the House can continue to talk our country down.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the net debt calculation the government used in its last budget is the IMF's net debt calculation, which includes the Canada pension plan. I am sure that Canadians listening would not like to know that the government's calculation involves using the assets of the Canada pension plan to offset its rapidly growing debt.

The Prime Minister came to office with a much vaunted fiscal resume, and again I ask the question, will the government keep to the fiscal anchors it established in the last federal budget?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when an economy is faced with challenges, we can do one of two things: We can blame everybody else and throw our hands up, or we can actually get down to building and to focusing on building a strong economy.

We just hosted the Canada Investment Summit, where over half a billion dollars was pledged to build Canada strong. We are doubling non-U.S. exports at a pace not seen in decades. Foreign investment is coming into our country at a level not seen in decades also.

We are focused on building a strong economy for Canadians—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Simcoe North.

Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a former governor of the Bank of Canada, David Dodge, has a simple rule: The government should be wary when it spends more than 10% of its revenue on debt service costs. The Parliamentary Budget Officer says that figure will grow to nearly 14% in just a few years, and in fact, debt service payments are the fastest-growing line item in the budget.

Does the government want this to be the fastest-growing line item in the budget? The Liberals' actions suggest they do not even care.

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has the strongest fiscal position in the G7 and a AAA credit rating, which keeps our debt service costs low relative to our peers.

The Bank of Canada governor confirmed in the finance committee today that it is not just how much governments spend but what, specifically, they invest in. Let us look at our track record. What are we investing in? We are investing in increasing the productive capacity in our economy. We are investing in affordability measures for Canadians. We are asserting our sovereignty. We are assuring that we have self-reliance and independence for the future. Our budget 2026 is called “Masters of our Destiny” for good reason.

Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague very much, but let us spare Canadians the lecture.

When Paul Martin was the finance minister, he met every single deficit reduction target and fiscal anchor that was imposed. At the very first opportunity, the Prime Minister is choosing to break it. In fact, there has not been a finance minister in over a decade that has bothered to even care to keep the fiscal promise.

What good is a promise if the Prime Minister has no intention of keeping it?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the opposition is very concerned with Thursday's budget, called “Masters of Our Destiny”. That budget will continue our progress investing in the things that matter to Canadians. What does it matter if Canada has a strong fiscal position if it is not willing to use it in an affordability crisis, where Canadians want their government to stand up and help them? That is exactly what we are focused on. God forbid the Conservatives should write the budget. It would be called “Prisoners of Pessimism”.

● (1435)

THE ECONOMY

Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I shared a conversation around my family dinner table about how difficult life has become for young families like my daughter's, but some families face something far worse. A new report reveals that one in eight Toronto children relies on a food bank, and more than one in four surveyed families reported a child missing meals because they could not afford food. These are children going hungry while the government piles on debt and spends over $1 billion a week on just paying interest.

How many more children must go without supper before the Prime Minister makes affordability a priority?

Hon. Adam van Koeverden (Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we not only thank the Food Banks Canada network for its important advocacy, but also read those reports and heed their advice. That is why in the third paragraph of the report that the member would have read, it says, "In recent years, we have welcomed and see hope in measures such as the Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit, the National School Food Program", which the member continues to deride, "Build Canada Homes and the Canada Disability Benefit."

It is worth noting that all of the measures the food banks network is supporting and recommending that we are doing, they voted against.

[*Translation*]

Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised to cut spending, but instead he doubled the deficit, which is now at a record high. While the Liberals are spending like there is no tomorrow, Canadian families are having to tighten their belts to make ends meet. According to a new report from the Salvation Army, one in three Canadians is skipping meals or cutting down on portion sizes.

Will the Prime Minister finally cut his inflationary spending and eliminate the federal diesel taxes to help Canadians save money?

Hon. Anna Gainey (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we thank the Salvation Army for its report this morning. We are aware of the challenges Canadians are facing, particularly when it comes to the cost of living. That is why we have put in place measures to make life more affordable and reduce poverty. We will continue to be there for Canadian families.

Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, clearly, their measures are not working. Visits to food banks have now reached 2.3 million. That is unprecedented. We are learning that one in five young people has to go into debt to pay for basic necessities.

Meanwhile, the government is spending billions of dollars on bureaucracy, consultants and corporate welfare. The Conservatives want to cut that spending and suspend the GST on fuel to save consumers $1,000.

Will the Liberals borrow the Conservatives' idea?

Hon. Anna Gainey (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to take action on affordability and help Canadians. We cut fuel taxes. We cut taxes for 22 million Canadians. We introduced the Canada groceries and essentials benefit for 12 million Canadians. We continue to support the school food program and affordable child care. We are doing all this while growing our economy and creating good jobs for Quebeckers and Canadians across the country.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have been asking the Liberals for weeks to condemn Bill C-39. It was the National Women's Liberal Commission that had the courage to take the lead. These Liberal women submitted a brief condemning the Prime Minister's overreach. They are demanding that all powers to exempt or abbreviate environmental assessments be reported to Parliament, be subject to independent review and be time-limited. They are also speaking out against the government's intention to approve projects before the assessments are complete.

Will the government finally listen to reason and listen to the voices of Liberal women?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to once again reassure everyone that we have not made any changes to the environmental assessment standards. We are protecting the environment. It is very important to continue to do that.

However, we need to build major projects, such as clean electricity projects. We have to be able to do that. We have to be able to help Hydro-Québec, for example, so that we can double the capacity of our electrical grid. We will do this work, and we will do it right so that we protect the environment.

● (1440)

Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette—Manawan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal women also denounce the temptation to create "manufactured urgency". Any claims of urgency should be independently verified before they justify an exemption.

The National Women's Liberal Commission is right on the money. It clearly sees that the Prime Minister is exploiting the tariff crisis, which is temporary, to give himself excessive permanent powers, powers that allow him to bypass environmental assessments and indigenous consultations in order to build pipelines. Women are always the first to suffer when there is authoritarian overreach.

Will the government listen to them?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to say something again because I think it bears repeating.

We continue to respect the environment and ensure that we protect it in everything we do. However, we must undertake major projects for the environment to secure clean energy and achieve a net-zero economy.

That is what we are doing. We are going to do it, and we are going to do it right. We are going to do it while protecting the environment and pursuing major projects, such as clean energy.

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[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister blames this economy on the president's tariffs, and then turns around and says that we can wait the president out for another two and a half years. Both cannot be true. These tariffs are either serious enough that he walked away from negotiations and left Canadians to absorb the costs, or mild enough to wait it out until 2029. He should tell that to the steelworker whose shift was cut, tell that to the lumber town for which the mill was the town and tell that to the two million families living with uncertainty.

Will he pick a lane today, or will he keep exploiting the pain of our people for by-election politics?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what our Prime Minister has been doing is helping create jobs in this country when they are not doing it, like the 8,000 jobs in—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I think the minister should start from the top.

Hon. Tim Hodgson: Mr. Speaker, what our Prime Minister is doing is helping create jobs in this country, like the 8,000 new jobs in Montreal, the 18,000 new jobs in Darlington, the 20,000 new jobs in Pickering and the 8,000 new jobs in Kitimat.

All the Conservatives do is talk down this country. They are the pirates of pessimism. Why do they not help build some jobs in this country?

Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have lost over 100,000 jobs over the last two months. Canadians elected a negotiator. Instead, they got Beijing's new world order and, at Davos, a world in rupture, with concession after concession. We got a negotiation from weakness on terms he did not define, and then he walked away on terms he still hides. He was rebuffed by Britain over the defence bank and rebuffed by France and Germany at a nothing summit. He called by-elections; then he called President Trump. It is grand theatre, with nothing for taxed and tariffed jobs.

Will the Prime Minister return his minister to Washington or make two million workers wait two and a half years because Liberals put politics and party ahead of the country?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister will do is not talk down Canada. He will build Canada. That is why we are creating jobs. We are creating jobs in Newfoundland, jobs in Nova Scotia, jobs in Quebec, jobs in Manitoba, jobs in Alberta and jobs in British Columbia. Why do the Conservatives not try to create a job or two?

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, will the Prime Minister confirm that no Canadian tax dollars will ever go to the European Union and that no EU laws and regulations will ever apply here in Canada?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mona Fortier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada and the European Union are currently working together to explore how we can continue to build Canada strong and how we can collaborate.

We will continue to discuss this and exchange views. We will also be able to discuss it here in the House of Commons, once we have a clearer idea of what that collaboration will look like.

● (1445)

[*English*]

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals really know nothing. It was a very simple question. I am going to ask her again.

Will she confirm that no Canadian tax dollars will ever go to the European Union and that no laws and regulations from the European Union will ever apply in Canada? It is a simple yes or no.

Hon. Mona Fortier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada and the EU share values, priorities and strengths that create an opportunity for a deeper partnership. That is exactly what we are doing. We are taking this partnership to a new level through Canada's move toward an alliance and looking together toward the future. Our focus is on delivering real results for Canadians, more opportunities for businesses, greater economic prosperity and stronger sovereignty. This alliance is built for people and the sovereignty of all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the summit in Montreal, the Prime Minister has remained remarkably vague about his vision of associate membership in the European Union.

My question is very simple. Can the Prime Minister guarantee that Canadian taxpayers will never have to send money to the European Union and that Canada will never be subject to European taxes, laws or regulations?

Hon. Mona Fortier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, Canada and the European Union share values, priorities and strengths that enable us to strengthen our partnership. Our focus is on delivering concrete results for Canadians, creating more opportunities for businesses and workers, strengthening our economy and enhancing Canada's independence.

We will continue to work and collaborate to make this alliance a strength for Canada.

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[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Gurbux Saini (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, true sovereignty is the ability to live our lives as we choose. In 2026, achieving that goal requires secure access to critical minerals and energy.

Last week in Montreal, the Prime Minister and the European Union launched the Canada-EU alliance for the future. Can the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources tell the House how this new alliance will open doors for clean British Columbian LNG and critical—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is what our relationship with Europe is doing: three million new tonnes of LNG being shipped to Europe, creating thousands of jobs in this country; a new treaty with the European Investment Bank to invest in Canadian mines here in Canada, creating jobs in this country; and a European country investing $30 billion in our energy sector this year. That is what our relationship with Europe is doing.

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[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised a great deal with the United States, but there are no results. It is a total failure.

Last week, the Prime Minister said that he could wait two or two and a half years before negotiating with the Americans. However, a few days ago, before calling the by-elections, who did he call? He called Donald Trump to negotiate. What a coincidence. It is déjà vu all over again.

Is the Prime Minister negotiating to save jobs, or is he doing it to give the Liberals an advantage in the upcoming by-elections?

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, once again, we see the Conservatives' completely understandable anxiety about the by-elections. However, they are trying to create a link that does not exist.

On the one hand, they want us to engage with our American counterparts and negotiate an agreement. On the other hand, they do not want us to talk to them. On the one hand, they want us to support Canadian workers, but on the other hand, they say we are spending too much as we stand up for the interests of Canadians and our industries.

We know what we need to do, and we are going to do it well.

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was elected on a promise to save us from Mr. Trump. Where is the deal? There is no deal. All we get are promises and empty talk, never any results. Our businesses are paying the price for his failure. Quebec has lost 130,000 jobs since January.

Will the Prime Minister succeed in delivering the deal he promised, or will he continue putting on a political spectacle?

● (1450)

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to support Canadian workers. Our objective is to support the Canadian workers affected by the unjustified and unjustifiable U.S. tariffs.

I would also add that this includes many businesses in the member's riding. Businesses in Beauce are receiving assistance through the tariff response.

I would like to add one last thing: We will never, ever accept a bad deal. We walked away from the negotiating table because the deal that was presented to us was unacceptable.

[*English*]

James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister got elected on the promise that he could do a deal with Trump. Instead of getting the deal done, the Prime Minister has been playing political theatre. First, he called six by-elections. Then he called Trump. All the while, the ongoing trade war is hurting rural manufacturers and farmers. Costs are going up, revenues are going down, and life is more unaffordable.

The Prime Minister continues to use defence as a political pawn, which is making our military less capable and Canada more vulnerable. The Prime Minister has been in office 599 days.

When will he finally get the deal he promised?

Hon. David McGuinty (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is proudly rearming, rebuilding and reinvesting in the Canadian Armed Forces. The member is aware of this. We have met the NATO 2% target five years ahead of schedule and accelerated our investments to put Canada on a path to meet our new target. He is aware of that as well.

Canada's defence industry is a major contributor to our economy, generating more than $17 billion in annual revenues and supporting over 81,000 jobs across the country. Now more than ever, we need to be united in this House. We need to reaffirm Canadian sovereignty by strengthening our military. This is exactly what we are doing.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. Every prime minister before this one got a deal done with America. Even Justin Trudeau signed a trade deal with Trump. Trudeau also finally ordered the F-35s.

Let us be clear. The Royal Canadian Air Force wants the F-35s. The Canadian Armed Forces wants the F-35s. Over 1,000 Canadians who are already working on them want Canada to buy the F-35s, but the Prime Minister would rather play political theatre. Canadians did not elect a performer this time. They were promised a negotiator.

Will the Prime Minister quit acting and finally get what our military needs?

Hon. David McGuinty (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are procuring right across the Canadian Armed Forces family. The member is aware of this. We are rebuilding our bases. We are buying hardware, we are buying materiel, we are supplying kit, and yes, we are looking at a fighter fleet for the Royal Canadian Air Force. We are going to review this procurement approach, as we have, with discipline. We are going to take the time we need to get it right.

[*Translation*]

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' mismanagement is undermining Canada's security. In her latest report, the Auditor General found that a significant portion of the Department of National Defence's ammunition inventory data is unreliable, with an average error rate of 13%. Worse still, it takes an average of 19 months between the time a contract is signed and when the goods are delivered.

Will the Liberals support our call for the Auditor General to appear before the Standing Committee on National Defence without delay and provide a full account of the situation?

Hon. David McGuinty (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we would like to thank the Office of the Auditor General for its work. We are carefully reviewing the findings and accept all of its recommendations. Ammunition is a critical component of Canada's military readiness. That is why we have invested $1.4 billion to expand Canada's domestic ammunition production capacity and support Canadian industry. New manufacturing facilities in Ontario and Quebec are increasing our production capacity while creating good jobs here at home.

[*English*]

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General confirmed critical ammunition shortages and NATO ammunition requirements not met. The Minister of National Defence told Canadians, “we have progress to make, and we're making it.” Well, I have heard of our soldiers on the front lines in Latvia going on patrol with no ammunition in their rifles, backed by only a few days of artillery shells should tensions erupt. The minister has failed to properly arm our forces and failed to meet our NATO commitments and, most importantly, failed to defend Canada's sovereignty.

Will the minister immediately table the required ammunition levels, Canada's NATO requirements and a timeline to meet them, yes or no?

● (1455)

Hon. David McGuinty (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some 10 months ago, we stood up Canada's first defence industrial strategy. One of the 10 priorities for the country was to move forward in ammunition production. The member is aware of this. By the way, where was the former Conservative government on ammunition production? There was not a single deal, not a single site, not a single manufacturing installation, no joint ventures, absolutely nothing.

We are moving forward. We are making progress. We are looking after our forces.

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government announced $9.2 billion over 13 years for ammunition. That only buys about 7,800 artillery shells a month, if nothing else is purchased. In Ukraine, they are firing about 180,000 a month. At this rate, it will take years to meet our NATO stockpile requirements.

My question was about the requirement, not history. The minister failed to answer my question, so I will ask it again.

Will he immediately table the required ammunition levels, Canada's NATO requirements and the timeline to meet that plan, yes or no?

Hon. Stephen Fuhr (Secretary of State (Defence Procurement), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a very good reason why that member does not want to talk about history, and I think we all know what that reason is.

We have never moved faster on the procurement for our military of aircraft, subs, radar and ammo. This is the most we have spent, and the fastest we have moved, literally in generations. We could use the Conservatives' support. What would be beneficial is if at committee they would support the supplementary estimates by voting for spending money on our military, something that member refuses to do.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have yet another stunning example of public policy decisions benefiting well-connected Liberal insiders.

Dominic Barton, the chair of Invest in Canada, and Patrick Pichette, the head of digital transformation Canada, were early investors in Cohere AI through Radical Ventures and Inovia Capital, respectively. Both have long-standing ties to the Prime Minister and were recently appointed to major government roles. The Liberals just gave Cohere $1.6 billion in taxpayer money, which will increase the value of Cohere and, potentially, Barton's and Pichette's ground-floor investments.

Why is it that when the Liberals claim to be acting in the public interest, it is well-connected Liberal insiders who do well self-dealing while the people they govern suffer?

Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the theme of today's question period appears to be talking down Canada and talking down Canadian champions, so let us get after this.

Cohere is a Canadian champion, one of the only LLMs in the world that is not owned by the U.S. or China. It is a Canadian champion. It is a Canadian powerhouse. It promotes and preserves Canadian AI sovereignty. It allows us to build a strong AI network here at home. It does that by ensuring that Canadians are part of that success.

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is not about Cohere. Canadians have seen this self-dealing Barton Liberal playbook before with McKinsey. They shape public policy and then benefit from the results.

Patrick Pichette and Jordan Jacobs were both appointed to the Prime Minister's AI council, and both sit on the board of Cohere. Jacobs co-founded Radical Ventures, where Barton is a partner. Together, they backed Cohere in its early stages and advised the Prime Minister on Canada's AI strategy. Now the company they invested in has received $1.6 billion in taxpayer funding.

When will the Liberals stop using taxpayer dollars to align public policy that enriches well-connected Liberals?

Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the real scandal here is the fact that the Conservatives are ignoring the facts. The facts are that Cohere is going to create more than 1,000 new high-paying jobs to employ Canadians and that Cohere is going to invest $1.7 billion into creating capacity in Canada. That is how we build Canadian champions.

The Conservatives may not like success. That is clearly what we are seeing from their own success and their own record.

The reality is that we are going to help build Canadian champions. We are going to make sure Canadian companies create the jobs here at home so they can remain at home and build Canadian companies that are going to make Canadians proud for decades ahead.

● (1500)

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Giovanna Mingarelli (Prescott—Russell—Cumberland, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, Canadians across the country are celebrating National Francophone Immigration Week.

Francophone immigrants contribute so much to our economy, our communities and our culture. Francophone immigration plays an essential role in strengthening francophone communities outside Quebec and in preserving our proud bilingual identity.

Can the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship tell the House what our government is doing to attract more francophone immigration to Canada?

Hon. Lena Metlege Diab (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her commitment to francophone communities in Canada.

Thanks to our investments and programs, we have exceeded our targets outside Quebec for the past four years, and we will continue to help communities attract and retain francophone talent to build a stronger Canada.

This National Francophone Immigration Week, let us thank all of our partners who work every day to enrich our communities.

