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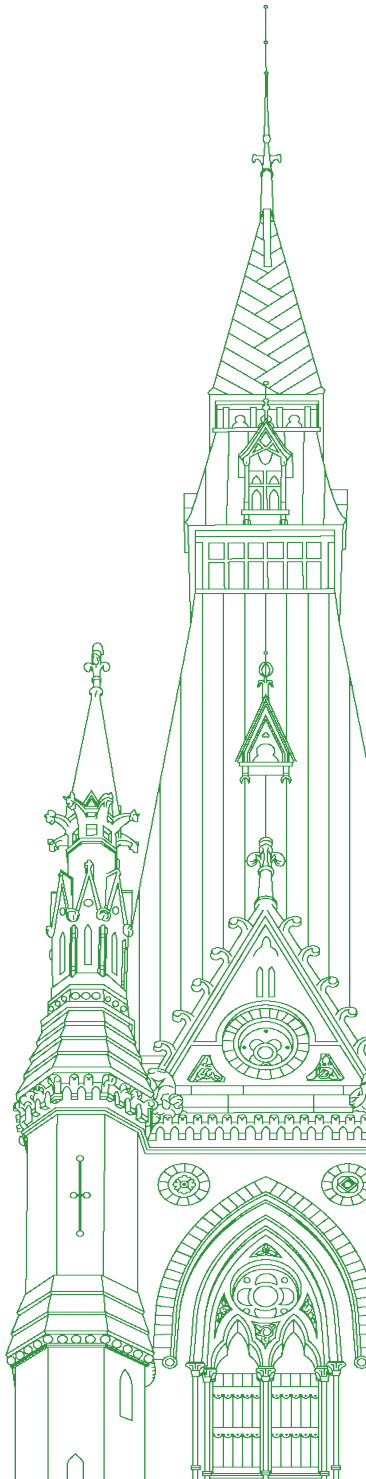

Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, November 20, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1000)

[*English*]

GROCERY AND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY ACT

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.) moved that Bill C-42, An Act respecting certain measures related to affordability and housing, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Bill C-42, an act respecting certain measures related to affordability and housing.

First, I would like to thank all members for their co-operation in ensuring quick passage of this bill through the House. Affordability remains a very pressing concern for many Canadians, and all of us understand we are living through extraordinary and challenging times. The global trading system that brought stability for decades is being rewritten, and wars and geopolitical competition are reshaping supply chains. For many Canadians, this uncertainty affects them every day.

[*Translation*]

People are wondering whether their job is secure, whether their business can weather another shock and whether they will be able to own their own home, raise a family and build the future that they want.

Just two weeks ago, this government tabled our plan to build a stronger and more affordable future for Canadians. We are helping families facing financial pressures with a boost today and a bridge to tomorrow. Since day one of forming government, we have focused relentlessly on making life more affordable for people across the country.

[*English*]

Budget 2026 provides over $22 billion over five years in new measures to ease the day-to-day financial pressures on Canadians. Key among these measures is the new 2027 Canada groceries and essentials benefit supplement. This supplement will give more than 12 million Canadians a 50% boost to their benefit, which is $4.1 billion in extra help for groceries and essentials in 2027.

This benefit builds on the GST credit and has continued to provide additional relief, with a one-time 50% top-up in June 2026 and a 25% increase in the benefit for five years beginning in July 2026. We are now going even further to provide additional support to Canadians for the cost of groceries and essentials by significantly enhancing this benefit.

Under the legislation, there would be a one-time top-up payment equivalent to a 50% increase in the annual 2026-27 value of the benefit, to be paid early in 2027. This new top-up would provide up to $339 for a single person without children and up to $679 for a family of four. Combined with our previous increases to the benefit, this targeted help to those who need it the most would bring the total support in 2026-27 to up to $1,290 for a single person without children and $2,570 for a family of four.

In addition, a foundational aspect of affordability for Canadians is housing. Whether someone is raising children, starting their adult life or preparing for retirement, every Canadian should have access to a housing market that works for them. By pursuing measures across the housing continuum to increase supply, we are helping more Canadians find a home they can afford.

That is why the government has eliminated the GST on homes valued at or under $1 million for first-time homebuyers. We have helped Canadians save for a down payment by establishing the tax-free first home savings account. We have partnered with provinces and local governments to decrease development charges, have invested in housing enabling infrastructure and have helped communities cut red tape and accelerate approvals through the housing accelerator fund. In fact, more than 200 agreements have been signed, committing over $4 billion to fast-track more than 120,000 permits for new homes across Canada.

Through Build Canada Homes, we are working directly with non-profit, indigenous, public and private partners to get more affordable non-market housing built. While there is still more to do on this, housing affordability is beginning to improve. Rents have gone down for 25 months in a row. The share of household income covering ownership fell from 55% to 41% according to the Bank of Canada. In Ontario, the new data tracked by BILD, the Building Industry and Land Development Association, shows more than 7,900 new homes were sold between July and September, which is an increase of 61% over the same period in 2025, in a very challenged market in the GTA.

● (1005)

While the challenges remain, these indicators show some encouraging signs of progress. To help ensure that Canadian homes are owned by Canadians, the federal government brought into force the Prohibition on the Purchase of Residential Property by Non-Canadians Act on January 1, 2023. Originally a temporary two-year measure, the prohibition was subsequently extended to January 1, 2027.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-42 will extend the ban on the purchase of existing residential properties by non-Canadians for two years, to January 1, 2029.

This bill is fundamentally about housing affordability. Its goal is simple: to reduce pressure on a limited supply of housing by preventing foreign investors from increasing competition for existing housing in Canada's tightest markets.

I want to be crystal clear about what this bill does and does not do. This legislation applies to residential properties with three units or fewer, including semi-detached homes and condos. It does not prohibit the purchase of large residential buildings of four or more units.

[*English*]

The prohibition focuses on the markets experiencing the greatest affordability challenges. This is why the prohibition generally applies only to properties located within census metropolitan areas with larger populations. It is equally important to understand who would not be affected by the legislation. This prohibition does not apply to Canadian citizens, permanent residents or persons registered under the Indian Act. The regulations also provide exemptions for certain temporary residents studying or working in Canada, accredited members of foreign missions, refugees and refugee claimants. These exemptions have a clear goal: to support people seeking to put down roots and build a life in Canada through home ownership.

Alongside this legislation, the federal government recognizes that investment plays an important part in driving new construction and increasing supply. That is why we would be launching a regulatory process in the new year on a proposed exemption for newly built residential properties. This proposed change to the regulation would strike an important balance. It would help protect housing affordability by keeping much of the market available for Canadians, and at the same time, it would unlock additional investment and accelerate the development of new housing supply, new homes.

This proposed amendment forms part of the government's broader consultations aimed at capturing the perspectives of all industries that are potentially affected by the prohibition. It would be an opportunity to ensure that the new exemptions are appropriately scoped, have required safeguards and align with the overall objectives of the prohibition to maintain affordability for Canadians.

This new legislation would strike an important balance. It would help Canadians make ends meet with direct, tax-free support. It would uphold the principle that existing homes should be available first and foremost to people living and working in Canada, while creating greater opportunities to attract investment into the construction of new homes.

We are focused on providing Canadians with a boost today and a bridge to a better tomorrow. This means providing immediate help to ease the pressure on household budgets while also building a stronger, more independent and prosperous economy for all Canadians well into the future. We are taking bold action to deliver a more affordable life for Canadians. Taken together, the measures in budget 2026 and the additional support through the Canada groceries and essentials benefit would form part of a comprehensive effort to make life more affordable and build a housing system that works for all Canadians.

I thank all members of the House for their support and co-operation in getting this bill through the House. Together, we are delivering for Canadians.

● (1010)

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the grocery top-up. As they should, the Liberals have set income level cut-offs. One of the problems in the minister's own province is that a couple with two children, both parents working for minimum wage, which is the very lowest, would not qualify for the GST rebate or the bump.

Why has the government set it so that two people in the minister's own province who are both making minimum wage, with two children at home and with the worst housing crisis and the highest rent, would not be eligible for the GST rebate?

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, to that point, initially the groceries and essentials benefit is applied across the country in a way that we feel is fair based on incomes across the country. Obviously, different markets and different cities have different contexts. B.C. has the highest minimum wage in the country right now, which is entirely appropriate in places such as Vancouver, where the cost of living, and certainly housing, is the highest in the country. This is where we can look at opportunities to make changes in the future.

Obviously, exemptions are part of what could happen next in terms of regulations. We are looking at regulations related to making new homes eligible for foreign buyers to purchase. The member could bring something like that forward in the regulatory process.

[*Translation*]

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things we are proposing today is extending the ban on foreigners buying property in major Canadian cities for two more years.

Minister, can you tell us briefly what impact this will have in practical terms, particularly in your riding, which has traditionally seen bidding wars created by foreign buyers? How will extending this ban benefit residents?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I would remind the member that questions are to be addressed through the Chair.

The hon. Minister of Housing and Infrastructure.

[*English*]

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, in my home city of Vancouver, we have probably had a disproportionately higher number of foreign buyers and investors for a number of years, particularly prior to many changes that were made federally, provincially and locally to really tamp down speculation and the flipping of properties, such as introducing an empty homes tax in particular, and other changes that could quell the opportunity.

That has obviously dramatically reduced the skew, in which foreign buyers were impacting the market. For many years, those controls were not in place. I think, in this case, it would protect the housing first and foremost for Canadians, but we look forward to enabling some investment, from going specifically into new—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

[*Translation*]

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague already knows that we agree on the bill. He talked about co-operation in the House at the beginning of his speech.

I have a question for him. In terms of the credit, why is the government refusing to have monthly payments instead of these quarterly cheques? This would go a long way to helping low-income people balance their budgets better and avoid the vicious cycle of debt when they are struggling at the end of the month.

What is the rationale? Why not do that? Can he work within his party to get us there?

[*English*]

Hon. Gregor Robertson: Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a worthy point made by my colleague and certainly something we could look at changing in the future. For now, it is about putting the groceries and essentials benefit in place and scaling it up to a level that is appropriate for Canadians across the country. There is certainly opportunity to change the delivery of that going into the future. I will certainly take it up with the Minister of Finance in terms of distribution.

I know that trying to keep this simple is important, but I acknowledge the fact that sometimes the schedule of payments can be improved. Certainly that has been the case with welfare, income assistance and other programs.

● (1015)

Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to be able to rise today and speak to Bill C-42. Obviously, it is an important discussion. This bill aims to address issues of affordability and the housing crisis. I am sure all members in this place would agree that these issues are of the utmost importance. I will start by saying that while I believe it is positive to see the government acknowledging that we are indeed in an affordability crisis and a housing crisis, it is unfortunate that, overall, we see the Liberals continuing to advance the same policies that have led us to these issues in the first place.

Canadians have held up their end of the bargain, so to speak. Canadians work hard, they follow the rules, and they love their country, and truly, that should be enough to afford them a basic, affordable life. Unfortunately, under the Liberal government, that simply is not the case. Everything has become more expensive since the Prime Minister took office, and his decisions at home have only made things worse. He is hiking taxes on fuel and driving up the cost of everything. He is adding $765 billion in new debt, meaning taxpayers will actually pay more on debt servicing than on health care under the plan. The Prime Minister also promised to spend less, but in fact, he is spending more, adding $331 billion in new spending, which will lead to higher inflation and higher interest rates for Canadians.

As a result of this, as we have heard from far too many people, Canadians are struggling to get by and are turning to food banks or even eating less simply to try to save some money. We can look at it from a national perspective. According to the CBC, yes, the CBC, recent reports indicate that nearly 10 million Canadians are experiencing food insecurity, a staggeringly high number. A further survey, from The Salvation Army, shows that 31% of Canadians are skipping or reducing their meals to save money on groceries. For me, one of the most shocking statistics is that 776,000 food bank visits this year alone were made by children. These statistics are as shocking as they are heartbreaking to read.

The situation in Canada is so dire that, according to the CEO of Food Banks Canada, many people who used to donate to food banks are now the ones lining up, finding themselves in need of visiting the food bank. This truly is a failure of government. These kinds of numbers tell stories, and these stories of people struggling are simply unacceptable, and we should never concede that this is normal in Canada.

The Liberals boast about the programs they have created to try to help Canadians afford groceries, but a decade ago Canadians did not need the government to pay for their groceries. The very need for such programs indicates a failure of the Liberal government. Despite this reality, despite the numbers and despite the constant stories filling all of our inboxes, the Prime Minister has said that affordability is the best it has been in a decade. With 10 million Canadians experiencing food insecurity and 31% of Canadians skipping meals, the Prime Minister could not be more out of touch in that respect.

Those national numbers show the big picture, but I believe these issues are impacting every corner of this country. That is true in northwestern Ontario. I can look to Kenora, where more than 10% of Kenora's population turned to the Salvation Army food bank during the first six months of this year. The food bank served over 1,500 unique individuals, which is an increase of more than 100% compared with the same period in 2025. I will remind members that this is a small city of some 15,000 folks or so.

The more recent numbers are even more staggering. In August 2025, the food bank served 60 people. In August of this year, it served a record 437 people. That is a 700% increase in food bank usage in Kenora. These numbers are shocking enough on their own, but 40% of people relying on the food bank also have a job. Of course, that means wage growth is not keeping up with rising costs. This is particularly concerning because a job used to be and should be enough to afford a good life, certainly a basic life, and that is clearly no longer the case in Canada after more than a decade of Liberal policies.

● (1020)

I also want to note that this is a somewhat timely discussion. Coincidentally, today is the 36th annual Miracle Marathon in Kenora to support The Salvation Army and its work in making the holiday season brighter for those in need. I am looking forward to calling in to the radio show later today as part of the event. This is an incredible opportunity each year where folks can donate cash, non-perishable food items and unwrapped toys to The Salvation Army's Christmas hamper program. Clearly, I am in Ottawa today and not able to be there in person this year, but I want to thank everyone who is involved in making the event a reality and all in our community who support it. Of course, I want to encourage everyone who can to stop by or go to the link online to support this very important cause, which is badly needed around the holiday season.

I will come back to Bill C-42. This is not a bill that is focused only on groceries and affordability. It also aims to address housing concerns. We are no doubt in a housing crisis. All Canadians should have an opportunity to afford their own home and have access to safe, affordable housing. In fact, the Prime Minister promised he would double housing starts, but homebuilding is down 3% from last year. That is just another one of the Prime Minister's broken promises. That is what happens when the Liberals build bureaucracy instead of homes. More programs, more spending and more government have not delivered the housing supply that Canadians were promised. Instead, families are paying a hefty price through higher housing costs.

I can cite local examples in northwestern Ontario. I can look to Kenora again, which is a community of 15,000 people. There is an identified housing shortage of 1,620 units, and that is expected to grow to nearly 2,500 units by 2031. This is a shockingly high number in such a small community. When I am travelling my district, in places like Sioux Lookout, I often hear from young professionals about how they are moving away because they cannot find a place to live. There are many young professionals who cannot move to the community. They would love to take a job, move to northern Ontario and enjoy our way of life, but they are unable to do so because of the lack of housing. I look to other regions like Red Lake, Deer Falls and Ignace, which are all poised for growth with natural resource development opportunities. All of those communities are in desperate need of housing to be able to capitalize on that growth and ensure that it can be of the utmost benefit for their communities.

I hear similar concerns from the housing standpoint across all corners of northwestern Ontario, and it paints a picture of just how urgent this issue is. Let us make no mistake. This is a Liberal-created housing crisis. Young people have given up completely on their dream of home ownership. Sellers are struggling to sell their homes. Builders are unable to build the homes we need. This is the reality.

The Conservatives have a plan to fix this crisis. We would stop the inflationary spending that is driving up inflation and interest rates, eliminate the GST on new homes under $1.3 million and clear away needless red tape so builders can build more homes faster and at lower costs for Canadians. Overall, Conservatives will continue fighting to restore the promise of Canada that hard work and playing by the rules will lead to a good job and a good, affordable life. We are working to save Canadians money and jobs while bringing down the deficit so everyone can afford to put food on the table and afford a safe place to call home.

● (1025)

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the member's comments, and I really appreciate the concern for Canadians who are struggling with affordability. I think that is something that everyone in the House acknowledges.

