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# House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 2, 2026

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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- (1100)
- [*English*]

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, at the conclusion of the time provided for Government Orders later this day, Bill C-19, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act, be deemed read a second time on division and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, the committee shall meet to consider Bill C-19 on Tuesday, February 3, 2026, and shall hear from the Minister of Finance for at least one hour and any other witnesses the committee sees fit, at no later than 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 4, 2026, Bill C-19 shall be deemed reported from committee without amendment and deemed concurred in at report stage on division, the third reading stage shall be taken up on Wednesday, February 4, 2026, and at the conclusion of the time provided for Government Orders on Wednesday, February 4, 2026, Bill C-19 shall be deemed read a third time and passed on division.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay. It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

### CANADIAN MULTICULTURALISM ACT

The House resumed from October 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-245, An Act to amend the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (non-application in Quebec), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when I look at this particular piece of legislation, I think it is important to emphasize the difference between the Bloc and the government of the day, the Liberal Party of Canada. We will find that every Liberal member of Parliament recognizes that one of the greatest assets that Canada has, when we talk about building

Canada strong, is the diversity of Canada. It is the people of Canada who make our nation as great as it is.

When the Bloc talks about getting rid of multiculturalism in the province of Quebec, I believe that what they are really doing is taking away a valuable asset or suggesting that we not recognize the sense of equality, the opportunities and the advantage that Canada has, more than most other countries, which is our diversity. We should embrace our diversity, as it is a great strength for Canada, in order to continue to build Canada strong.

**Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today on behalf of the people of Fort McMurray—Cold Lake. I grew up in Fort McMurray, a community I am proud to call home and a community that has drawn people from everywhere in Canada and right across the globe.

[*Translation*]

My parents, who are anglophone, made the wise decision to enrol me in French immersion in Fort McMurray, a decision that opened many doors for me. I consider myself to be a francophone by choice, not by chance. I am part of the growing francophone community outside Quebec. French was the first European language spoken in Alberta and today continues to be the language that is most spoken in the province after English.

- (1105)

[*English*]

When I was growing up, Canada was a place where anybody from anywhere could become anything if they were willing to work hard, a country where we could seek opportunity to grow, learn and unite with our neighbours under one common identity, a country where we embraced our differences while uniting around a common belief in freedom, hard work and, of course, family. If we worked hard, we could afford a nice home on a safe street and start a family. That was the Canadian dream.

[*Translation*]

Former prime minister Brian Mulroney introduced the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988 to reflect the idea that we are stronger as a country when we are united, not divided. Prime Minister Mulroney himself grew up in an Irish Catholic family in a working-class community in Baie-Comeau, Quebec. He was proud to be a Quebecker, proud of his Irish heritage and also proud to be Canadian. As Conservatives, we have long believed that multiculturalism works best when we are united, not divided.

*Private Members' Business**[English]*

Under former prime minister Stephen Harper, Canadian multiculturalism continued to thrive. It was a period in which the government continued to lead with a belief of pride in our country and a time when we could find strength in our unity. Canada was a place where we could celebrate our differences and unite under a shared national identity, another example of how Conservatives have long understood that we are stronger united.

*[Translation]*

It is in that spirit that Prime Minister Stephen Harper recognized Quebec as a distinct society within a Canadian federal system. In doing so, he recognized Quebec's unique history, language and culture, promoted Quebec and its importance for Canada, and acknowledged that Quebecers are part of Canada's history and that they can be proud to be both Quebecers and Canadians.

*[English]*

After a decade of divisive Liberal policies, the Canadian dream is fading. The government has done everything it can to divide us into boxes, into categories and into subcategories, by using identity politics. It has made life so unaffordable that our youth are worried they will never be able to afford a home or start a family. Liberals told our youth, through their postnational state philosophy, that we should not be proud to be Canadian, slowly letting the Canadian promise fade away. We were told by Liberals that we must focus on what makes us different rather than celebrating what we have in common. The truth is that we are stronger as communities and as a nation when we are united.

Every Canadian child remembers honouring Terry Fox and participating in a Terry Fox run throughout elementary school and high school, learning about the Canadian soldiers who valiantly fought at Vimy Ridge, a moment when Canadians did what the Allies believed to be impossible, and of course learning about the Famous Five, who fought to have women legally considered persons, not just here in Canada but right across the Commonwealth. That is what the fathers of Confederation wanted for the country, a place where hard work and dedication meant we could achieve anything, yet Liberals have removed these proud and important moments from our passports, the most important document for any Canadian.

The actions and decisions of the Liberal government shaped our future. We could once again be a great nation. We need to reject these divisive Liberal politics of multiculturalism, which have become so deeply political that Canadians no longer feel united. Liberal immigration policy has been used to deepen regional and cultural divides across our country. Liberals made Canadians feel that they could not be proud of who they were and who they are. I can tell us today that I am proud to be here. I am proud to be Canadian.

The Canadian promise is fading from our youth. They work hard and they do everything right. They do everything we have asked them to do, but they cannot buy a home. They cannot start a family, all because they cannot afford to live, all while they are told that they do not have an identity and that they cannot be proud of who they are. For my colleagues and me, and for every Canadian watching at home, I am here today to tell us that we do have a national identity and that we are Canadian. No matter where they were born,

no matter where they grew up, from coast to coast to coast, every Canadian deserves the right to unite under a common flag.

Regardless of one's race, religion, gender or background, we will unite under shared values, hard work and the belief in freedom. It is then, and only then, that the Canadian promise can be restored. Divided, we will fall. United, we will stand tall.

We are the true north, strong and free. We will fight for our country. We will defend the country. We will unite the country. A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. We must never lose sight of that sentiment. This is what it means to be Canadian. Conservatives will always support unity, freedom and opportunity in Canada because we believe that these are the very foundations of a strong, multicultural Canada. We are proud to be Canadian, and we will fight to restore the promise of Canada. We will fight to make sure that our youth can have the Canadian dream and for a life where our youth can work hard, afford a home on a safe street and start a family. We will bring unity. We will celebrate our Canadian heritage together. We are Canadian.

- (1110)

*[Translation]*

**Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat unusual for me to be rising this morning to speak to Bill C-245, which was introduced by my colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères and which seeks to amend the Canadian Multiculturalism Act so that it does not apply in Quebec. This is something that the Bloc Québécois has taken a strong stance on, something that we are calling for.

In a way, multiculturalism undermines the rights of the founding peoples. I would even go so far as to say that the Canadian political regime's official policy of denial of the Quebec nation is the fundamental reason for the existence of the Bloc Québécois as a political party operating at the federal level. Obviously, this is rather symbolic for me because I represent the riding of Shefford, which was once represented by one of the three founding members of the Bloc Québécois, Jean Lapierre. That is one of the ideas that sparked the formation of the Bloc Québécois.

First, it is important to clarify what this debate is about. Quebec is a diverse society. Ethnocultural diversity is an inescapable reality in our society, a part of everyday life. I want to say that today's debate is not about inclusion, but rather about the political model chosen to organize community life. It is essential to make a clear distinction: Diversity is not multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is a government ideology set out in a federal act. For us, in the Bloc Québécois, this is a matter of nationhood, because Quebec is a distinct nation with its language, culture, collective choices and history, which I will talk more about later if I have time at the end of my speech.