* * *

[*English*]

STEEL AND ALUMINUM INDUSTRY

Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for months, our aluminum extrusion industry has been sounding the alarm, yet just weeks ago, the industry minister could not even remember that the industry exists.

The government calls aluminum and steel critical to Canada's sovereignty and success, yet leaves downstream aluminum producers facing 100% U.S. tariffs going into the U.S. while allowing record volumes of U.S. imports into Canada.

When will the minister publicly acknowledge the industry exists and protect the downstream aluminum industries just like they have steel?

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 100% tariffs, that is punitive. That is ridiculous. That is the world we live in. That is the world we live in with the neighbour we have, with the neighbour that the Conservatives seem to like a lot.

What are we doing? We are helping the local businesses in that industry, in aluminum, as we do with steel and other derivative products. It is important for us to keep those industries alive because we need them to build our ships, to build our airplanes and to make sure that we are sovereign in our own country.

Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised a deal with that neighbour to the south that was just referenced. It is all talk and no results.

The Leader of the Opposition and my Conservative colleagues recently visited Can Art Aluminum Extrusion in Windsor, Dajcor Aluminum in Chatham and eight other industry representatives. They are not asking for handouts or more debt. They are asking for a fair Canadian market to compete in. They submitted a proposal to the Minister of Finance in June 2026 and have yet to receive a response, despite the rhetoric from across the aisle.

When will the Minister of Finance act to save this downstream industry before it is actually lost and our sovereign capabilities are gone forever?

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have also visited a number of companies in those industries in Quebec as well as in Ontario. That is an industry that is crucial to our sovereignty. We will keep that industry alive. That is where our spending goes. The Conservatives keep saying it is inflationary spending. That is where our money goes, to making sure our industries stay alive.

We are facing an attack from outside with 100% tariffs. That makes no sense. We have to stay alive throughout this period. That is what we are doing. That is what the regional initiative on tariff relief is all about, and we will continue to maintain it.

Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's housing crisis will not be solved if builders cannot get the materials they need. A building supplier in my community says jobs are at risk because rising steel costs are hurting roof truss production. No trusses means no roofs. No roofs means fewer homes. The Liberals promised to double homebuilding, yet only 2,000 homes are under construction, and now they are failing to make homebuilding more affordable.

When will these Liberals give builders relief on this deal that holds Canadian homes together?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is taking action on buy Canadian with all of the housing that we are financing. We are financing a significant amount of housing. Last year, over 8,000 non-market homes were built, which is a record of many decades. We are seeing a big scale-up in rental housing.

The builders across Canada are using Canadian materials increasingly. We need to support that. We could use support from the Conservatives for buy Canadian rather than taking pot-shots at our own industries and not supporting affordable housing.

● (1505)

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Eric St-Pierre (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, something that I have been hearing from my constituents is that certain benefits are not being obtained because some have not filed their tax return. Today the House is debating Bill C-31, which would help ensure Canadians get the benefits they are entitled to thanks to automated federal benefits.

Could the Secretary of State for Canada Revenue Agency share with the House how automatic federal benefits would benefit my constituents and all Canadians?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we want to talk about affordability or a transformational program, let us talk about 5.5 million Canadians receiving automatic federal benefits. CRA would automatically file taxes, in particular for low-income individuals, finally getting them the benefits they are entitled to. I encourage members to vote for this bill to help us ensure Canadians get the benefits they deserve.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mike Dawson (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for more than a decade, the Liberal government has been questioning and erasing the very values that define this nation, but in New Brunswick, at CFB Gagetown, it reached a new low. This summer, the Liberal government actually stole Jesus off the cross and came back for the nails. Using building improvements as a cover, it stripped St. Luke's Chapel of its crosses, its altar and its stained glass after nearly 70 years and is refusing to put them back. The congregation was never consulted, and multi-faith spaces already exist on base. We are not making room for others by erasing the faith of those who already serve.

Will the minister order that St. Luke's Chapel be fully restored at CFB Gagetown?

Hon. David McGuinty (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Armed Forces is strengthened by the diversity of traditions, backgrounds and beliefs of all its members. The policies to support diversity are a moral and ethical responsibility of the Royal Canadian Chaplain Service, the chief of the defence staff and CAF leadership, and their commitment to care for all. The spiritual health and well-being of Canadian Armed Forces members are vital to our operational effectiveness. These guidelines do not ban private or personal faith and are meant to be more inclusive for a wide range of spiritual and faith traditions. The member knows this.

* * *

HEALTH

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since 2016, over 57,000 Canadians have died from a toxic drug supply. In response, the Liberals committed $1.3 billion to border security and appointed a fentanyl czar. However, enforcement alone cannot treat substance use disorders.

We may disagree on approaches, but surely we can all agree on investing in prevention, education, treatment and recovery. We need a compassionate, coordinated response where help is ready when people are ready.

Will the Liberal government finally show federal leadership and fund treatment on demand in this budget?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is always there to support the provinces and territories, as they are responsible for delivering services to their residents. I am working closely with my provincial and territorial counterparts to ensure that the services are appropriate.

* * *

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, 10 first nations have now gone to court to challenge the designation of the so-called Pacific link pipeline in the national interest. They point out that it contradicts and violates their treaty rights and constitutional rights, because how can they possibly assess whether a project impacts their treaty rights when the route is not finalized, the engineering has not been done and there is no environmental impact statement?

The Tsartlip First Nation is one of the 10 and is completely within the boundaries of my riding. I thank them in their language, SENĆOŦEN: *HÍSW̱KE SIÁM*.

Someone has to stand up for the British Columbia southern coast, for the Salish Sea, for our precious marine protected areas—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the consultation that happened in listing the project the member is referring to was the most intensive consultation ever held. There were more than 100 submissions. There were more than 100 in-person meetings. It was the most

comprehensive consultation that has been done on a project, and it was the earliest consultation that has been done.

We will continue to work with indigenous peoples to make sure projects are properly reviewed.

● (1510)

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I am persnickety about the Standing Orders, and I particularly like Standing Order 16. I have never heckled in this place in 15 years. I know some members do, and I find it offensive when opposition members heckle members of the government's cabinet, but I find it even more offensive when the hon. member for Simcoe North, who happens to be one of the MPs whom I never hear heckle, is shouted down by the bellowing of the Minister of Energy. I would ask that cabinet members try to set an example.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL PROCUREMENT

The House resumed from November 2 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:11 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

● (1525)

[*English*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 188)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Anderson	Anstey
Arnold	Au
Baber	Bailey
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt)
Berthold	Bexte
Bezan	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Bonin	Borrelli
Bragdon	Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Caputo	Chambers
Champoux	Chong
Cobena	Cody
Cooper	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Niagara South)

Dawson
Deltell
Deschênes
Doherty
Duncan
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake)
Fortin
Garon
Gazan
Gill (Calgary Skyview)
Gill (Calgary McKnight)
Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan)
Godin
Gourde
Guglielmin
Hallan
Ho
Holman
Jansen
Johns
Khanna
Kirkland
Kram
Kronis
Kusie
Lake
Larouche
Lawton
Lemire
Lewis (Essex)
Lobb
Majumdar
Mantle
Mazier
McKenzie
McPherson
Moore
Motz
Nater
Patzer
Perron
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Richards
Rood
Rowe
Scheer
Seeback
Small
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Stubbs
Thomas
Tolmie
Vien
Vis
Waugh
Zimmer– — 155

DeBellefeuille
DeRidder
Diotte
Dowdall
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Gallant
Gaudreau
Genuis
Gill (Brampton West)
Gill (Windsor West)
Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)
Goodridge
Groleau
Gunn
Hardy
Hoback
Jackson
Jivani
Kelly
Kibble
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kuruc
Kwan
Lantsman
Lawrence
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lloyd
Mahal
Malette (Kapuskasing—Timmins—Mushkegowuk)
May
McCauley
McLean (Calgary Centre)
Melillo
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Reid
Reynolds
Roberts
Ross
Ruff
Schmale
Simard
Steinley
Stevenson
Strauss
Thériault
Tochor
Uppal
Viersen
Warkentin
Williamson

NAYS

Members

Acan
Ali
Anandasangaree
Bains
Bardeesy
Begum
Bendayan
Brière
Carr
Chagger
Chang
Chatel
Chi
Clark
Cormier
Dabrusin
Danko
Deschênes-Thériault
Dhaliwal
Diab
Duguid
Earle
El-Khoury
Fancy
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Fuhr
Gainey
Gerretsen
Gobeil
Grant
Guay
Hajdu
Harrison
Hirtle
Hogan
Hussen
Idlout
Jeneroux
Joseph
Kelloway
Klassen
Lalonde
Lamoureux
Lapointe (Sudbury)
Lauzon
Lavoie
Leitão
Long
Ma
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLean (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke)
Mendès
Miedema
Mingarelli
Myles
Nathan
Noormohamed
Oliphant
O'Rourke
Petitpas Taylor
Provost
Rana
Rochefort
Royer
Saini
Sari
Schiefke
Shahnawaz
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sousa
Tesser Derksen
Turnbull
van Koeverden
Villeneuve
Weiler
Zahid
Zuberi– — 163

Al Soud
Alty
Auguste
Baker
Beech
Belanger (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River)
Bittle
Caley
Casey
Champagne
Chartrand
Chenette
Church
Connors
Coteau
Dandurand
d'Entremont
Desrochers
Dhillon
Duclos
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Eyolfson
Fanjoy
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fry
Gaheer
Gasparro
Gladu
Gould
Greaves
Gull-Masty
Hanley
Hepfner
Hodgson
Housefather
Iacono
Jaczek
Joly
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Lambropoulos
Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)
Lattanzio
Lavack
LeBlanc
Lightbound
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Cardigan)
Malette (Bay of Quinte)
Martin
McKelvie
McKnight
Ménard
Michel
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Nguyen
Ntumba
Olszewski
Osborne
Powlowski
Ramsay
Robertson
Romanado
Sahota
Sarai
Sawatzky
Sgro
Sheehan
Sodhi
St-Pierre
Thompson
Valdez
Vandenbeld
Watchorn
Yip
Zerucelli

PAIRED

Members

Anand	Blois
Bonk	Fergus
Konanz	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	Menegakis
Plamondon	Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Solomon
Sudds	Van Popta– — 14

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded division, the time provided for Government Orders will be extended by 14 minutes.

* * *

BUDGET 2025 IMPLEMENTATION ACT, NO. 2

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-31, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Cheryl Gallant (Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, despite all that growth, somehow Public Services and Procurement Canada lacks the staff to renew the defence contracts. I am not buying that, and neither should Canadians. Even if it were true and the government were issuing fat contracts faster than staff could keep up, it becomes a matter of triage on priorities. National defence is supposed to be the highest priority of a national government. Contracts to secure enough bullets and bombs should always be at the top of the pile. Instead, the priority of the defence department goes to the sole-source contracts hiring American diversity consultants.

One of the recommendations Conservatives have made to fix the bill is to establish a secretariat inside the Privy Council Office. This would do more to ensure that defence procurement is a priority than would Bill C-31 and Bill C-40 combined. We know this from our experience in Afghanistan. Under Stephen Harper, defence procurement was a real priority of the Privy Council Office. That is how we rapidly procured 651 light armoured vehicles, 500 tactical armoured patrol vehicles, 100 battle tanks, 37 Howitzer guns, 21 Chinook helicopters, 17 Hercules aircraft, 16 route clearing IED devices and five Globemaster aircraft. That is a real record with real results.

The Liberal record is one of delay, deny and deflect. The decision to delay the completing of the F-35 contract is not based on what is best for Canada's national security. It is about what is best for the political interests of the Liberal Party. The threats to Canada's national security have not diminished since the Conservatives left government. They have grown. Anyone watching the defence committee yesterday or anyone reading today's editorial in The Globe and Mail knows the truth. The threat of war is very real. Our soldiers were the tripwire in Latvia but now are at an even higher posture. Our sailors ply the Taiwan Strait, yet the government seems more keen on doing business with the very countries we might find ourselves in conflict with.

There is a real urgency needed to rebuild the Canadian Armed Forces after a second Liberal decade of darkness. Instead, the government wastes time trying to figure out the difference between a Crown agency and a Crown corporation. The Liberals have us debating legislation rendered moot by the next bill they introduce. This is no way to run a lemonade stand let alone a NATO member country. If this is how the Prime Minister ran the Bank of England, it is no wonder the U.K. crashed out of Europe.

It is clear from the bill before us and Bill C-40 that the government does not know what it is doing. This is not the quiet competence of a central banker but the desperate hustle of an investment banker caught in a stock market bubble. All his foreign trips and fake summits are meant to create the impression of action, the illusion of substance, but photo ops do not put bullets in the rifles or jets in the sky. The Liberal Party famously ran a campaign with a platform listing out 40 priorities. If it has 40 priorities, then it has zero priorities.

Conservatives understand that national defence is the number one priority of a national government. It is time the Liberals learned that lesson.

● (1530)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all the bafflegab aside, let us look at the reality. Since the last federal election, when people chose our Prime Minister, there has been a solid, tangible commitment to the Canadian Forces to the degree that we now have a record number of people applying to be members of the forces. There has also been the increase to 2% of GDP.

Bill C-40, which the member referred to, would create a Crown corporation to ensure that tendering is efficient and that Canadians are getting good value and, at the same, time transparency and accountability.

Does the member not recognize that, in the last 18 months, the Prime Minister, in fact the government, has moved quicker on military than those in generations before us did?

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, people are leaving the military faster than it can recruit them. It does not have bullets. It does not have the equipment. We have zero air defence in Canada. That is why it is keeping the Canadian people in the dark. The government knows that war is coming, and it has to warn the people but is not prepared to do so.

James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Algonquin—Renfrew—Pembroke for her long-standing efforts, since 2000, on the national defence committee. She knows this file inside out and backwards. She also knows that the Defence Investment Agency has done nothing but make announcements and promises. It actually has not delivered anything yet.

The government loves to talk. We hear the member for Winnipeg North get up to say that Crown corporations are the greatest thing ever. We can talk about all the sliced bread the government has invented in the last little while, but the reality is that there is no transparency, there is less accountability and there is going to be more opportunity for more political interference and the rewarding of Liberal insiders.

Will the member please address that issue and how this would actually open up the doors to more corruption, which we have witnessed in the past?

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, we have seen the correct way to do procurement. It was when Prime Minister Harper was in charge. He assigned the Privy Council Office to do it. When the prime minister is behind the orders, we get it done.

Right now, the Prime Minister has changed a defence agency in its infancy into a Crown corporation. The difference is that he can invest money. The government can invest in companies, in the Crown corporation. Not only are they getting the benefits personally from the dividends, but now, with the government's investing in these companies, it is nationalizing them. We have seen that in other countries, and we are at odds with them.

● (1535)

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just today I got an email from L'Arche Comox Valley. It is building a project of 16 homes for adults with intellectual disabilities. Build Canada Homes rejected its application for, get this, not meeting supportive and transitional housing requirements. If these Canadians do not qualify for supportive housing, who actually does? Build Canada Homes continues to lay blame, saying that construction and financing costs are not eligible. Mortgage debt means more unaffordable rents and draining of the non-profit itself. These Canadians need support to live independently before they face homelessness.

Does my colleague agree that the Liberal government needs to stop making excuses and fund projects such as this? I know there are projects such as this in need right across the country.

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the bill that is before us is about the military. I can tell the House that not only are regular people, civilians, looking for housing but that the people joining the military are also looking. The military has not built new barracks in years, and the barracks it does have are condemned. A recruit coming in is sent into a room, if there are even any left, that is mouldy, with insufficient electricity and no connectivity. That is no way to treat someone who is going to put their life on the line for their country.

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise and represent my wonderful riding. Today, I will be speaking to Bill C-31, the budget implementation act from last year.

This legislation deals with the allocation of public funds from the previous fiscal year, which ended on March 31 and, in my opinion, should have been passed by this House a long time ago. In fact, tomorrow, November 4, it will be one year since the previous budget was tabled. This is from a government that said it would move at speeds never seen before in the history of Canada. The Liberals have not done that with their legislative agenda and all of the procedural tools available, even including time allocation, to move this bill forward.

When borrowing is increasing and debt service costs are consuming more public resources, the government has an even greater responsibility to be transparent in how it accounts for every dollar. After the spring economic statement earlier this year, the Parliamentary Budget Officer highlighted “absence of key planning and governance detail for many new measures”.

Indeed, since the government tabled the budget a year ago, there has been nearly $5 billion in various announcements not tied to the budgetary process; in other words, spending before parliamentary approval. That includes $1.75 billion for a venture capital fund; $750 million for an agricultural growth pathway program; $430 million to unions; $200 million to an Inuit organization; $173 million for women's entrepreneurship; $168 million for a research ecosystem; $145 million to FIFA; $813 million for research chairs; $100 million to Gaza; $100 million to Vital health, and I do not even know what that is; $100 million to ELYSIS, and I do not know what that is; $100 million for offshore wind in Nova Scotia; and $100 million for women's economic leadership.

I will not comment on each of these announcements made by ministers. However, I will note that when the government gets completely into the habit of making spending announcements outside of the budgetary process, following the usage of public funds through the budget and estimates process in Parliament becomes almost impossible for the average member of Parliament.

Now, on the Liberal side, that does not seem to matter very much because most of the Liberals never speak in Parliament anymore. They have delegated that role to one member, the member for Winnipeg North. That is sad. I actually believe there are lots of intelligent people in the Liberal caucus. Either they are not allowed to speak or they do not know how, but it diminishes the capacity of this House to scrutinize and to have proper debates. I want intelligent Liberal members to raise their voices on behalf of their constituents, but they do not. That is a shame, and it is eroding the democratic traditions of this chamber.

The PBO now projects that federal borrowing will increase by $732.9 billion over the next five years, and that the federal debt will continue running substantial deficits as Liberals continue to spend more in a way that outpaces even higher revenues by the government. Interest payments will be the fastest-growing federal expense, skyrocketing to $83 billion projected by 2030-31, consuming 13.6¢ of every dollar in federal revenue and costing a family of four nearly $8,000 annually compared to just $2,500 five years ago.

● (1540)

The government promised to lower the debt-to-GDP ratio in the last election. Then it was changed to deficit-to-GDP ratio in the last budget a year ago. This is especially concerning as the Prime Minister has doubled the deficit with the biggest deficit outside the COVID pandemic and the highest spending as a share of GDP since the 1990s debt crisis. To be clear, Conservatives think that these are necessary but insufficient fiscal anchors. The deficit must just simply be reduced.

The bare minimum is that the government keeps its word to reduce the debt and the deficit as a share of our economy, but we are not doing that. We have not seen the results that Canadians expected a year ago, and a year and a half ago, since the last election. To achieve this, the government has to look very carefully at our taxation system and overhaul it as part of the budget that is going to be announced this week. I have been pressing the finance minister and the minister responsible for small businesses to do just that.