There is one point he mentioned that I have heard a number of times from the Conservatives, which is that government spending is driving up inflation. I have not been able to find any evidence whatsoever that this is the case in Canada or anywhere else around the world. I wonder if the member opposite could cite the sources he is referencing when he makes that statement.

Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, the member gives me an opportunity to highlight that after more than a decade of Liberal policies driving up inflation, we are back in this crisis where Canadians are struggling to afford food, housing and other basic necessities.

We know that when the Liberals continue to create big bureaucratic programs, it adds to inflation and it causes interest rates to rise. Again, we have a massive amount of debt. The Prime Minister is bringing forward over $700 billion in new debt that is actually squeezing out services that Canadians can rely on. Canadians are going to be paying more on servicing that Liberal debt than on health care transfers to the provinces. It is an absolutely unsustainable and irresponsible path, and that is why Conservatives are going to keep fighting to make life more affordable for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his speech. The parliamentary debates we are having today are important, as are all the debates that take place in this House every day. Unfortunately, nowadays, it seems like the members opposite do not share that view.

I believe Bill C-42 is something of an exception to this government's usual approach. It contains measures that enjoy fairly broad support, such as the restriction on foreign purchases of property at a time when we are facing a housing crisis and rising costs. It also increases the Canada groceries and essentials benefit. These are measures that we welcome.

My question for my colleague is this: Why can the government not be this collaborative all the time? Today's debate shows that it can be done, yet that is not what we typically see from the government on a day-to-day basis.

[*English*]

Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question. Obviously, I cannot speak for the government, but I know there are a number of great ideas that the Conservative Party, and members of all parties, have brought forward to address the issues that are facing Canadians.

The Liberals are really steamrolling ahead and doubling down on the policies that have caused these issues in the first place. As I mentioned in my remarks, they are continuing to add more debt. They are increasing taxes on fuel, which will drive up the cost of all essentials. They are going to continue with their inflationary spending pattern, adding over $300 billion in new spending under the Prime Minister.

The Liberals are really not listening to parliamentarians, and they are not listening to Canadians. They are just moving forward on the same policies that have created these cost of living crises in the first place.

Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and, at the end, for talking about the promise of Canada.

Twelve years ago, we had the richest, most prosperous middle class in the world, according to The New York Times. We had the strongest-performing economy in the G7. The private sector was building pipelines and projects. Canada was prospering, and the middle class was successful.

How did we get to the point, after 11 years of the Liberals, where we have such an unaffordable life in Canada and the middle class is shrinking?

Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, that is a question I hear throughout northwestern Ontario constantly. How has it gotten to this point?

The answer is that it is a direct result, again, of the Liberals' policies that are driving up the cost of living. They have done a great job of building bureaucracy and creating more bureaucrats and programs that do not actually build homes, for example. They have also created more programs that are not actually bringing down the cost of living for Canadians. If we look at house prices, they are double what they were before the Liberal government took office.

Everything the Liberals have been doing is just throwing more fuel on that inflationary fire. That is how we have gotten to this point after more than a decade of Liberal rule. It is certainly time for change.

[*Translation*]

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I believe my esteemed colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères raised an issue of paramount importance just now. Today, everyone is patting themselves on the back, puffed up with pride at having come together to advance a bill that serves the public interest. It is true that we were able to work together, and I am happy about that.

However, I have to say that this does not happen very often anymore. Since the government got its fake majority thanks to floor crossers, its attitude has gradually shifted. We see examples every day. As the chief whip of the Bloc Québécois, I work with my team to oversee all of the work of the House of Commons standing committees. If there is anyone who is well placed to observe the government's changing attitude toward collaboration and openness, it is us. I have seen some unfortunate things, and it is even worse when the committees meet in camera. Unfortunately, I am not allowed to talk about what happened in those meetings, but it seems much easier for the government to get away with things when committees meet in camera. The government is completely rejecting arguments put forward by French-speaking members, members from Quebec. I am trying to choose my words carefully, but I find this alarming. I was glad that my colleague raised that point, and that is why I began my speech by talking about this.

The Bloc Québécois has not changed its DNA since the Liberal government manufactured its majority. Because we were elected by the people in our ridings, we have a duty to represent their collective interests. An election campaign lasts a month and a half.

Mr. Speaker, I can hear people talking in the chamber. I would appreciate it if they would take their conversations outside, since it does take some concentration to deliver a speech.

I was saying that our DNA has not changed. We are always prepared to work constructively for the good of our constituents.

Unfortunately, that is not always the case on the government side. We are getting steamrolled. I am referring to the Legislative Committee on Bill C-39. It is practically sitting around the clock. We are exhausting our resources, our people, who are careful, conscientious workers. This is demanding work. At times like these, the work we do here becomes a bit surreal. We talk past each other for hours or weeks on end, and then suddenly, a certain bill needs to be passed, so we hunker down, sit until midnight every day, vote without a debate and are forced to insist on voting clause by clause in order to keep the attention on the bill and try to work on its content in, again, an intelligent and constructive way. I am very proud of the Bloc Québécois team. I think we are doing an outstanding job. I think we often rise above the fray in the House, and for that, I congratulate my team. Nevertheless, it seems a shame.

Mr. Speaker, if people want to have conversations, they should do it in the lobby. I would appreciate it if they could step outside. What a tough morning. It is true that it is Friday and we are tired. It must be because of the Legislative Committee on Bill C-39, which will be sitting until midnight. Those people are more tired, but their voices carry. I say this to my friends: Their voices carry.

Let us come back to Bill C-42. It is a fine example of collaboration. We are happy to vote in favour of this bill, because it fulfills one of our budget requests. Lord knows it is not often that a budget request from the Bloc Québécois is granted. When it does happen, we are always happy and we make a point of saying so. However, the last budget was not very impressive. Our decision to support this bill may also head off cheap shots from members on the other side. Whenever we ask questions in the House of Commons, they stand up and say that we voted against increasing the Canada groceries and essentials benefit, which was in the budget. However, they hand us a budget full of things that are unpalatable, unacceptable, and even outrageous to a certain extent, including giving oil companies up to $25 billion more over the next five years. If we consider what is going to be sent through the pipelines without no environmental assessment and no oversight, it is even worse.

● (1030)

It is only natural that we would vote against a hodgepodge of a bill that is like a dish containing ingredients that are going bad and that would make us sick if we ate them. However, we are pleased that we are getting to vote on one specific thing. The key feature of this measure is that it is targeted. We have been making this point for a long time. Handing out money to people before an election is easy. Just think back to the carbon tax rebate, which was issued before the provinces of Canada had even paid the tax. It did not apply in Quebec, because of our carbon exchange, which is still in place, but the government sent rebates to people in other provinces for a tax that had not been paid. That money was a gift sent to people right before an election. Doing that is easy.

Those kinds of measures are not very smart, not very well thought out, since everyone will get the money, even though some people do not need it. This is being done at a time when inflation is skyrocketing, people are struggling to put food on the table, and lineups at food banks are getting longer and longer. I hope every single person in the House is aware of that. Anyone who is not aware must not be visiting their riding very much. We all have food banks in our ridings. As everyone knows, they are facing enormous demand. It is becoming a very big problem. At the same time, we cannot help but wonder why it is that, in a G7 country, working people have to go to a food bank. It makes no sense. It is just as absurd as having to sit until midnight when we could have been working more efficiently beforehand.

The Canada groceries and essentials benefit supplement is a poetic rebrand of the old GST credit. Governments do that sometimes. They change the memo line on the cheque to make it look like they created something, when in fact it is an old credit that already existed but has been enhanced. We welcomed that. The benefit had already been increased by 25%. Last year, the government sent out a cheque for a 50% increase. In our budget requests, we asked that it be done again this year, and it has been done. We welcome that. We are pleased. My colleagues already know that. I am happy, but I do want to call for collaboration. I am asking the Liberals to be objective, to take a step back, take in what is happening and realize that the opposition members are not stupid. We are capable of working constructively. We sometimes get the sense that there is a bit of contempt and that no consideration is given to what the opposition can contribute under this fake majority government. That is important. That is key.

Another measure in the bill is the extension of the ban on foreign purchases of residential property. The ban was set to expire on January 1, 2027, but it has been extended to January 1, 2029. We welcome this measure because the housing affordability crisis has not been resolved. It is still a very serious issue, and we must continue to work on it despite all the new construction going on. We cannot simply say that we are going to build, build, build, because we are starting to see buildings with exorbitant rents sitting half empty. I am beginning to see this in my own region. If rents are set at $1,600 a month in a rural area where people simply cannot afford that, those units will remain vacant for quite some time. The government needs to look at incorporating social housing into the mix. It should also consider transferring the money to Quebec and the provinces, which are best placed to address this issue.

● (1035)

It is fine for the government to send people a cheque to help pay for groceries, but we have to consider the long term. Can we be constructive and look at the studies that have already been done? I wasw a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food for a long time, and we did studies on that issue. When five companies control more than 80% of the grocery retail market, it comes as no surprise that they always deny any collusion and say it is not an oligopoly. However, they keep an eye on each other, and if they notice that one of them is increasing its prices, they all follow suit. The same goes for gasoline. The joke is on us. Everyone is laughing at us.

Some sensible solutions have been suggested, such as an agency to oversee grocery pricing practices. How is it possible that a farmer can sell a head of lettuce for 35¢ only to see it selling for $2 at the grocery store three days later? Where is the money going? Did the driver who drove it from one location to the other pocket the difference? That is not where the money should be going. It should be going to the producer, but that is a different matter altogether.

I may not be the agriculture critic anymore, but I still care about our farmers. We need to look after them and make sure they stay in business. That requires respect. We need to understand what they do and focus on the heart of the matter. On the whole, we support the bill. I would be pleased to answer any questions.

● (1040)

Gaétan Malette (Kapuskasing—Timmins—Mushkegowuk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in some regions of Canada, parents who are earning minimum wage and raising a small child are not eligible for the Canada groceries and essentials benefit. The program does not seem to be reaching the right people. Could the hon. member, my neighbour from Quebec, tell us more about that?

Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his intelligent question. He is right. Some people are falling through the cracks. We need to figure out who those people are and why they cannot access this support. We need to be smart and take a long-term view. As I just said, perhaps we should consider setting up an agency responsible for overseeing grocery pricing practices. That could be one solution. This is why we advocate for targeted measures.

I will now just take a few seconds to talk about the extension of the suspension of the excise tax on fuel, which everyone is so happy about. The government is lowering taxes on fuel, which will help people. However, as we have said before, only half of that money goes to consumers, while the other half goes into the pockets of oil companies. What is more, it is not a targeted measure. People who have a lot of money and those with less all benefit equally. It is important to take targeted measures in these cases. We need to look at who is not eligible for the tax credit.

[*English*]

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague made a comment that, while he supports these measures, they may not necessarily produce the affordability that is required and needed by Canadians. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives actually calls the issue a big loophole where the government intends to exempt newbuilds from the foreign buyer ban. I wonder if the member has any further thoughts on that.

[*Translation*]

Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, that provision should indeed be examined thoroughly in committee. This measure may seem positive, in the sense that it will further increase the housing supply, but would that be at the expense of local businesses that also could have developed these undeveloped residential sites? The exemption she is referring to is for new developments. I believe this is not yet enshrined in law. If I am not mistaken, she is referring to the Australian model. The issue will have to be studied in depth, but there is indeed a risk. That is precisely why my entire speech on collaboration was so important. Even though the government knows it will win every vote, it would do well to listen to our proposals, from both the Bloc and the NDP.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the last point made by my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé on the notion of collaboration. This is very important on both sides of the House. Although the government has a majority, working together can only improve legislation and increase the chances of coming up with ideas that were not thought of at the outset.

We have the impression that the government opposite is constantly steamrolling Parliament to push its priorities forward. How does that create a difficult dynamic in terms of collaboration? I imagine that when one side is acting in good faith and the other is not, it gets harder to keep reaching out.

Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right, and I thank him for pointing that out. It is a vicious cycle that can easily be set in motion but is difficult to stop. Let me give an example. A few days ago, during a sitting, there was a technical issue while someone was making a statement under Standing Order 31 before question period. There is often a lot of noise, and the person had been interrupted. The House usually allows that person to repeat their statement if there was a problem with the recording, for example. I have seen it happen. It was denied in recent weeks because there was a petty feud and some bad blood. We were told it was because the other side had previously refused consent in another matter, and that by refusing consent this time, the score would somehow be settled. If we keep playing that game, we will not get very far. It is the common good that suffers.

● (1045)

[*English*]

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government says budget 2026 is about making life more affordable for Canadians, but when we take a closer look at the two key measures, the groceries and essentials benefit and the proposed changes to the foreign homebuyer ban, some very important questions emerge. Are these measures actually going to make life more affordable for ordinary Canadians, or are they designed to create the appearance of action while leaving the underlying problems largely untouched?

Let us start with groceries. The government is proposing a $4.1-billion one-time supplement to the GST credit through the new groceries and essentials benefit. For eligible individuals, the payment will range from $329 to $679 for a couple with two children, depending on household circumstances and income. Combined with other increases to the benefit, total support could reach $1,290 for a single individual and $2,570 for a couple with two children. Let us be clear: people need this money. Families are making difficult choices among groceries, rent, utilities and other basic necessities. Any additional support that helps put food on the table is welcome. For a single person, the additional supplement amounts to roughly $20 a month over a year. Grocery prices do not stop rising after the government issues cheques. The bills do not stop arriving. Families do not get a break from the cost of living just because the government has announced a one-time payment.

There is also an important eligibility consideration. People will need to have filed their 2025 income tax return to qualify. What about the people who are struggling but have not filed their taxes? What outreach will the government undertake to ensure that eligible people actually receive the benefit? Why should Canadians have to wait until 2027 to receive this support when they are struggling with grocery bills today?

The government is spending $36 billion over five years on its corporate mega deduction, yet when it comes to helping people afford groceries, it is offering a one-time temporary relief. That tells us something about the Prime Minister's priorities.

The NDP has been clear that we need to address the underlying causes of food inflation and the concentration of power in Canada's grocery sector and its oligopolies. Why will the government not take meaningful action to increase competition in the grocery sector? Why will it not move forward with a network of public grocery stores that could provide affordable food and put competitive pressure on the major grocery chains? Why will it not ban surveillance pricing, where corporations use personal data and algorithms to charge consumers different prices? Canadians need more than a one-time cheque. They need a grocery system that works in the public interest.

On the second issue, which is about housing, the government has proposed changes to the Prohibition on the Purchase of Residential Property by Non-Canadians Act. The bill does not say that newly constructed residential properties and rural properties will be exempted from the ban. However, that is the government's intention, and that is what it is going to do. That will, of course, be left to regulations. The government's apparent rationale is that allowing foreign investment in new housing construction will help increase supply, but there is no guarantee that the homes being built will be affordable for Canadians, because, of course, they will not be.

In fact, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives calls this a “big loophole” designed primarily to bail out property developers rather than help regular homebuyers. Economist Mark Lee indicated that carving out new residential properties fundamentally undermines the ban. The truth is that relying on private investor-driven preconstruction fails to produce genuinely affordable housing. A luxury condominium purchased by an overseas investor does not solve the housing crisis facing a young family trying to get into the market. CBC Massey lecturer Leilani Farha's work on the financialization of housing has proven that point.

● (1050)

There is also a mismatch with family housing. Foreign buyers typically target preconstruction condos rather than the ground-oriented detached or townhomes most families struggle to afford. The government has chosen not to be transparent about its intentions, and in this legislation, the foreign-owned housing ban does not say newbuilds will be exempt. That policy decision will be made by the government behind closed doors.

Since we will not know what is going to be in the regulations, I want to ask the government the following. What safeguards will be in place? Will there be limits on the number of newly built homes or residential units that a foreign buyer can purchase? Can one foreign investor purchase an entire condominium development? Can a foreign investment fund acquire hundreds of units in a single building or multiple developments across the country? Will there be restrictions on bulk purchases by corporations, investment funds or other entities acting on behalf of foreign interests? Will the government allow foreign investors to accumulate large portfolios of residential properties simply because those properties are newly constructed? These are not hypothetical concerns. They go directly to the question of whether this policy would create another avenue for financial speculation.