As we can see, Canadian multiculturalism is a denial of Canada's plurinational character and gives Quebec the status of one ethnic minority among others. A nation must be able to define itself and choose its own approach to integration. As I said, Canadian multiculturalism is a state ideology. Canada's multiculturalism policy has been in place since 1971 and is enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988. It is based on the myth that Canada is fundamentally multicultural, without a clearly defined host society. It is a vision that values the coexistence of cultures, but without any real common ground. This essentially sows a form of identity confusion, particularly among new Quebecers, by claiming that there is only one nation in Canada. The aim is to weaken Quebec's national identity and replace it with a single Canadian identity. We can see that at work. That is what Canadian multiculturalism is achieving.

The Canadian Multiculturalism Act recognizes groups based on their ethnic origin, finances their distinct development, and promotes the development of parallel communities. The result is social fragmentation, moral relativism, and a weakening of common values. A society is not built simply by populations living side by side. Quebec is a minority nation that must protect itself. Francophones represent approximately 22% of the Canadian population and less than 2% of the North American population. As we know, French is in decline in Quebec and remains a minority language in Canada and an ultra-minority language in North America. Quebec's choices cannot therefore be those of a dominant majority. Quebec's weight in this federal system is also at play. We can come back to that as well. What is important, ultimately, is that French is there as a language of cohesion.

• (1115)

In Montreal, only 51.3% of people use French as their primary language at home. Across Quebec as a whole, that figure rises to 80.6%. People can live in Montreal without speaking French, but then they cannot fully engage in Quebec society. That much is obvious. In the Bloc's opinion, French is not a tool for exclusion, it is a tool for integration and community engagement. However, there are limits to French-language training. Quebec has been focusing on that for more than 20 years now. Quebec's auditor general has concluded that French-language training policies have a limited impact, especially in the short and medium term.

Experts believe that immigration is the main lever for influencing the future of French. Economic immigrants account for 60.9% of immigration to Quebec. Unlike other countries, in Quebec, the language of the majority does not impose itself naturally. Quebec's solution is interculturalism.

Quebec has developed its own model, known as interculturalism. With this model, we want to recognize diversity, but we also want to emphasize integration into a common culture. Interculturalism is based on French as the civic language, shared democratic values and genuine connection among citizens.

In the Bloc Québécois's view, interculturalism is consistent with the reality of a minority nation. That is why we think that Bill C-245 is necessary. Quebec takes in immigrants, funds their integration and develops its own policies. It is only logical, then, that the Canadian Multiculturalism Act not apply in Quebec.

### *Private Members' Business*

Bill C-245 does not eliminate or impose multiculturalism in Canada. It simply allows an extremely important exemption provision for Quebec. The Bloc Québécois sees this as a question of consistency, autonomy and respect.

In closing, Canada is free to choose multiculturalism. Quebec chooses interculturalism. The Bloc Québécois is not asking Canada to change its model; it is asking that Quebec be permitted to make its own choices. Living together involves more than cohabitation alone. It involves building together based on a common language and shared values. Bill C-245 is reasonable, legitimate and consistent with the recognition of Quebec as a nation.

I would like to end my speech by calling attention to the presence of organizations in the riding of Shefford that spare no effort when it comes to spreading knowledge of our history and of who we Quebecers are as a people.

Obviously, we cannot ignore the Prime Minister's speech on the Plains of Abraham, which showed his lack of knowledge about Quebec's history and culture. That is sad because it was a denial of history, and not just Quebec history, including everything that happened with the Durham report and the patriots. History matters.

Of course, we want to look to the future, but to know where we are going, we need to know where we came from. Quebec is not the only one that has had historical problems with the British. There was also the hanging of Métis leader Louis Riel and the deportation of the Acadians. In short, history and culture are extremely important.

To come back to the organizations in Shefford, I want to acknowledge the work of Solidarité Ethnique Régionale de la Yamaška, or SERY, whose motto is "our home is your home".

Of course, the organization is involved in French-language training, but beyond that, SERY organizes key events, because Granby is a welcoming place. It has been identified as a city in Quebec where people from other places are invited to settle. It is interesting because SERY works very hard, and not only on French-language training. I have taken part in discussion forums with people to share information about our political system, our history and our culture. As a member of Parliament, it is extremely rewarding to speak with these new Quebecers who are coming to Granby.

I cannot forget Valcourt 2030, an organization that hosts summer skills competitions, among other things. These events bring together athletes from around the world who have settled in the Valcourt area. At Christmastime, people gather to share their cultures and traditions from here and other places.

These organizations do important work. That is why Quebecers no longer want to be subject to this law on multiculturalism. We would sooner follow our own model based on who we are.

*Private Members' Business*

• (1120)

[English]

**Doug Eyolfson (Winnipeg West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-245, an act to amend the Canadian Multiculturalism Act. It is a bill that seeks to exempt the province of Quebec from the application of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act. The debate is not merely legislative; it is a fundamental question about who we are as Canadians, how we live together and how we respect the rich tapestry of cultures that make up this great country.

Moreover, it is a question about Quebec's place within Canada's shared commitment to diversity, inclusion and unity. As Canadians, we take pride in our nation's diversity and our long-standing commitment to multiculturalism. Canada was the first country in the world to adopt multiculturalism as official policy, in 1971. Canada then became the first country in the world to turn the policy into law, when the Canadian Multiculturalism Act was passed in 1988.

The act is more than a legislative framework; it is a statement of our shared values and who we are as Canadians. Multiculturalism affirms the idea that all Canadians, no matter their background, are equal. Multiculturalism also affirms that every person should have the opportunity to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage. The act not only promotes diversity but also fosters understanding and respect between different cultural communities. The act encourages Canadians to learn from one another, to work through differences and to participate in civil life.

By recognizing and celebrating the contributions of various cultural heritages, multiculturalism builds trust and solidarity. It reinforces our commitment to democratic values and equal rights. It strengthens our resolve to hold together in an increasingly complicated world that threatens to divide us. Multiculturalism does not erase a province's cultural identity; on the contrary, multiculturalism enriches it.

Therefore, let me be clear: The Canadian Multiculturalism Act is indispensable to Quebec's social fabric, its linguistic and cultural vitality, and its future prosperity. It is a legal and moral cornerstone that protects the rights, dignity and contributions of all Quebecers, whether they are indigenous peoples, long-established francophone communities or the many immigrants who call Quebec home.

Quebec's diverse population contributes greatly to the economy, civic engagement and cultural vitality of the province and indeed the country. Multiculturalism proudly recognizes Quebec's language and culture while embracing the contributions of the many generations of people from all over the world who have made Quebec their home. To exempt Quebec from the act would be to deny the fundamental truth that Quebec's distinct society is enhanced not diminished by the diversity of its people.

According to the 2021 census, nearly 94% of Quebec's population speaks French. Among newcomers to Quebec, French remains a strong and growing language. In fact, recent statistics show that the majority of newcomers to Quebec had French as their first official language spoken. These numbers demonstrate that multiculturalism and the French language can coexist. Society can be open and diverse while remaining deeply connected to its linguistic and cultural roots.

Multiculturalism represents a commitment to fairness, respect and a shared sense of belonging to this country. For it to keep working, Canadians count on all provinces and territories, including Quebec, to fulfill this commitment. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act plays a vital role in promoting a shared identity within Canada by upholding Canada's inclusive and democratic values. The act affirms that all Canadians have the right to preserve their heritage while participating fully in Canadian civic life. Allowing a province or territory to reject multiculturalism would weaken our national unity and send the message that our country's values of inclusion are regionally negotiable or optional.