In fact, I have introduced a couple of tax reforms I hope to see presented in the next week. The first is that the GST and HST small supplier threshold should be increased from $30,000 to $60,000 and adjusted to inflation going forward. In Canada, once a business exceeds $30,000 in annual revenue, the owner must register for GST and HST, collect and remit the tax, file returns and take on additional administrative responsibilities. This threshold has not changed for more than three decades despite inflation.

I am raising that change to the tax code in good faith, in the hope that the government will make that change because the people impacted by it the most will be, in many cases, the Canadians working the hardest and struggling the most. It is the stay-at-home mom running a side business out of her kitchen like a bakery just to pay for her kids' hockey and dance lessons. It is the father working as a car detailer on evenings and weekends to cover his kids' hockey fees or that trip to the Okanagan for that tournament their kid really wants to go to. Let us make it easier for those people. Let us encourage entrepreneurship in our tax code. We have not done that.

The second policy I would like to see the government adopt is to increase the federal small business deduction limit from $500,000 to $700,000. This limit was last increased in 2009. Since then, inflation and rising business costs have steadily eroded its value, and growing businesses are hitting that threshold sooner than policymakers originally intended. Increasing the limit to $700,000 and also adjusting for inflation would allow businesses to keep more of their hard-earned dollars.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, in advance of the next budget, in response to this one, have all called for an overhaul of our taxation system to reduce the taxes on our entrepreneurs. As I have said in this chamber many times before, we have lost many entrepreneurs in Canada because it is no longer profitable to be an entrepreneur like it was 25 years ago.

I say to the government that it should be more transparent with how it spends taxpayer dollars. Announcement after announcement, without the ability of Parliament to properly scrutinize how that money is being spent, is not good for anyone nor for any Canadian. It should adopt a more transparent model. Second, it should overhaul our taxation system with the lens of making Canada more competitive and more open for business.

The government should take those two points moving forward, make some necessary changes to improve the entrepreneurial landscape in Canada and provide the transparency we need to allow Canadians to see how the government is spending money and what the actual results of those expenditures are. We cannot do that today, and it needs to change.

● (1545)

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I know the member opposite was really looking forward to hearing from the member for Winnipeg North.

I did listen closely to his remarks. I really agree on some of the points he made about small business, in particular, the GST threshold and small business deduction limits. I think those are really important things that have not been adjusted for much too long. They have not been adjusted for inflation as well. At the same time, I think we also need to recognize that Canada has the most competitive business tax rates in the G7 and new measures like the productivity mega deduction are helping business invest in those productivity tools that they need.

Is there anything where we are on the right track?

Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, the member from Hamilton asked a good-faith question. If, in fact, there is a mega deduction in the upcoming budget, I believe that is generally a step in the right direction. My criticism of that policy would be that it would apply more to the attraction of foreign capital into Canada. Where I believe we need to focus is on allowing existing Canadian businesses in the existing Canadian supply chains to address the competitiveness issues we are facing there.

[*Translation*]

Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as far as the economic update is concerned, the Bloc Québécois had 11 proposals to help people cope with the cost of living. One of our demands was to increase OAS by 10% for seniors aged 65 to 74, since the government did it for seniors over 75. These people are really being affected by inflation and the cost of living.

Does my colleague support this measure?

[*English*]

Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, with respect to old age security, there have been many Conservatives in our caucus supportive of some of the measures put forward by the Bloc Québécois simply because the cost of living is too high, which is a result of a government overspending and not addressing inflation appropriately.

However, I will note that the baby boomer generation in Canada has received more government money and more social programs than any generation in the history of probably mankind. I believe we need to look very closely at our old age security regime at large. Why is it that someone with a retirement income over $120,000 receives social assistance from the Government of Canada? Why is it that the income thresholds for old age security are much looser than the thresholds we apply to the Canada child benefit? Those are questions Parliament needs to ask and examine carefully.

● (1550)

Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls—Niagara-on-the-Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that it is rather odd that we are talking about the budget implementation act of 2025 almost a year to the day when the budget will be delivered, which is on Thursday.

I want to go back to his comments about the growing debt and it being the fastest-growing line item of the government, and that by 2031, it will be over almost 14¢ on every dollar, and the impact that will have on Canadian families.

Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, our Parliamentary Budget Officer has been very clear that some of the accounting practices of the Prime Minister, namely, separating operating expenditures and assets into different categories when they are tied to Crown corporations is, in essence, fudging the books, so to speak. Nobody expects Canada Post to ever pay back the money the Treasury Board has given it in recent years. That is not an asset. That is money we are paying interest on, and we will in perpetuity until that is paid off.

I believe the government needs to be more transparent in its budget reporting, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer outlined, but at this point, I am also very concerned about the future of my children, the debt they are inheriting and what the results of that debt will mean for their livelihoods in the future.

Danielle Martin (University—Rosedale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to participate in today's debate about Bill C-31, the budget 2025 implementation act, no. 2.

This debate is very timely, as has already been pointed out in the House today, because budget 2026, as we all know, is only a few days away.

Like all Canadians, I am worried about the circumstances in which our country finds itself. We are experiencing a trade war at the hands of what was once our closest ally. We are buffeted by the impact of armed conflicts in which we are happily not engaged, but which affect our lives in many ways, including through the price of goods.

In my riding of University—Rosedale in downtown Toronto, people are concerned about the cost of groceries, the availability of housing, the threat of climate change and the accessibility of the social programs they rely on. They are counting on us to do all we can to protect Canada's sovereignty and to stay true to Canadian values.

In this context, as our Prime Minister has said many times, we are focused on the factors we can control. Happily, that list is a long one. There is much we can do to support one another and to build a more self-reliant economy that leaves no one behind.

For this reason, I am eager to see what measures the next federal budget contains, and I am confident it will build on the important foundation that was presented a year ago in budget 2025.

[*Translation*]

Passing Bill C-31 would be a crucial legislative step forward in delivering on the priorities of budget 2025 and our plan to build a stronger, more resilient Canada. Our government is focused on what we can control: strengthening the Canadian economy, expanding our international trade partnerships, managing public finances responsibly and helping Canadians who are feeling the pressure of daily costs.

[*English*]

Bill C-31 is a piece of legislation that I have become quite familiar with. As members of the Standing Committee on Finance, my colleagues, some of whom are in the House today, and I were tasked with reviewing and considering this bill at committee. As part of that process, our committee heard from a wide range of stakeholders, many of whom spoke positively about the bill and some of whom offered constructive feedback. I am proud to say that, in response to some of that feedback, as well as what I heard from constituents in my own riding, I was able to advance three amendments to Bill C-31, which were ultimately adopted by the committee.

I will come back to those shortly, but I first want to speak to some of the important changes to the tax system that we find in this bill.

[*Translation*]

A robust and efficient tax system is what allows the government to support Canadians, protect the essential services they rely on, and build necessary infrastructure, as well as millions of homes. Bill C-31 will implement key measures outlined in budget 2025 aimed at protecting the integrity and improving the efficiency of Canada's tax system.

● (1555)

[*English*]

Bill C-31 proposes numerous measures aimed at improving tax fairness. It would strengthen anti-avoidance rules to counter the actions of those who attempt to use sophisticated transactions to transfer their assets from one trust to another or to render their tax liabilities uncollectible. It would limit delays in the payment of refundable tax on investment income when corporations use multi-tiered corporate structures with different fiscal year ends. It would also implement the remaining major components of global minimum tax, which is intended to ensure that large multinational businesses pay their fair share, no matter where their profits are earned.

However, let us not forget that our tax system does more than just collect money from those who owe it. It is also a mechanism for supporting those who need it most. I want to focus on a key part of the tax changes to Bill C-31 that would support people living on low incomes. That program is the commitment to automatic federal benefits and automatic tax filing found in this bill.

[*Translation*]

An important aspect of tax fairness is ensuring that Canadians have access to all the support measures available to them. We know, for instance, that a disproportionate number of low-income Canadians do not file their taxes. This means that people who most need benefits often do not receive them.

[*English*]

Bill C-31 proposes to allow the CRA to file a tax return on behalf of certain eligible individuals with low incomes in simple tax situations who do not owe tax and do not file themselves. Many people with low incomes in our country are missing out on benefits and credit payments because they cannot, for any number of reasons, fill out and submit their annual tax and benefit return. Often, they are unaware the government owes them money.

Whether for reasons of literacy, illness, the chaos of life and poverty, or other legitimate priorities, they are not filing their taxes, and therefore, they are not getting money to which they are entitled. Because of this, seniors are losing out on benefits like the Canadian dental care plan. Single parents are not receiving the Canada child benefit to help make ends meet. Young people and workers are going without the Canada groceries and essentials benefit or the Canada workers' benefit, which could ease their expenses for a week, a month or more.

The most important determinant of health is a person's income. In addition to being a financial policy, this would be a health intervention, an intervention that would benefit 5.5 million Canadians. I am personally very passionate about this opportunity.

Indeed, we know that this bill would affect health through a wide range of mechanisms, so before my time concludes, I would like to shift my focus to another such part of the bill, which is the proposed amendments to the Pest Control Products Act. The Pest Control Products Act came out of necessity to protect the health of Canadians and our environment. It is an important piece of legislation that places the regulation of pesticides rightly in the hands of Canada's Minister of Health.

Through Bill C-31, the government seeks to make amendments to the act in order to reduce regularly scheduled reviews of low-risk products where nothing has changed since the last review while maintaining a focus on ensuring regular review of high-risk products or products where our understanding of risk has changed. While the goals of these amendments, such as improved efficiency and better use of limited resources, are laudable, we did hear from stakeholders who wanted us to be even more clear that health and environmental concerns remain the primary focus in the review process.

This is why I introduced three amendments at the committee stage, which were ultimately adopted by the committee. These were the amendments: first, inserting language to ensure that, when conducting an assessment of a pest control product, the Minister of Health will apply a scientifically based approach and take into account government policy that prioritizes the precautionary principle; second, inserting language to clarify that subsection 17(1) of the Pest Control Products Act continues to apply, as this section of the act specifies that the minister must initiate a special review of a pesticide where they have reasonable grounds to believe that the health or environmental risks of the product are unacceptable; and third, adding a transparency requirement for the minister to make public any decision not to initiate a re-evaluation of a pest control product and the reasons for that decision within 90 days of the decision being made.

I believe, as did my committee colleagues, that these amendments have strengthened an already strong bill. I hope this chamber feels the same way.

● (1600)

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, the world beyond our borders is becoming increasingly uncertain, but Canada is confronting this reality from a position of strength. Bill C-31 would implement key measures from budget 2025 aimed at protecting the integrity of our tax system and making it fairer and more efficient.

[*English*]

When we work continuously to improve our public institutions, that builds the public's trust.

I urge all members of Parliament to pass Bill C-31 without delay.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague's speech. Incidentally, I want to congratulate her on her French. In her speech, she told us that Canadians were relying on the government. There is one segment of the population that certainly relies heavily on the government: the people in the oil and gas industries.

As for our demands for the next budget, the Bloc Québécois' proposal is simple. We could raise $25.7 billion over five years by eliminating direct and indirect federal government subsidies to the oil and gas sector. Let us not forget that the oil and gas sector is making record profits, that it is currently exempt from the tariffs, that 60% of it is owned by Americans, and that 90% of its production is sold to Americans. It makes no sense for us to collectively give so much public money to this sector. Does my colleague agree with me?

Danielle Martin: Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of a transition. We are moving from an economy that depended on the oil sector to a system based on renewable electricity and renewable energy. That is what we are focusing on right now as a government. We need to put the necessary infrastructure in place to make this transition to wind and hydroelectric power, which, incidentally, is very important in Quebec. For me, the most important thing is to build this infrastructure.

Louis Villeneuve (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as members know, my colleague is a family doctor. She is an expert on public health policy.

In her opinion, how does a person's income affect their health?

Danielle Martin: Mr. Speaker, there are ways of ensuring that an individual's or a family's actual income is sufficient to purchase basic necessities. Obviously, that is very important for health. However, there is also the issue of uncertainty. People who are living in poverty live in uncertainty, and that also has an impact on their physical and mental health. Programs such as the Canada child benefit for Canadian families with children or the guaranteed income supplement for seniors across Canada are very important for reducing uncertainty. At the end of the day, this is not just a financial initiative, but a health initiative as well.

[*English*]

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I felt that it was really rather unfair for my hon. colleague from University—Rosedale, as someone with such a distinguished medical career, to suddenly find herself on the finance committee with Bill C-30 barrelling through, which eroded the Pest Control Products Act in ways that were not amended in the bill. I do appreciate the amendments she made to Bill C-31.

Does she not feel, as a member of the finance committee, that it would have been preferable if changes to what is fundamentally a health and environment piece of legislation had gone to those committees to have adequate expert witnesses testify rather than to only the finance committee?

● (1605)

Danielle Martin: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the interventions she made at the finance committee on both bills, Bill C-30 and Bill C-31.

The reality of a budget bill is that they are broad and touch on many aspects. However, they do come to the finance committee. I was happy, as a member of the committee, to hear the feedback we heard from a wide variety of experts, including the member opposite herself, on their concerns with respect to the regulations we are discussing. I feel that that feedback was taken into account. I am happy to say that I will be happily supporting the bill.

Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill C-31, which is the government's second foray into getting the last budget put in front of this House and getting some of the implementations from that budget moving forward, recognizing that that was almost a year ago and we have a new budget coming out tomorrow.

I should point out that the budget presented in the House of Commons and voted on over a year ago was the budget for the prior fiscal year. We are going to have a budget in two days, and we are not sure whether it is going to be for the current fiscal year, because we already have one for 2026-27, or for the next fiscal year, because the government talked about budgeting and getting it out in the fall so that we could get a good glimpse of what was going to happen in the future, that is, in the next year.

Getting a budget for the 2026-27 fiscal year, which ends on March 31, is a bit of a charade, because, number one, the Liberals have already indicated that they are going to have more than a $66-billion deficit, which looks like it may be fixed a bit. Through the summer, they have obviously thrown a whole bunch more money at the wall, at this, that and the next thing, none of which was in the budget they presented in the House of Commons last year.

It is a government without any guidelines whatsoever, any fiscal anchors, any reason. As some people tell me, the thing about a budget is that it is a sacred document because it is what guides what we do. Everything we do in life is about choices, choices about what we spend money on and about what we do and do not do. At this point in time, we do not have a government that says we should not do this, because it wants to be the sole determinant of what happens in the Canadian economy.

That is not working for Canada. We can see that in our growth numbers. The Parliamentary Budget Officer came out last week and said that our real gross domestic product growth is only 0.9%, whereas our nominal growth is 5.5%. That means our GDP deflator is 4.7%. That is a proxy for inflation. It is not the same as the CPI, but it is a proxy for what is happening in the economy. The same output is now costing 4.6% more, and we have a 0.9% real increase in the economy. I know those numbers go above most the heads of my colleagues on the other side, but they matter because they show that the amount of money the government is pumping into the economy is having very little effect.

I want to get to where we are in Bill C-31, because it has a number of factors in it, one of which I have time to address. I have addressed it before. It is a very important part, but it is the establishment of a special government agency, the Defence Investment Agency. No sooner did the government present another entity coming forward for the government to spend money in than, lo and behold, it decided to change it into a Crown corporation.

I will explain this to people at home. There are three types of government operations. Basically, there are government departments, which respond directly to ministers, and those ministers are, in the old context, responsible for what happens in their departments. That means if the government messes up really badly, they have to stand on the floor of the House Commons, answer for what happened and potentially resign their post because they are at the head, the person responsible for that department.

That is no longer happening with the government whatsoever. There are no accountability mechanisms. Nobody in the front bench on the other side has been accountable for any of the disastrous outcomes that have impacted the finances of this country for the last 11 years, and it is getting worse.

When we look at the ramping up of deficits, nothing is getting better as far as our economic outlook goes. We had the Bank of Canada governor in front of our finance committee this morning, and inasmuch as his job is only about monetary policy, we can take a look at how fiscal policy is impacting monetary policy. It is putting us into a trap, and we are now the most indebted nation in the OECD, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Of 38 countries, we are number two. The only country above us, as far as the debt profile goes, is Luxembourg, and that is because of an anomaly about the number of financial corporations that are headquartered in Luxembourg, which have such a large weight.

When we talk about the debt profile, we talk about corporations, individuals' mortgages and consumer debt, and governments. The government's debts, combined with the provincial governments' debts, are onerous to this economy. This is a problem. We have to get ahead of it. It is going to be a problem as we go forward, particularly because we will have to refinance a bunch of it going forward.

● (1610)

Going back to Bill C-31 and the Defence Investment Agency, there are three forms of government operations, as I said. There are departments and agencies and then there are Crown corporations. Which one is the least accountable to government? It is Crown corporations.

No sooner did the government decide that we needed a Defence Investment Agency, which is one step removed from responsible government, than it decided with Bill C-40, which follows this bill, that we needed a Crown corporation called the Canadian corporation for defence investment to invest in defence. However, it would not be at arm's length, because the legislation says the associate minister could direct the new Crown corporation. That is nowhere else in any other government legislation pertaining to a Crown corporation. It is an aberration. It is the government wanting to have its cake and eat it too. It wants a Crown Corporation that functions like a little piggy bank, and the government would get to decide exactly what happens.

I raised this at committee. I do not mind using this word, because we have to make sure that we are building structures in Canada that are not open to corruption. I am not saying that any members on that side are going to be corrupt. However, they are setting up structures that are unaccountable to Parliament.

Picture this. The president of the defence Crown corporation that would emerge from this bill would have no oversight from the Treasury Board Secretariat about who he pays and how he pays them in order to get the job done, so it would be completely blind as far as the contracts he has to oversee go. Similar to what the government has been doing, a vast number of people could effectively be appointed to help the president of the defence Crown corporation more or less make all these decisions. It would be beyond oversight as far as how those people would have to be paid goes, as if they were public servants. They are public servants. Doug Guzman is that man's name. The compensation for the officials should be overseen by Parliament, if it is something being funded by the House. Think about those numbers going off the table.

The other problem with Crown corporations is the financial reporting mechanisms. As the Parliamentary Budget Officer clearly illustrated just last week, the government's deficits over the next five years, counting the current one, are going to add an additional $333 billion to this country's debt, but the government is going to increase this country's borrowing by $730 billion. What is the difference? The difference is that the government is parking money in Crown corporations without oversight, and it is being opaquely illustrated as if it is not debt, yet it is very much borrowing that Canadian taxpayers are paying tax on. That debt interest charge, as we call it, has gone from $24 billion four years ago to over $59 billion today and is projected to be $83 billion in four years. That is a ridiculous amount of interest coming out of taxpayers' pockets, and it is something the government has to get ahead of.