Second, what exactly qualifies as a newbuild? Does it include preconstruction purchases? What about assignment sales? What about completed but previously unoccupied units? None of this information is outlined in the bill, and Canadians deserve to know.

Third, what about rural Canada? The government has referenced rural properties in its proposed changes, but what exactly is the rationale for these exemptions? The existing prohibition already applies only within designated census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations. Many rural communities are outside of those boundaries. Will the government expand the exemptions? Will it change the geographic rules? What evidence does it have that foreign investment is needed to address housing supply in rural communities? Rural communities are not immune to housing pressures. In many places, local workers, young families and seniors are struggling to find affordable housing. What protections will be in place to ensure that foreign investment does not further drive up prices or reduce the availability of homes for local residents?

These two measures tell us something about the government's overall approach. On groceries, the government offers a one-time payment rather than taking on the concentrated market power that contributes to high food prices. On housing, the government is opening new avenues for foreign investment without yet providing Canadians with sufficient clarity about the limits and safeguards. Across the broader budget, we see $36 billion in corporate tax deductions alongside major increases in military spending and a continued absence of meaningful new measures to make the wealthiest Canadians pay their fair share.

The government is asking Canadians to trust that if corporations and investors do well, everyone else will eventually benefit, but Canadians cannot pay their rent with promises of future economic growth, they cannot put food on the table with corporate tax deductions, and they cannot build a future if housing and agricultural land continue to be treated primarily as financial assets. The NDP believes the public policy must start with the needs of the people, and that means addressing grocery prices and inflation, tackling corporate concentration, investing in affordable and non-market housing, protecting agricultural land and ensuring that Canada's resources serve the public interest. Canadians are not asking for miracles. They're asking for affordable groceries, homes they can afford and a government that understands the difference between helping people and helping wealthy investors.

The groceries benefit may provide some temporary relief, but it is not a substitute for structural action, and the proposed changes to the foreign homebuyer ban raise serious questions about who will benefit from Canada's housing market and what protections will remain for ordinary Canadians. The test of this budget should not be how money is delivered to corporations and investors. It should be how it makes life better for everyday people.

● (1055)

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her comments. We do not agree on everything, but we certainly agree on a lot of it, and she brought up some very good points today. One of the concerns I expressed when this bill first came into the House, before the added bump, was how it is not targeted enough, how minimum-wage couples in large parts of the country, including in her province, would be shut out from the rebate and the bump as well.

When I asked the minister about it, his comment was not to worry because minimum wage in Vancouver was so high and therefore that was the reason they were not eligible for the GST rebate.

Does my colleague think that a couple in Vancouver with two children making the bare minimum wage is making too much to qualify for the GST rebate?

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, actually, I know people who are making minimum wage and barely surviving. They are living out of cars as a result of that. These are working people who are working hard, trying to survive. People making minimum wage absolutely deserve the support. The fact of the matter is that the government's focus is always for the corporate class and not the everyday people.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I look at Bill C-42, I see that it addresses in good part the issue of affordability. It would be nice to hear whether the New Democratic Party will support it. I might have missed the member's comments indicating whether those members actually support the principle of the legislation, of providing assistance to Canadians at a time when affordability is an issue. It would be nice to see virtual unanimous support for legislation such as the bill on the floor today.

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, clearly, the member did miss my speech. He can go back to Hansard and read it. He often comes to this place with blinders, so he does not actually hear and see what really is going on, other than the message box from the government.

Let me put this on the public record: What the government is doing with this bill is ramming it through, by the way, all stages in one day. That means we, as parliamentarians, would not even have the opportunity to make amendments at committee.

I ask the member this question: Why would the government not allow parliamentarians to do their job? For example, on the foreign buyer ban, why would it not clearly spell out that it would exempt new developments from the ban? Why would it not tell Canadians that outright, up front?

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing repeatedly from the Liberal government is a series of announcements with a different metric every time. I suppose its members say it is a new government, but the old version of the new government, in 2017, promised to cut homelessness in half. It is now promising to eliminate it immediately, even though it has gone up since 2017. It promised to double certain kinds of housing, and now it is promising to triple other kinds of housing. Of course, once again, now we are seeing the repeated pattern of ramming through a bill in order to make more announcements.

The member is in Vancouver, one of the most expensive housing markets in the country, and I am wondering if she can comment on what the constant moving of the goalposts does to our communities.

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the Liberals have yet to make a target they have set out. Even the Minister of Housing himself, when he was the mayor of Vancouver, promised that he would end homelessness. How did that go? It was a big, fat fail. Here we are again, where he is making the same promise, and my prediction is that the government is not going to achieve the target. Today, instead of actually abiding by the National Housing Strategy Act, which says that access to housing needs to be a fundamental human right, the minister actually changed that target to say that every Canadian should have access to a housing market that works for them.

Here we go. We are backsliding already, before the bill has even passed and as we are debating it. Already, the minister is backsliding on the promise to end homelessness for Canadians as the government has promised.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1100)

[*English*]

CANADA-PHILIPPINES FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is really important to recognize that Canada has one million-plus individuals of Filipino heritage, and so many others who love the Philippines and the relationship between Canada and the Philippines.

In the last election, the Prime Minister made a commitment to look at ways to expand trade opportunities beyond the Canada-U.S.A. border. I am so happy to say that last summer, we had the President of the Philippines and our Prime Minister meet in Vancouver. I had the opportunity to sit over lunch and hear the discussion first-hand, where both leaders indicated that they wanted to be able to achieve an agreement before the end of the year.

The good news is that we achieved that agreement on November 14, not that long ago. All of Canada will benefit by it, because it hits at the issue of tariffs.

Expanding trade opportunities is what this government is about.

* * *

EDMONTON ELKS

Billy Morin (Edmonton Northwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the green and gold are back on top.

Congratulations to our hometown Edmonton Elks on capturing the 113th Grey Cup. After a tough 11 years and finishing last in the west a year ago, after QB Cody Fajardo and top receiver Austin Mack were cut loose by the Montreal Alouettes and after the whole team was cast as a clear underdog, the Elks persevered and won.

As a former shareholder, I want to personally thank the late Larry Thompson, his wife Deb and their family for buying and saving professional football in the city of Edmonton for fans and families.

Decades ago, as a kid, my grandpa brought my late dad to Clarke Stadium to watch the green and gold. They were inspired by five in a row. Later, my father championed youth outreach by scraping together what donations he could to take kids from Enoch Cree Nation to the Knothole gang section in Commonwealth Stadium. Thirty years later, those games are still cited by many of my friends as great childhood memories.

The double E inspired greatness in our city, and in the words of Coach Mark Kilam, we are proud to be the city of champions once again.

* * *

SURESHKUMAR RAVINDRAN

Jennifer McKelvie (Ajax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in this chamber to share sad news from my community.

Earlier this month, Ajax lost a local leader and friend, Sureshkumar Ravindran. He was only 41 years old. Over the past few weeks, the outpouring of tributes and love for Suresh has been both inspiring and heartbreaking. Political leaders, neighbours, family and friends have shared stories about his kindness, his positivity and his wonderful smile.

On behalf of the Ajax community, I extend my deepest condolences to his mother, Uthayarani, his wife, Prasintha, and their children.

While there are no words that will lessen the grief, I hope that love from all corners of our community serves as light in the darkness, a reminder of his life well lived.

* * *

CADETS

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, cadets give young Canadians something that is harder and harder to find: a place to put down their phones, try something new, make friends and discover what they are capable of.

Last week, I was inspired as more than 90 of our Nanaimo—Ladysmith cadets stood vigil at our cenotaphs in the pouring rain for Remembrance Day. Tomorrow, I will participate in a conference on dementia put together by a cadet.

Yesterday, Liberals claimed that cadet budgets are up, but the cuts that cadet leadership have been forced to make to activities like band, first aid and marksmanship tell a different story. The minister now says that he will look at it and get back to us.

Well, that does not cut it. We will fight this shameful policy until we get confirmation that all activities will be restored.

The cadet program brings together youth of every background, from every kind of family, and meets kids where they are. Cadets provide for every experience level and instill a love for Canada in our youth.

Save our cadets.

* * *

STEEL INDUSTRY

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite the unjustified and illegal American tariffs, there is very good news for Canada, including the recent announcement that all laid-off Stelco workers are now back on the job.

I am very proud that Hamilton steelworkers have shown all of Canada how we can win against Donald Trump's trade war, through unity, collaboration and a shared commitment to protect Canadian jobs. Even the American owner of Stelco, CEO Lourenco Goncalves, has acknowledged that there is a growing demand for Canadian steel, proving that our government's investments in the Canadian steel industry are creating new opportunities for Canadian industry.

Protecting the Canadian steel industry is not a partisan issue. This is in our collective national interest. Now is the time for all levels of government, industry, labour, unions and all Canadians to work together to stand up to protect workers, to stay united and together, to build a stronger, more independent Canadian economy for today's families and generations to come.

* * *

● (1105)

ENDOMETRIOSIS

Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some of the most difficult stories to hear are those of women who have spent years searching for answers. I have met remarkable women building careers, raising families and strengthening our communities, all while quietly navigating pain, uncertainty and unanswered questions. Across Canada, nearly two million people are living with endometriosis. For far too many, the road to diagnosis is measured not in months, but in years, with another appointment, another referral and another year without answers, yet life does not stand still.

These women are not asking for something immeasurable. They are asking for something fundamental: to be heard, to be believed and to have access to timely, compassionate care. Their stories deserve more than acknowledgement. They call for continued research, better coordination among health professionals and government, and a clear plan to turn advocacy into action, because being heard should never be the hardest part of getting care.

* * *

CAREER CONGRATULATIONS

David Myles (Fredericton—Oromocto, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Fredericton Dr. Brad McKay. The baseball coach and sports scientist made history a few weeks ago. He helped the Milwaukee Brewers capture their first ever World Series championship. McKay is the lead strategist for skill acquisition with the Brewers. That means he helps players learn faster, practise smarter and play better. Brad discovered his passion for coaching while growing up in Fredericton. He started by working with youth through the Fredericton Royals and went on to coach at the University of New Brunswick.

[*Translation*]

His knowledge and talent have influenced an entire generation of male and female players in New Brunswick. His accomplishments show that small towns can produce coaches for the major leagues.

[*English*]

Fredericton is so proud of what Brad has accomplished. Please join me in congratulating Dr. Brad McKay.

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100TH BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS

Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Sunday I attended an amazing event. Eli Shantz of Shellbrook, Saskatchewan celebrated his 100th birthday. It was a full house and a fun party. Born in Wallenstein, Ontario in 1926, Eli moved west in 1949. While working as a farmhand in Phippen, he met Lilleth, a young schoolteacher who had just arrived in town. They married in 1956 and celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary this past July. Together, they raised their family and farmed west of Shellbrook for more than five decades. He retired at the age of 88, and today he and Lilleth still live in Shellbrook.

He is not the first in his family to reach 100. His older sister also lived to 100, and their aunt lived to 106, but today, we are honouring him and the remarkable life that he has lived in Saskatchewan. On behalf of my family and the family and friends all around us, the constituents of Prince Albert, I want to congratulate Eli on reaching this incredible milestone. I wish him a happy 100th birthday.

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[*Translation*]

LE VENT DU NORD

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the members of Le Vent du Nord, who won the Félix award for traditional album of the year for *Voisinages* at ADISQ's premier gala. This prestigious award once again recognizes their talent and their exceptional contribution to traditional Quebec music.

The remarkable journey of the group comprising Nicolas Boulerice, André Brunet, Réjean Brunet, Olivier Demers and André Gagné deserves to be recognized. From the beginning, Le Vent du Nord has been showcasing our culture far beyond our borders and has been bringing joy to the hearts of anyone who hears their music. Seeing them share our culture with the entire globe, with our nation in their hearts, is a great source of collective pride.

May they continue to enjoy many more years of creativity, encounters and success. Long live Le Vent du Nord and Quebec's traditional music.

[*English*]

BROADCASTING LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Hamilton's excellent local news includes CHCH, a station where I spent 20 years teasing stories out of people with my microphone. The first broadcast was in 1954, but CHCH only recently gained industry recognition for its talent.

I am over the moon that Lifetime Achievement Awards have gone to two friends from whom I have learned so much. Duane Worth, cameraman extraordinaire, has 45 years of experience and intelligence capturing the best angles and understanding which images are important to a story. Annette Hamm started in 1986 and only recently retired as beloved morning show host. When I started, Annette was the crime reporter and my most valued mentor.

Budget 2026 will help CHCH continue its legacy, including with the expansion of a tax credit to broadcasters so they can hire more stellar journalists like Annette and Duane.

* * *

● (1110)

THE BUDGET

Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is counting on Canadians to forget all of their past promises, projections and discarded fiscal anchors and that Canadians will not notice that the 500-page budget is rooted in accounting trickery.

They hope we will not notice that they are still spending $20 billion a year on consultants. They hope we will not notice that they are relabelling expenses to remove them from their operating calculation. They hope that we will not notice that they are going to borrow $150 billion this year alone, that debt is the fastest-growing government expense and that revenues do not even cover non-interest expenses. They hope we will not notice that debt to GDP is rising. They hope we will not notice that they are hiding their borrowing off the balance sheet, just like bankers before the 2008 financial meltdown. They also hope that we will not notice that the budget adds $765 billion to the national debt.

Canadians hope that the banker Prime Minister will rein in his borrowing before debt becomes the master of our destiny.

* * *

HOUSING

Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my community and I welcome budget 2026's commitment to put Canada on a path to ending homelessness in 10 years. Through investments across the housing continuum, from shelters and supportive housing to affordable rentals and home ownership, the federal government is making a historic commitment to tackle the housing crisis, but federal investment alone is not enough. Success depends on strong provincial and municipal action. Provinces must fund the essential wraparound services and municipalities must modernize planning rules, protect existing affordable housing and permit the construction of new housing.

In Ottawa Centre, residents at 551 Riverdale Avenue are facing demoviction. While federal programs can help preserve affordable homes, the Province of Ontario and the City of Ottawa must strengthen protections against these practices. All Canadians deserve a safe, affordable place to call home and all levels of government must do their part.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the case for Alto is based on a 180-minute travel time from Montreal to Toronto. Adding a stop at the Kingston Via station would slow this by 20 minutes, making Alto uncompetitive with air travel. Two factors are responsible. First, for a TGV-style train, every intermediate stop adds 10 minutes. Second, diverting the planned route to Kingston would add 50 kilometres and, therefore, a further 10 minutes to every trip. If Kingston's promised Alto stop is actually delivered, it is probably going to look like this.

First, the 10-minute deficit caused by extra stops will be addressed by ending Via's practice of stopping every train in Kingston. Take a look at Port Hope's intermittent train service to see what this looks like. Second, the deficit caused by the 50-kilometre detour would be addressed by moving the station, not the track. Kingston's train station would likely be 30 minutes away in Verona or Sydenham. Alto service will be far worse and far slower for Kingston than Via is. It is no wonder Kingston does not want Alto.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PROJECT AURORA

Abdelhaq Sari (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these days, criminals do not recruit young people on street corners. They do it online, behind a screen, with the promise of easy money. In response to this reality, the Montreal police service, or SPVM, launched Project Aurora nine months ago. It is a digital undercover operation designed to curb the recruitment of minors on social media.

In nine months, there have been 75 arrests, and the youngest offender was 12 years old. That is right: 12 years old. We are talking about our young people. The program has been a success, and Montreal's expertise is now inspiring police officers across the country and even in Europe.

As the member for Bourassa and former vice-chair of Montreal's Public Security Commission, I know how much prevention saves lives and secures the future of our youth. I commend the SPVM investigators, particularly Francis Renaud, head of the organized crime unit, and Maya Alieh, head of the cyber investigations unit.

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals had a chance to bring the deficit down. The Parliamentary Budget Officer reported this week that Ottawa gained $158 billion in fiscal room over five years. Instead, they committed 96¢ of every dollar to new spending.

What are Canadians getting for their money? The Prime Minister promised to double homebuilding. In the PBO's words, housing starts are down and funding is up. At the investment summit, the government touted a number of vague financing commitments. The PBO says that most of these commitments have yet to be tied to specific projects.