Passing the bill would have adverse consequences for minorities in Canada. Communities with a long-standing presence in Quebec would be affected by the bill, and this includes people of diverse backgrounds who strongly identify with Quebec as their home. Without the Multiculturalism Act, these groups may feel pressured to reject the unifying values of multiculturalism. They might question their place in Canadian society and whether they belong. Communities that already face barriers to inclusion could feel even more marginalized.

• (1125)

Without multiculturalism, we lose a key tool for maintaining the trust and sense of interconnection that helps us hold our country together, especially during challenging times. As I mentioned earlier, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act does not erase a province's cultural identity; it strengthens our cultural fabric. In the case of languages, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act reinforces the belief that our official languages and multiculturalism can coexist.

There are some people who argue that the Multiculturalism Act conflicts with Quebec's language policies. This is a false dichotomy. The act supports the vitality of minority languages and cultures across Canada, including of francophone communities outside Quebec. By upholding the Multiculturalism Act, Quebec ensures the respect of its own language and culture while promoting reciprocal respect for minority languages within its borders.

In fact, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act and the Official Languages Act of 1969 both came out of the recommendations from the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. Through these two pieces of legislation, the Government of Canada continues to recognize Quebec's distinct cultural and linguistic heritage just as strongly as it supports the French language as an integral part of Canada's cultural and linguistic identity.

This commitment is not just symbolic; the Government of Canada has made significant efforts to promote and protect the use of French across the country. Over the years, the government has updated and strengthened the Official Languages Act to ensure that the act continues to serve Canadians. Most recently, in 2023, Bill C-13, an act to amend the Official Languages Act, received royal assent. That bill introduced key changes to strengthen the French language in Canada and in Quebec.

These changes go to greater lengths to protect French in federally regulated spaces and services, ensuring that every Canadian has access to government services in French. These changes strengthened francophone immigration with the adoption of a francophone immigration policy to ensure that new Canadians who speak French can integrate into francophone communities across the country. Finally, these changes strengthened bilingual operations in the federal public service with a stronger requirement for senior leadership in the public service to be bilingual.

The adoption of the act to amend the Official Languages Act reflects the Government of Canada's unwavering commitment to the equal status of English and French. Going forward, the Official Languages Act will be reviewed every 10 years. This will ensure that the regulations and the application of the Official Languages Act align with Canadian society as it evolves.

Multiculturalism is not only a reflection of who we are but also a commitment to who we aspire to be as a nation. We must continue to embrace the full range of heritages and linguistic and cultural traditions that have shaped our society. The unity that the Canadian Multiculturalism Act fosters within Canada is especially needed in today's global political landscape. Around the world, we are witnessing rising instability, division and economic uncertainty.

Now is the time to reaffirm our common humanity; to stand together across regions, cultures and languages; and to ensure that no one is left behind, because when we are united, we are resilient in the face of challenges ahead. Multiculturalism is not simply a policy; it is assurance for every Canadian in every province and territory that they are valued and they belong. Now is the time for us to pull together as a country. In the face of global uncertainty, economic challenges and shifting political landscapes, our strength lies in our ability to find our common humanity. By standing together, we can protect what matters most: our values, our people and our future.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

**Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, before we talk about multiculturalism, before we even start to talk about immigration, and before we talk about policy, I think we need to talk about one basic point: What is a society that stands up for itself? A society is not just administrative areas. A society is more than an economy and monetary relations. It is also more than just a merging of individuals. A society is a shared history, culture, references and common standards, as well as a collective memory that brings generations together.

Without all those things, there are just borders and territories within which people happen to live. Multiculturalism in Canada did not emerge in a vacuum. It took shape within a country that, at the

### *Private Members' Business*

time, had a clear sense of its own identity. That country was firmly rooted in its institutions, confident in its values, and proud of its history, despite its imperfections. There was a turning point in 1988 when multiculturalism was enacted into law. Multiculturalism was codified in law under the leadership of a great Quebecker, who was proud of his Irish roots and profoundly grateful for the welcome the Quebec nation had extended his family.

Brian Mulroney did not regard support for immigration as a repudiation of Canada, its history, or its values. He saw multiculturalism as an affirmation of what Canada was all about. To Brian Mulroney, Canada held a promise that Canadians from all walks of life would have equal rights and equal opportunities. However, this equality was based on something that was very fundamental, and which continues to be so: a nation that was confident, a nation of two founding peoples and two official languages.

Brian Mulroney embodied Canada. He respected Quebec, its autonomy, its identity, and its culture. He was a Quebecker and a Canadian, and there was no contradiction there. He was open to the world, but also deeply rooted. His vision was not one of erasure but of integration. Newcomers were told they could become Canadian, regardless of where they came from. However, they were also told, albeit implicitly, that they were integrating an existing society with its own set of values and that they were taking part in a grand project. I believe this makes all the difference.

Yes, societies evolve. They change over time. They acquire new understanding. However, there is a key difference between evolving and relinquishing one's own identity. A mature society does not destroy its history. Instead, it builds upon the history, rectifies its shortcomings, and fortifies it. It articulates its history, understands it in its context, and learns from it. Erasing history does not create a more just society. It makes it weaker because a society that does not know where it came from can also not know what it has to share, and quite often, it lacks a clear path forward.

I have a simple analogy. If a business advertises a product as solid, reliable, accessible and affordable, but it delivers a product that is broken, expensive and ineffective, customers will inevitably be disappointed. However, the customers can hardly be blamed for believing in the product and buying it. The customers are not to blame for buying the product. The one to blame is the one who sold the product. That is exactly what has been happening over the past 10 years since the Liberal government came to power. It has been selling Canada as a welcoming, fair and inclusive society capable of integrating newcomers, a society full of promise with a reputation for making the people who live here happy. However, what has this government actually delivered? It has delivered a country that is unsure about its identity, a country that is ashamed of its past, and a citizenship that has been stripped of all meaning and reduced to a mere administrative formality, if that, because it can be completed online.

Canada's intake capacity is overloaded. In a nutshell, this is a country that says that living within its borders is all it takes to be Canadian. I want to be clear: We cannot welcome people if our intake capacity is not respected and if the product we are providing does not deliver in terms of housing, services, integration and social cohesion. Ignoring these realities is neither generous nor welcoming. It is irresponsible.

*Private Members' Business*

Everything was working very well under Prime Minister Harper. Why? It is because Canadian identity was part of daily life. It is because national pride was not something to be ashamed about. Citizenship had meaning and a purpose, and it had its limits. Integration was a given. It was also under Stephen Harper that Quebec was recognized as a nation within a united Canada in 2006. This recognition as a nation is fundamental. It does not erase multiculturalism; rather, it gives it a foundation. The two are not mutually exclusive. The one allows the other to thrive.

La Malbaie in Montmorency—Charlevoix is a great example of a place that knows how to welcome and integrate newcomers. From its origins as a French colony, the region experienced substantial development under British governance and opened up to the world, attracting notable figures from American society. La Malbaie is now a global example of integration, history and culture and a source of immense pride for the francophonie. It is known around the world. This kind of success story and high-profile example could have served as an inspiration, but instead, a radical change has taken place over the past 10 years. Canada has been described as a postnational country, a country without a core identity, a country where pride is becoming suspect. The Canadian government has chosen incessant apologies over pride, erasure over explanations.