It is enough with the obfuscation. I can go through the data as far as what we are talking about goes. The Defence Investment Agency is turning into the Canadian corporation for defence investment. The current government has already created another couple of Crown corporations, which are the Canada strong fund and the financial crimes agency, but since 2019, the Liberals have created nine new Crown corporations and agencies. These are organizations that exist almost beyond the purview of the House. Ninety-two exist now.

We have to get ahead of this and look at all the ways the Liberals are hiding money and creating new second-guess organizations. Having Crown corporations versus independent agencies is just obfuscating the whole reporting mechanism, both for personnel and for the Canadian taxpayer dollars that are going off the table.

There are a number of issues here. I can only expound on so much in the 10 minutes I have on the floor of the House of Commons, but this is not the way to run a country. We are going broke. We are actually the most indebted country in the world, all things considered. We have to make sure we get ahead of this and stop the obfuscation.

● (1615)

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite would agree that we are at a stage in our defence where the cupboard is bare and we have to quickly procure all the things that are needed. We are buying planes, we are buying boats and we are buying munitions. There are all kinds of efforts on the go. Does he not feel that we need to put resources in place to put us in a place where we can better defend the country?

Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes. In the last election, we put forward a plan to spend judiciously but spend a lot more on getting a new base built in Iqaluit. It has been over a year and a half since the last election. What has the government done as far as spending goes? It has created a bunch of agencies. How do we spend? Should we spend? What should we spend? How do we measure that spending? How do we get people connected to the government who are effectively going to make these decisions? We are creating another bureaucracy, as opposed to getting things out the door.

All things considered, I know there have been some successes, so I do not mean to say that there is only bad happening. However, this opens the door to another bad structure and a lot of money going off the table.

[*Translation*]

Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one of the Bloc Québécois's budget expectations for the 2025 economic update involved ending the discrimination against seniors aged 65 to 74.

We have been fighting for this measure for several years now. It would cost about $3.2 billion. If the government were to end the subsidies it gives to oil companies, it could recoup nearly $6 billion a year. Let us round that down to $5 billion a year.

Does my colleague not think that would be a good idea?

Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from the Bloc for his question about Canada's oil industry, which I think is the best industry in the country.

The Bloc Québécois is always asking questions about the oil industry. I wonder if it thinks that oil is not important. It is a very important industry for the country. It pays a lot of taxes and generates a lot of revenue to improve the lives of Canadians.

It is important for Canada's future. It is important for paying bills in the future.

[*English*]

Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are debating the budget implementation act, volume 2, and the government brought in $130 billion more in tax revenue in 2025 than it did in 2020. What have Canadians gotten for that money? It has basically been higher inflation and higher food costs, and affordability is the worst it has ever been.

I wonder if my colleague can explain to the government what happens when the people of Canada are overtaxed and the government disrespects Canadian taxpayers' dollars.

Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is exactly right. The government is pushing more taxpayer money out the door into the Canadian economy because nobody else in the current framework is investing in the Canadian economy. The government can talk all it wants about the great investment summit that happened and say that we have turned around some investment that should be coming into Canada, but we are losing Canadian companies that are being moved south of the border.

It is one of those things where we are creating inflation with government spending. That is something the Parliamentary Budget Officer was quite clear about. The GDP deflator has gone up by 4.5% because our nominal GDP is up 5.4% and our real GDP is up only 0.9%. It is not working. We are not getting the private sector into the economy. We have to make sure that we are getting the rules straight so that people can see the path to invest in Canada and can make a good investment in Canadian industries again.

● (1620)

Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, and it is certainly no exception to speak to Bill C-31, the bill that is colloquially known as the budget implementation act.

It feels like we are a little late because we are getting a new budget in two days. I find it interesting that the government would table a budget literally at the end of the day on Thursday. Western MPs like myself and ministers often travel on that day. For those who tune in to question period on Friday, it is usually a bit shorter, not shorter in time but a little less raucous, a little quieter, and people are all spread out because, I would say, probably half of the MPs are present. It is often called the Friday afternoon news dump, as we often hear about. At times, we have to ask why.

The worst I saw, and I am trying to remember the example, was when the government made an announcement, and I am sure the member for Winnipeg North, with his repository of memories, would probably remember what it was. At 10 p.m., the government made what I believe was a military announcement, something deeply unpopular that it wanted to bury.

I am left wondering why Thursday at 4 p.m. Who knows? We will see what is in this budget. We will see just how bad the deficit is. If the government wanted to tell people about all the good news, one would think, it would table the budget on a Monday. Not only that, but the next week is a break week. Sure, we will have question period on Friday, although most ministers will not be here. I will be surprised if they are. When I inevitably get a question from the Liberals, perhaps the Liberal member who invariably gets up and asks me a question can tell the House whether the finance minister will be here on the Friday to answer questions. If the finance minister is going to table a budget, one would think that both he and the Prime Minister would be prepared to defend that budget in question period the next day.

I am very curious to hear whether the minister in charge of the budget and the Prime Minister will be here on Friday, because we will then go home for the Remembrance Day week, for what we call a constituency week, and those weeks are very important. We as MPs need time with our families, but we also need time with constituents. It is a time to connect with people, and that goes for members of Parliament from all parties. There are probably 10 different Remembrance Day ceremonies in my riding, maybe even 15 or 20, because there are upwards of 15 communities, 29 first nations and two regional districts in my riding alone. I look forward to connecting with people, but I am curious as to what will be in the budget.

Now I am going to deviate and say what I really hope will be in the budget. There is one thing I am very proud of. When I was the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, I had the tremendous honour of tabling a petition in support of the community land trust concept. This is something that has been championed by one of Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola's finest people, a wonderful volunteer, somebody who has been involved with the chamber of commerce. His name is Colin O'Leary. Colin has given so much of his time to this idea because he not only believes in it but believes this will have a tremendous impact for people.

The Hill Times just did a story. It says November 3, so it is hot off the presses. The Hill Times did a story about the community land trust, and has a photo of Mr. O'Leary, as well as the chamber of commerce located in Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola. One of my former students in the faculty of business, Acacia Pangilinan, is also pictured in The Hill Times. This is what The Hill Times says about the community land trust:

> ...Community Land Trusts...could be a big part of the solution. CLTs are non-profit organizations that acquire land and buildings, and hold the land in trust for affordable housing. While people can purchase houses, duplexes, or apartments on CLT property, the land itself remains in ownership of the trust. The effect? Land costs are taken out of the equation, meaning that housing can be built for the cost of construction, at the same time the land is held in trust as a community asset, benefiting future generations and ensuring lasting affordability.
>
> The problem? Our current tax rules make it difficult to donate parcels of land to CLTs.

● (1625)

In other words, people are punished for their own charity. This is something that has been advanced by the Kamloops and District Chamber of Commerce. It has been advanced by Mr. O'Leary, and I believe Mr. O'Leary deserves the lion's share of the credit for this idea. Anybody who would claim otherwise simply does not know the history. I would say to Colin, and those who have supported him, like the Kamloops chamber and like Acacia, thanks for all he has done, on behalf of the people of Canada and as his member of Parliament for Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola.

Another thing I would like to see addressed, and I have tabled a number of petitions in the House of Commons on it, is with respect to Merritt. Merritt is a new community in my riding. It was not in the former Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo riding. An atmospheric river went through Merritt, and the prime minister showed up, as he always did for the good photo ops. Justin Trudeau never missed a photo op. Let us be real. He showed up with Bill Blair, who ran in the last election and then got a patronage appointment. Nobody talks about the cost of his by-election in order to do that, one of many.

Be that as it may, they showed up. They said, “We'll have your backs.” The province put forward well over $100 million. I believe it was about $140 million, but I stand to be corrected on that number. The federal government indirectly, I am told, has contributed a couple of million dollars to this. When it was photo op time for the people of Merritt, hard-working blue-collar people like my family, so many of whom I identify with, as my dad was a sawmill worker, the government was so happy to say, “We'll have your backs.” When it came time to write cheques, the Liberals were missing in action.

We now have the West Coast Corridor Resiliency Partnership, which is a partnership of communities in my riding and in other ridings. It is time to deliver what the government promised to the people of Merritt. I have tabled petitions to this end, and I really hope that the government makes good on its promise. Let us face it. Talk is kind of cheap around here. We have heard so many promises that have not come to fruition.

Barriere is another great community. It has a strong mill history that I can empathize with, given my family's history. Barriere needs a new fire hall, and it needs a new fire truck. We talk about infrastructure, and we talk about community needs. This is really basic, and I have petitioned the government to fund those types of things.

With respect to Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola itself, Kamloops had this iconic landmark, the Red Bridge, called the Red Bridge because the side was actually red. It was destroyed by arson, tragically. There were two attempts. The second attempt actually worked. The reality is that the people of Kamloops want the Red Bridge back. This is going to be a provincial responsibility, but we need federal funding for the fast-tracking of the rebuilding of the Red Bridge. It connected mainland Kamloops to the Tk̓emlúps te Secwépemc lands. It is an alternate route so that we actually have a second way of getting from downtown to the Tk̓emlúps te Secwépemc territory. One would think that with a housing and infrastructure minister from British Columbia, we would be hearing about this. This is something on which I have put forward five petitions already. I really hope the government listens. This is exactly the type of thing it should be funding.

I have a lot more to say, but I see my time is up. It is an honour to rise in this House to discuss these things.

● (1630)

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his speech. I admire his passion for his community. He has pointed out a number of the buildings and things that are needed from an infrastructure point of view.

Our government has put in place the build communities strong fund. I would suggest he look to the local impact fund and also the direct delivery stream. There is a provincial stream as well. Has he looked at those?

Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not address that question by noting that the member, when she was on this side of the House before she crossed the floor, was highly critical of the government. In fact, she said that she did not get a call from the housing minister until she crossed the floor. What do we have, then? We have Liberals overtly telling us that unless one is a Liberal, one does not get a phone call from the housing minister.

Where I come from, one is an MP to everybody, to the people who voted for them, the people who did not vote for them and the people who did not vote at all, just like the government is a government to every single person. Shame on the government.

Will the Prime Minister be here on Friday? Will the Minister of Finance be here? Anyone? Bueller?

[*Translation*]

Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that the oil companies are not making huge profits these days and are struggling to make ends meet, just like the people who put gas in their cars.

However, the government continues to fund them through subsidies to the tune of nearly $26 billion. With that money, we could put an end to the discrimination against seniors and even lock in a 6% health transfer escalator, which is the level it should be. Otherwise, it will drop back down to 3%.

What does my Conservative colleague think about the government's insistence on continuing to subsidize oil companies when people are struggling to make ends meet? Furthermore, the government has decided to lower taxes at the pump, but we know full well that, in the end, many experts will tell us that the oil companies are pocketing the savings.

Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[*English*]

The hon. member talks about subsidies and things like that. In a lot of ways, he is talking about government spending. We may not always agree, but I think one place we may agree, and we may part company in some regard on this point, is on the nature of government spending. We constantly hear the Liberals stand up and ask where we would cut. I do not know. Maybe we would cut the consultants.

I was looking at a plan, a budget, for a jail that is being built. The government budgeted $5 million for lawyers, external counsel. Five million does not sound like much, but it is a lot of money. In this country, we have something called the Department of Justice. Do members know who it employs? It employs lawyers. Why are we spending $5 million on lawyers when we have government lawyers? I was a government lawyer.

This is where we are spending our money. This is why we are in a massive deficit. We are not even looking after the pennies or the dollars, the hundreds of millions of dollars. It all just goes into a big pool, and we are told that we have never had it so good.

Blaine Calkins (Ponoka—Didsbury, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my friend, who just talked about some of his previous life experience, about this. The member for Oxford was recently in my riding doing a round table about the failures of the criminal justice system in this country and its ability to keep Canadians safe. The recurring theme that I heard from municipal leaders and law enforcement was that they know who the bad guys are. They know what they are doing. This is a common theme that we hear.

I wonder if my colleague would like to expand on the budget's massive amount of non-investment, for lack of a better term. Is there anything in the budget implementation act that is going to help our justice system actually make Canadians safer?

● (1635)

Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, all we hear is that we have never had it so good when it comes to crime. I would say that the response from the government on crime has been absolutely inadequate. If the Minister of Justice wants to talk with me, I will show him about 15 areas where the Liberals need to pull up their socks and get going.

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to give my regards to all my colleagues who are here today for this important debate, which is on last year's budget, just two days before the next budget.

I would like to digress for just a moment and mention that the Premier of Quebec, Mr. St-Pierre Plamondon, made some important appointments today to very senior government posts. I would like to take a moment to commend my cousin, Isabelle Garon. When I was a little boy, I used to call her my big cousin. She will be working very closely with the Premier and will be responsible for his priorities and major projects. I have always been proud to be a Garon, to be part of a family that has served Quebec for generations, especially since my cousin was, until very recently, a senior vice-president in the president's office at Desjardins. I am pleased to see that, in flagship companies like Desjardins, which is a big cooperative, there are people who want to pursue their careers by serving Quebec. That makes me very proud.

I want to sincerely congratulate Isabelle Garon and everyone else who was appointed today.

As I said at the outset, today we are talking about last year's budget. We were told that it would be generational and that it would be urgent. However, 362 days later, we are still debating Bill C-31, the second budget implementation bill. Today, the Bloc Québécois presented its expectations for the next budget. The budget will of course be tabled in two days.

I had some conversations with the Minister of Finance, as basic courtesy dictates. What is surprising is that, once again this year, we have to resubmit requests that we made in the past. For example, we are calling for Quebec to be reimbursed for the phony carbon tax rebate that was used to buy votes during the election campaign and partly paid for with Quebec taxpayers' money. Our share amounts to $814 million. We are still having to ask for it.

That money would allow the Government of Quebec to take additional measures to ease the pressure of the high cost of living in Quebec. Let us also consider the costs incurred by Quebec because of the influx of asylum seekers. We know that the federal government acknowledges its responsibility. An initial small payment was made, but Quebec City is still owed significant amounts of money that could be used to deliver better services and help ease the cost of living burden for Quebeckers. We are still making those requests, but most of all, we are trying to make the most effective use of taxpayers' dollars in order to help people get through this cost of living crisis. We know that interest rates have risen again, and the Bank of Canada tells us that inflation will remain higher, around 3%, possibly throughout 2027.

That is something that hits people directly in their wallets. For someone in the riding of Mirabel, inflation is not an economic indicator. It shows up on grocery store shelves. We are proposing a significant increase to the much-touted groceries and cost of living benefit. We resubmit these requests year after year because they eventually work. Sometimes governments end up listening. For example, last year, the Minister of Finance introduced the new groceries and cost of living benefit. That was something the Bloc Québécois had suggested when the war in Ukraine first broke out. It took several years, but it finally happened. Today we are calling for that benefit to be enhanced, because the Bloc Québécois's primary concern is the people who vote for us, the voters and citizens across Quebec who are going through this cost of living crisis.

Earlier on, my colleague, the member for Montcalm, mentioned the poor oil companies that are living on bread and water these days, having a hard time, unable to make ends meet. Obviously, the member for Montcalm was showing off his trademark sarcastic wit. These oil companies are getting billions of dollars in subsidies.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the oil industry is active in your riding of Lac-Saint-Louis. One thing is clear, however: The United States has a predilection for this industry at the moment, considering that it was spared from the tariffs. A big portion of our oil output goes to the United States.

Why is it that instead of helping people make the transition, the government is granting money to these companies, which are owned primarily by American shareholders?

It is a fair question, not for or against the industry. It is a common sense question. Why is the government helping this sector?

● (1640)

In Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, the steel, aluminum and phosphate sectors have seen funding under the critical minerals strategy held back by government-imposed regulatory measures. The government should be helping these people. They are the ones really bearing the brunt of the tariff crisis. The growth data clearly show that the oil sector is doing anything but struggling at the moment.

We are therefore reiterating our proposals. They have been costed and are self-financing. This is a responsible and thoughtful approach, and we are proud to stand behind it. Now, will the government listen to us? During committee consideration of Bill C-31 last week, the parliamentary secretary and member for Whitby, a very sweet man, would tell us with a smile, every time the opposition tabled an amendment, that we had done a good job, that the Liberals agreed with the principle of our amendments, but that they would nevertheless be voting against them. The message was clear: Our amendments were doomed to be tossed out like garbage, purely on principle. That was essentially it. At the end of the day, what does that amount to? I even heard the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant say that the only thing he knows for certain when he gets up in the morning is that the Bloc Québécois will be complaining about something.

We have pages and pages and pages of costed proposals for the people we represent, but will it all be tossed in the trash, just like our amendments during the committee study of Bill C-31? I invite people to watch the video of that meeting. It is sad to see how the government treats members of Parliament. It is sad because, when it comes to pesticides, we know it is important to farmers to have access to products that support agricultural productivity. What did we ask for in our amendments? We wanted the government to release the scientific studies it used to authorize pesticides that were previously banned. That was too much to ask, apparently. The Liberals supported it in principle, but opposition amendments are always one step away from the trash, unfortunately.

On the air transportation file, the Liberals are planning to outsource work the government should be doing. They are now contracting out work that they have not been able to do for years. We said the people handling complaints should have to meet clear criteria. That was too complicated, apparently. In parliamentary committees, the shredder is always close at hand. We said that an airline should have to pay interest if it withholds money it owes people, just as any customer would have to do. The member opposite is reacting to that. She cannot believe that her own party voted against that. I see her. She cannot believe it, and neither can we. We also said that complaints should be assigned at random, rather than by a third party selected by the airline. Airline passengers' rights always end up in the shredder too.

We raised questions about the global minimum tax. Companies that make profits in Canada but are headquartered in the United States should also contribute to the common good, since they have economic activity here, to ensure there is no unfairness toward companies that are based here. However, the Prime Minister created a special regime for the Americans, just as he did with supply management permits and the levy on digital giants. He rolled over. It is too hard for him to stand up to the U.S. President, so Bill C-31 includes a special tax regime for the United States, for the very companies that are suffocating our media ecosystem.

Under the Canadian Income Tax Act, which is extremely simple, as everyone knows, there are dollar thresholds for accessing the accelerated dispute resolution mechanism. This mechanism can be used for cases below a certain threshold. We asked that the thresholds be indexed to inflation so that we would not have to pass new legislation on that every year. In fact, the Quebec bar association proposed that idea. The government replied that if the thresholds were indexed, it would mean that the numbers would go from $50,000 to numbers that are not round numbers, that is, with cents. Since the government thinks that is too complicated, the whole idea went into the trash bin.

It is hard to work constructively in a Parliament where the Prime Minister is on an authoritarian rampage and showing contempt for Parliament. The Prime Minister has nothing but contempt for the work of parliamentarians, especially when they do their work diligently. That is how last year's budget was handled by Bill C-31 this year. Today, I am calling on the members opposite to start recognizing the quality of the work being done on our side. Obviously, without significant amendments, it is impossible for us to vote in favour of Bill C-31.

● (1645)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we begin questions and comments, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Artificial Intelligence; the hon. member for Middlesex—London, Health; the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona, Labour.