One bill Canadians can count on is the interest. By 2031, Ottawa expects to spend over $2,000 per Canadian on debt interest that year alone. Canadians deserve to know which homes are getting built, if and when any shovels will hit the ground, and what they are getting for all that debt and interest.

* * *

● (1115)

WORLD FISHERIES DAY

Ernie Klassen (South Surrey—White Rock, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow on World Fisheries Day, we recognize the fish harvesters, fishing communities and indigenous peoples whose stewardship of the water sustains local economies, supports livelihoods and strengthens communities across Canada from coast to coast to coast. Canada's sovereignty, prosperity, identity and way of life are deeply connected to the oceans, from the Pacific coast to the communities across the country that rely on seafood processing, trade and marine industries, healthy oceans support jobs, food security, and economic opportunity. This is why our government continues to invest in conservation and habitat restoration, all while building a more resilient, more sustainable fishing industry.

On tomorrow's World Fisheries Day, let us celebrate the stewards of these vital resources and renew our commitment to healthy oceans, sustainable fisheries and thriving coastal communities for generations to come.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

THE BUDGET

Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said he would spend less, but the budget watchdog exposed $331 billion in new spending. He will also borrow $868 billion in six years, which is $65 billion more than Trudeau borrowed in a decade. Canadians cannot afford food, fuel or homes, but the PM gives more than $500 million for forests in Brazil and $8 million for rice in Vietnam. The Liberals are giving hundreds of millions to other countries, but the more they spend, the more Canadians pay.

Where is the relief here at home? When will the Liberals finally put Canadians first?

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, stewarding the nation's resources responsibly is a duty that the government takes extremely seriously. That is why Canadians hired a world-class economist to be their Prime Minister at a pivotal moment in our history.

As our country faces threats to our economic security and sovereignty, what we are doing is leveraging our fiscal strength, the strongest balance sheet in the G7, to invest in our people, unite our country and grow a stronger economy. That is exactly what Canadians gave us a mandate to do, and we are never going to apologize—

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

Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the budget watchdog says the Liberals used an accounting scheme found nowhere else in the world. The Prime Minister counts assets as pensions that cannot repay debt and as Crown corporation loans that drive up interest, with $135 billion in spending as capital, unlike international standards. The PBO warns these costly credit card Liberal tricks make Canada fiscally unsustainable. It is no wonder the Liberals cooked the books to hide it.

Why must Canadians pay more for everything, while the out-of-touch Prime Minister breaks his promise to spend less?

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 had the opportunity to question the PBO at the finance committee earlier this week. She confirmed that Canada has the strongest fiscal position in the G7 and that we are meeting our fiscal anchors. Those are two points that the Conservatives fail to mention.

Budget 2026 leverages Canada's fiscal strength to invest at a time when Canadians need it and expect it. They expect their government to step up with new supports around affordability, like the groceries and essentials benefit, which we are topping up, which is going to put hundreds more dollars into Canadians' pockets.

Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised fiscal prudence but instead delivered a budget that adds $765 billion in new debt and brings higher costs for Canadians. The fastest-growing line item in the budget is now debt interest, and under the Liberal plan, taxpayers are paying more on that interest than they are on health care transfers.

At a time when so many Canadians are struggling to fill their gas tanks, make their mortgage payments or even put food on the table, why will the Liberals not stop their costly credit card budgeting so Canadians can afford to live?

● (1120)

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just this week, the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that Canada has the strongest fiscal position in the G7 and that the Government of Canada is sticking to its fiscal anchors in budget 2026.

What does budget 2026 focus on? It focuses on income, housing, food and energy security. Those are ways to protect our economy from the shocks that are hitting us externally, which are beyond our control. We are doing everything in our power to utilize the strength that we have to invest in Canadians, protect our sovereignty and grow our economy for future generations. That is what we mean when we say build Canada strong. Conservatives would build—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Kenora—Kiiwetinoong.

Eric Melillo (Kenora—Kiiwetinoong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the Liberals' budget focuses on is more debt and more inflationary spending. In fact, the Parliamentary Budget Officer reports that spending is up $331 billion under the Prime Minister. Of that, 61% is on government operations, not investments, and over $500 million is even going to forests in Brazil. Job number one in this budget should have been saving Canadians money. Instead, the Liberals delivered a budget that does the exact opposite.

Why do the Liberals not stop their inflationary spending spree so Canadians can afford to get ahead?

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, it is very clear to Canadians that the Conservatives have no economic plan at all. All they have is an Internet disinformation plan to divide and weaken the country. That is all they purport to do for Canada. In fact, most of what they propose is a do-nothing agenda. They say to get out of the way and everything will resolve itself. That is not what we believe on this side. We believe we were elected for a purpose, and we are fulfilling that purpose by leveraging the strength that Canada has to beget more strength in our economy, support Canadians and unite this country.

[*Translation*]

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report is devastating for the government, but above all it is devastating for the wallets of those who are watching us right now: the taxpayers. The report states that Liberal spending is going to increase by $331 billion and that there will be a shortfall. For the average Canadian, that means the debt will rise from $56,000 to $74,000.

Is the Prime Minister aware that the way he is currently managing Canada's finances is leading the country into serious trouble?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Parliamentary Budget Officer said was that, first, Canada has the best fiscal position in the G7. Second, we are rigorously abiding by our fiscal anchors by reducing program spending and operating expenditures, for example. We are in the process of doing that.

The member opposite talked about what would be devastating for Canadian households. What would be devastating is if the Conservatives were in power. Let us not forget that they voted against the Canada child benefit. In the member's riding of Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, 22,845 children are receiving $79 million a year to help with the cost of groceries. I could go on, but perhaps I will have the opportunity to continue in the next answer.

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is a very experienced MP. He was elected in 2015 alongside Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Believe it or not, Justin Trudeau's record is looking better than that of the current Liberal Prime Minister. The numbers speak for themselves. The current Prime Minister will borrow more in six years than Justin Trudeau did in nine. Who would have thought? The problem is that Canadians will ultimately be left to foot the bill.

Does the minister realize that the more the debt grows, the more our children, our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren will be left to bear the consequences of this utterly irresponsible behaviour?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to put it in numbers, there are 22,845 children in Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, my colleague's constituency, who would pay the price for the Conservatives' irresponsible behaviour. On average, that works out to $3,456 per child. That is the direct support for families which he opposes.

Let us talk about the Canadian dental care plan. I know he is very active in his riding, which means that of the constituents he meets, 23,614 of them would be deprived of affordable access to a dentist through the Canadian dental care plan.

A confident country invests in its future. It invests in ending homelessness and in building the infrastructure needed to drive an investment supercycle in Canada.

THE ECONOMY

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, anyone wondering what a Liberal majority looks like need only look at the government's outrageous handling of Bill C-39 and their interference, because that is what this is.

The Liberals are trying to ram a bill down Parliament's throat that weakens environmental laws and undermines the rights of workers and indigenous peoples. They are voting down all of the amendments proposed by civil society by forcing the committee responsible for Bill C-39 to sit until midnight every night in the hopes that the Bloc Québécois will get tired of standing up for citizens. That will not happen.

Will the Liberals stop this shift toward authoritarianism and behave like democrats?

● (1125)

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Under Bill C-39, projects assessments will be just as rigorous, but they will be carried out based on a simple formula: one project, one year, one review. We think it is time to build. That is the mandate we were given by Quebeckers and Canadians.

That is exactly what we are doing. We are striking a balance. We want to protect workers' rights and the environment, because that is essential, while also providing certainty, so that major projects can move forward in Canada.

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are holding members and House of Commons staff hostage to rush through Bill C-39. They want to get rid of impact assessments for pipelines and nuclear projects, despite what was just said. They want to pre-approve projects without waiting for environmental assessments or consultations. They want to get around the Environmental Protection Act and the Species at Risk Act. They want to suspend workers' right to strike, and they want to start doing all of that as quickly as possible.

Are they afraid that the public will find out what they are doing?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think I explained the principle well: one project, one review, one year, while obviously respecting workers' rights and the environment. Going faster does not mean we are doing things less rigorously. That is the principle behind Bill C-39.

I would point out to my colleague that many Quebeckers and many Canadians want Canada to build, to diversify our markets and to build major projects. That is indeed the government's agenda.

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are two official languages in Ottawa. One is English, and the other is simultaneous interpretation and text translation. Those are the two choices.

In its budget, the government is using falsehoods to justify replacing our excellent translation service with AI. The Liberals are claiming that the output from their GCtranslate software is reviewed by humans before it is used, but that is false. It is even more false considering that translations should actually be reviewed by reliable professionals.

We would love to hear more French spoken here, but until that day comes, francophones are entitled to impeccable translations. Will the Liberals finally show us some respect?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his unwavering and sincere interest in the importance of both official languages, an interest shared by this side of the House. I also want to second what he said, because he is absolutely right to say that the Translation Bureau translators here do outstanding work, and I want to add my thanks.

As for GCtranslate, it is true that this tool was developed so that texts could be translated much more quickly and more cost-effectively than with the tools available from the private sector. Now, it is up to users to check the final version, and Translation Bureau translators are always available to help.

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[*English*]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's strategic partnership with Beijing is bad news for Canadian workers and national security. It will allow 50,000 Chinese EVs onto our streets, threatening our auto sector, which is already struggling with U.S. tariffs. When Beijing goes into a market, it does not want a piece of it; it wants the whole pie. It is what it did in Europe, and it is what it wants to do here.

Will the Liberal government finally stand up for our auto industry and our sovereignty, and just say no to this reckless partnership with Beijing?

Vince Gasparro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is, any vehicle coming into this country has to meet Canadian security and safety standards.

Since we are on the topic of public safety, Bill C-12, the strengthening Canada's immigration system and borders act; Bill C-14, the bail and sentencing reform act; Bill C-9, the combatting hate act; Bill C-16, the protecting victims act; and Bill C-22, the lawful access act, are significant pieces of legislation that have the endorsement of our public safety and national security apparatus. The Conservative Party has obstructed and delayed—

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

Oral Questions

STEEL AND ALUMINUM INDUSTRY

Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gets worse. This week, the Prime Minister went even further with his strategic partnership by allowing more Chinese steel into Canada. This comes even as Chinese steel dumping has undercut our workers, contributing to over 1,000 layoffs in the steel sector since 2025. Instead of standing up for Canadian workers, the Liberals have once again chosen to cozy up to a regime that wants to destroy our manufacturers.

Conservatives will always fight for Canadian steelworkers and their jobs. Why will the Liberals not?

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what I have been doing. Stelco, in case that has escaped our colleague, has recalled the 500 workers who were laid off. Canadian demand for steel is growing again, and so is production.

On the specifics that the colleague mentioned, nothing could be further from the truth. The portions of steel that are now being reimbursed are those that are not made in Canada. Our steel transformers need that steel tariff-free.

* * *

● (1130)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cadet program has taught generations of young Canadians self-confidence, teamwork and leadership. As a former 533 Sabre Squadron cadet myself, I know that this program provides tremendous value for Canada.

The Liberals have been killing this program for years. They cut summer camps to a fraction of their pre-pandemic size. New cadets do not even receive uniforms anymore. After cadets volunteered for weeks selling poppies outside grocery stores, the Liberals are delivering more disappointment for these kids by cutting fun weekend activities for the rest of the year.

Why do the Liberals have $500 million for Brazilian rainforests but none for our cadets?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to our colleague, I agree with only one point he made, and that is that the cadets serve a very important purpose in this country. It is a great opportunity for young people to learn vital skills, particularly leadership. In fact, that is why the government increased funding for the cadet program, an increase in funding that led to the number of recruits being at 50,000. Now it is in excess of 70,000.

We take note, of course, of the very important points that parents have raised and that organizations have raised on this, and we are committed to the cadet program from start to finish.

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is all good news from the government. It cut the glider weekend, but the cadets still get to march up and down the square every Tuesday night.

The review that the Liberals are talking about is not doing anything to make up for the disappointment that the cadets are facing right now. The Prime Minister has cannibalized this program, and these latest cuts are just another nail in the coffin. In fact, cadets in Alberta who fundraised for a weekend activity have now been told that it is cancelled, because these Liberals cut the staffing budget.

This program is a critical part of our national identity, but instead of supporting it, the Prime Minister is cutting it.

Why will the Liberals not step up and stop these cuts to cadets?

Sophie Chatel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for highlighting how important cadet programs are to all our ridings and provinces.

We have heard the concern of the cadets, and the minister issued a statement today that the program will be revised. The last economic statement really provided additional funding: $250 million for the program to train more of the armed forces and $27 million for the cadets.

It is a very important program. We support the cadets. This program will ensure the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest.

John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a lot of talk from the Liberals about sweeping cuts to Canada's cadet programs that are undeniable. It does not matter what they are saying about what they have done and what they have announced. For tens of thousands of Canadians across our country, young Canadians, the cadets offer team-building, mentorship and opportunities to build confidence and leadership skills, yet the Liberal government has cancelled their training and competition, everything but the cadets' weekly parade night.

Will the Liberals reverse this incomprehensible cut to Canada's cadets, yes or no?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do have respect for the member. We have worked together for many years. However, he knows, with all his experience, as we all do, that when members of Parliament have an opportunity to really speak, they speak with their vote.

In the spring economic statement, there was funding allocated for many things, including cadets. They voted against it. Now they have an opportunity to correct that mistake. In the supplementary estimates (B), they can vote for it and therefore support cadets. Let us get behind cadets. This program is great.

John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me get this straight. Liberal MPs claim they are making historic investments in our military. They say the military is investing in people and training. They say billions of dollars have been added in national defence, but the Liberals will not fund Canada's cadets.

Why would the Liberals cut this successful leadership program in communities right across Canada? It makes absolutely no sense, and they continue to spin their wheels. Just restore the funding.

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this place, votes always do the talking. We will see how they vote. Will they correct themselves when they have a chance to vote for the supplementary estimates? Again, it is the supplementary estimates (B), for every member of the House.

In fact, if Conservatives want to continue down this path of questioning, I am more than happy to respond. Every single one of us is. It opens a pathway to talk about defence. We are absolutely behind the Canadian Armed Forces with historic funding in support of the men and women who defend this country. We will never waver from that. They voted against it every single time.

● (1135)

Gaétan Malette (Kapuskasing—Timmins—Mushkegowuk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cadet program teaches young Canadians discipline, value and honour, yet this week, the government paused military cadet training until April 2027. I think of the cadets in Hearst, Timmins, Cochrane, Kapuskasing, Kirkland Lake and all of Canada, young boys and girls who gather every week at their local armoury to build skills and serve their community.

Why is the government cutting funding for programs that turn young Canadians into soldiers?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know the member very well, but I do know something about his background. I know he has served his community as a mayor in the past. He has the respect of his community.

Certainly, mayors, premiers, prime ministers and all governments understand the importance of service. Cadets fit within that, of course. This is why we affirm our commitment to the cadets, a program with its origins going back to the 1800s, 1862 in fact. We will not waver from that. We support the cadet program. In fact, the comments yesterday of the deputy minister at the public accounts committee, which are on public record, are an affirmation of this. I point the member to—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the defence budget is ballooning, the Liberals are penny-pinching at the expense of our young people. They are cutting the cadet budget by nearly 100% and asking them to suspend their activities until spring. The cadet program accounts for about $200 million out of a $60-billion defence budget. That is barely one-third of 1% of the budget, and that is where the Liberals have decided to make cuts, in free activities for our young people.

Will the Liberals address this serious lapse in judgment?

Sophie Chatel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. The cadet program is very important across the country, but especially in Quebec. We have heard these concerns and have asked government officials to review their budget allocation. I would also note that the most recent spring economic update provided $250 million for training programs, including $27 million earmarked specifically for the cadet program.

The cadets are important to Quebec and Canada and we support them.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a former cadet. The cadet program gives young people between the ages of 12 and 18 the opportunity to develop leadership skills and a sense of civic responsibility. That is where the Liberals are making cuts, even as they continue to spend freely elsewhere.

We learned that the Minister of Defence requested a review of the decision this morning, but he had also called for a review when cuts were made across the board to French-language programs within the Canadian Armed Forces, and nothing ever came of it. Drop the reviews. What we want are firm commitments.