There is a time and place for everything. There are customs for every period. Of course, the past can be difficult. It has left us divided. The English and the French did not greet one another with hugs and high fives. History is written by the victors. There used to be a clear divide between French Canadians and English Canadians, but those days are behind us. Adversity has given rise to a proud people, an inspiring people, rooted in their history and strengthened by their culture.

• (1135)

I also did some research on the common values shared by Canadians and newcomers. Contrary to what some alarmist rhetoric might suggest, immigrants largely support the foundations of our Canadian institutions, including things like respect for the law, gender equality, democracy, human dignity, hard work and responsibility. Indeed, newcomers are not afraid of hard work.

Immigrants are not asking for a society without rules. They are asking for a coherent society and, more importantly, they want to understand what they are joining. If we cannot provide them with benchmarks, they will find their own. This is not because of a lack of respect, but rather a lack of leadership. Integration does not begin by erasing the person being welcomed, but rather by clarifying the values of the community that individual is joining.

Quebeckers know something fundamental about identity. They know that identity is not kept alive by chance. They know that culture must be passed on or it disappears. They know that adversity builds character. French Canadians fought to exist. They know their history. They know their culture. They know who they are and who they want to continue to be. That is exactly why they have what it takes to inspire Canada, which has lost its identity under the postnational Liberal regime.

Quebec can play an influential role, not to divide but to remind Canada that unity starts with clarity, pride and recognition of the past. To move forward, we must stop always trying to relive the

past, reopen old wounds and bring up mistakes of the past. We need to learn, grow and inspire.

In tough times, division sometimes seems like the easy answer, whether because of hopelessness or sheer weariness. However, division weakens, fragments policies, pits identities against one another and reiterates differences. Canada does not need more division. It needs consistency, continuity and unity. We need to be more united than ever because there is strength in unity.

I want to conclude with a universal and very current metaphor: the Olympic Games. The Olympic Games celebrate perseverance, work, failures that lead to victory, collective support and the idea of never giving up. Athletes do often fall, doubt themselves and fail, but they stay focused. They get up again and use their struggles to motivate themselves, to learn, to grow and to become better athletes. No uplifting film has ever been made based on a character who has had an easy life. No story of a person who has changed lives has ever been written based on somebody who has had everything handed to them. A life without hardships is hardly inspiring.

People like Marchessault, Yanni Gourde, Mathieu Olivier, Georges St-Pierre, Ann-Renée Desbiens and Joannie Rochette all faced adversity in their lives. Today, they inspire the next generation of athletes with their stories. The same applies to a country. It is a mistake to erase or forget stories. Being welcoming does not mean we need to disappear or step aside. Being open does not require us to erase ourselves.

It is in knowing who we are, taking charge of our history and respecting our ability to welcome others while safeguarding our values that we can transmit our values and welcome newcomers with dignity. I hope that the spirit of the Olympic Games inspires us and reassures us so we can build a united, confident and proud Canada together.

• (1140)

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, our debate today centres on a fundamental disagreement between Quebec and Canada, a pivotal disagreement, a deep fracture that reveals what Quebec is and, most importantly, what Quebec refuses to be. This debate is not about openness, diversity or immigration. It is about Quebec's vision of itself as a nation and its right to make its own collective choices.

Bill C-245 is simple. It seeks to ensure that the Canadian Multiculturalism Act does not apply in Quebec. The reason is that this act is based on a vision of Canada that denies the existence of Quebec as a nation and that directly contradicts the integration model that was democratically chosen by Quebec.

Ethnocultural diversity is a fact. It exists in Quebec. It is an asset. No one here is challenging it. Multiculturalism, on the other hand, is a political choice, a government policy, a state doctrine. This doctrine puts all identities on an abstract equal footing, without recognizing the existence of nations, whether it be the Quebec nation or indigenous nations. Conversely, a multinational federation recognizes the possibility of different peoples, different nations, each capable of making its own legitimate collective choices. Canada made one choice. Quebec made another. That is not a misunderstanding, but a deliberate political choice made decades ago.

It is important to remember one key point. Quebec has never signed the 1982 Constitution, which enshrined Canadian multiculturalism in constitutional law and imposed this model without Quebec's consent. Multiculturalism is therefore not simply an administrative policy. It is a state doctrine that defines the Canadian national identity and that refuses to fully recognize a multinational state. This doctrine is not neutral. It is based on standards that originate primarily in English Canada and that are presented as universal but that are actually being imposed. It is therefore paradoxical, to say the least, that Quebec continues to be subjected to an identity policy that it has rejected, both politically and constitutionally.

This contradiction is not theoretical. It is experienced on the ground every day, particularly by newcomers. On the one hand, Quebec clearly states one thing: French is the common language, the language of integration, the language of work, the language of public life. On the other hand, Ottawa sends a different message, based on maintaining parallel identities, without a clearly affirmed common culture. The result is quite clear. There are contradictory expectations, it is more difficult to integrate and immigrants are caught in a political tug-of-war between Quebec and Ottawa.

Immigrants have the right to hear a clear, honest and consistent message. Quebec has made its decision. On May 28, 2025, Quebec passed a law based on clear principles: French as the language of integration, a common culture, shared democratic values, state secularism, the rule of law, and full participation in Quebec society. This model does not exclude anyone, but instead proposes a common approach. As such, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act has become redundant, and even harmful, in Quebec. These two opposing integration models cannot be applied at the same time in the same territory because it causes confusion.

Multiculturalism does not exist in a vacuum. It is part of a set of federal tools used to impose a single national vision, which sometimes directly contradicts Quebec's vision. The solution proposed today in Bill C-245 is simple: We need to stop applying this law in Quebec. Let us be very clear. Bill C-245 does not amend the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It does not take away any rights and it does not exclude anyone. It simply allows Quebec to apply its own law on its own territory.

• (1145)

In 2006, the House of Commons recognized that Quebecers form a nation. That recognition has since remained largely symbolic. Recognition without any meaningful impact is not a recognition at all. It is just words. Bill C-245 provides an opportunity to give real meaning to this recognition.

Let us be clear: Canadian multiculturalism not only denies the existence of the Quebec nation, it also refuses to fully recognize the multinational nature of the state to the detriment of first nations, which are too often reduced to mere cultural diversity. We must look at this objectively: Quebec's independence did not arise from a rejection of Canada. It emerged as a political consequence of a repeated refusal—emphasis on “repeated”—to give meaningful recognition to Quebec's collective choices.

When a nation has a vision imposed on it that is not its own, and when recognition of that nation remains purely symbolic, the question of real autonomy will eventually arise. Bill C-245 is not an act

### *Private Members' Business*

of defiance, it is a gesture of respect. This is precisely why the Bloc Québécois exists in the House of Commons: to express this fundamental disagreement. Many democracies choose an integration model based on a common culture without denying diversity. The Canadian choice is not the only option, nor is it the only legitimate one. Respecting a different choice does not weaken a federation. It is the opposite. Refusing to recognize that choice is what erodes it.

I will say it again: Bill C-245 does not take away anyone's rights. Its singular aim is to ensure there is a single framework for integration in Quebec, namely the one democratically chosen by the National Assembly of Quebec. MPs who vote for this bill will be choosing consistency and respect. MPs who vote against the bill will be confirming that recognition of the Quebec nation is nothing more than empty words and symbolism. For the Bloc Québécois, the choice is clear: We must continue to oppose this state doctrine, which is toxic to the Quebec nation.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** I believe the member for Drummond has a point of order.

**Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent among the parties for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the member for Drummond be permitted to give the five-minute right of reply to close the debate on Bill C-245 on behalf of the member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères.

[*English*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** All those opposed to the member moving the motion will please say nay. It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Drummond has five minutes for his right of reply.

**Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-245, which was introduced by the Bloc Québécois, seeks to exclude Quebec from Canadian multiculturalism so that it can implement its own model for integrating immigrants. It is simple. The bill has just one provision, but the other parties are having a hard time understanding it.

First, what is multiculturalism? We are hearing all sorts of things in the House, including a lot of misinformation. Multiculturalism is not about having a diverse, multicultural society, as is the case for Canada and for Quebec. It is also not about being open to immigration, which is a characteristic of Canada and of Quebec too. It has nothing to do with the fight against racism that is being waged in Canada, as well as in Quebec. Multiculturalism is simply the model for integrating newcomers that Canada chose for Canada.

### *Government Orders*

Why do we want Quebec to be excluded from that? The reason is that, as a nation, Quebec has the right to choose the model for integrating newcomers that works best for Quebec. As my colleague said earlier, last May, the Quebec National Assembly passed a law to implement its own model, which the current government refers to as the national integration model.

There are therefore two models in Quebec, two opposing models, primarily because multinationalism rejects the very existence of Quebecers as a nation and as a founding people of Canada. Multiculturalism denies the existence of any common core whatsoever. It does not provide for upholding common values such as gender equality or the rule of law, nor does it provide for drawing inspiration from a common culture, such as the discovery of our national history.

Multiculturalism completely rejects the fact that the official and common language of Quebec is French and that French must also be the language of integration. In the name of a supposed openness to others, multiculturalism promotes a postnational Canada, without history, values, or culture; a Canada without dialogue, but rather a proliferation of monologues; a Canada that is increasingly fragmented by communitarianism, when an integration policy is supposed to be unifying, as the name suggests.

This Trudeauvian dream does not work in Quebec. Quebecers know that being open to others does not mean denying ourselves. Rather, it means engaging in a dialogue. It takes two to come together. It takes two to have a dialogue. Quebecers want to have a relationship with those who honour us by coming to live in our province. We want these individuals to participate fully in the workplace, in the culture and in political life. We want these new Quebecers to continue to enrich our common culture with their experiences and traditions.

We want Quebec to be a place where there is equality of opportunity, but that is only possible when everyone has the tools, knowledge and networks they need to flourish. We do not want to live side-by-side with no connection, like unhappy neighbours, or with no relationship, like an unhappy couple. We cannot just be content to live with that, because the future of our nation is at stake. The future of more than four centuries of resistance from our people depends on our ability to build a shared life with newcomers in Quebec. We have no choice but to succeed, yet Canadian multiculturalism is standing in our way. Anyone who is in favour of imposing multiculturalism on Quebecers is, in fact, supporting the assimilation of our people in the near future.

I call on the House to let these words sink in. Supporting the imposition of multiculturalism on Quebecers is tantamount to supporting the assimilation of Quebecers as a people and as a nation. On the pretext of openness, the other parties are pushing for a Canada that would be less diverse, less culturally rich and, to be honest, less interesting, because our people would be marginalized within some nebulous, postnational, English Canadian blob.

It seems ironic that we should be debating all this just a few days after the Prime Minister's controversial Plains of Abraham speech at the Quebec Citadel. To refresh my colleagues' memories, he said the Battle of the Plains of Abraham was actually the start of a grand partnership between the French, the English and indigenous peo-

ples. All the Liberals stood behind this speech, even though it took pains to highlight the existence of Canada's founding peoples. Today, those same Liberals support forcing Quebec to submit to a form of multiculturalism that fails to acknowledge the founding peoples, our history, our values and our French language as the glue that holds Quebec society together. Once again, this is by no means a partnership. In fact, this is exactly the opposite of a partnership. My colleagues in Ottawa are imposing an integration policy on Quebec that directly contradicts the policy of our National Assembly.

Just as it is time for Quebec to make a choice, my colleagues must also make a choice. They can choose to partner with Quebec, or they can choose to remain confrontational, with serious consequences for the future of our fate in the Americas. I urge them to choose wisely.

• (1150)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** The question is on the motion.

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

**Martin Champoux:** Mr. Speaker, I love when you speak French and when you say the word "multiculturalism" in French. I know it is hard to say, and I commend you for it, which is why we are requesting a recorded division.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 4, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

• (1155)

[*English*]

SITTING SUSPENDED

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** It being 11:55 a.m., the House will now suspend to the call of the Chair.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:55 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12 p.m.)

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1200)

[*English*]

### PROTECTING VICTIMS ACT

The House resumed from January 29 consideration of the motion that Bill C-16, An Act to amend certain Acts in relation to criminal and correctional matters (child protection, gender-based violence, delays and other measures), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak here today to this important subject matter.

*Government Orders*

To understand where we are today, it is important to understand where we have come from, particularly over the last decade. Over this past decade, we have seen lax Liberal laws deliberately reshape the balance of our justice system. They are deliberately going much easier on criminals and much harder on law-abiding citizens, such as the law-abiding citizens in my riding of Fundy Royal.

These are people who get up every morning, work hard, provide for their families, take their kids to hockey and volunteer in the community. Those people have the right to feel protected and safe in their communities, and for a long time, they did. I know in my hometown of Quispamsis, like many of the towns throughout Fundy Royal, up until recently, people did not even lock their homes at night. I know it is a cliché, but they also did not lock their cars. They felt safe and secure.

Now, after 10 years of Liberal governments, people in those communities no longer feel safe. They no longer feel secure, whether it is from violent crime, drug-related crime or property crime. I cannot find a person in my riding of Fundy Royal who does not know someone who has had their home, garage, car or shed broken into.

Is this because there are so many more criminals than there were 10 years ago? No, it is not. It is because there are no more consequences for the commission of these crimes. We have a failed justice system because of the steps the government has taken over the last 10 years.

This is not just my anecdotal observation. I want to share some of the facts in Canada. They are absolutely alarming, and it is no wonder Canadians have lost confidence in the justice system. In fact, when I served on the justice committee, we once heard powerful testimony from the sister of a victim of crime. She said that she does not feel like we have a justice system anymore. She said that we have a legal system, but we do not have a justice system, particularly for victims. I have to echo those concerns.

Canadians do not feel a sense of justice. They do not feel safe in their communities. Why is that? Let us look at some of the facts. Under the government, since 2015, so over the last 10-plus years, violent crime is up 54%, homicides are up 29%, sexual assaults are up 76% and gun crime is up 130%. This one is unbelievable: Extortion has skyrocketed 330% over its 2015 level. Fraud, and we all know individuals who have been touched by this, has increased by 94% over the last 10 years.

These are absolutely horrific numbers, but this is not about the numbers. Behind every one of these statistics are real people and real victims from our communities. They are our friends and our family. They are feeling the very real consequences of the soft-on-crime policies that have been undertaken by the Liberal government.

All too often we learn that the criminals committing these crimes have a lengthy criminal record, and after the commission of many of these crimes, they are out on bail. Why are they out on bail? It is so frustrating for Canadians to hear that someone who has committed a serious sexual offence or another offence is out on bail.