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Isabelle Garon on her new role. It is a good thing when several members of a family serve the people. In my family, my great-uncle was the member for Charlottetown.

We are currently debating budget 2025. The member said that the government sometimes listened to the Bloc Québécois's recommendations and included them in the budget.

What would he like to see in budget 2026?

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I really appreciate her. She knows that.

We always prepare budget proposals. It is not an easy exercise because our proposals actually pay for themselves. That means that we need to find the money, so it is an exercise in choices.

As I said in my speech, we need to help those who are struggling the most right now with the cost of living by increasing the benefit. We also want to eliminate the GST on secondhand goods. Quebec is ahead of Ottawa in this respect. We need to stop taxing these goods twice. In fact, this would be an environmentally responsible policy. As for policies regarding housing, rent relief and homelessness, two things need to be done. First, the money must be sent to Quebec in order to avoid duplication, and, second, certain funding must be made permanent.

I am thinking of the Reaching Home program, whose funding is ending in 2028. It is not right that, at a time when we are experiencing a crisis like the homelessness crisis, a crisis in transitioning away from homelessness, organizations do not know what their funding will look like beyond 2028. That requires planning.

We have prepared a package of proposals, and we hope that the government will listen to them, especially since the government has had enough time to adjust the budget.

[*English*]

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier today, we heard the Governor of the Bank of Canada, at committee, talk about the importance of governments having a plan, the importance of fiscal anchors and framework, and the signals to the market if one fails to meet those fiscal anchors. It appears that the government is likely going to blow through one of its fiscal anchors.

I am curious as to what my colleague thinks that might signal to markets and what that might mean for the overall future of our economy.

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, having failed to meet its debt-to-GDP target, a target that the Parliamentary Budget Officer projects will continue to rise, the government simply chose to change the rules in its last budget.

When it comes to fiscal anchors, the government is like a hockey team trailing 5-2 late in the third period that decides to add three extra periods in the hope of winning the game. It is changing the rules after the fact. When a government establishes rules so that its performance can be measured from one year to the next, it cannot simply rewrite those rules.

Of course, no one is expecting a balanced budget this year. Everyone understands that the public finances have been managed loosely. That was true under the Trudeau government, and it remains true today. The deficit is expected to exceed $60 billion. No one realistically expected a balanced budget.

However, the fact that there is no clear fiscal anchor to show us whether the government has met its targets from one year to the next—in a country that prides itself on being a G7 nation and reminds us of this every five seconds—is, in my view, bordering on irresponsibility.

● (1650)

Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech. As I have said before, the member for Mirabel's speeches are always interesting. He knows a lot more about public finances than I do, so I always learn something when I listen to him. I thank him for his speech.

That being said, I heard one thing in his speech that keeps coming up.

I get the impression that the government could use the money it is spending on the oil sector to address many of the Bloc Québécois's budget priorities and many of the Canadian government's other problems.

Did I understand correctly? Could what we spend on the oil sector really be used to support seniors and fund health care and all the other priorities?

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, tens of billions of dollars of public money is going toward that sector. They do not print that money. They take it from taxpayers' pockets. The subsidies given to oil companies could certainly be put to better use for society.

We also raised other issues in our pre-budget requests, such as indigenous housing. We are not asking for a single penny more. We are asking the government to spend the funds it has already budgeted. The government puts on a good show, tables a budget, invests in indigenous housing, and then does not even spend its own money. It is the same story when it comes to homelessness and housing. I am thinking of the Reaching Home program. We are calling for these funds to be made permanent to ensure predictability. We are not trying to run up the deficit.

Drawing up a budget is about making choices. In our view, giving tens of billions of dollars to oil companies and mismanaging spending are bad choices.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

There have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That the order made yesterday pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3) respecting the deferral of the recorded division on the motion to concur in the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights be discharged and the motion be deemed adopted on division.

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

It is agreed.

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

Some hon. members: No.

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the rose scholarship, a scholarship put on by a good friend of mine, Andrew Addorisio, and his wife, Sarah Addorisio. It was inspired by his mother, Rosella Addorisio. This scholarship aims to help underprivileged youth that face barriers to education and the things they are trying to achieve. I want to congratulate them on establishing this scholarship.

It is an honour to rise on behalf of the great people of Vaughan—Woodbridge to speak to Bill C-31. Before the government asks Canadians to believe another budget promise, I should explain why so many people can no longer afford to eat.

Today, the Salvation Army reported that one in three Canadians surveyed had skipped meals or reduced their size because they could not afford groceries. Among young adults, that number was 41%. These are young Canadians who are trying to establish themselves, build careers and start families. They are being robbed of a Canadian promise, falling behind on what is the most basic of necessities.

The Daily Bread Food Bank also released its latest report today. One in eight Toronto children now lives in a household that relies on a food bank, nearly double the rate in 2022. Toronto recorded 4.1 million food bank visits for the second consecutive year. After housing costs, clients now have a median of just eight dollars a day left for food and other essentials. Can members imagine that? Eight dollars is not even enough to grab a meal at Tim Hortons. Let us think about people trying to get to work, feed themselves and replace a child's worn-out shoes when all they have left is that amount.

I am sure we will hear the Prime Minister deliver another speech about the strength of the economy, another talking point in the House that will be dressed down if spoken to the average Canadian. As we have heard, "Affordability is the best it has been in over a decade." After all, if we listened to the government very closely, we would get the impression that Canadians have never had it so good, but I would ask Canadians watching at home if that resonates with them. Are they better off today than they were yesterday? Are they better off from anything that the Liberal government has done? Parents, when they open their fridge when they get home, know the truth. That is exactly the reality against which we will judge Bill C-31, the second act implementing last year's budget and, of course, the budget the government is preparing to introduce later this week.

Canadians deserve to know whether any of this will leave them in a better position to pay their bills. The government cannot keep raising the cost of doing business and expecting the consequences to stop before they reach the customer. The Prime Minister, over the past decade and a half, has doubled the deficit, with the biggest deficit outside of the pandemic estimated to be the highest spending as a share of GDP this century.

There are serious threats, of course, from outside of our borders. American tariffs are hurting Canadian employers and workers. This makes it even more urgent to address the costs the government can control. Canadians should be able to count on their own government to make it easier for them to earn a living here. Instead, the government's finances are moving further away from the discipline that it promised when it was first elected.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer now projects a $63.3-billion deficit this fiscal year. Federal debt as a share of the economy is projected to rise every year over the forecast. The government is also projected to miss its fiscal anchor of a declining debt-to-GDP ratio. It is the Liberals themselves who chose that very commitment, and Canadians are certainly entitled to expect them to keep it.

Earlier today at the finance committee, I asked the Bank of Canada governor what his thoughts were on the importance of fiscal anchors from the perspective of the market and what the signal of missing a fiscal anchor might do. Of course, his response was predictable: These are plans, and they give confidence to the market.

The government ignores its fiscal anchors, and it has been doing this for the last 10 or 11 years. We might remember a time when Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin, when he was finance minister, got us back on track with our fiscal anchors and balanced budgets. Of course, since then, we know about Justin Trudeau's time here. How many of us would love to forget how the Liberals ran deficits year after year, blowing our deficit to smithereens? Worse than that, they set numerous fiscal targets and ran through every single one of them. Now the Prime Minister has set fiscal anchors, and it appears he will already be blowing through at least one of them.

● (1655)

When a family cannot make its payments, it cannot solve its problem by inventing a new description for its bills. A small business can not reassure its bank by moving the goalposts whenever it misses a target. The Prime Minister should face the same basic demand to have an honest plan, one that he is able to stick to and that breathes confidence into the Canadian economy.

The PBO projects interest on the federal debt will cost over $59 billion this year, rising to $83 billion in the next five years. Canadians will end up paying that through taxes while trying to manage their own debt. Imagine that. We now live in a time when we are going to be spending more on debt interest than we do on health care transfers.

If we recall, former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge once had a proposal for keeping debt servicing costs below 10% of government revenue, or roughly 10¢ for every dollar. According to the PBO, we are already around 10.5¢ for every dollar, and that is expected to rise over the next five years to just under 14¢. Borrowing certainly has a cost. The larger that cost becomes, the harder it is to fund essential services and provide lasting tax relief for Canadians.

We should be focusing on metrics that will help the structural issues of our economy and get it moving again. Often, we see from the government that its measure of success is how much money it spent. What we need to do is signal to the economy that we are ready and open for business and want to attract investment. We would like to see some regulatory and tax reform, which is much needed in this country. This is why Canadians are asking for a budget that saves them money.

In this budget, we would love to see the Liberals cut wasteful spending, reduce their reliance on expensive consultants, cut unnecessary bureaucracy and corporate handouts, and cancel the $150-billion Alto project rather than committing taxpayers to another enormous project while families struggle. I find that interesting. When we were discussing Bill C-31 at the finance committee, I asked the transport minister what the ceiling was on this project, and he would not commit to a ceiling.

There are certain projects that some people try to argue, the way the government has, are in the national interest. That does not mean there is a blank cheque awarded to government for these projects. We have a project that is already demonstrating that the cost will be exponentially higher than first considered. Oftentimes, when projects are put on the books and a costing plan is looked at, there is a large buffer in the plan when dealing with bigger projects. There seems to be no end in sight to the amount of money that this project is going to cost taxpayers.

Let us think about the GST on fuel for a second. Conservatives are calling for the elimination of federal diesel taxes until Canada Day, the suspension of the GST on fuel until summer and the permanent repeal of the fuel standard tax. That is exactly what it is: a tax on Canadians and a tax on the trucks that carry groceries to the store, materials to a construction site and products from Canadian factories to their customers. Reducing fuel taxes would lower transportation costs and give families direct relief at the pump.

We also need more good jobs and stronger paycheques. That requires businesses willing to invest in this country and to expand and hire in Canada. Ottawa needs to speed up approvals, remove unnecessary regulatory barriers and make it easier to build homes, develop our resources and manufacture Canadian products.

The responsibility to protect taxpayers also needs to apply to defence procurement. Division 16 of Bill C-31 would establish the Defence Investment Agency in legislation. One thing we are constantly questioning is why, with every new agency developed, there seems to be less and less accountability from the government.

I thank members for their time. I stand here on behalf of Canadians fighting for a more affordable Canada.

* * *

● (1700)

[*Translation*]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-220, an act to designate the month of March as Hellenic heritage month.

* * *

[*English*]

BUDGET 2025 IMPLEMENTATION ACT, NO. 2

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-31, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I take a look at the debt-to-GDP ratio, Canada is doing relatively well in comparison to all the G7 countries. When we look at Canada's AAA credit rating, Canada is doing exceptionally well. When we compare that to G7 countries, only Germany has the same rating.

The question I have is a principle question. If a government has fiscal capabilities, as we do, would the member not agree that, if we were to invest in Canada, work with provinces, indigenous communities and so forth, that we could build our infrastructure, which would help the economy, not only in the short term, but also in the long term?

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a theme that we have heard over and over again. Time and time again, we have heard the Liberals say they are going to be investing in the economy and they are going to be investing to grow, but we have seen the deficit climb higher and higher, and our public debt climb higher and higher.

It is interesting that, on the debt-to-GDP ratio, we often hear the government cite net debt. Of course, that calculation considers the Canadian pension plan. I am sure Canadians would be alarmed if they understood that the government was considering their pension as potential debt repayment. I do not think people would appreciate that very much.

The government has these fiscal anchors. It has these fiscal anchors that it needs to achieve, and it seems as though it is blowing through them. If we want to maintain our credibility, and maintain our credibility in markets, we have to make sure we make a plan and we actually stick to it.

● (1705)

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

I thank my colleague for his speech. Like me, he is also from a family of Italian background, as are many other members of the House, although I cannot point to who is or is not here in referencing any particular member. One of the things I am so proud of is the hard work I saw from my family. They instilled that work ethic in me. I sense that the member has many hard-working people in his riding who are struggling to get by.

Could the member comment on where he might shift priorities to in helping those hard-working people?

Michael Guglielmin: Mr. Speaker, obviously, my family, the member's family and many families that have come to this country as immigrants share a similar story. They came here, they worked hard and they wanted a better future for their families, for their children and their children's children.

The question now becomes, what exactly should government be focusing on today? There are numerous things. We need to get our debt and deficit under control because, as I said in my speech, we are now at the point where we are spending $83 billion on interest payments alone, which is more than is being spent on health care transfers.

We are overtaxed and over-regulated in this country. What Canadians need and what Canadians expect from government is for the government to address these issues. We need some tax reform and income tax reform. We need reforms that will make businesses grow and thrive so there is more employment and more opportunity for our workers.

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when our government talks about building Canada strong and investing, especially with the unjustified tariffs from the U.S., we are having to put a lot of effort into creating jobs in the country.

Would the member not agree that there is a great need for well-paying jobs and that these nation-building projects are part of the solution?

Michael Guglielmin: Mr. Speaker, there is a principle we often talk about, which is, what is in the government's control that it could address today? My colleague would know this quite well from when she was a member on this side of the House. She would have been a strong advocate for supply-side principles.

This includes things like tax reform, regulatory reform and things that would create the conditions for businesses to prosper and for individuals to keep more of their paycheques in their pocket. They are the things that would inspire businesses and investment to grow here in this country. We need to see more of that and less centralized government control over the way the economy works.

Blaine Calkins (Ponoka—Didsbury, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to take a page out of the book of my colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola and say it is a pleasure to rise today on behalf of the good, honest and hard-working people of Ponoka—Didsbury.

Ponoka—Didsbury is in central rural Alberta, just about 45 minutes north of Calgary and 45 minutes south of Edmonton. This is the heart of Alberta, and it is truly a pleasure and an honour for me to rise to speak on their behalf. As an Albertan, it also gives me pleasure to stand here in the House of Commons to talk about the great things Alberta contributes to this great nation of Canada.

I am going to take this opportunity to just mention to everybody listening in the House that, this year, every single man, woman and child in Alberta will contribute $4,000 more to the Government of Canada than it gets back in services. For the constituents of Ponoka—Didsbury, that is about a half a billion dollars, just under $500 million. I know nobody in this place is rushing forward to give thanks, and in 21 years, I have yet to hear many people say it, but just in case they are thinking it, I am going to say that they are welcome, on behalf of my constituents in Alberta, who simply want the government to get out of their way to let them do what they do best.

We know from our industrious spirit and our can-do attitude, particularly in rural Alberta, that we can grow the food, get the resources like oil and natural gas out of the ground and harvest our timber. Like I said, we can grow our food. We can do the industrial and commercial development we need to create prosperity. There are mod yards in the constituency of Ponoka—Didsbury that build massive pieces of infrastructure, which are shipped up the road to places like Fort McMurray, either by truck or by train.

We know that the workers we have in rural and central Alberta, and even in our larger urban centres, have all of the capacity, technological capability, experience, engineering, knowledge and know-how to build out even more of our resource extraction, resource processing and resource shipping machinery. I know a lot of that happens right in my constituency, in Ponoka, Blackfalds and other places, in the industrial yards that we have there. I am looking forward to, someday, those yards being as busy as they used to be about 11 years ago.

The reason I am standing here today is to talk about the government's budget implementation act from the previous budget. Here we are, at just the report stage. We are not even at third reading yet. We are just at report stage on the budget implementation legislation, which is largely housekeeping legislation, on a budgetary policy that was passed last year, and we are two days before the next budget, which is going to be presented this coming Thursday. It is a really interesting piece of legislation.

Let me tell the House how Liberal logic works. It works the same way on a lot of different things, yet here we are. We are talking about division 16 of part 4 of Bill C-31. I am just going to talk about this a bit for the folks back home. Division 16 deals with the creation of the Defence Investment Agency, which was, in the last budget, the government's newfound bureaucracy that was going to somehow do procurement for our men and women in our armed forces.

Let me be absolutely clear that the people of Ponoka—Didsbury 100% stand behind the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces. Many of the people in my constituency, like it is for anybody else in the House, have served in the Canadian Armed Forces. We are very, very proud of the men and women who stand on guard for us each and every day, but we have a procurement problem in Canada. We cannot get things done on time. We have lots of red tape and lots of bureaucracy.

This budget implementation act is just at report stage. It is not even at third reading two days before the next budget is to be tabled. Division 16 in Bill C-31 would establish the Defence Investment Agency as a body with its own minister, which is, by the way, yet to be named. This piece of legislation would actually to be replaced by another bureaucracy in Bill C-40, which is also currently before the House. We have a bill to create a bureaucracy that is so late coming to this place that the new bureaucracy to replace this bureaucracy is being stood up in another piece of legislation currently before the House. We cannot even make this stuff up.

● (1710)

If there was a gold star for building government, every grade 5 teacher in Canada would be asked to surrender their gold stars to the Liberal government in Ottawa for all of the gold stars it would get for creating more bureaucracy. We have never had more government than we do right now. The Liberals are so busy making government here that they do not even have time to ratify legislation that creates one bureaucracy before they get around to ratifying another piece of legislation to replace that bureaucracy. That is how fast they are growing government here.

Our men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces need the tools, technology and equipment to defend us, but really, all we are doing right here in Parliament is creating one bureaucracy after another bureaucracy. Like I said, they get gold stars for creating bureaucracy, but that is not the bigger point I want to make in my comments today.

I think Canadians would be shocked to find out just how in debt Canada actually is. I am not just talking about our federal debt, which is massive. It is more than double what it was in 2015. I think we are at $1.5 trillion in national debt, which is up from just over $620 billion. Every government and every prime minister in Canada, up until 2015, in 150-some years of the existence of our country, managed to amass a grand total of about $620 billion in debt. Since Justin Trudeau and this new Liberal Prime Minister have been to office, that has more than doubled, and the Parliamentary Budget Officer has projected that, in the next five years, it is going to go up another $700 billion to well over $2 trillion.

That is just the federal debt, and the interest on that debt is now becoming one of the highest budget line items we have, to the point where we are getting up to $6,000 for every family. All the taxes they pay to the Government of Canada are just going to pay the interest, not the principal. It is like just paying the interest on the credit card without ever paying down the principal or the amount that is owing. Right now, we are at $6,000 per family before any service is paid, before any doctors are paid, before any teachers are paid, before any schools are built, before anything is done, before any police officer is paid, before any Crown prosecutor is paid, before anybody at our corrections services or anybody at our border trying to protect our country is paid, and before our men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces are paid. Before any of that gets paid, we are dealing with $6,000 just in interest.

We also have all the sub-sovereign debt from all of our provinces and then all of the business debt. I am not even talking about what our financial institutions are on the hook for when it comes to lending. I am just talking about business debt, such as businesses that take out a line of credit, a farm that has a loan with Farm Credit Canada, or something like that. This debt is now added on to the personal debt of every Canadian, and we are looking at 385% debt-to-GDP.