Will the minister cancel these cuts and reverse his decision?

Sophie Chatel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the saying goes, actions speak louder than words. In the latest spring economic statement, our government announced additional funding for cadet training, including skilled trades that will support them in their program. However, the Bloc voted against it.

Therefore, I ask my colleague: Will he support the cadets and the funding we are providing for this program?

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, rural residents in my constituency feel under siege. At yet another crime meeting on Saturday, the message was blunt: People are done with a catch-and-release justice system. This fall, the Prince Albert RCMP recorded over 58 break and enters, a staggering 71% increase. We had a 29-year-old woman who was abducted during a vehicle theft. Residents have had enough, and without action, somebody is going to get hurt.

My question is for the Minister of Justice. Will he immediately fast-track Bill C-293, the safe at home act, so violent home invaders are kept behind bars?

Vince Gasparro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, everyone in the House is completely against any of those crimes' being committed in his community and all our communities. What I will say, though, is that the government has taken decisive action, especially when it comes to bail and sentencing reform. I have an article here from Radio-Canada where the justice made it very clear: “This is no longer the Canada that gave recidivist offenders the benefit of the doubt". It is “[n]ot anymore”, he said.

● (1140)

Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is so effective that crime is up 71%.

Statistics Canada confirms what rural Canadians already know: The crime rate outside our cities is 42% higher than in urban areas. Saskatchewan is being hit the hardest, worse than Manitoba and Alberta. While urban Canadians get the resources, rural communities are left to fend for themselves, and rural residents in my constituency are paying the price.

I ask the Minister of Justice once more, will he finally sit down with his provincial counterpart in Saskatchewan and deliver a concrete action plan to stop this rural crime invasion?

Vince Gasparro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's government has passed significant pieces of legislation that have enhanced our public safety and our national security: the Strengthening Canada's Immigration System and Borders Act, the bail and sentencing reform act, the Combatting Hate Act, the Protecting Victims Act and the lawful access act, 2026.

Every single piece of legislation has the support of the frontline men and women of our national police forces across the country. The only group of people who do not support our tough-on-crime legislation is the Conservative Party of Canada.

Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2022, Arnold and Joanne de Jong were brutally murdered in their Abbotsford home. Three men were found guilty for these horrific murders, yet four years later, the De Jong family is still waiting for justice. A B.C. judge has ruled that, according to the faint hope clause, these murderers can seek earlier parole. The family has suffered unimaginable losses and should not have to keep fighting for justice.

Will the Liberals defend the restrictions on earlier parole eligibilities, or will the rights of convicted killers continue to come before the rights of victims and their families?

Patricia Lattanzio (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in less than a year, Canada has implemented three very bold legislations that will be able to attack the issues of crime in this country. These laws provide stricter bail, tougher sentences, hate crime protections, and better protections for victims and children.

The government takes crimes seriously, has acted and will continue to act.

Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member did not answer my question. This is not just about parole. It is about protecting victims from violent offenders in the first place. In September, a man in Kelowna choked his wife and was released on bail. Just 30 minutes later, he returned. He attacked his wife again, and he was released on bail again. He was released on bail three time. This is ridiculous. Canadians deserve a justice system that protects them.

Will the Liberal government explain why violent offenders are being released repeatedly, while victims are left fearing for their safety?

Patricia Lattanzio (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, we put forward tougher sentencing and bail legislation this June, and it has been enacted.

I want to remind the member that not only is it working in the justice system, but a judge from Newfoundland publicly declared yesterday in the news that violent offenders aren't getting let out on bail and are receiving sentences that fit their crime. Just this week, the Newfoundland judge cited our government's bail and sentencing reform act—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Columbia—Kootenay—Southern Rockies.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Rob Morrison (Columbia—Kootenay—Southern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in communities throughout Columbia—Kootenay—Southern Rockies, cadet programs give young people valuable opportunities to develop leadership, discipline, confidence and teamwork. For many youth in our rural communities, these programs provide experience, skills and mentorship they might not otherwise have access to, yet the current government is forcing cadet programs to scale back training, cancel activities and restrict opportunities because of funding cuts.

Why is the government taking opportunities away from young Canadians in our communities who are working hard to build skills, serve others and become the next generation of leaders?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Our colleague is an outstanding member of Parliament, Mr. Speaker, who has served his community as a police officer. He fundamentally understands the importance of service.

I would simply repeat what I said earlier. All Conservatives have an opportunity to get behind supplementary estimates (B), which affirm support for the cadet program. We will see what they do. Votes always do the talking in this place. What will Conservatives do? I point them to the statement of the hon. Minister of National Defence earlier today.

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● (1145)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Doly Begum (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent Scarborough Southwest, home to a vibrant Filipino Canadian community that contributes so much to the heart of our neighbourhoods. With Canada wrapping up negotiations on a free trade agreement with the Philippines, we are showing the world that Canada's diversity is not just a part of who we are but one of our greatest economic strengths.

I ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade how the government is ensuring that these new trade agreements translate into real opportunities for Canadian exporters while addressing the barriers our businesses face in accessing international markets.

Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade and to the Secretary of State (International Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Scarborough Southwest for being such an effective representative here in the federal Parliament in such a short period of time. I congratulate her for her good work.

Absolutely, she is right that the Canada-Philippines Free Trade Agreement was negotiated by our trade minister in just nine months. Once it is in force, over 95% of Canada's trade with the Philippines will benefit from lower tariffs and exports that should triple by 2035.

We want to help take Canadian businesses' products to the world and find new customers. The Philippines is one of those places, and I hope they use this free trade agreement to the benefit of Canadian employees.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George—Omineca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Millar Western Forest Products is owned by Atlas Holdings, an American private equity firm. In July, the Liberal finance minister gave this company $100 million of taxpayer money to protect Canadian jobs, and just 100 days later, hundreds of jobs were lost in my community of Quesnel.

Did the finance minister know that Millar Western was going to shut down its Quesnel operation when he approved the $100 million loan, yes or no?

Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course we know the forest sector has been hit very hard by unjustified duties and tariffs from the United States. That is why we have programs that have supported the sector to get through these moments and also transition and pivot to a more prosperous future. There were $2.9 billion in supports announced last summer and we are very happy that the budget brings an additional $6.5 billion to move forward.

I am happy to talk to the member about his specific concerns later.

Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George—Omineca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the terms of the contract, Millar Western must provide an employment plan, laying out the employment expectations over 24 months, and it is required to adhere to that plan as a condition of the loan agreement. Millar Western is shutting down its operations 100 days after receiving the funds. Someone is not telling the truth.

Either Millar Western lied on its application or the minister knew it would kill hundreds of jobs in my community of Quesnel and still gave it the $100 million. Which is it?

Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will stand with the workers in Quesnel as we will stand with forestry workers across the country.

As mentioned, I am happy to bring up the specifics with the member at a later date, but we will always fight for the forestry sector and forestry workers in Canada.

THE ECONOMY

Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Clarke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are struggling. They cannot afford groceries, they cannot afford gasoline, and they cannot even afford to heat their homes. They are pinching pennies just to make it to the end of the month, but while Canadians are stretching their budgets, Liberals are doubling down on their out-of-control spending, which includes a $200-billion vanity project and sending $500 million for forests in Brazil.

Why are Liberals mortgaging the future of our grandchildren when most Canadians cannot afford to make their monthly minimum credit card payments?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely focused on affordability measures, be it on helping Canadians to buy heat pumps or being able to actually increase the groceries and essentials benefit, but if we are going to talk about the tropical forests, they are the lungs for the world. We have invested, through a loan, into a fund, co-managed by Norway, that is going to protect one billion hectares of tropical forests across 70 countries. We are doing that with our allies, and we are making sure that we have a strong future for our children.

Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Clarke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are not listening to us. Canadians, the people who sent us here, need their help. They are sending billions of dollars in pursuit of Liberal ideological fantasies, including $1 billion to a trust fund to supposedly accelerate the transition from coal in Indonesia, Philippines and South Africa, while Canadians can barely afford to heat their homes. The good news is that the $1 billion is not spent yet, because they are so incompetent they cannot even spend money.

Will they get their $1 billion back, yes or no?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is focused on delivering on what we were elected to do, which is to build Canada strong and help families and workers all across this country afford the life they want to be able to afford. We know that Conservatives would not invest in ending homelessness in the country. We know they would not help make the affordable housing market work. We know they would not invest in having an electricity grid that underpins productivity and a prosperous future for our country. We know they certainly would not step up to provide a groceries and essentials benefit that supports Canadians with hundreds of dollars.

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● (1150)

FINANCE

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, "We are going to have a declining level of debt." Those words were spoken by the Prime Minister in the House. He also famously said that they were going to spend less. What did the Liberals deliver? It is $331 billion in new spending and $765 billion in new cash borrowing.

Can the finance minister explain how adding $331 billion in new spending is somehow less spending, and adding a quarter of a trillion dollars in added cash borrowing is less debt?

Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue and to the Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives should pick a lane. On the one hand they say to do nothing, and then on the other hand they nitpick about investments that the government is making.

What we are doing is exactly what Canadians gave us a mandate in the last election to do, which is to leverage the strength of Canada's fiscal balance sheet, the strongest in the G7, and make strategic investments in our economy. That is the groceries and essentials benefit, a national food security strategy, and investments in an electricity grid that will underpin a productive economy for the future. Those are things that we should all support, across party lines.

Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the rising costs on Liberal debt mean every Canadian is on the hook for $2,000 per year just for interest. The share of debt liabilities for every single Canadian will rise from $56,000 to $74,000. The debt itself will rise from $1.4 trillion to $1.6 trillion, while interest-bearing debt is going to go up another $124 billion to up to $2 trillion. How is this, as the Prime Minister stated in the House, a declining level of debt?

Jennifer McKelvie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about the investments we are making in Alberta. These investments will make a difference in the lives of the residents there.

We are investing $29 million for infrastructure to support Calgarians, and 1,460 affordable housing units are under way with Build Canada Homes. We are making upgrades to community halls in Edmonton, and we are investing $33.6 million to support additional infrastructure projects. I would also like to point out good news in Edmonton. We announced $51 million, through the apartment construction loan program, to build 199 rental homes.

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TAXATION

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, food banks in New Brunswick are seeing record-breaking numbers, and gas prices are sky-high, but while families struggle just to make ends meet, the Liberal budget is costing them more and giving them less.

Liberals could have provided real relief by scrapping their taxes on gas and diesel, but instead, they are cruelly hiking gas taxes in the new year. Will the Liberals do the right thing and accept our plan to scrap all gas taxes until at least Canada Day 2027?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these are just some of the ways we have been helping Canadians with affordability: a groceries and essentials benefit cheque that is reaching 12 million Canadians, $30 billion in new investments to end homelessness, six million children benefiting from the Canada child benefit and 900,000 children in affordable child care all across the country, saving families an estimated $4,000 to $9,000 per child per year. I could go on. What do these items all have in common? The Conservatives voted against them all.

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THE ECONOMY

Billy Morin (Edmonton Northwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are making empty promises at speeds not seen in generations, even worse than Trudeau. New homes cost between $500,000 and $600,000 in Edmonton Northwest. We are seeing catastrophic youth unemployment, a cost of living crisis, adults forced to live in their parents' basements and record-high debt servicing costs. That is not youth mastering their own destiny; that is government selling out their future. That is why I voted against this budget.

How can the government expect young families or anyone outside the Brookfield class to save even a down payment for their first home?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the youth I talk to want a fair shot at success, and that is exactly why we are investing $8 billion in the team Canada strong program across the country, not to mention the billions of dollars we spent in youth employment workforce strategies that include paid work experiences across this country for young people all across the country to get the kinds of skills, talents and connections to employers that they need.

What happens when we put these programs on the table? Those parliamentarians vote against them. We need a Conservative Party that understands that youth need a fair shot at success.

● (1155)

Billy Morin (Edmonton Northwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, families do not want to rely on government programs to put food on their tables. They want to earn a paycheque that actually covers their bills. Families in Edmonton Northwest are barely getting by with the cost of essentials like rent, groceries and fuel. This budget for the banker class puts the dream of buying a home or starting a family out of reach for too many young Canadians.

Conservatives measure success on how many people can get off government programs. Do Liberals really think that families should have to rely on government programs to survive?

Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, creating those opportunities is exactly what budget 2026 does. The fiscal plan and the plan of this government is working. In the province of Alberta, 63,000 full-time jobs have been created since the start of the year, with 4,000 youth jobs within that number. House prices are down and rents are down. Affordability is becoming more in reach to people as these programs come forward. I welcome the member to join us in making sure that we can push this success even further. We know there is more to do. We are going to do it with or without them.

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[*Translation*]

JUSTICE

Tatiana Auguste (Terrebonne, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Black communities are overrepresented both within our criminal justice system and among victims of crime. Community organizations tell us that support is needed at every level, from prevention, to reintegration, to victim support. Budget 2026 renews our government's commitment to Canada's Black justice strategy.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice give the House an update on progress made toward implementing that strategy?

Patricia Lattanzio (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Black Canadians are indeed overrepresented within the criminal justice system, whether as accused persons or victims of crime. Canada's Black justice strategy is our plan to change that. We have already funded community projects across the country. However, Budget 2026 goes even further by providing $136 million over four years for prevention, victim support and reintegration.

Everyone is entitled to equal treatment before the law and a trustworthy system of justice. We will always protect this system, and always keep working to advance this very important project.

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[*English*]

DIGITAL SERVICES

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister's hand-picked president of Shared Services Canada, Patrick Pichette, admitted at committee that he knew about the government's investment in the AI company Cohere before it was announced. This is because he sat on Cohere's board and was a partner at Inovia, the venture capital firm heavily invested in the company. In fact, Mr. Pichette had his own money invested in those venture capital funds.

Did the Liberals know about Patrick Pichette's financial interest in Cohere when they put him in charge of government technology?

Hon. Evan Solomon (Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud to have invested in a strategically important company, Cohere. Canada is one of the four countries in the world that have these large language models. Why do we need this strategically important company? We need it to stay in Canada, and we need it to build reliable AI. Patrick Pichette is working for the government and follows all the stringent ethical rules, and we are proud that he is serving the government for a dollar a year.

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while Patrick Pichette was personally invested in the AI company Cohere, he was also a member of the Liberals' AI task force. During that time, he recommended the government award billions of dollars in federal contracts to Cohere. Shortly after, the Prime Minister announced taxpayers would fund a $1.6-billion equity purchase of Cohere. It is clear that Mr. Pichette's investment skyrocketed.

How much did Patrick Pichette make from the Prime Minister's taxpayer-funded Cohere deal?

Hon. Evan Solomon (Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always interesting to hear the opposition find ways not to invest in important Canadian companies that would build here in Canada. This is a company that will provide 1,000 jobs here for this strategically important commercial investment that all Canadians will benefit from. Patrick Pichette is a globally recognized figure. We are proud that he is following all the strictest ethical guidelines. He is serving this country to build this country strong, and he is doing it for a buck a year.

* * *

● (1200)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Scott Anderson (Vernon—Lake Country—Monashee, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals promised to expand the reserves and rebuild our military, yet reservists have faced limits on paid Remembrance Day participation, while cadet training weekends and competitions are being cancelled in Ontario and British Columbia. How does the minister expect to recruit more Canadian soldiers when his government cannot support those already serving?

Will he restore these activities, or does the military expansion happen only in Liberal announcements?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, focus on recruitment has been a steadfast commitment of this government and that will continue. Efforts to promote diversity within the forces are within that goal, and we respect everyone and everyone's faith and background. This includes within the Canadian military, of course. As far as the cadet program is concerned, again, I point my colleague to my comments from earlier. He can vote for the supplementary estimates and affirm his support for the cadet program.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Juanita Nathan (Pickering—Brooklin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear with Canadians. Budget 2026 prioritizes our sovereignty and our strength at home and abroad in everything we do. Our commitment from the start has been clear. The Canadian Armed Forces will see the tools they access, the salaries they earn and the respect for their services and the sacrifices they make on our behalf. In my riding of Pickering—Brooklin, Legion branches 606, 483 and 152 have always stood with both active Canadian Armed Forces members and our veteran community.