Why are they out on bail? How does this happen? How is it just? How is it safe? They are out on bail because the government, with

Bill C-75, changed the law. It introduced a principle of restraint, and that ties the hands of judges. It says that the will of Parliament is that individuals are to be released at the earliest possible opportunity and held under the least onerous provisions. They are held as loosely as possible, which means that rather than being in custody, they are out on the street.

This frustrates not only the victims and our communities but also the police. We can imagine arresting someone for a gun crime or auto theft, doing the work as a police officer. The individual is then brought before a judge, and before the officer has finished their shift, that person is back out on the street. That is not right, and the Liberals continue to defend the indefensible when it comes to soft-on-crime laws, such as Bill C-5 and Bill C-75.

I just spoke about Bill C-75. Bill C-5 shockingly eliminated mandatory jail time for violent gun crimes such as robbery with a firearm and extortion with a firearm. The government, under its so-called criminal justice legislation, eliminated mandatory jail time for those serious gun crimes.

Let us refer back to what I said a few minutes ago. Let us see how that is working. How is that approach of letting people who have committed serious crimes out on bail, under Bill C-75, working? As well, if someone is sentenced, they are not going to have mandatory jail time, under Bill C-5. What is the combined effect of that?

● (1205)

Maybe gun crime is down. Let us take a look. Unfortunately, gun crime is up a mere 130% under these policies. This is a serious indictment now. The facts are in. This is a serious indictment of this government's agenda.

Conservatives have put forward common-sense legislation to undo some of the damage done by Bill C-5. We introduced the protection against extortion act to restore mandatory jail time for the offence of extortion with a firearm. We introduced the combatting motor vehicle theft act so that convicted car thieves would no longer serve their time from the comfort of their home, from where they can simply walk out the door to steal another vehicle. Of course, the Liberals voted against it. Bill C-5 weakened sentences for the producers, importers and exporters of dangerous drugs. These are the drugs that are affecting people throughout all of our communities, and there have been skyrocketing deaths due to drugs.

*Government Orders*

In the last Parliament, I introduced the stronger sentences for safer streets act, which would have reinstated mandatory jail time for criminals who import, produce and export dangerous schedule 1 drugs, such as meth, heroin, cocaine and fentanyl, but the Liberals' soft-on-crime policies have not made anyone safer. In fact, the numbers say that it is just the opposite; they have done much worse.

That is why, in speaking to this legislation today, we have to be aware of what the Liberals have done. Embedded in this legislation is a further deterioration of the will of Parliament when it comes to serious offences. The will of Parliament has been, if there has been a serious offence, say a serious gun crime, there must be mandatory jail time associated with it. With this legislation, the Liberals would allow an override valve with which a judge would be able to not impose the mandatory minimum sentence set out by Parliament.

There is a myth out there that mandatory minimum sentences are somehow unconstitutional. I was looking at an old backgrounder on Bill C-5 that the government produced. These are not my words, but the Government of Canada's own words from its backgrounder on mandatory minimum penalties for, for example, gun crimes, serious gun crimes. It says that, when those were challenged before a court of law, 52% of them, over half, were upheld as being in line with Canadian law, the Constitution and charter values.

While there are some positive steps in the legislation, mostly things that were copied from my hard-working Conservative colleagues, with this legislation, the Liberals have said that, even for the mandatory penalties for serious gun crimes that have been upheld as being in line with the charter, a judge could give an offender less than two years for a serious gun crime, less than two years for a serious sexual offence or less than the mandatory penalty for any other serious crimes that involve a mandatory sentence.

There is some good in this bill, but we always have to be aware that the Liberals' track record is awful. Conservatives will continue to hold them to account and restore once again a justice system for Canadians.

• (1210)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in so many ways, the member is just wrong in many of his assertions. I would ultimately argue that the new Prime Minister and the government, in the last nine months since the last election, have put forward a substantial crime legislation agenda. We have witnessed, day after day from the Conservative Party, a filibuster of an important issue that Canadians want us to address.

Bill C-16 is yet another example. Through Bill C-16 we would see the reinstatement of many mandatory minimums. It will not weaken the process. Conservatives try to give a false impression that it would.

Does the member really believe the Conservative Party of Canada is reflecting the interests of Canadians by not allowing the legislative agenda dealing with crime to pass?

**Hon. Rob Moore:** Mr. Speaker, thank goodness for our leader. Thank goodness for the Conservative Party, because we were the only ones for years standing up for the rights of law-abiding citi-

zens and victims in this country. If the hon. member feels there is something inaccurate in anything I said, I would encourage him to be specific.

I am citing the government's own material from when Bill C-5 was introduced, when David Lametti was the former justice minister. The government's own material, the backgrounder from the Department of Justice, says that 52% of mandatory minimum penalties for firearms offences were upheld by the courts.

The member is wrong. Under this legislation, aggravated sexual assault with a gun, human trafficking, multiple violent firearms offences, extortion with a firearm, weapons trafficking and drive-by shootings would all be eligible to no longer be subject to a mandatory minimum penalty.

[*Translation*]

**Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague on his speech. He spoke at length about his criticisms and what is missing from the bill.

I would like to return to certain important aspects that a number of victims' groups have called for and that even his female Conservative colleagues are calling for. For example, in Bill C-16, there is an openness to criminalizing coercive control, which is something that groups in Quebec have been advocating for since the publication of the "Rebuilding Trust" report. In fact, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women held a non-partisan press conference in November demanding this type of measure. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on this.

Of course, there are still things that need to be looked at in this respect. Would it not be worthwhile to at least study it in committee?

[*English*]

**Hon. Rob Moore:** Mr. Speaker, as my friend said, there are some positive aspects to the bill, which I mentioned. The work of my colleague from Calgary Nose Hill on the issue of deepfakes is included in this legislation. Some of the work by my hard-working colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola around intimate partner violence is included in this legislation.

However, also included in this legislation is a weakening of the will of this Parliament when it comes to mandatory penalties: Even penalties that the Supreme Court has upheld as constitutional would be subject to this. Individuals charged with drive-by shootings would have available to them a reduced sentence, thanks to this legislation.

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

*Government Orders*

I heard the member for Winnipeg North question my colleague, who is a lawyer, about these things. I could not agree more with my colleague about the problems we have. This government took away mandatory jail time, and jail time, period, potentially, for people who do drive-by shootings.

Does my colleague agree that it was not only negligent but also reckless, given the problems we have with guns, to allow people to serve their sentence on the couch when they shoot at other houses and endanger Canadians?

**Hon. Rob Moore:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his hard work on behalf of victims. He has introduced many pieces of legislation to run counter to this Liberal agenda, which has been soft on thugs but hard on victims.

To answer the question, absolutely, Bill C-5 eliminated mandatory jail time for serious offences like drive-by shootings. In the brilliance of that legislation, what has been the result? It has been skyrocketing gang-related crime and skyrocketing firearms-related crime. We just need to read or watch the news any day, and we can see the effect of the Liberals' failed approach.

• (1215)

**Fred Davies (Niagara South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-16 today. It is timely for me and relevant to my constituency, which has recently been hit with more than our share of sexual assaults and child sexual assaults. I meet regularly with survivors of these crimes, and their stories are heartbreaking. They have informed me, educated me and inspired me. They have shared not just their insights and their tears of disappointment but tears of hope as well, hope that we can change the Criminal Code. I am humbled and proud to be their voice today in the House.