I am not even talking about the money financial institutions have lent out that they owe. I am just talking about personal debt, credit card debt, business and commercial debt and government debt. The entirety of our economy has to service all of that debt, and we are not getting the economic questions in this country right.

We have a Prime Minister who gets up every time he speaks and has a doomsday scenario for Canada, yet one simple little request we had was to remove the tanker ban off the west coast. If we are on a war footing economically, we could be shipping another 250,000 barrels a day by rail to Prince Rupert to give to our friends and allies.

I just got back from a trip to Japan with several Liberal colleagues, not the ones who are smirking at me on the other side right now, and Japan would take every drop of oil, natural gas and propane we have, but we will not get out of the way. We will not remove a tanker ban to allow a simple little thing to grow our economy so that, hopefully, we could pay some of this debt. I shudder to think why this is. It makes no sense.

● (1715)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just want to address a couple of comments from the member's intervention. First, on behalf of the residents of Winnipeg North, I do thank the residents of Alberta and the Province of Alberta for their contributions through equalization. I like to think it is one of the things that makes Canada great. Some provinces are not blessed with the same sorts of resources and so forth. Having a balance of social services is really important for all of Canada.

Second, I would note that the member talked a great deal about getting oil to the west coast. The demand that the member is referring to has been there for many years. When he was in government with Stephen Harper, the Conservatives did not build an inch of pipeline going to the west coast. Not only did our previous prime minister, Justin Trudeau, do that, but we have a strong indication that the current government will do likewise. I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts on that issue.

Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, do members know how many oil pipelines to tidewater the Harper government inherited from the Chrétien and Martin governments? It inherited zero. We had four and a half years of a majority government to change the legislation in the country in order to create a streamlined application process.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, they are laughing on the other side of the House. They think it is funny, but I was here. I lived through all of it.

How many LNG projects did we inherit? We inherited four. They were import terminals. The Liberals of the day wanted to import liquefied natural gas into Canada, not actually export it. When Justin Trudeau became the prime minister, he inherited northern gateway, the Trans Mountain expansion, energy east and Keystone XL. He chased away all the private sector financing available for that and put on a $40-billion price tag on it for the taxpayers of Canada to pay.

The Liberals are now going to do the same thing again. They have regulated our economy to a standstill, and the only people who get to do anything are their buddies, to whom they give a bunch of taxpayer money, rather than fixing our roads and paying for hospitals that everybody gets to enjoy.

● (1720)

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, tens of thousands of air passengers whose rights have been violated have filed complaints and are waiting for them to be processed. The government's response is to outsource the process to entities that will be selected according to criteria that are nowhere to be found in the legislation. When an airline owes compensation following the resolution of a complaint and interest has accrued on that amount, passengers may face significant challenges in recovering the money owed to them. Furthermore, the companies that handle those complaints may ultimately be chosen, directly or indirectly, by the airlines themselves.

The Bloc Québécois tabled amendments to correct these shortcomings in the bill, but the government rejected them all in committee.

In my colleague's opinion, what are the government's reasons for relentlessly targeting air passengers this way?

[*English*]

Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, as somebody who spends an inordinate amount of time in airports and dealing with our Canadian airlines, I can understand and appreciate the frustration. I am sure all my colleagues of the House generally have those same levels of frustration. The government has announced that it is going to be privatizing some of our airports. That is an interesting concept and an interesting idea. I do not know where this is going to go. I have some ideas about whether or not it is a good idea.

The reality is that Transport Canada has huge bills. Canadians have some of the highest rates of landing fees and taxes to pay in order to move goods and services around this country. We have one of the largest geopolitical land masses. We need to reduce costs and red tape wherever possible and make it so that airlines can operate in a true free market environment and give the best solutions possible to the—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague did talk about the west coast opportunity that we have on our horizon to get our oil to our allies very quickly and to customers around the world that are demanding Canadian resources. I would like him to explain the pipeline that was already planned and approved, to get to the pipeline, and what held that pipeline up from getting approval and actually getting built and in the ground.

Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, my good friend from Calgary Centre knows this issue inside and out. Anybody who is involved in the industry and in the business, right from the suits down to the boots on the ground, understands that it is just regulations and red tape that have held everything up, and it is the decisions that the government has made, picking the winners and losers, and getting involved and actually spending taxpayers' dollars on this.

I cannot stress enough how important it is to create an environment where people feel safe to invest in this country. They do not need millions and millions of taxpayer dollars. When I collect tax dollars on behalf—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Simcoe North.

Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the chamber on behalf of constituents of Simcoe North. I understand that we are running late on debate, so my comments will be brief this evening in order to provide opportunity for other colleagues to make an intervention.

I would just like to point out that Bill C-31 is 338 pages long. It was first introduced in the chamber in May. We are not even at third reading. This is report stage. Nothing screams that we are at war like a bill's taking multiple months to get through the chamber on something that is supposed to be as important to the government as its financial plan. When a government creates a bill this big, it makes it quite difficult for parliamentarians to get answers to very specific questions, and there are some things in the bill that I think deserve some further scrutiny.

For example, division 7, part 4, says that the government would increase the total borrowing capacity of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the CMHC, that is, in effect, to increase the liabilities the taxpayer has to backstop or to support the activities of the Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation.

Of course, we are in a housing crisis in this country. However, I would say the government has preferenced its support of the sector that suggests it would further subsidize rental units as opposed to single family dwellings or other different forms of ownership of homes that are not apartments but actual owned homes. The construction of owned homes, owned units, is way down, but the construction of apartments is way up. I happen to be an all-of-the-above conservative, and I think the government should be making sure it is creating equity in the housing market by not preferencing one style of housing over others.

There is also an overbuild of apartments right now because rents are falling across the country. That is a good thing. More supply means lower rents, but what about the other forms of home ownership, such as of single-family dwellings, townhouses or condominiums, in which the owner occupies the residence?

I also would like to point out that in the bill, there would be a further consolidation of power from the bureaucracy into an individual minister. I am referring to the power of the minister to get more involved and take power from the Canadian Transportation Agency into the minister's office with respect to consumer complaints. If we like the current Minister of Transport, as many people do, and I have nothing bad to say about him, there is no problem if he gets more power, I suppose. However, what would happen when the minister is a dud? We would have just given them more power.

This is yet another example of how, time after time, the government has further consolidated power within its own ministerial offices, giving it more discretion and more power, and taking it away from unelected individuals who may exercise that power in a more judicious manner. That is a risk I would like to highlight.

I think my previous colleague hit the nail on the head very well when he talked about challenges with debt service costs. It is the fastest-growing line item in the budget. It is unclear to me whether the government even cares about this. It will retort that we should be thankful and appreciative that it has the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7.

However, Canadians would be surprised to learn that the calculation includes the assets of the CPP and not any of the liabilities, which I do not think is the impression the government is trying to give. I do not think it is saying that it could take money from the CPP to pay the government debts, but we could be forgiven for making that mistake, given the number of times the government refers to that stat in the House.

● (1725)

Frankly, given the recent announcement by the government to invest in a private AI corporation called Cohere, I would like to highlight the risk of the government's turning the Prime Minister's Office and the government into an investment bank, not into an appropriate policy shop, such that the only things that get done in this country are those that get a permission slip from the Prime Minister's Office and are those that require significant sums of taxpayer money to be contributed.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, CMHC actually does an incredible job at enabling people to own a home. I suspect that many members of the House would not have had their opportunity at one point in time if it were not for CMHC. The increase to $1 trillion is something that is necessary. I do not know the actual number, but I suspect 50% of that allocation is already there in terms of being secure. Stephen Harper increased it by a couple of hundred billion dollars.

I am wondering if the member would agree that it is good for the housing industry as a whole to enable CMHC to provide housing for Canadians and support that.

● (1730)

Adam Chambers: Mr. Speaker, the challenge I have is that most, if not the vast majority, of the increase of the liabilities of CPP that the government is now backstopping are related solely to the apartment sector. I think it is clear where the government's priorities are. It is preferencing apartment building rentals, in terms of increasing supply, at the expense of other forms of home ownership, and that is the risk I would like to highlight. Frankly, when the sector is being overbuilt, as it is now, this actually increases the risk to taxpayers, who may be on the hook if some of these projects cannot be completed.

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy that my friend and colleague mentioned the Conservatives' approach to housing and solving the housing crisis in this country, and the Liberals' approach. He talked about home ownership, and I very much share that perspective. I wonder if he would also like to expand on how home ownership can really help a young person build their assets, build their equity and really have a start on their life as they are having a family and building wealth around them. Why is it so important that we keep this at the forefront of our conversations around housing affordability?

Adam Chambers: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has made valuable contributions in a very short time in the chamber. We need to give young people hope in this country. They need to think that home ownership is attainable. It should not be the case that young Canadians wake up every day thinking that this dream is out of reach for them. The biggest number of young people possible should believe it is possible to own their own home. It provides retirement security. It builds equity. Unlike as a renter, it means they are not paying someone else's mortgage but paying themselves first.

James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has been doing yeoman's service on this file for quite some time, including working in the previous Conservative government for finance minister Jim Flaherty, a great finance minister who was able to bring Canada through the economic downturn and balance the books along with Stephen Harper, whose book *Here for Canada* is on sale today, by the way. It is a great story that I am sure all of us are going to enjoy.

When we listen to Liberals on the other side and they talk about how great Crown corporations are and about how wonderful the debt-to-GDP ratio is, we know that, just as with national defence, they love to cook the books and play a shell game. They are doing it this time around by using the Canada pension plan money as a way to show a better position of government debt to GDP.

I was wondering if my colleague wanted to comment on how the Liberals always cook the books.

Adam Chambers: Mr. Speaker, the government is setting up the CPPIB, the Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board, which is viewed around the world as the gold standard for governance, primarily for the reason that it is free from political interference. Every time the government uses the net debt-to-GDP ratio, it confuses the public by suggesting that the assets of the CPP, in effect, may be available to the government to use because the government is using those assets to reduce the amount of money that it shows it owes the rest of the world.

Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise on behalf of Oshawa to speak to Bill C-31, the second budget implementation act. I want to begin by pointing out something that perfectly illustrates the Liberal government's inability to manage the country's finances and the business of Parliament.

We are debating legislation to implement last year's federal budget, yet this Thursday, the government is prepared to table an entirely new budget. If the government can barely get last year's budget implemented before introducing the next one, it might make Canadians wonder if they can have confidence in the government's ability to manage their hard-earned money. While the Liberals struggle to manage their own parliamentary agenda, Canadians, at the same time, are struggling to manage their household budgets. The government has become very good at making announcements and promises and, of course, spending money, but Canadians are still waiting to see any results that would bring meaningful improvements to their lives.

After 11 years of the Liberal government, Canadians are working harder, paying more and falling further behind. Families are struggling to afford groceries. Young Canadians are losing hope of owning a home and seniors are watching their savings disappear as they struggle just to cover everyday expenses. According to The Salvation Army's 2026 report, 31% of Canadians are skipping or reducing meals because they cannot afford groceries. That is up 27% from last year. Among Canadians between the ages of 18 and 34, that figure rises to 41%. The same report found that half of Canadians surveyed have used their savings to cover basic necessities, while 40% have taken on debt or relied on credit and 30% have delayed or completely missed bill payments.

The Daily Bread Food Bank's 2026 report found that one in eight children in Toronto is now relying on food banks. These challenges are deeply personal in my hometown of Oshawa. Our community was built by generations of automotive workers, skilled tradespeople, small business owners and hard-working families who believed that if they worked hard, they could build a better life. In a recent affordability survey conducted in Oshawa, more than 8,000 residents shared their experiences and concerns. Of those who responded, 73% reported that their financial situation had not improved. In fact, 5% said they were living paycheque to paycheque. One unexpected car repair, one increase in rent or one additional household expense can be enough to push them further in debt or, worse, unable to pay or cover their bills completely.

Our local food banks like Feed the need in Durham and other community organizations do extraordinary work supporting those in need. I want to recognize the volunteers and staff who dedicate their time to help our neighbours. However, food banks should be a temporary safety net, not something working families must rely on to get through each and every month.

Beyond the affordability crisis, there is another deeply concerning issue with Bill C-31 that deserves serious attention. Throughout the legislation, the Liberals are seeking to grant ministers sweeping and discretionary powers yet again over important areas of our economy and government, including taxation, defence procurement, air transportation, and mining and natural resources in Canada's north. These are significant powers involving decisions that can affect Canadian businesses, taxpayers, workers and entire communities, yet Conservatives are concerned that the legislation does not provide what Liberal legislation never seems to provide: transparency, safeguards and parliamentary oversight to ensure these powers are exercised responsibly. In several areas, the government is asking Parliament to give ministers greater authority to make consequential decisions with limited opportunity for scrutiny. That should concern every Canadian, regardless of political affiliation, and I think it does, because accountability is a fundamental responsibility of government, even if it is not a principle of the Liberal government.

● (1735)

Let us take the proposed changes to the Canada Revenue Agency as an example. The bill would allow the CRA to automatically file certain tax returns for eligible low-income Canadians, with a process that could treat a failure to respond as an authorization to proceed. Helping vulnerable Canadians to access the benefits they deserve is a worthwhile objective, but it should never come at the expense of their rights. Canadians should not be expected to shoulder the consequences of errors, for instance, in tax returns they neither prepared themselves nor expressly approved. Even the taxpayers' ombudsperson raised concerns about the proposed approach and recommended stronger safeguards here.

When Conservatives sought to strengthen protections for taxpayers at committee, the Liberals rejected an amendment intended to ensure that individuals would not be held responsible for errors or omissions in returns that were filed on their behalf and not even by them directly. How the Liberals can reject such an amendment is beyond me.

That same troubling pattern appears in the government's approach to defence procurement. Division 16 of Bill C-31 would establish the Defence Investment Agency and expand ministerial authority over defence purchasing and investment. Conservatives support getting our brave men and women in uniform the equipment they need, but we are deeply concerned about the broad exceptions to competitive procurement and the discretion being placed in the hands of ministers yet again. The government should not be able to award significant contracts without competition or exclude potential suppliers on national security grounds without appropriate safeguards and accountability. It is funny how those two words keep coming up: safeguards and accountability. Our military needs equipment, not another layer of bureaucracy. Our soldiers, sailors and aviators deserve a procurement system that delivers the equipment they need efficiently, transparently and at the best possible value.

For communities like Oshawa, where manufacturing has been the backbone of the economy for generations, these decisions matter. Our automotive workers, skilled tradespeople and manufacturers have the experience and expertise to contribute to Canada's industrial and defence capabilities, but Canadian businesses need fair, predictable procurement rules that reward competitiveness and innovation, not a system where political discretion can determine who gets the opportunity.

Similar concerns arise with the bill's provisions affecting air passenger complaints and mineral rights in the north. Whether the government is changing who makes decisions about passenger rights or expanding federal authority over northern resource development, Canadians deserve clear rules, meaningful recourse and proper scrutiny.

These concerns are particularly important when we consider the government's broader record of economic management. In fact, let us remember that it was the Liberal Prime Minister who told Canadians very recently that affordability is the best it has been in a decade, yet his government continues to pursue higher spending and growing deficits while families struggle to make ends meet.

Conservatives believe there is a better approach. The government must cut wasteful spending, reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and excessive consulting costs, and keep its commitments to reducing debt and deficits relative to the size of our economy. When transportation costs increase, those expenses are passed along through the supply chain, affecting the prices Canadians pay for groceries and other necessities. That is why Conservatives are calling for the elimination of federal taxes on diesel until Canada Day, a suspension of the GST on fuel until the summer and a permanent removal of the federal clean fuel regulations.

My neighbours in Oshawa are asking for a fair chance to get ahead. They want to afford their groceries, save for a home, raise their children and retire with dignity.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1740)

[*English*]

RESPECTING FAMILIES OF MURDERED AND BRUTALIZED PERSONS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-235, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (increasing parole ineligibility), as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

● (1745)

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

An hon. member: On division.

(Motion agreed to)

Jeff Kibble moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the great people of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford on beautiful Vancouver Island. It is my honour to address Bill C-235, the respecting families of murdered and brutalized persons act, at third reading, not because it is my private member's bill, but because of all those who have been a part of this journey through years of hard work and effort across party lines. I rise to acknowledge the collaboration and support on every side of this House that made this bill possible. Members of every party have debated it, questioned it, amended it and made it stronger, always through the lens of respecting the families of victims. I thank them for that. That vision was never lost. The amendments they recommended, seven in all, were offered with just one purpose: to make this bill just. My hope today is that this vision and this spirit of collaboration will continue and carry this bill to the upper chamber so that it can continue its journey to becoming law.

A private member's bill is meant to be the loneliest kind of legislation, one member, one idea, one chance. However, this has been a team effort. Let us think of Kimberly Proctor who was 18 when her life was taken in Langford close to where I live. Her aunt, Jo-Anne Landolt, came from Vancouver Island to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights and told the committee, in her own words, what a parole hearing costs a family like hers, or the families of Tori, Kristen and Leslie, and so many more, every family who has had to speak a loved one's name at a parole hearing in a room they never chose to enter, and the many others whose names I have spoken as well in this House.

An institution is judged by how it treats people on their worst day. Our Parliament, the justice system, the Parole Board are all institutions. The Parole Board carries one of the hardest jobs in our country. This bill criticizes none of them. It asks whether we can give a family more time before that next hard day in a parole room. Ms. Landolt told the justice committee that in the beginning, a single victim statement took her months to write. She travelled from the island to the mainland with overnight stays, security clearances and procedures. One hearing was delayed, over and again, to December, then February, then June, with a full year of waiting and preparing. For every step of preparing for those hearings, she and her family relived the worst day in their lives. She said her family attends parole hearings for Kimmy, to be her voice. She also said that this bill “won't take away the pain...but it will ease some redundant stress.” Early on, she told the committee, “Something good has to...[come] from Kimmy's death”, “Someone can't die like that for nothing.”

That is what this bill is for, the families. It applies to only the most heinous and depraved of crimes, where the same victim is abducted, sexually assaulted and murdered in the same event or series of events. Justice officials told the committee there were about 26 offenders in federal custody between 2000 and 2020 who had crimes that fit this pattern, though not every one of them was convicted on all three offences.

Let me say plainly what this bill would do, because it has been described as larger than it is.

First, the starting point is that it would stay at 25 years of parole ineligibility, as it is today.

Second, a jury could make recommendations.

Third, in those cases, only a judge could add years up to a ceiling of 40 years of ineligibility, but only after weighing an offender's character, the offences and the circumstances.

Fourth, a judge would need to give reasons. The offender could appeal, so could the Crown, and the Parole Board still would decide whether anyone was ever released. That would not change.

Now I will go to an important question that members have asked. Is it constitutional? Section 12 of the charter protects every person in this country from cruel and unusual punishment. Many Canadians, myself included, find it unimaginable to extend that protection to those who have done such horrible things, but the charter requires it and Parliament respects it.