Can the parliamentary secretary reaffirm that Canadian veterans—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Sophie Chatel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Pickering—Brooklin for her advocacy for veterans. Budget 2026 made our commitment to veterans very clear. We committed $300 million to modernize service delivery, investing in the people and the tools our veterans can count on. We are investing $6.5 billion over 10 years to renew and strengthen the reaching home initiative and the veteran homelessness program so our veterans can all have a place they can call home.

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AIR TRANSPORTATION

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cost of living is putting pressure on families and businesses. The last thing the South Okanagan needs is a 500% increase in airport parking fees. The transport minister's decision to increase parking fees 500% at the Penticton airport is wrong. Residents deserve to know where that money is going.

I have written to the minister and I am asking him directly: Will he reverse the 500% fee increase at the Penticton airport?

Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be happy to look at this issue with the Minister of Transport and see how we can work with the member on this issue. I have no comment.

PARKS CANADA

Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what are Liberals thinking? They are throwing open the gates to our national parks, and at the same time, they are putting the jobs of nearly 3,000 Parks Canada workers at risk. It does not make any sense. They are closing warden stations, and cutting search and rescue services. These cuts will endanger visitors and wildlife. In Jasper, where families are still rebuilding, nearly half of Parks Canada workers face job uncertainty. What a kick in the teeth.

Will the minister commit today to reversing these reckless cuts?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I first want to say that Parks Canada, our national parks, are so important to Canadians. I really want to thank Parks workers for the work they do in making sure that we are safe.

Safety in our national parks and the protection of our parks is one of the key factors that we are working on. I just want to talk about the workforce adjustment. The affected notification does not necessarily mean that an employee will lose their position. Some positions will remain exactly as they are. Some will change. However, we are using every possible means to minimize involuntary departures.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, 85 seconds to midnight is where the doomsday clock sits right now. It was started in 1947 by Albert Einstein and Oppenheimer, another scientist who worked on the Manhattan project. It has never been this close to the threat of nuclear war.

On November 30, the United Nations will host the first review conference of state parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Canada is not a state party, but other countries, even other NATO partners, do send observer delegations. I will be there with parliamentarians.

Will the government send a review party?

● (1205)

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all have respect for the hon. member and her commitment to climate change. The government will continue to work with allies from across the world, particularly democracies, to advance an agenda that is focused on growing the economy, but doing so responsibly and engaging in international forums is something we are doing and will continue to do.

I am happy to engage with the member, I suppose on Monday, to have a further discussion on her ideas.

Routine Proceedings

BUDGET 2025 IMPLEMENTATION ACT, NO. 2

BILL C-31—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Evan Solomon (Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the report stage and third reading of Bill C-31, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stages.

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WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Evan Solomon (Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1), on behalf of the Minister of Finance and National Revenue, I would like to table, in both official languages, a notice of a ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 5, 2026.

Pursuant to Standing Order 83(2), I request that an order of the day be designated for consideration of this ways and means motion.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 21 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Patricia Lattanzio (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, reports on the following: the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas participation in the 2025 United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP30, Belém, Brazil, from November 10 to 21, 2025; and the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas parliamentary delegation to Washington, D.C., U.S.A., from March 25 to 27, 2025.

Private Members' Business

PETITIONS

SALMON FISHERY

Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions on behalf of residents from Abbotsford—South Langley who are deeply concerned about the proposed changes to the Pacific salmon allocation policy. Recreational fishers fully recognize the importance of conservation and first nations' constitutionally protected fishing rights, but for generations, salmon has been managed as a shared public resource.

Petitioners are concerned that changing the principle could limit public access, undermine confidence in fisheries management and hurt British Columbia's tourism economy, so they are calling on the government to keep the revised common property resource policy to ensure salmon remains a publicly managed priority, and no single group has control over it exclusively.

FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION

Billy Morin (Edmonton Northwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, education is a treaty right. In honour of that, I would like to present petition e-7431, from students across Canada. It is in regard to funding when it comes to post-secondary education supports for indigenous young people. Programs such as the post-secondary student support program do not guarantee support for all eligible students. There is uncertainty around the program, and there has been for a number of years now.

The petitioners are looking for some clarity and action from the government in terms of making this a permanent program. We do note that treaty rights, including education, are enshrined in the Constitution's section 35. The petitioners are looking for some more clarity and stable funding in that regard. I am proud to support this petition on the students' behalf, because when students are educated, this country thrives for years to come.

* * *

● (1210)

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURN

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1510, 1511, 1512, 1513, 1514, 1515, 1516, 1517, 1518, 1519, 1520, 1521, 1522, 1523, 1524 and 1525 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled in an electronic format immediately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

GROCERY AND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-42, An Act respecting certain measures related to affordability and housing, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): There being no further members wishing to speak, pursuant to order made on Wednesday, November 18, Bill C-42, an act respecting certain measures related to affordability and housing, is deemed read a second time on division and referred to committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage on division, and deemed read a third time and passed on division.

(Bill read the second time, considered in committee of the whole, reported without amendment, concurred in, read the third time and passed)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you might find that there is unanimous consent to call at 1:30 p.m. so that we can begin private members' hour.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

CLEAN COASTS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-244, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 and the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in at report stage.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

An hon. member: Mr. Speaker, I propose it be adopted on division.

(Motion agreed to)

Patrick Weiler moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise today at third reading of my private member's bill, Bill C-244, the clean coasts act. More than a year has passed since I first spoke to this legislation in the House. Since then, it has been debated, studied by committee, voted on and amended.

I want to thank my colleagues, particularly the members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, whose work has made this legislation stronger and more practical. I also want to recognize the residents and community organizations in my riding of West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country who have spent years advocating for action on marine pollution and abandoned vessels. Their experiences have helped inform this legislation and bring it to this stage.

Canada has the longest coastline in the world. Our oceans sustain local economies, support extraordinary biodiversity and are central to the livelihoods of coastal communities across the country, yet marine pollution and abandoned vessels continue to threaten those ecosystems, often leaving communities and taxpayers responsible for problems they did not create. In my riding, from Howe Sound to the Sunshine Coast, residents have watched vessels deteriorate in their harbours and bays, sometimes for years, until they sink, release pollutants or become hazards to navigation.

At its heart, the legislation is about prevention and accountability. It is about ensuring that vessel owners and all operators in and on our oceans take reasonable responsibility for preventing environmental harm, rather than leaving coastal communities and taxpayers to bear the costs.

The clean coasts act addresses two gaps in federal legislation, one concerning the interpretation of marine dumping provisions under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, and the other concerning the transfer of vessel ownership under the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act.

First, the bill addresses the application of Canada's marine dumping laws. Members may recall the 2015 *Marathassa* oil spill in Vancouver's English Bay, where a bulk carrier released more than 2,700 litres of bunker oil into the water. The spill affected beaches, marine life and shoreline habitats, requiring an extensive response involving the Coast Guard, municipalities, first nations and volunteers. The cleanup costs ran into the millions of dollars. The prosecution arising from the spill ultimately ended in an acquittal, raising questions about the interpretation of Canada's marine dumping provisions.

This is not simply about one oil spill. Across British Columbia, we have seen styrofoam from deteriorating docks break apart and disperse in the ocean, as well as abandoned or poorly maintained aquaculture facilities release plastics, ropes and other debris. For instance, in Baynes Sound on Vancouver Island, a shoreline cleanup in 2022 recovered 38 tonnes of debris, the vast majority reportedly originating from the shellfish industry.

Examples like this demonstrate how marine pollution results not only from deliberate dumping but also from poor maintenance, negligence or a failure to take reasonable precautions. Where such incidents constitute disposal at sea under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, the absence of intent should not, on its own, prevent accountability. That is the legal uncertainty that the clean coasts act is intended to address.

When I introduced the legislation, my objective was to ensure that the law is clear and that the absence of intent does not, by itself, prevent unauthorized disposal from being established. The original bill proposed expressly prohibiting someone from allowing disposal at sea with specific language to create a strict liability offence. During committee study, members heard from Environment and Climate Change Canada that the Canadian Environmental Protection Act already provides a due diligence defence consistent with a strict liability framework. How the department interprets legislation, however, is not necessarily how a court will interpret and apply it, as we saw in the *Marathassa* case. That is why this legislative clarity matters.

The committee adopted a different approach, adding a provision to section 125 confirming that a disposal occurs whether or not the act or omission resulting in that disposal was intentional. I believe this approach ultimately achieves the same purpose. Rather than introducing a separate prohibition, the amendment addresses the interpretation of “disposal” itself, making Parliament's intention explicit while preserving the existing framework for determining liability.

This does not mean every accidental incident results in a conviction; far from it. The Crown must still establish the elements of the offence, and an accused retains the ability to demonstrate that reasonable precautions were taken. The purpose is to provide greater certainty to the courts, enforcement officials and vessel operators alike.

● (1215)

The polluter pays principle is fundamental to environmental protection in Canada. Those engaged in activities that could cause environmental harm must take reasonable steps to prevent it, and our laws must provide clarity about how responsibility is determined when incidents do occur.

The second part of this legislation addresses a different but equally important challenge, abandoned and derelict vessels. In 2019, the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act established new federal prohibitions against abandoning vessels and provided additional tools to address boats that pose environmental safety or navigation risks. However, significant gaps remain.

One concerning practice is the transfer of aging or unseaworthy vessels to people who do not have the resources or intent to maintain or properly dispose of them. Anyone who has looked online at boat listings has likely come across vessels advertised for a dollar or sometimes even for free. Sometimes these are legitimate transactions, but in other cases, a vessel that is expensive to maintain or dispose of is simply passed along to someone who may have little understanding of the responsibilities that are involved. When that vessel is eventually abandoned or, in many cases, sinks, the original owner has moved on, and the consequences are left for someone else to deal with.

We have seen these impacts in Porpoise Bay on the Sunshine Coast. For years, residents have watched derelict vessels and makeshift structures accumulate in an area that is valued for its natural beauty and recreational opportunities. People who grew up swimming and digging clams in the bay have described how difficult it has been to witness the deterioration. Some have said they no longer believe they will ever swim there again. Local businesses are affected. Those vessels can pose serious risks to navigation and human safety. Tragically, the community has experienced the death of a man living aboard one of these vessels.

These are not simply abandoned pieces of property or an eyesore for the waterfront. They can pose genuine risks to public safety, marine ecosystems and surrounding communities. Once a vessel sinks, dealing with it becomes far more expensive. The Coastal Restoration Society has seen these challenges first-hand. Removing a single 45-foot wooden boat can cost upwards of $40,000. I have heard of six-figure removal costs in other circumstances as well. These costs too often fall to taxpayers, local governments, port authorities and community organizations rather than to those originally responsible. That is why prevention is so important.

The purpose of the clean coasts act's vessel transfer provisions is to reduce the likelihood that an owner can simply pass an unwanted vessel to someone unable or unwilling to take responsibility for it. During committee study, colleagues raised legitimate concerns about whether sellers would be expected to investigate a buyer's financial circumstances or guarantee that they would maintain a vessel responsibly for years to come. The purpose of the legislation is not to make ordinary boat sales unnecessarily complicated or to hold responsible sellers accountable for decisions that a future owner might make.

The committee worked constructively to establish a clearer and more practical approach. Under the amended bill, sellers must take specified steps to satisfy themselves that a prospective owner has the resources and the intention to maintain, operate and ultimately dispose of a vessel responsibly at the time of transfer. This involves two requirements: disclosing information about the vessel's condition to the buyer in writing, and obtaining written confirmation from the buyer that they have the resources and intention to take responsibility for it. This establishes a clear record without requiring sellers to independently investigate a buyer's personal finances.

The committee also amended the bill to, one, clarify the government's existing regulatory authority over ownership transfers and, two, exempt non-pleasure vessels of 24 metres or more from the new requirements, recognizing that larger commercial vessels are generally subject to more extensive registration, inspection and certification and broader responsibilities and prohibitions under the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act.

Another question that was raised at committee was whether improving the tracking of vessel ownership would be sufficient. Knowing who owns a vessel is essential for accountability, but by the time the vessel has sunk, identifying the owner does not undo the environmental damage or eliminate the cost of recovery. We must also prevent situations where a vessel is knowingly transferred to someone who cannot reasonably take care of it. That is the additional gap this legislation seeks to close.

● (1220)

I welcome the modernization of Canada's pleasure craft licensing system earlier this year, which included requirements for licence renewal every five years to ensure more current ownership information. These changes would complement the clean coasts act. While improved licensing requirements help ensure that ownership information remains current, the transfer provisions and legislation would address the responsibilities that come with the change in ownership.

To ensure these measures work effectively, the requirements must be straightforward to ordinary boat owners, with clear guidance and practical processes for documenting the transfer. Implementation may also require breaking down silos within Transport Canada, where vessel licensing, registration, marine safety and enforcement are managed through different programs. Information collected when ownership changes should help authorities identify problem vessels and act before they become abandoned or hazardous. This coordination must also extend to the Canadian Coast Guard and other authorities responsible for protecting our waterways.

I want to thank the member for Vancouver Quadra for bringing forward the government amendments and colleagues from across the committee for their constructive contributions. Their work has helped make this legislation stronger and more practical.

The clean coast act would be part of a broader response to the challenges associated with abandoned and derelict vessels. We must also address the vessels that have already been abandoned or become hazardous. This means ensuring that governments have the resources and tools to deal with those situations. This will require finalizing the vessels remediation fund, which would establish a sustainable, owner-financed source of funding to address problem vessels, rather than leaving taxpayers to bear the costs.

With the modernization of pleasure craft licensing now in place, I hope the government will move forward with regulations that strike the right balance between affordability for vessel owners and the resources needed to make a meaningful difference.

Another important part of addressing this problem is ensuring that owners have affordable and accessible options to dispose of vessels responsibly at the end of their useful life. At present, there are limited facilities on the west coast capable of dismantling and recycling end-of-life vessels. Proper disposal can be expensive, particularly when hazardous materials are involved. This can create an incentive to pass along a deteriorating vessel rather than dispose of it properly.

Therefore, I was very encouraged to see the commitment in the Canada-British Columbia prosperity agreement announced this July to advance discussions on shipbuilding and servicing, but importantly, recycling capacity, including potential locations on Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland. It is critical that such a new facility be capable of handling smaller, end-of-life vessels, in addition to larger commercial ships.

Ultimately, these efforts must work together to create a system that makes it practical for boat owners to meet their responsibilities and ensures that vessels do not simply become someone else's problem when they are no longer wanted or affordable to maintain.

These challenges were also examined by the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, which has previously made recommendations for improving the federal response to abandoned and derelict vessels. There is broad recognition of this problem across party lines and an opportunity to build on that work.

I also want to recognize the extraordinary efforts of organizations such as the Dead Boats Disposal Society, the Coastal Restoration Society, the West Vancouver Shoreline Preservation Society, the Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound Marine Stewardship Initiative, the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association and many more. Their staff and volunteers have dedicated enormous time and resources to cleaning beaches, removing debris, restoring marine habitats and protecting our oceans.

They are doing important work, but they should not have to carry this burden alone. The federal government must ensure that the rules, resources and infrastructure are in place to support their efforts and prevent these problems wherever possible.

The principle behind this legislation is simple. The responsibility for a vessel should not end when maintaining it becomes inconvenient or disposing of it becomes expensive. We should not have to wait for a vessel to sink, for fuel to enter the water or for a community to face an expensive cleanup before taking action. The clean coasts act would be a meaningful contribution to preventing these problems, with clearer responsibilities and greater accountability for those whose actions affect our waterways.

I am grateful to the residents, community organizations, advocates and colleagues who have helped bring this legislation forward and improve it in a meaningful way.

I encourage all members to support Bill C-244, the clean coasts act, as amended, to help ensure that Canada's waterways remain clean, healthy and productive for generations to come.

● (1225)

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, suppose an owner sells a deteriorating boat for one dollar. The buyer signs a declaration saying they have the resources and intention to maintain it. Six months later, the boat sinks.

I would like the member to comment on whether the seller has, in fact, complied with the law and what exactly Transport Canada would have to prove to establish a violation. I would particularly like to know why the member did not include a requirement to report these transfers to Transport Canada in his bill.