I have learned that, more often than not, perpetrators remain in the community, silently hiding, often repeating their crimes, only to be released again into the community. I have met survivors who move from place to place out of fear for themselves and for their own children. These survivors hide their identities, cannot trust people they do not know, and find it difficult to have relationships with and trust people they do know.

This is not theoretical. Survivors of child sexual abuse often live with trauma for decades, struggling with mental health, relationships, job security and trust. When repeat offenders are allowed back into communities too quickly or inconsistently, the justice system sends a devastating message to victims that their suffering is secondary to the comfort of the offender. Mandatory minimum sentences reverse that message. They say, clearly and unequivocally, that protecting children comes first.

People in the House know that I have risen countless times to talk about the horrendous assault of a three-year-old toddler in Welland, in my riding of Niagara South. The sexual assault of this little girl was an unspeakable act of cruelty that violates the most basic moral and human boundaries. What makes this crime worse is that the perpetrator had been released early from prison, after serving just one year in jail for raping a 12-year-old boy. Within just a few short weeks, this abhorrent excuse for a human being attacked little E in her own home, where she should have been safe from harm but was left for dead with horrifying and horrendous injuries.

Such crimes demand not only our collective outrage but an unwavering commitment to protect children and hold offenders fully accountable.

I am not a lawyer, but my father was a Crown attorney and most of my preceding family members were police officers. My son Conrad is a first responder in Welland with the Welland Fire and Emergency Services. My entire family has witnessed atrocities from repeat offenders, and the images are forever etched in their minds and memory.

I had the opportunity to welcome my son's colleagues here on the floor of the House, shortly after the assault on this little girl in Welland. I believe it was cathartic for the firefighters, two of whom had been first on the scene of this appalling assault. We spent time in the chamber and talked about the magnitude of the tasks we undertake here. We spent over an hour talking about when legislation could be introduced to fix the system of repeat offenders being continually released.

They asked one fundamental question: Why did we tolerate a soft-on-crime approach for so long? We talked about ensuring that time in jail must be commensurate with the gravity of the crime. We talked about the relentless rise in violent crime that first responders endure while still stepping forward every day to protect and serve our communities. The emotions were high and the expectations even higher, but I fear that we have failed them yet again with Bill C-16. The legislation goes only halfway and does not provide certainty in minimum sentences for serious crimes.

There are few responsibilities more fundamental to a society than protecting its children. Children depend on adults, not only for care and guidance but for safety, especially from those who would exploit their vulnerability. When that trust is violated, the harm is profound, lifelong and often irreversible. That is why mandatory minimum sentences for repeat child sex offenders are not only justified but necessary. Little E deserves this. We owe it to her and to so many others.

Sadly, we had another arrest in my hometown of Port Colborne a few weeks ago, where the repeat offender was arrested on historic assault charges. This repeat offender actually played Santa Claus in my community and was well known as an entertainer.

*Government Orders*

• (1220)

Minimum sentences are not about vengeance. They are about protection, accountability and prevention. First, we must confront the hard truth that repeat child sex offenders have already demonstrated that previous punishment, supervision or rehabilitation efforts were not sufficient to stop their behaviour. The first conviction may involve some uncertainty, with questions about rehabilitation, treatment or the possibility of change. However, a second or third offence removes that uncertainty. It shows a pattern, and when a pattern involves the repeat sexual abuse of children, society has a moral obligation to respond deliberately and decisively.

Mandatory minimum sentences provide that decisive response. Subjective wiggle room in Bill C-16 is not decisive. Instead, it creates uncertainty where clarity is required and discretion where firmness is needed. Research consistently shows that repeat offenders pose a significantly higher risk of re-offending.

Second, mandatory minimums promote consistency and fairness in sentencing. Without them, sentencing outcomes can vary widely depending on the jurisdiction, the judge and the ability to have counsel who may have a more dynamic set of legal skills. It is conceivable that offenders with nearly identical records can receive drastically different sentences. That inconsistency undermines public trust in the justice system and leaves victims feeling that justice is arbitrary.

Bill C-16 allows a situation where similar crimes can end with drastically different consequences, creating uncertainty for both victims and those charged with enforcing the law. Mandatory minimums establish a clear baseline. They do not eliminate judicial discretion entirely, but they ensure that repeat offences are met with serious, predictable consequences.

Third, mandatory minimums serve as a powerful deterrent. While no law can stop every crime, the certainty of severe consequences does influence behaviour. Critics argue that mandatory minimums remove flexibility and emphasize punishment over rehabilitation. That points to the flaw in this legislation. For example, it states:

When imposing a sentence for an offence that has a minimum punishment of a specified term of imprisonment, a court shall impose a shorter term of imprisonment than the specified term if, in the circumstances, the minimum punishment would amount to cruel and unusual punishment for that offender.

In other words, if Parliament's baseline jail term for any particular crime feels too extreme, a judge can simply decide on a new minimum. The rules for what counts as cruel punishment are murky at best, and make no mistake, this will be the first argument in every trial going forward.

Finally, minimum sentences must reflect our values as a society. Laws are not just rules; they are statements of what we prioritize. When we impose minimum mandatory sentences for repeat child sex offenders, we are saying that children's safety outweighs convenience, cost or discomfort. A society is judged on how it protects those who cannot protect themselves. On this issue, we must choose clarity over hesitation, safety over leniency, and justice over excuses.

I mentioned the survivors I meet with regularly in my office in Welland. These inspirational and brave women will be coming to Ottawa on May 26 to talk to us, tell us their stories and urge further movement to ensure stricter sentencing, the removal of easy bail procedures and the necessity of minimum sentences. Most importantly, they will urge us to release the national sex offender registry as a measure to protect victims. I am looking forward to welcoming Alicia, Melissa, Liz, Tammy, Alysa, Ashley and other brave women who have survived sexual assault and who have shown extraordinary strength in their healing, resilience and willingness to stand in community with one another.

To sum up these remarks, minimum sentencing is necessary to ensure accountability and communicate that these crimes are taken seriously by the justice system. That is how we protect victims. Conservatives will continue to be the advocate for survivors like these brave women from my riding, and we will not stop until repeat offenders actually get a sentence commensurate with the crime, and the registry is made public.

• (1225)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is really important for all members of all political parties to realize that when we talk about the issue of crime, the Prime Minister made a commitment to Canadians in an election platform, and we have substantial legislation before us.

We can talk about Bill C-2, Bill C-9, Bill C-14 or Bill C-16, the debate that we are having today. Bill C-14 is bail reform legislation. Bill C-16 reinstates mandatory minimums. All of these are important pieces of legislation, and the Conservative Party, for whatever reason, continues to not allow that legislation, as a package, to pass. The Conservatives want to filibuster it. If the member is genuinely concerned about fighting crime in Canada, why are Conservatives filibustering this important legislation—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Order.

The hon. member for Niagara South.

**Fred Davies:** Mr. Speaker, I could have anticipated that question before I stood up.

We are not filibustering anything. I am a new member of Parliament. I have a right to stand in this House. I am not on the justice committee, which this bill would be referred to. We are only putting up four speakers today on this bill. As a new member of Parliament, and with these crimes committed in my riding, I have a right to stand here and speak on behalf of my constituents.

*Government Orders*

The member should be ashamed of himself for suggesting I should not be standing up and talking about this on behalf of the victims in my riding. It is a shameful question, and he should be ashamed of himself.