● (1750)

In 2022, in Bissonnette, the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously struck down a provision that let courts stack parole ineligibility in multiple murder cases and that allowed 50 years all the way up to 150 years. The court said that Parliament may not remove, in advance and for every offender, any realistic possibility of parole. I take that seriously, and so did the committee.

This bill is built differently. It does not stack. It does not start at 50 years. It starts where the law starts today, at 25 years of ineligibility for parole. The justice officials told the committee that the key difference from the Bissonnette case is judicial discretion. A judge could choose 26 years or 30 years; nothing is automatic. Then the committee made the safeguards stronger, adding appeals for both sides and reasons from a judge. As reported in this House, the Library of Parliament found no full paroles among the offenders in this class of most heinous crimes.

The Parole Board has not treated these offenders as releasable. The bill asks only to say so less often, to the families who must prepare for every hearing. I will not stand here and promise how a court will rule. No member of this House can do that. However, officials told the committee plainly that any change to parole ineligibility would be closely examined under the charter, and I welcome that. A law that touches liberty should be examined.

What I can say is that Parliament did its part. We heard from families, police, the ombudsperson for victims of crime, and justice officials, and we kept the 25-year ineligibility parole floor where it is. Eligibility for parole is a date on a calendar, not a release.

Several members, who were worried about this, asked that this bill apply only to future cases, and I can assure everyone that it would.

[*Translation*]

I am speaking directly to my Bloc Québécois colleagues. I believe in social reintegration, and I believe that every offender should have the opportunity to access it. I also believe there are certain horrific crimes, such as these, where that may not be possible.

That is why this bill leaves the decision to judges, with justification, and gives both parties the right to appeal. It does not close the door. It requires the courts to examine each case individually.

[*English*]

How did we get here? It is not the way many private members' bills do. At second reading, the member for Bourassa said, “When a family has to relive their trauma at every parole hearing, it is not only difficult, it is inhumane.” He asked for the right to appeal, written reasons and a clear rule that the law look forward.

At committee, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice moved seven amendments, and all seven carried. I thank her for her collaborative and positive work on them.

The member for Mount Royal, speaking of an earlier version of this bill, told the committee, “I supported it then, and I still support it now.”

The member for Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, who grew up half a block from where Kristen French lived, showed real emotion at the table. I thank her and, through her, every member of the committee for their thoughtful questions and support.

The member for Rivière-du-Nord pressed me on rehabilitation, and that is the right question for every sentencing law. The reasons and appeals are how we keep that door open honestly.

I thank my own colleagues in this House.

The member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman tabled this bill in two separate Parliaments, and he seconded it when I introduced it. He has spoken in support of it in the House many times. He has given years of hard work and passion to it. I know it is as near and dear to his heart as it is to mine.

The member for St. Albert—Sturgeon River seconded it again at second reading and spoke strongly in support of it.

The member for Elgin—St. Thomas—London South kept the voices of families, like Tori Stafford's father, at the centre of the committee room.

The member for Oxford, our critic for justice, gave his full and strong support to this bill.

Larry Brock, the former member for Brantford—Brant South, gave me guidance through this process, and I am incredibly grateful to have worked alongside him.

● (1755)

A private member's bill is carried by far more than its sponsor. Dr. Benjamin Roebuck, the ombudsperson, told the committee that this bill is one part of a broader conversation: clearer information for families, attention to the time between reviews and a real complaints process. I support all three, and I would ask the government to bring those forward.

This bill has come before the House in earlier parliaments. Twice, it has passed committee with the support of every party. We do not need an election to interrupt it again. Every party in the House has a hand in this bill, but more importantly, it belongs to the families it is meant to serve. Most importantly, it is a win for families, beginning with Kimberly Proctor's.

Together, we stood up for the families of victims. We have heard their voices, and I stand with them. I feel confident that all members of Parliament stand with them. I spoke with Ms. Landolt today. She is thankful, and she strongly supports this work. Families in Langford, in Ontario and in every province are watching what the House does today. Let us give them a vote that every party can stand behind, a vote that says regardless of who holds government, no family should be asked to relive the worst day of their lives in a parole hearing room they never chose.

[*Translation*]

To the families watching us, from Vancouver Island to Quebec, this journey was not a choice, and no one should have to go through it alone. We have listened. Let us work together to pass this bill.

[*English*]

Let us pass Bill C-235 and send it to the upper chamber with the voice of this House behind it.

James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for taking on the bill and bringing it forward this far and for his passion and compassion for the families of victims who were brutalized persons.

When I first drafted this bill back in 2012, it was with the realization that Clifford Olson was dying in the hospital and talking about how he used parole board hearings to retraumatize the families, to revictimize the families at these ongoing, unnecessary parole board hearings, and how it impacted families like the Rosenfeldts. Also at that time was the Tori Stafford case, and I knew her family would have to go through two separate parole board hearings because of the killers in that situation, Terri-Lynne McClintic and Michael Rafferty. That was really the nexus for drafting the bill.

Could the member speak to the fact that this is not about being harder on the criminal, the murderer, the people who kidnap our kids, torture them, assault them, sexually assault them and murder them? This is about empowering the courts and being compassionate to the families so that they would not have to go through all these unnecessary parole board hearings, because the people who commit these types of heinous crimes never do get released.

Jeff Kibble: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the passion he has brought to this bill, for the amazing work and support he has given me and for his kind words today.

The member mentioned the Olson case. It has been proven that these most heinous criminals get off on further victimizing the victims' families. We know these types of criminals are never released by the parole boards, and going forward, we know they likely will never be released by the parole boards.

This bill addresses the revictimization of families. This bill is focused on families. It would change little for the criminals of these horrific crimes, but it would make a huge, positive difference for the families of those victims.

● (1800)

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, obviously we understand the intent of the bill, and our hearts go out to the victims' families.

I am not a legal expert, but as a parliamentarian, I wonder whether this bill might not lead to constitutional challenges. From what I understand, the Supreme Court has already ruled on the constitutionality of extending the minimum period before someone can be released on parole. Unless I am mistaken, I believe that was ruled unconstitutional.

I am wondering how the bill before us today could be deemed constitutional by the Supreme Court, given previous rulings.

I would like my colleague to clarify that.

[*English*]

Jeff Kibble: Mr. Speaker, as far as I can tell, and the experts have looked at it, the courts agreed that the provision of the Bissonnette case was unconstitutional because the trial judge's remedy to set discretion at 40 years was too intrusive, but that was struck down because they were stacked upon each other. This will potentially face a charter challenge, but the way that it was built with the floor of 25 years, nothing has changed there. With discretion and the way the bill was built, as the legal experts who came before the committee have stated, is that the floor would stay the same at 25 years of parole ineligibility and discretion would still lie with the judge and with the Parole Board and would rest with the safeties that have been put into this bill. I am confident that this bill will stand and help the families of victims.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague and I both represent parts of Vancouver Island. Cowichan—Malahat—Langford is his constituency and Saanich—Gulf Islands is mine, and I want to thank him for the work to bring this forward. I want to again say that I also appreciate the work of the federal ombudsperson for victims of crime.

I am someone who cares very much about civil liberties and the concerns for cruel and unusual punishment. I think this bill has gone through all the kind of analysis that puts those concerns to rest. This is about avoiding the retraumatization of families, and I am very pleased to see the House come together to support the efforts of the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Jeff Kibble: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her comment, and I also appreciate her passion for supporting the families of victims.

[*Translation*]

Louis Villeneuve (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the third reading of Bill C-235, the respecting families of murdered and brutalized persons act.

During debate on this bill at second reading, members of the House recognized both the seriousness of the offences the bill aims to address and the difficult issues it raises regarding ineligibility for parole, the interests of victims, and the principles governing sentencing in Canada.

Since then, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights has had the opportunity to examine these issues in greater depth. It has also been able to hear a range of important perspectives on these issues, including those of Jo-Anne Landolt, whose 18-year-old niece, Kimberly Proctor, was tragically murdered in 2010; the federal ombudsman for victims of crime; and representatives of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. We are grateful to all the witnesses who took the time to share their experiences and expertise with us. Their contributions have enabled the committee to better understand the problem the bill seeks to address and have helped identify ways to improve it. The result is the amended bill before us today.

Although the committee made significant changes to strengthen the legislative framework, the substance of the proposal remains unchanged. Bill C-235 would apply to a narrow category of cases where an offender is convicted of murder, a kidnapping offence and a sexual offence involving the same victim and the same event or series of events. These are exceptionally serious offences that already carry a life sentence. Bill C-235 will give sentencing judges additional discretion to extend the parole ineligibility period beyond 25 years, up to a maximum of 40 years.

It is important to remember that parole eligibility does not mean release. It means that an offender becomes eligible to apply for parole and that the Parole Board of Canada will determine whether to grant parole. Bill C-235 would change when this process can begin for the first time in these narrowly defined cases.

For victims and their family members, the parole process can have emotional and practical repercussions. Those who choose to participate may be asked to write or update statements detailing the persisting impact of the crime, attend hearings and present their concerns about the offender's possible release. This can involve reliving painful memories, talking about their loss, taking time off work or having to travel to get to a hearing. By allowing a judge to delay the start of this process, Bill C-235 aims to allow families more time before they have to deal with these demands.

Ms. Landolt's testimonial gave the committee a striking example of this burden. She described her family's experience during the parole process in the years following the murder of her niece, Kimberly. She spoke of how hard it had been to draft the victim statement, get to the hearings, face one report after another and have to relive the circumstances of Kimberly's death. Her family firmly supports Bill C-235, convinced that a longer period leading up to parole eligibility, in cases like Kimberly's, could lighten the load for families such as hers.

The committee also heard from the federal ombudsperson for victims of crime, Dr. Benjamin Roebuck, whose office studied victims' experiences with the federal parole process. He noted that experiences and needs varied widely. Some appreciated the opportunity to participate in the process, while others preferred to be more removed from the process. This diversity in experience underscores the importance of the discretionary power provided for in Bill C-235. Rather than automatically delaying parole eligibility in all eligible cases, the bill would allow a sentencing judge to determine whether a longer period is justified, taking into account the offender's character, the nature and circumstances of the offences and any recommendations made by the jury.

● (1805)

The committee's study also highlighted ways to strengthen the bill's safeguards to ensure that it would withstand charter scrutiny. For example, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police expressed support for the bill but raised some concerns about how an extension of the parole ineligibility period might infringe on the rights guaranteed by section 12 of the charter, which prohibits cruel and unusual treatment or punishment. Among other things, they recommended that the bill expressly grant offenders the right to appeal the length of their parole ineligibility period. The committee adopted this recommendation by adding an explicit right for an offender to appeal a decision to extend their parole ineligibility.

The bill has also been amended to give the Crown a corresponding right of appeal when the parole ineligibility period is less than 40 years, or when the sentencing judge decides not to extend the parole ineligibility period. Given that the bill would allow the period to be extended by up to 15 years, this right of appeal constitutes an important safeguard. It will also enable appellate courts, over time, to develop guidance on the circumstances in which an extension of the parole ineligibility period may be warranted.

The committee has also amended the bill to require sentencing judges to provide reasons, either orally or in writing, for any decision to grant or deny an extension of the parole ineligibility period. This promotes transparency by ensuring that the basis for the decision is clear.

Taken together, these safeguards reflect an important conclusion that emerged from the committee's study: The desire to ease the burden on victims' families must be part of a fair, balanced and carefully regulated process.

The interests of the victims, on the one hand, and the fairness and integrity of the sentencing process, on the other, are not conflicting concerns. In fact, Dr. Roebuck addressed this point directly, while acknowledging the harm that repeated parole proceedings can cause. He emphasized the importance of fairness and reintegration. He also agreed that ensuring the law could withstand constitutional scrutiny was, in itself, in the victims' best interests.

Ms. Landolt also agreed that strengthening the bill's transparency safeguards and ensuring its resilience against any legal challenges would be in the best interests of the victims and their families. She said that this could help the victims regain a sense of normalcy and recover from their tragedy.

The committee also heard from a number of witnesses who said that the support offered to victims and their families throughout the parole process could be further improved. Dr. Roebuck identified some other concerns, including the information provided to victims, the timelines for the frequency of parole hearings, the burden involved in attending proceedings and the mechanisms available when victims feel that their rights have not been respected.

In his testimony, he emphasized that Bill C-235 addressed one aspect of victims' experiences with the parole system, but that more work needed to be done to make the process more responsive to victims' needs.

Bill C-235 focuses on a category of crime that is particularly serious and traumatic. The committee's work ensured that, in doing so, the legislation not only considers victims and their families, but is also better able to withstand scrutiny and provide a lasting response to the harms they have described.

I therefore encourage members from all parties in the House to support it for swift passage at third reading so that it can proceed without unnecessary delay.

● (1810)

Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-235 may seem appealing at first glance because it deals with cases involving people who have committed heinous crimes. It is hard to imagine anything worse than kidnapping, sexual assault and murder. I fully understand the desire to come down hard on people who commit such acts. Still, there is something our Conservative colleagues do not seem to understand, and I do not know why. Perhaps they think that, if they keep trying, it will work eventually, but the Supreme Court of Canada ruled otherwise in R. v. Bissonnette. Repeated attempts will not change that. The maximum is 25 years.

Bill C-235 is not our Conservative colleagues' first attempt, as I was saying. This is the eighth bill on this issue. It started in 2013. It may have started before that, but that is as far back as I looked. The member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman has introduced this four times. Other Conservative colleagues, whose ridings I will not name because I do not know them off the top of my head, have also introduced similar bills. For instance, there was Bill S-224, introduced by Senator Boisvenu, as well as Bills C-296, C-267, C-266, C-478 and C-587. None of those attempts succeeded. They are back at it again today. That is all well and good, but I think we need to be serious. We have important work to do here. We were talking about budget issues earlier. We are still discussing last year's budget, and a new budget will be tabled the day after tomorrow. Bills like this one have been introduced eight times and have not been passed, so can we move on to something else?

I like that. In an ideal world, a person who commits crimes like that should receive harsh, very harsh, or even the harshest of all treatment. Society, however, has rules that set limits on such things. A murder, whether in the first or second degree, results in a life sentence from the outset. That is the way it is. The difference between the two is eligibility to apply for parole. If the crime is first-degree murder, the period of parole ineligibility is 25 years. Before then, parole is simply not an option. For second-degree murder, it is 10 years. Even then, however, the judge may seek recommendations from the jury and increase that period from 10 years to as much as 25 years. I will repeat that we are talking about cases involving abduction, sexual assault and murder. Under the law as it currently stands, where a murder is accompanied by either a sexual assault or an abduction, the offender will in either case face a minimum of 25 years before becoming eligible to apply for parole. As for a period of 40 years, the Supreme Court has already ruled that out.

We can certainly look at 33 other bills that, in one form or another, seek to achieve the same objective. It is simply impossible. Even if I, the member for Rivière-du-Nord, were to say that this is a good idea, that it reflects my personal view and that offenders should remain imprisoned for 40 years, I do not have the authority to make that happen. That is not my position, of course, but let us pretend that I am persuasive enough to convince the members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights and Parliament itself to vote in favour of such a measure. One, two or three years later, the Supreme Court would review the matter and conclude that Parliament had no authority to enact the legislation. Personally, I want to make a difference in my work as an MP and, with all due respect to my colleagues who are acting in good faith—and I do acknowledge that—I have to say that this is, unfortunately, a waste of time.

We heard this point raised earlier. As our colleague across the aisle noted, obtaining parole is no easy matter. First, it is not automatic. The vast majority of applications are denied. In 2023–2024, the parole grant rate stood at 32.4%. The vast majority of applications were denied. Furthermore, anyone seeking parole must demonstrate to the Parole Board of Canada that they no longer pose a risk to society and that the likelihood of reoffending is negligible or non-existent. Applicants must meet a number of conditions.

● (1815)

If these conditions are met and someone manages to convince the Parole Board to grant them parole, it is important to remember that parole comes with conditions attached. It is not as though the offender is handed a ticket and told to go off on vacation, that everything is settled and that nobody wants to hear from them again. Far from it. The offender will have to meet regularly with a parole officer. A number of conditions will have to be met. There may be curfews, a prohibition on drinking alcohol and a number of other conditions. It is not a free-for-all.

Once again, I understand the desire to ask whether there is a way to be strict enough with someone who abducts a young girl, sexually assaults her and kills her. I feel the same way. I think that this is unacceptable. I will keep to myself what I think about that sort of individual, but I agree that severe consequences are warranted.

However, we must also abide by the rules adopted by our society. These rules have been upheld by the Supreme Court, particularly in the Bissonnette case. My Conservative colleague referred to it earlier. Alexandre Bissonnette was sentenced to prison with no parole eligibility for 150 years. One does not need to be a medical expert to recognize that, as of now, it is not possible to live for 150 years. The Supreme Court held that such a sentence constituted cruel and unusual punishment and therefore violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As a result, the Supreme Court overturned that sentence and held that the maximum would be 25 years. That is the maximum. Parole ineligibility periods cannot exceed 25 years.

That does not mean that the inmate will be released from prison after 25 years. They have been sentenced to life in prison. They will remain an inmate for the rest of their life. What parole means is that, instead of keeping them in a cell, we can release them. They will be able to apply for parole after 25 years. They will be able to tell the Parole Board that they are rehabilitated and that they are asking to be released. It does not matter how they were rehabilitated or why. That will be assessed when the time comes. The Parole Board will conduct an investigation and determine whether or not they should be released. That is all. The 25-year sentence is not being revised. We are simply giving these inmates the ability to ask to be released at the end of 25 years. They may choose to apply for parole, and according to the statistics, it is likely that they will do so. They can apply after 25 years, but they may never actually be released and they may die in prison. Yes, under special circumstances, the Parole Board may decide to release such inmates. I do not want to lecture the House, but this seems pretty clear to me.

I cannot understand why, once again, our Conservative colleagues are stubborn about this proposal. I acknowledge that they are acting in good faith. I was elected to the House 11 years ago. In 11 years, I have had discussions with many people and I have disagreed with many members. Still, I have not met any, or at least not many, and perhaps no member of Parliament who acted in bad faith. I acknowledge their good faith. From their perspective, it is important and we should pass legislative amendments to increase it to 40 years. I acknowledge that. I do not agree with them, but I acknowledge that they are acting in good faith, because they think that is how things work.

However, I urge them to reread the Bissonnette decision, to digest it, to fully understand it and to include it in the Conservative narrative that this cannot be done in Canada, under the existing law.

If the Conservatives still wish to go further, I invite them to look at the notwithstanding clause in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They could invoke the notwithstanding clause, the way others, including Quebec, have in other cases, cases involving secularism, among other things. By invoking the notwithstanding clause, they might be able to convince the Supreme Court that, despite what it has said, we have the right to do things differently, but that is just a theory.