While I commend him for bringing this forward, as well as all the efforts that have been made, I am wondering what practical impact this would have.

Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith for her support in moving the legislation to this point. What the act establishes is very clear. In order to discharge their obligations, the seller is going to have to provide written disclosure of the vessel and then obtain written approval from the boat buyer that they have the resources intended to maintain it. Those are the requirements under the act. There are things that can be built within the existing pleasure craft licensing transfer system. There are, in a larger context, a number of other areas the federal government is working within to make sure that it is addressing the issue of abandoned and derelict boats.

In the circumstances that the member brought up, it would be discharging the obligations under the act there and the boat buyer in that circumstance would be responsible, as all boat owners are, for the boat or anything that might happen to it at that point. The purpose of this bill is to make sure that we are taking reasonable steps to mitigate those concerns. It is not going to completely solve the problem. I indicated some of the other measures that the government is taking that collectively are going to address this problem.

● (1230)

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his advocacy. I have heard him advocate for orca whales, for sandpipers and now, with this bill, for all marine life along the coast.

My question for him is, does this bill apply to lakeshores as well as coasts?

Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, there are two provisions in this bill. The one we were talking about in the previous question had to do with the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act, that applies no matter which part of the country the actual transfer of the boat license is within. The other aspect addressed by the bill is Canada's disposal-at-sea provisions within the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which is separate from provisions that might be on lakes and rivers.

I would say that, in some ways, this would apply, but in some ways it would not. Really, this is about providing clarity during times of disposal at sea or marine dumping, that it is a strict liability offence because there has been uncertainty, given how the court has interpreted it. Similarly, we have provisions that deal with all disposal of those sorts through the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

Tamara Kronis: Mr. Speaker, what would this bill do practically for enforcement when we are dealing, as we are in most cases with derelict boats, with judgment-proof abandonment?

Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure I understand the question from my colleague opposite, but this bill is really about prevention. We want to make sure that we get around these bad-faith transfers of boats.

An example that I have given many times is when someone wants to get around their responsibility to properly dispose of it. Oftentimes, they give it away for a nominal cost to someone who is just looking for a roof over their head. Vessels become unseaworthy, which can result in many disasters, loss of life, marine pollution and otherwise. This is about preventing it from getting to that situation and ensuring that those who are going to be new boat owners have the ability to properly manage or dispose of those boats.

There are very significant concerns where those folks might not have the resources or intent to do that. That is why these new measures are put in place to mitigate that risk. It is not going to completely solve it, but it is a reasonable measure to mitigate it.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I represent Nanaimo—Ladysmith, where abandoned and derelict boats are a constant problem. They sit in our harbours, sink in our bays, threaten navigation and damage marine habitats.

Like my predecessors, I have spent an extraordinary amount of time dealing with these vessels. Because those who came before me sought legislative change, I too initially thought what was required here was more legislation. However, the more I consulted, the more I came to understand that what we really need is enforcement. More laws will not fix the federal government's failure to clean up the derelict boats on our coast. Enforcement will do that. On the derelict vessels file, the claim that we need more legislation has become an all-too-convenient excuse for not doing what the law already allows.

I supported sending this bill to committee. I agree that we have a problem with people transferring deteriorating vessels to buyers who cannot afford to maintain them. What has come back from committee? The bill would now require the seller to provide written information about the boat's condition and obtain a written statement from the buyer saying that they have the resources and intention to maintain and eventually dispose of it responsibly. That is it. There would be no requirement for a marine survey, no independent verification of the buyer's resources, no proof that the buyer can actually afford disposal and no requirement to file the required declarations with Transport Canada. The bill claims it would stop people from transferring worthless boats to people who cannot maintain them by asking them to sign a piece of paper saying they can. I am sure the people who abandon boats are terrified.

Here is what actually troubles me. Section 130 of the existing Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act already gives the federal government authority to make regulations establishing conditions for selling or acquiring vessels. The government could have regulated the sale and acquisition conditions. No law is required. Section 32 of the existing law makes abandoning a vessel illegal and provides for a process by which it can be designated, abandoned and removed. Section 33 of the existing law prohibits owners from allowing their vessel to become wrecks through inadequate maintenance. Section 30 of the existing law restricts stranding a dilapidated vessel in one location for more than 60 days without consent.

The act already authorizes federal authorities to direct owners to act, move or remove vessels, dismantle and dispose of wrecks, impose penalties and recover costs in many cases. These powers have existed since 2019. When I see an uninhabited, derelict or dangerous vessel sitting in my riding, my first question is not whether Parliament needs to pass another law. It is why the federal government has not used the law we already have to remove it. I can tell the House from experience that asking that question repeatedly works.

I particularly want to thank the good people of Ladysmith, Gabriola Island and the other coastal communities in my riding, as well as the organizations, many of which were named by the hon. member in his remarks, for the photographs, locations, histories of vessels and evidence of deterioration they have sent me. They have made calls, written emails, followed up with authorities and joined me in refusing to accept that these boats are somebody else's problem. They have kept after me, and I have kept after Transport Canada and the minister's office.

We have pressed for removal timelines, challenged decisions and insisted on follow through. The boats are starting to move. Transport Canada has arranged for the removal of a number of vessels in Degnen Bay and Silva Bay, and has started enforcement proceedings against several others. At least three left after receiving notices and at least 14 abandoned or dilapidated vessels were removed. Unauthorized floating rafts were also cleared. This was all done under the laws we already have.

I was out last weekend surveying the progress so far. I was delighted to see an unprecedented number of unoccupied moorings. That is what enforcement looks like. We have also seen what happens when enforcement fails. Near Ladysmith's Transfer Beach, residents documented a vessel that sank and an apparent fuel sheen on the water. Advocacy with Transport Canada saw the vessel moved, but only to the Dogpatch, where it promptly started to sink again. That is not a solution.

● (1235)

However, at the time of this speech, I am waiting for a list from Transport Canada of vessels to be removed from the Dogpatch. I was supposed to get that list yesterday and have been in touch with an official from the Minister of Transport's office who knows that I am making this speech today. To his credit, he got back to me immediately, and I take him at his word that I will have the list early next week.

The work is far from finished. There is important work to be done, with compassion and with help from the province and other agencies, with those living aboard derelict boats that are not theirs. Still, in these past 18 months, with careful file management, persistence, community advocacy and a good deal of elbow grease, we have accomplished more in parts of my riding than years of legislative proposals have done. Fines do not remove derelict boats; people do.

I want to thank the Transport Canada and Coast Guard employees who are doing their jobs. I want them to have the resources to do more of it, and I am working directly with Transport Canada officials to get it.

A member of Parliament should not have to chase individual boats through a maze of federal departments before somebody acts, but if that is what is necessary, that is what we will do.

Bill C-244 would not build the ship-wrecking and ship-breaking facility we need on the west coast, provide new cleanup funding, establish removal deadlines or give local organizations a clear, user-friendly path to report and remove abandoned and derelict vessels.

I would add that removing derelict vessels must not create more pollution in the process. These boats often contain diesel, oil and other contaminants that can escape during salvage. North Vancouver's Aqua-Guard won a national competition with Canadian-made technology capable of recovering oil sheens previously considered impossible to collect. The technology is now commercially available, but Transport Canada has yet to adopt it. Surely, we should be requiring coastal authorities to have appropriate spill-recovery equipment on hand wherever they operate in Canada.

The fisheries committee recommended vessel turn-in programs, better owner identification, disposal and recycling incentives and fewer barriers for people willing to remove and remediate derelict boats. Where are those measures in the bill?

I am not opposed to improving the law. I support it, but what I am opposed to is pretending that every enforcement failure can be fixed by passing another law.

The people of Nanaimo—Ladysmith do not want another legislative promise to protect their coastline. They want the wrecks removed in a way that deals compassionately with those living aboard dilapidated or abandoned vessels they do not have the right to be on.

In Nanaimo—Ladysmith, we have shown that when people organize, when government is pressed to act and when someone actually manages the file, boats get removed.

I have no objections to Bill C-244, but new laws are no substitute for enforcing the ones we already have.

I thank everyone who has been assisting in this very important project. We will continue until all the boats that are supposed to be gone are gone.

● (1240)

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today we are debating Bill C-244, the clean coasts act. First of all, I want to say that I am thrilled to see a bill like this one being debated in the House, not that I necessarily consider it groundbreaking. I think my colleague who spoke earlier on the matter made the point quite effectively. Indeed, laws alone do not always solve problems. Sometimes what is needed is simply the political will to act and get things done. That is an important point that all of us in this House would do well to keep in mind whenever we are faced with a problem.

Nonetheless, I must say that it is refreshing, and I will explain why. Essentially, when private members' bills are introduced by opposition members, they are often powerful, impactful, with a clear vision. They are designed to make a difference, to really tackle specific issues. Unfortunately, when private members' bills come from the government benches—and I am not talking about bills introduced by ministers, since ministers are not allowed to introduce private bills—what we usually get are trivial bills that change absolutely nothing. It is as though those members are practically tossing out whatever bill they can come up with, because they lucked out in the draw and have to introduce a bill just for the sake of introducing something. I suspect the whip's office or the House leader's office ends up scribbling something on the back of a napkin and telling the member to turn it into a bill.

In the case before us today, I do want to acknowledge my colleague's work, because there is at least a genuine effort here to tackle a real problem, which is a refreshing change. I think it is a shame when Parliament's time is wasted on completely insignificant issues that are not really issues at all. I commend my colleague opposite. I do not know whether he had to stand up to his party to be able to introduce this common-sense legislation, but I want to commend him for his initiative. We know that, in Canada, there are at least 2,000 abandoned derelict vessels in our waters. I say "at least" because they have not all been documented. Obviously, they can be found up and down our coasts, but some places in Quebec are especially known for their shipwrecks, particularly Charlevoix and the north shore. These wrecks are pretty easy to spot if one is paying attention. In some cases, they have even become a sort of tourist attraction. However, I would not say that every shipwreck is a tourist attraction or that we want more of them in our lakes, rivers and waterways. Quite the contrary, I think that is far from desirable.

That reminds me of a specific case. I have been a member of the House since 2015, and I had the opportunity to witness repeated interventions by some of my colleagues who represented the riding that is now known as Vallée-du-Haut-Saint-Laurent. They regularly brought up a local wreck known as the *Kathryn Spirit*. If I am not mistaken, the ship was abandoned around 2011 and was not removed from the water until 2018. It took seven years to finally get the pieces of the wreck out of the St. Lawrence River. I am the member for Montérégie, so it happened in my region. I must say that I was quite upset to see the government sitting on its hands and doing nothing week after week, month after month, year after year.

Would Bill C-244 have resolved the *Kathryn Spirit* case? I cannot say for sure. I would tend to say no. Nevertheless, this is a striking example of a federal government that too often neglects its responsibilities and displays a troubling degree of complacency. I must say that these abandoned ships often leave behind all kinds of debris and damage. We know that the metals they contain gradually leach into the surrounding environment. Rust is an obvious example. They can also become hazards to navigation. On the St. Lawrence River, in my region, we do not really have a choice but to remove them quickly when they are in the middle of the channel because, if we do not, boats can no longer reach Montreal. On the other hand, when they are a little farther out, it seems less urgent because they sometimes stay there longer. These wrecks can have a wide range of impacts. The chemicals they contain can end up in the water we drink and in the food chain. There are also plastic particles to consider. In some cases, we are talking about lead, mercury, cadmium, chromium, oil, grease, and so on.

● (1245)

Everything on a boat eventually breaks down and ends up scattered everywhere. That is not exactly pleasant for the people who live nearby, and it clearly does nothing to enhance the scenery. If I had paid a lot of money for a beautiful waterfront property, I would certainly not want to end up with a shipwreck nearby. We do not know what is on these vessels and parents might be worried that their children will go and play there and get hurt. I have young children, but I do not have a waterfront home. However, if I did, I would not want my children playing around a shipwreck and getting hurt.

My riding is home to the Verchères wharf, which the federal government has abandoned, since it considers it to be a surplus asset. The federal government has not taken care of this infrastructure for 20 years. I am bringing up the Verchères wharf in the context of Bill C-244 and abandoned vessels because there is a response team based there. The team has boats so that it can respond to any spills in the river. Unfortunately, this is the only facility between Montreal and Sorel, or between Montreal and Lake Saint-Pierre, that can intervene if there is a spill in the river.

Unfortunately, we know that wrecks can lead to spills. Once again, unfortunately, we have been fighting for years to tell the federal government that it is responsible for the wharf, that essential activities take place there and that the wharf will be needed if there is a spill. In time, once the wharf becomes completely unusable, these boats will no longer be able to dock there. They will have to go somewhere else. Where will they go? We do not know. If there is a spill in the future and they are not able to respond, it will be Ottawa's fault because it neglected its infrastructure.

Consider the state of the Verchères wharf in my riding. Located in the heart of the village, it is meant to be a source of pride and a gathering place. It is, in many ways, the village's postcard image. For those unfamiliar with Verchères, it is a historic rural community, with homes that are hundreds of years old and built of stone and timber. However, all this beautiful character is ruined by the eyesore left there by the federal government. It is completely neglected, and the local council is constantly raising the matter with Ottawa. Unfortunately, a solution has yet to be found. Every time the matter is brought forward, we are told that the wharf is on the priority list and that perhaps they will get in touch when there is funding available. We have been hearing the same thing for 20 years. We feel as though we are being strung along.

We are talking about abandoned boats. I mentioned the *Kathryn Spirit*. I talked about what is happening back home with the Verchères wharf. What these cases illustrate is a broader pattern of federal neglect in areas that fall squarely within its own jurisdiction. Unfortunately, the federal government should be taking responsibility for these problems. They are its responsibility. It is always quick to lecture the provinces, however. I could also talk about the broader impacts of shipping. Shipping has many benefits, particularly when it comes to trade and economic activity. We would not want ships to stop delivering goods from around the world, nor would we want to lose the ability to export our own products to markets abroad.

This has consequences. People sometimes abandon vessels when they reach the end of their useful life. There can be other kinds of consequences, too. People live along the shorelines. Another example from my riding that we have been complaining about to Ottawa for more than 20 years is the impact of shipping on shoreline erosion along the St. Lawrence River. People live alongside these ships, which generate significant economic benefits, but their land is being eroded year after year. The shorelines are receding. Some people are losing several metres every year. There used to be retaining walls and protective structures built by Ottawa, but once again, Ottawa has completely abandoned them. Ottawa is not paying attention to the reality facing the people in my riding. This was clearly illustrated in a story on the Radio-Canada show *La facture* on November 10.

While serving on the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, I had the opportunity to table a study calling for this issue to be addressed. The report was debated in the House and ultimately adopted. Among its recommendations was the reinstatement of a shoreline protection program. Despite that, and despite the many petitions submitted by residents of my riding, Ottawa's response has been a deafening silence. Nothing has been done. People feel that they are not being taken seriously.

Nevertheless, I hope that this bill will finally lead to concrete solutions and meaningful action. There are some positive aspects to Bill C-244. For example, it would require a person acquiring ownership of a vessel to formally assume responsibility for it. I believe that is a worthwhile measure and a step in the right direction.

● (1250)

However, will it resolve every case of vessel abandonment? I can raise my hand and swear that I will deal with the vessel down the line, but will I actually do it? That remains to be seen. At least this is a starting point, because it does create a moral obligation and require an extra effort to avoid this kind of abandonment.

I think the initiative is commendable, but what I would like to see is more concrete action and a real political will to address problems with things that are the federal government's responsibility. Unfortunately, most of the time, what we see from Ottawa is arrogance and a readiness to steamroll over the constructive work that we are trying to accomplish in this place. I hope that, this time, we will see—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear a member from the Bloc indicate that the bill is a step forward, because there is no doubt that it is a step forward. I must say that I was a little disappointed to hear the Conservative speaker not recognize the intrinsic value of seeing the legislation pass.

I want to just take a moment, looking at the sponsor of the legislation, to express my appreciation in recognizing a very important issue. We do not have to live on the coastlines in order to appreciate the coast. I live in the middle of Canada, in Manitoba. The closest that we have to that is Lake Winnipeg and the feed into Churchill.