● (1820)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford has five minutes for his right of reply.

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank every member who has spoken on this bill today and over the many times it has come before this House in earlier Parliaments and at committee.

I thank the member opposite from the Liberal Party for his detailed and passionate analysis where he pointed out the many safeguards that are built into this bill to protect against the challenges that the member from the Bloc Québécois pointed out. I thank the member opposite from the Liberals for his support. I know we are making the correct decision.

I would like to address the comments of the member for Rivière-du-Nord, who spoke about the Bissonnette case. Indeed, it was rejected, but it is worth pointing out. I have read the 2022 Supreme Court of Canada decision 23, where the court agreed that the provisions that the judge stacked parole ineligibility on top of each other were deemed unconstitutional. In fact, in that case, the judge tried to remedy it by reducing the sentence from 150 to 40 years. When that decision was thrown out by the Supreme Court, it was due to those provisions, not the 40-year sentence.

This private member's bill, I can assure the member, has been built completely differently. This is making the right choice to both protect criminals and, more importantly, respect the rights of the family members. We never want another family to be touched by this kind of horrific crime. I pray there never is, but if there is, God forbid, this is the kind of bill that can lessen their pain. For that family, for Ms. Landolt's family and for every family that has walked that road, this is what we can do.

I have done my part, and I am humbled to have been able to contribute. My hope is that it will make it to the upper chamber and the upper chamber will bring the same compassion and the same speed, so that the respecting families of murdered and brutalized persons act can do what its name promises, and respect those families. I have carried this torch as far as one member can. I hope that it soon will humbly pass to the upper chamber and if this bill does become law, the torch can finally be laid down because the law will carry the weight from there.

To the families that have had to carry this for so long, I thank them. We pray, as I said, that no family will ever have to use this law.

I want to tell Ms. Landolt and every family that has told us about their trauma of reliving these horrific crimes at parole hearings that they have carried this longer than any of us. They did not have to. They carried it for Kimmy, for all the victims and all of the families. I say to them, as they say in the navy, Bravo Zulu, or well done, to everyone.

● (1825)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The question is on the motion.

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

Jeff Kibble: Mr. Speaker, I ask that my private member's bill, respecting families of murdered and brutalized persons act, do now pass.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I cannot tell the House how often memories come back to me of the Speaker's saying, “It being now 12:40 a.m., pursuant to an order reached earlier this week”, deeming a motion to adjourn the House to have been moved, and saying, “The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has the floor.” It is nice that our adjournment proceedings are beginning at a more civil hour and that there are still members in the chamber.

I am pursuing a question I asked in question period on June 4. It was the day the government announced its artificial intelligence strategy, which was called “AI for all”. My question for the government started by noting that I just wondered how the slogan “artificial intelligence for all” lands in Tumbler Ridge. We had just become increasingly aware of the role AI had played in the tortured and challenging mental health crisis that was being experienced by the adolescent who then killed children and caused such unbearable pain.

I noted that seven families were in court seeking redress for the loss of their children who were not adequately protected, and I asked when there would be protection. The hon. secretary of state who responded to my question did, of course, share that sense of grief, and said, “[The government is doing] everything we can, including working with AI companies and advancing our protective legislation, to ensure that these types of tragedies never happen again in Canada.”

I am glad I submitted an Adjournment Proceedings slip, not because the answer was particularly egregious from the secretary of state but because our response to this is inadequate. I also referenced in my question on June 4 that I was very much taken by the advice of Pope Leo XIV that artificial intelligence, in his words, needs to be “disarmed”. That was before the additional trauma and additional facts were unearthed about the Tumbler Ridge tragedy.

It is still with me. I am so honoured that I was included, and I thank the Prime Minister for including all leaders of the other opposition parties so we could all go to the vigil in Tumbler Ridge together. It has not left me for a day how searing that tragedy is and how avoidable it was.

Flags were raised within OpenAI and other companies that are really creating an addiction problem for young people and creating real mental health issues, even to the extent that artificial intelligence and what are now called chatbots were actually engaging in a conversation to encourage the very tragic and disturbed person who committed these crimes.

It has now come to light that there are at least allegations, which have been unearthed through joint work of the RCMP and law enforcement in the United States, that there was another person who was in an ongoing conversation with the young person in Tumbler Ridge, promising them that they would become famous because the person in the States was promising to livestream the killings in the school as they happened. Again, this would never have been possible without artificial intelligence.

We have before us Bill C-34 now. I asked my question before Bill C-34 was tabled, which happened later in June. I know that a lot of levels of government and different countries around the world are trying to grapple with what we do with artificial intelligence. We are being warned by people such as Geoffrey Hinton, a Canadian who is actually credited and known as the godfather of AI, that there is an existential risk.

Here we are, and we still have no answers.

● (1830)

Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. friend for her question. We are both British Columbians. We have both felt the pain of the families and victims at Tumbler Ridge. I am a dad. No day goes by that I do not think about what it is like for the parents who lost children or whose children have been injured, and what it is like for that entire community. I think it is not an exaggeration to say that Canadians and all of us in this House are heartbroken, and we continue to keep the families, survivors and victims in our thoughts and prayers.

To the hon. member's question, our AI for all strategy is built on three pillars: trust, opportunity and sovereign control. It has to begin with trust. We all know that Canadians are only going to use and benefit from AI when they know they are protected and when they can trust it.

Over the course of the last several months, we have spoken to parents, we have spoken to kids and we have spoken to teachers, educators and experts. That is how we have come up with our response. That is why our government is taking the approach of protecting children, strengthening privacy protections and putting clear rules in place so that Canadians can use this technology safely. That is the right way to move forward.

These protections are not an afterthought. It is quite the opposite. They are the foundation and cornerstone of our strategy. It starts with clear rules around how personal information is used. The hon. member referenced legislation. We are modernizing Canada's consumer privacy law through Bill C-36, which was introduced in June and recognizes privacy as a fundamental right. It would safeguard children's information. It would strengthen Canadians' control over their personal data. It would create a right to deletion. It would protect them against surveillance pricing.

However, trust also means keeping Canadians, especially our kids, safe online. Bill C-34, the safe social media act, would hold social media platforms accountable for reducing harms from online content. It would also protect children from the harmful content the hon. member mentioned: AI chatbots.

We are taking tangible action to stop AI from being used to mislead voters. We are working with police and security experts to stop people from using AI to scam Canadians, cause harm or worse. We have committed $50 million to expanding the Canadian AI Safety Institute, strengthening Canada's ability to track risks and advance technical safety research. Our government has invested $150 million in LawZero, led by Yoshua Bengio, the world's leading AI safety researcher. Alongside Germany, we are helping build AI that is safe by design right here in Canada.

Following this tragedy, our government summoned OpenAI officials to Ottawa to demand stronger accountability and clear escalation pathways. I was in that conversation, and I can say that our government has been tireless in ensuring that young people know that we will keep them safe from any risks related to AI. Following this, OpenAI established direct contact with the RCMP to report high-risk cases, and our government directed the company to apply stronger standards and to review past cases while the Canadian AI Safety Institute continues its review.

Canadians' safety is our first priority. We will ensure that companies operating in this space act responsibly and that Canadians, and particularly Canadian kids, are protected. Nothing that we can do will change what happened at Tumbler Ridge, but we owe it to survivors like Maya, who is now home, to ensure that young people and families know their government is taking steps to ensure that this technology serves them and keeps them safe, not the other way around.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. I do not think we can trust any of these AI companies, and Bill C-34 would not make them behave in ways that would make them trustworthy. They have to be held accountable.

As much as I support the intent of Bill C-34, proposed section 85 says:

> The purpose of a penalty is to promote compliance with this Act and not to punish.

These are multi-billion-dollar profit-making criminals. They plunder the earth for their profit. They do not care about children's safety. They will not care about Canadian children's safety until they are really afraid of the punishment.

I hope that when we go to committee and go to clause-by-clause, the government will agree that it is important to put in threats to their profits and put in strict liability and personal liability for directors on the boards of companies like Anthropic and others so they realize that for shareholder benefit, they have to be punished.

● (1835)

Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, I think we all share the concerns the member has. The reality is that part of what we will do with the new regulator we are putting in place is make sure that it will be able to hold big tech accountable. Three per cent of revenue for these global giants would be the penalty. That is a real issue. If they do not care about people and do not care about the well-being of Canadians, they will certainly care about profits.

That is why we are building a strong regulator. That is why we are taking into account the comments of the member opposite and so many others, to make sure the regulator has teeth, has the ability to put penalties in place and has the ability to go after folks who do not comply and who choose not to work well with this government and work well with the policies that are going to protect all Canadians.

That is the work we all need to do together. I look forward to her further comments and further interventions on this legislation. I am hopeful that we will be able to build a stronger regime that all Canadians can be proud of.

HEALTH

Lianne Rood (Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thousands of Canadians who followed the government's advice, and in many cases, its mandates, have come to me and to colleagues such as the member for Niagara West. They share their lived experiences of having done what they were told they needed to do during the COVID crisis. They are now living with permanent injuries, lost incomes, mounting medical bills and the sense that the government they trusted has abandoned them.

At September's Allison Inquiry, Canadians heard directly from the injured. Fifty Canadians, chosen from more than 1,400 who applied to testify, described the vaccine injury support program as an unmitigated disaster. Of the roughly $56 million paid to the contractor, Oxaro, by the federal government, about $36 million went to administration, and only around $20 million actually reached those who were injured. That is one-third, an abysmal failure, highlighting the Liberal government's inability to take their concerns seriously.

Health Canada has recorded approximately 12,000 serious adverse events following COVID-19 vaccination, yet out of the more than 3,500 filed, only a few hundred claims have been approved. A majority of assessed claims have been rejected outright. Claimants describe years of delays, lost medical records, gaslighting and dismissals, like it is all in their heads, as well as the exhaustion of fighting a system that the government claimed was there to help them.

We have heard from Canadians who were diagnosed with life-altering conditions. Many Canadians have suffered from myocarditis and stroke. When our free health care system would not provide the care they needed, some people were forced to sell their possessions and travel abroad for treatment. Some lost their careers, including those in the military, who still cannot go back to service. Some were offered medical assistance in dying while they were fighting for recognition. Members can think about that for a moment. The Liberal government asks someone to do something, they comply, and when things go wrong, the government offers to kill them instead of paying off the damages that it had a compensation program for. It is immoral, and it erodes public trust in our institutions.

These are not abstract statistics. They are friends, family members, farmers, nurses, students, parents and children who trusted the process. After COVID-19 vaccinations, we have vastly more documented serious adverse health reports than we did during the tainted blood scandal, yet compensation remains limited, and the process has been encumbered by bureaucracy, slow and not transparent at all.

Social media commentary and the public record of the Allison Inquiry make the same point repeatedly. People who complied are still waiting, while administrative overhead consumed the majority of the funds. The Liberal government did not learn from the testimony either. Canadians are still describing the same obstacles: red tape, narrow eligibility for serious and permanent injury, multi-year waits and inadequate amounts that do not cover lost income or ongoing costs.

An independent inquiry was necessary because of the Liberal government's failures on accountability and timely support. These Canadians do not deserve to be dismissed. They deserve recognition, fair process and meaningful financial support for their injuries and the economic harm they are living with. The Liberals promised results. All we have received is talk, and it is long past time to deliver on those promises.

● (1840)

Maggie Chi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member's question is an important one. While vaccines save lives, we understand that in very rare cases, some people experience adverse impacts. That is why the vaccine impact assistance program exists. The vaccine impact assistance program provides support to Canadians who experience a serious and permanent injury as a result of receiving an authorized vaccine.

This program has been administered by the Public Health Agency of Canada since 2021. As the member notes, there were concerns about the old program, the vaccine injury support program. We have heard those concerns, which is why we acted. We compared how Canada addressed these challenges with how other G7 countries and the Province of Quebec managed these cases, and we realized that we needed to update the program so it was more responsive.

Since taking over the administration of the vaccine impact assistance program on April 1, the Public Health Agency of Canada has made great strides in strengthening services and information for claimants, maintaining approved financial supports and putting claim assessment and processing procedures in place. There is still work to do in addressing the backlog of pre-existing claims. Thanks to the agency's efforts, we are making sure that these cases are dealt with, with the compassion and care they deserve.

Our work on improving the vaccine impact assistance program shows how our government will always work to support vulnerable Canadians. This is important work, and we are committed to getting it right.

Lianne Rood: Mr. Speaker, we keep hearing that vaccines save lives and that the government recognized the problem and is working collaboratively to support people. That is a familiar response, but like so many things the government does, the facts do not always match the rhetoric. Taking a failing third-party program in-house and renaming it does not erase the $36 million that went to administration while injured Canadians received roughly one-third of that amount of money. It does not clear the backlog, raise the approval rate or restore the incomes and health of people who have been waiting years and are still waiting.

Urgency would mean results. Canadians who followed the advice and the mandates are still struggling. Talking about caring, while the money has gone primarily to bureaucracy, is not support. It is the opposite of the promise that was made. A government that cannot keep promises made to the vulnerable, one that does not value life but offers death as a solution for its own mismanaged programs, is not one that Canadians should believe in or trust.

Maggie Chi: Mr. Speaker, our government made changes to supports for Canadians who were injured by authorized vaccines because it was the right thing to do. We have taken over administration of the vaccine impact assessment program. We are addressing the backlog, and we are making sure every case gets the attention it deserves. We will continue to refine the delivery of the program and make sure that it is there for vulnerable Canadians.

LABOUR

Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk today about workers who are working at a federal institution and have been on strike for 134 days. It is a federal institution that has twice been found breaking the law and the government refuses to take action despite the rhetoric that it is here for workers.

Today marks 134 days since PSAC security officers in Ottawa have been on strike. These are frontline security officers. They are first responders. They protect Canada's central bank, its assets and the people who work there. They deserve respect from the managers and executives whose safety it is their job to protect. Twice, the Canada Industrial Relations Board found that the Bank of Canada had broken federal labour law by using scab workers against these striking employees, and the Bank of Canada continues to use scabs even after being ordered to stop.

I want to be very clear about this issue. The employees on strike are asking for one simple thing. They are asking to keep the wording in their collective agreement that they already have. The bank is demanding concessions on scheduling rights. That is it. If the Bank of Canada stepped back from that, the strike would be over. The PSAC workers have offered to go to arbitration, and the bank has refused.

At a moment in time when workers' rights across this country are under attack because of the tariff war, because of Bill C-39 and because of so many things the government is doing, the fact that the Bank of Canada is not negotiating in good faith with PSAC workers, who have been on strike for 134 days, is unconscionable.

I want to bring this back to something that we have also heard from the minister. When I asked this question in September, the parliamentary secretary said, "Mr. Speaker, let me be crystal clear. We will always protect the rights of workers, and we will always support workers' constitutional right to strike." That was in September, but what we have seen is a pattern from the government of undermining collective bargaining, taking away workers' right to strike and weakening the ability of workers to stand up for their own actual human right to withhold their labour.

The Canada Labour Congress president, Bea Bruske, warned Parliament at committee on October 20 that employers who expect government intervention have less incentive to bargain seriously. The Unifor president, Lana Payne, told the parliamentary committee on October 26 that the national interest test in Bill C-39 is so broad that virtually every single strike could qualify, because every strike has an economic impact.

I am looking at one side, and I see PSAC workers who are not being treated fairly by the Bank of Canada, which has been found guilty twice of using scab labour. Then we have a government that says it will continue to fight for the right to strike for all workers but brings forward legislation such as Bill C-39, and the government has been told by Unifor, CUPE, CLC, USW and so many labour leaders that it breaks the right to strike. This is a problem.

● (1845)

Maggie Chi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Edmonton Strathcona for the opportunity to set the record straight.

Workers power this country. The government will always have their backs and stand up for their rights.

Let me be clear from the outset. Bill C-39 would not take away their right to strike. It would not take away a single right that workers have today. Free and fair collective bargaining, including the right to strike, is protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is the foundation of Canada's labour relations system, and it remains so. We cannot build a strong economy without respecting the workers who keep it running every day. We also cannot protect workers without an economy that creates new jobs and can withstand shocks.

The federally regulated private sector underpins key sectors of our economy and employs one of the most skilled workforces in the world, with more than one million workers and more than 22,000 employers. They deserve a labour system that protects them and delivers strong collective agreements at the bargaining table.

Today, that system works well. About 95% of labour disputes are resolved without a work stoppage, but in a small number of difficult cases, negotiations break down and become entrenched. When that happens, existing tools are not always enough. Bill C-39 would strengthen a system that already works, with straightforward objectives: supporting good-faith negotiations and strengthening collective bargaining.

During consultations, we clearly heard that some bargaining parties need more support earlier. The bill would strengthen the tools, supports and processes available so that unions and employers could find solutions together. It would create earlier and more adaptable supports for these difficult negotiations. It would create a process to appoint a special mediator, who would work with the parties to resolve differences and reach agreements at the bargaining table. It would also encourage good-faith bargaining, a responsibility that applies to both parties.

Strikes and lockouts can be part of the bargaining process, and government intervention in a labour dispute should always be a last resort. Bill C-39 would keep existing powers under section 107 of the Canada Labour Code only for the very small number of disputes that become entrenched and where the impacts reach well beyond the bargaining parties. It would add requirements and greater clarity and transparency before they can be used to intervene in a dispute.

Before interventions can be considered, a special mediator would work intensively with both parties and provide greater transparency about what is breaking down at the table. That means more accountability, not less. It means more room for bargaining, not less. A national impact assessment would also determine whether the labour disruption has significant impacts on Canadians and the broader economy.

An economy is only as strong as its workplaces, and our workplaces are only as strong as the protections and relationships that hold them together. We will not build Canada strong by weakening workers' rights. We will build it by helping workers and employers reach agreements, by keeping workplaces safe and by making sure they succeed together in a rapidly changing economy. That is what this bill would do.

● (1850)

Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, this is exactly why workers across the country are so frustrated with the Liberal government. The Liberals constantly say that they are on the side of workers, but when it came to taking away section 107 from the Canada Labour Code, they voted against taking it out. When it came to listening to labour leaders like Bea Bruske, Lana Payne and Marty Warren, who said not to bring forward Bill C-39 because it takes away workers' right to strike, they did not listen.

The legislation the government brings forward helps employers. It does not help workers. This is not a government that is here for workers.

Maggie Chi: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite seems to think this government has abandoned Canadian workers. Nothing could be further from the truth.

This government has said time and time again that we will always respect workers' rights. Bill C-39 would not take away the right to strike. That right is protected by the charter and it stays. What the bill would do is give workers and employers more support to reach agreements together. We are also backing workers with action. We are adding more officers to enforce their rights and keep workplaces safe. We are investing in skilled trades, training, apprenticeships and union workers across the country. We are investing in projects that will build Canada strong.

Canadian workers power this country, and our government will continue standing with them every step of the way.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:52 p.m.)

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