There are concerns about abandonment even in our lakes and the impact that it has. I want to compliment the sponsor. I love the riding name. I think it is a reflection of the member himself, West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. What a beautiful name that is.

When we think about British Columbia and the area that the member represents, I am not surprised that he is genuinely concerned about an issue that affects the province of B.C. specifically, especially along the coast. It also affects Atlantic Canada. I would suggest to members that all of us have a vested interest in the issue that the member has brought forward.

I did a quick try to find out what kinds of numbers we are talking about in Pacific Canada. We are talking about an estimated 900 abandonments. In Atlantic Canada, it is nowhere near as high but still well over 100. These vessels are causing a great deal of concern and a great deal of potential damage, many of them damaging today in a number of ways.

I think it is important that we recognize the responsibility for the federal government, provincial governments and even municipalities and indigenous communities. When we talk about the federal government, it is Transport Canada and our Coast Guard that lead the way on this issue, but there is also a lot of responsibility for provinces, municipalities and indigenous communities, all of which have expressed the sort of interest that is necessary to deal with the issue of wrecked and abandoned vessels.

When I think of the types of vessels we are talking about, whether it is the fishing boats, commercial ships and, in some situations, even recreational boats. I can tell members, even from an inland perspective, the number of abandoned vessels that we see is very real.

I like the bill that is before us today because it really attempts to achieve two primary objectives. I asked my colleague and friend about the issue of liability, using an example. We do need to ensure that there is a classification of a strict liability offence. The example that was shared with me was when we have a vessel that is in our waters that discharges oil.

There are situations in which this occurred, where that vessel was not held accountable because there was no demonstration of it being intentional. For the vast majority of Canadians, whether a discharge is intentional or not, it should not be the taxpayer who pays the bill. The responsibility is for the vessel owners, not the taxpayers, ultimately.

● (1255)

This is one of the reasons I like the bill that is before us today. There is a responsibility that is there. It is real. It is tangible, and if it is not maintained, then the issue of a strict liability offence being put into legislation, I think, is a wonderful thing to see.

One of the loopholes that we know are there and that this bill actually resolves in good part is the issue of the seller or owner, if I can put it that way, and the purchaser. As it was pointed out earlier in debate, when a vessel is sold for one dollar, one wants to make sure the person who has purchased that vessel has a responsibility that goes beyond handing over a loonie. This bill advances that thought. It is saying to that owner or seller that in order to discharge that responsibility, they have to get a purchaser who is going to take on the responsibility of ultimately ensuring that the boat is not causing harm, that there is a plan to dispose of the boat or the vessel.

I think it is a very important aspect, and I like the fact that Bill C-244 attempts to deal with it in a very real and tangible way, whether it is through a written disclosure or whether the purchaser has to demonstrate that they have the resources to be able to fix or dispose of the vessel. Today, when we look at it, what often happens is that we will get owners who will completely disappear. We will get owners who will claim bankruptcy, and then we will get owners who just abandon the vessels. Therefore, I do believe there needs to be more work in this area. With Bill C-244, we are seeing that issue at least being addressed in good part.

When we think in terms of the types of vessels that are out there, which I made reference to, whether it is fishing, commercial or recreational, the impact of abandoning or leaving a wrecked ship or letting a vessel deteriorate to a certain point is that it causes a great deal of damage, both short-term and long-term.

One could talk, for example, about water pollution. There are all forms of things that we will find that are on an abandoned vessel that are not healthy for water, which will lead to contamination that all of us should be concerned about. We can talk about the damage to marine life. These abandoned vessels have a negative impact in many ways on the viability of our marine life, not only in the immediate area in which the vessel has been abandoned, but also in the surrounding area and quite a bit more than just the surrounding environment.

We can talk about the destruction of habitats. That, too, can cause a significant impact. We can talk about navigational hazards when we have a partially submerged vessel and there are others who are trying to navigate in and around it. We can talk about the high cleanup costs that are there. This is why it is so important that we ensure there is accountability and responsibility. There is economic damage and environmental damage that can be very long-term. There are over 1,000 abandoned and derelict vessels when we combine both of our coasts. I suspect we might even have some in the Arctic, but we know there are vessels on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts.

These are all reasons I would ultimately argue that Bill C-244 should be supported.

● (1300)

Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that we have a couple of Manitobans as the final folks up for debate. I will say my riding does touch the bottom of Lake Manitoba. I am closer to the port of Churchill and, further west, to the ocean.

I have a lot more to say, but most importantly, I was at the environment committee as the process of amendments to this bill was undertaken. I heard the sponsor suggest that the government amendments would strengthen the bill in some way. I am sure if the ministry of truth was involved it must have issued corrections, because the bill in fact came out weaker. For those who were not glued to the environment committee meetings on TV, let me explain what happened, because it really is quite something.

First, I should say abandoned boats are a very real problem. When someone dumps a rotting boat and simply walks away, taxpayers are left with the mess and the cleanup bill and communities are left facing the environmental damage. It is irresponsible, and we ought to put a stop to it. That should have been straightforward: Hold people abandoning boats accountable for abandoning boats.

The Liberals set out to stop shady people from dumping old boats, which is an admirable objective. Their solution was to make those same people sign a piece of paper promising not to do it. Having said all that, let me explain the situation in reality.

Imagine a guy puts a boat up for sale for one dollar. Someone sees a steal of a deal and agrees to buy it for one dollar. Before shaking hands, the buyer notices the guy selling the boat has a big old grin on his face, because he is a happy fellow right now. The reason he is happy is that his deteriorating 20-metre boat would cost thousands of dollars to properly dispose of. He just wants the boat gone, and now it is somebody else's problem.

The buyer might have a loonie to buy that boat, but he does not have a nickel to repair it or look after it. Six months later, the boat is half underwater, leaking oil and nobody wants to claim it. He got himself a one-dollar boat. The taxpayers get themselves a cleanup bill worth thousands.

That is the real problem here, and it does deserve a serious response. At the committee, Transport Canada officials told us the department had already removed almost 900 wrecked, abandoned and dilapidated boats since 2016. Unfortunately, there are many more remaining. Nobody at the committee was suggesting we should simply leave them there.

The Liberal MP bringing forward this bill wants to address this problem and, I believe, very sincerely. I respect that objective, but agreeing with an objective is just the beginning of our work as legislators. We must ask whether the law would actually achieve it and whether Canadians would understand what they would be required to do if we bring a law into force.

Before the Liberals changed the bill, it would have stopped someone from selling a boat if they knew or deliberately ignored the risk that the buyer could not afford to look after it or simply had no intention of doing so. It seems reasonable enough. However, officials warned us that assessing somebody else's resources and intentions could involve information that an ordinary seller could not readily obtain. This is very reasonable and fair enough, as those words could be interpreted differently and certainly cause disputes.

We would think the government would come up with a better way to solve this issue, but we would be wrong. Allow me to tell the House what it did instead. With its amendment, before transferring ownership of the boat, now the seller would have to give the buyer written information about the boat's condition. It sounds good at first glance, but the seller could simply write that the boat is not great or is in rough shape, or could provide a detailed three-page analysis of exactly everything that is wrong with the boat. That is the problem. The amendment never actually says how much detail would be enough.

Apparently, telling Canadians to put something in writing was easier than telling them what they are supposed to write. There would be no requirement for a marine survey, which is the technical term for an inspection assessing a boat's condition and structural integrity. The seller would now also obtain written confirmation that the buyer has the resources and intent to maintain, operate and eventually dispose of it without letting it become abandoned.

That sounds like a great idea, until we realize the piece of paper or even, and I asked this, the napkin that it could be written on, is completely worthless. The seller would not be legally required to ask for proof. They exchange their papers and complete the sale. Has the seller complied with the law? The government officials told us that under this Liberal amendment, the seller would not need to ask for any evidence to comply with the law. Responsibility for that boat being abandoned would now rest with the new owner.

● (1305)

That helps clarify the responsibility, but it also brings us back to the purpose of this bill. If all it takes is exchanging two pieces of paper, how does that stop boats from being abandoned? The buyer could still be flat broke, with absolutely no intention of fixing the boat or paying to get rid of it properly, but at least we would have his promise in writing. I am sure that would be great comfort to whoever gets stuck with the cleanup bill. However, what if the seller has a good reason to believe that the buyer is lying? Can he simply just take his word for it or is he supposed to investigate? The Liberal amendment would not require bank statements, credit checks or any other proof that a buyer can afford to look after a boat they are purchasing, so where does that leave the seller? Honest people need to know exactly what the law expects of them, especially when there are very hefty fines involved.

That brings me to one word in the Liberal amendment that nobody seems to be able to properly explain, and that word is "resources". We all have a general idea of what that means, but when writing laws that could cost someone thousands of dollars, a general idea is not exactly good enough. Does that mean money in the bank? Does that mean financing capacity? Does that mean access to storage? Does that mean skills and money to repair the vessel? The wording in the Liberal amendment does not define it. The buyer should know exactly what they are promising when they sign and the seller should know exactly what that promise means. The requirement to disclose the boat's condition also needs to be clearer so that sellers know exactly what information they must provide in order to comply with the law.

Officials told us sellers would not have to disclose problems they did not know about. Fair enough, but nobody could clearly explain how much information sellers have to provide about the problems they do know about. These are not minor details. If we get it wrong, an individual could face a fine of up to $50,000, while a company could face one of up to $250,000. I think it is reasonable to say that if Parliament can spell out exactly how much someone could be fined, surely we can spell out exactly what they need to do to avoid that fine.

Let us go back to our fictitious but very real example of a boat sale. The seller is an honest broker and tells the buyer everything that he knows to be wrong with the boat. The buyer signs a piece of paper promising that he has the money and every intention to look after it. They shake hands, exchange their paperwork and go their separate ways. A year later, the boat is sinking, the buyer is nowhere to be found and somebody is left with a very expensive mess to clean up. Officials told us that the new owner would be responsible, but here is the interesting part. This amendment in this bill would not create a new specific offence for lying on that declaration. Other laws may obviously still apply, although much more difficult to enforce, but if somebody never intended to look after the boat in the first place, I am not convinced that asking someone to sign a piece of paper, even a napkin, is going to change their mind.

Then there is the question of what happens with all of this paperwork. The government wants sellers to exchange these documents, but has not said how long they need to keep them. Imagine Transport Canada asking to see the declaration two years later. The seller thought the deal was finished and it is long gone. He threw away the piece of paper or the napkin. Was he supposed to keep it for five years, 10 years, 15 years or in perpetuity? Nobody should have to guess how long to do something like that in order to avoid hefty fines.

My Conservative colleague from Kamloops—Shuswap—Central Rockies, who spent decades working in the boating industry, offered another common-sense approach. His amendment would have required sellers to notify the government within 14 days of selling a boat, providing the new owner's name and the contact information. Until they did, they would still be considered the owner under that part of the law. That proposal was defeated. At least people would have understood what was expected of them had it not been defeated. It was a shame that the Liberals voted it down. Someone sells their boat, tells the government who bought it and makes sure there is a record of who is responsible. That makes sense.

I realize that debating paperwork for boat sales is not exactly the sort of thing that gets Canadians glued to their television screens on a Friday afternoon, but these are details that can cause real headaches for ordinary people. That is what really bothers me about this legislation. At the end of the day, our job is not to make people fill out paperwork. It is to stop irresponsible boat owners from leaving taxpayers with their mess. Coastal communities deserve better.

● (1310)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

It being 1:13 p.m., the House stands adjourned until next Monday at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1:13 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Friday, November 20, 2026

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Grocery and Housing Affordability Act
Robertson ... 11735
Bill C-42. Second reading ... 11735
McCauley ... 11736
Leitão ... 11737
Perron ... 11737
Melillo ... 11737
Danko ... 11738
Barsalou-Duval ... 11739
Muys ... 11739
Perron ... 11739
Malette (Kapuskasing—Timmins—Mushkegowuk) ... 11741
Kwan ... 11741
Barsalou-Duval ... 11741
Kwan ... 11741
McCauley ... 11743
Lamoureux ... 11743
Kronis ... 11743

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Canada-Philippines Free Trade Agreement
Lamoureux ... 11744

Edmonton Elks
Morin ... 11744

Sureshkumar Ravindran
McKelvie ... 11744

Cadets
Kronis ... 11744

Steel Industry
Danko ... 11744

Endometriosis
Kramp-Neuman ... 11745

Career Congratulations
Myles ... 11745

100th Birthday Congratulations
Hoback ... 11745

Le Vent du Nord
Perron ... 11745

Broadcasting Lifetime Achievement Awards
Hepfner ... 11746

The Budget
Kelly ... 11746

Housing
Naqvi ... 11746

Rail Transportation
Reid ... 11746

Project Aurora
Sari ... 11746

The Economy
Muys ... 11747

World Fisheries Day
Klassen ... 11747

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Budget
Stubbs ... 11747
Turnbull ... 11747
Stubbs ... 11747
Turnbull ... 11747
Melillo ... 11748
Turnbull ... 11748
Melillo ... 11748
Turnbull ... 11748
Deltell ... 11748
Lightbound ... 11748
Deltell ... 11748
Lightbound ... 11748

The Economy
Perron ... 11749
Lightbound ... 11749
Perron ... 11749
Lightbound ... 11749

Official Languages
Perron ... 11749
Lightbound ... 11749

Automotive Industry
Kusie ... 11749
Gasparro ... 11749

Steel and Aluminum Industry
Kusie ... 11750
Leitão ... 11750

National Defence
Lloyd ... 11750
Fragiskatos ... 11750
Lloyd ... 11750
Chatel ... 11750
Williamson ... 11750
Fragiskatos ... 11750
Williamson ... 11751
Fragiskatos ... 11751
Malette (Kapuskasing—Timmins—Mushkegowuk) ... 11751

Fragiskatos ... 11751
Barsalou-Duval ... 11751
Chatel ... 11751
Barsalou-Duval ... 11751
Chatel ... 11751

Justice
Hoback ... 11752
Gasparro ... 11752
Hoback ... 11752
Gasparro ... 11752
Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley) ... 11752
Lattanzio ... 11752
Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley) ... 11752
Lattanzio ... 11752

National Defence
Morrison ... 11753
Fragiskatos ... 11753

International Trade
Begum ... 11753
Naqvi ... 11753

Natural Resources
Doherty ... 11753
Hogan ... 11753
Doherty ... 11753
Hogan ... 11753

The Economy
Lawrence ... 11754
Dabrusin ... 11754
Lawrence ... 11754
Turnbull ... 11754

Finance
McCauley ... 11754
Turnbull ... 11754
McCauley ... 11754
McKelvie ... 11754

Taxation
Moore ... 11754
Hajdu ... 11755

The Economy
Morin ... 11755
Hajdu ... 11755
Morin ... 11755
Hogan ... 11755

Justice
Auguste ... 11755
Lattanzio ... 11755

Digital Services
Mazier ... 11755
Solomon ... 11756
Mazier ... 11756
Solomon ... 11756

National Defence
Anderson ... 11756
Fragiskatos ... 11756

Veterans Affairs
Nathan ... 11756
Chatel ... 11756

Air Transportation
Konanz ... 11756
Lightbound ... 11756

Parks Canada
McPherson ... 11757
Dabrusin ... 11757

Foreign Affairs
May ... 11757
Fragiskatos ... 11757

Budget 2025 Implementation Act, No. 2

Bill C-31—Notice of Time Allocation Motion
Solomon ... 11757

Ways and Means

Notice of Motion
Solomon ... 11757

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Government Response to Petitions
Lamoureux ... 11757

Interparliamentary Delegations
Lattanzio ... 11757

Petitions

Salmon Fishery
Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley) ... 11758

First Nations Education
Morin ... 11758

Questions Passed as Orders for Return
Lamoureux ... 11758

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Grocery and Housing Affordability Act
Bill C-42. Second reading ... 11758
(Bill read the second time, considered in committee of the whole, reported without amendment, concurred in, read the third time and passed) ... 11758

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Clean Coasts Act
Bill C-244. Report stage ... 11758
Weiler ... 11758
Motion for concurrence ... 11758

(Motion agreed to) 11758
Third reading 11758
Kronis 11761
Gladu 11761
Kronis 11762
Barsalou-Duval 11763
Lamoureux 11765
Leslie 11766

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