[*Translation*]

**Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we are debating a lot of issues related to the Criminal Code.

However, I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on this because it once again raises the issue of the fiscal imbalance. We can pass all the bills we want, but the bottom line is that Quebec and the provinces are the ones responsible for the administration of justice. It is important for the House to pass legislation, but it is also important to recognize that we then need to transfer funds to Quebec and the provinces so that they are able to administer their justice systems. As my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord rightly said, it is all well and good for us to pass this bill, but if the fiscal imbalance continues, then Quebec and the provinces may not have the means to implement all the laws.

What does my colleague think about that?

[*English*]

**Fred Davies:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises an interesting point, but I would again point out that one of the issues in this legislation, the wiggle room in Bill C-16 with respect to judicial discretion on changing sentences on mandatory minimums, creates a greater imbalance.

Someone can have a very talented lawyer who knows the system better than others but may be less fortunate and not able to have adequate representation. To me, that is the bigger flaw in the system and in this bill. I hope that at committee, my colleagues on all sides will discuss this in depth because it is a serious question. If we provide counsel with wiggle room because of lawyers not being able to argue strenuously, I think we have a bigger problem.

**Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask for a little indulgence first. I want to inform the House and all Canadians that Canada's most famous weather prognosticator for 70 years, Warton Willie, predicted an early spring this morning.

I want to thank my colleague for sharing the personal stories of victims across Canada, but also in his riding, who have been victimized as a result of the Liberal soft-on-bail regime over the last decade.

I do want to recognize that this bill would fix certain things and that our party has committed to working with the government. Unfortunately, the government has put in a poison pill.

Does the member think that when this bill gets to committee the government will listen to the other parties, including the Conservative side, to split the bill so that we can address those shortfalls in the legislation?

• (1230)

**Fred Davies:** Mr. Speaker, the government is saying we are filibustering and not co-operating.

**An hon. member:** You are.

**Fred Davies:** That is ridiculous.

Mr. Speaker, splitting a bill so that we can get important pieces of a bill through, so it becomes law, is not an unreasonable suggestion. We have already done it in this session. We are not filibustering or delaying. We are here to co-operate on good pieces of legislation. As my colleague said, there are good parts of this legislation, but I am hoping the committee will bring forward some amendments to make it a better bill.

**Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I do not think I will get a chance to speak to Bill C-16. I was initially concerned that the government had created a weakening and was going back to mandatory minimums.

If one does research on mandatory minimums, one finds that far from being effective at reducing crime rates, they are completely ineffective. We find that mandatory minimums increase disproportionate treatment within prisons. It is one of the reasons the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended we get rid of them. If we look at every report from the Department of Justice or the Parliamentary Centre, they find that mandatory minimums do not work, so I am worried about Bill C-16.

I am going to close here and ask if the hon. member has looked at the research that says mandatory minimums are simply ineffective.

**Fred Davies:** Mr. Speaker, tell that to the little girl's family, that when Daniel Senecal was released after serving one year for raping a 12-year-old boy, that one-year sentence was adequate. Tell that to the community that is hurting. We have to have mandatory minimums for serious repeat offenders. There is just no question about it. I do not care what the stats say. When we get down to repeat child sex offenders, there must be a mandatory minimum.

**Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-16. It is an important bill, and it is quite disturbing to hear the Liberal parliamentary secretary saying we are filibustering. We are putting up four speakers, a one-hour debate, and he is saying we are trying to push back. We are doing our job. We are here to say where things are good and where there needs to be improvement. That is our job. The Liberals would just prefer that we do not do our job on behalf of Canada. I just wanted to begin with that.

We believe that job one for the federal government is public safety and security. Historically, Canada has been known as a peaceful and safe place to live. As a matter of fact, in the 1867 Constitution Act, the words are "Peace, Order, and good Government". That is what Canadians should expect from the federal government: peace, for public safety; order, for rule of law; and good government, as in competent.

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Canada has been known for a number of symbols internationally. The one that is probably most famous is the maple leaf. It is on our flags, everywhere. The second one that would probably be most known internationally would be the RCMP with his red serge, or her red serge, and possibly on one of the horses.

I remember the first time I visited Ottawa. This was in 1973. I came on a school trip from Chibougamau, Quebec. I was very impressed with the buildings and the city. I never dreamed of one day being able to represent the Canadian people as a member of Parliament, specifically the residents of Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge and Mission, whom I thank for having re-elected me for a third term. I remember in 1973, when I was here, actually getting a coin, a 25¢ coin, and it was the centennial of the formation of the RCMP, which was originally the North-West Mounted Police.

The reason I bring this up is that the North-West Mounted Police, which later became the RCMP, came and brought order in the west of Canada. There was one fort that members may be aware of, Fort Whoop-Up, where whisky traders from the United States were making a mockery of justice in that part of Canada, so the NWMP was establishing order.

Canada has been known as a peaceful place and a safe place, but this has changed dramatically under the Liberals. I have many interesting conversations with Uber drivers, including late last night. I got in, and the fellow was an immigrant; he told me he was from Brazil. I asked him why he moved here. He said he moved here about nine years ago. He said a big thing for him was safety and security; that was the first thing. I said, “Oh, really?” However, he said things have changed, things are changing here in Canada. He says he sees the crime going up, people going to stores, grabbing things, and the police do not seem to be doing anything.

It was very disappointing to hear this. Canadians are not just making this up. They are not misinformed. Let us look at Statistics Canada since 2015. I choose 2015 because that is the year the Liberals came into power. Human trafficking is up 80%. Sexual assault is up 74%. Violent crime is up more than 50%. I can roll off mathematical percentages, but those stats represent thousands, hundreds of thousands, of victims in our country.

As a member of Parliament from British Columbia, I see violent crime is, again, up 50% to 85,000 incidences. Sexual assaults are up 97% to 4,396 incidences. Extortion is up 482%, almost 500%, or 2,885 cases in one year. This is under the Liberals. Government makes a difference. Brenda Locke, the mayor of Surrey, asked the government to invoke the Emergencies Act because the police are overwhelmed. People are fleeing the country. There are killings. We had never heard of this sort of thing beforehand. What is going on?

• (1235)

In B.C., again, sexual violations against children are up 294% since the Liberals have been in power, to 2,581 cases. Luring children on a computer has gone up 18 times, to 1,406 incidents. Distributing child pornography is up 776%. This is insane. These are Statistics Canada's numbers. People are afraid on transit, in their neighbourhoods, in their homes and the downtown core. Crime did not rise on its own. It rose because of deliberate Liberal choices and

legislation. The deliberate Liberal laws have undermined public safety.

What sort of things have they done to undermine it? They say we have Bill C-16, and they are all about safety, order and criminal justice. Well, they have a track record. Under catch-and-release bail, they let criminals go under the least onerous conditions. One-third of homicides in Canada are committed by criminals out on bail. The partner of Bailey McCourt from Kelowna was charged with domestic violence and released on bail. He found the young mother of two in a parking lot and killed her in cold blood two hours later. We have talked about this at different times. The Conservatives brought forward Bailey's law. There are stories across Canada. I talked to the grandmother, who lives in my riding. She told me that she was with Bailey when she took her first breath and she was with her when she took the last breath of life. She is grieving.

The Liberals also deliberately repealed mandatory minimum sentences. They have claimed that mandatory minimums violate the charter, and the Supreme Court upheld it. There are over 100 mandatory minimums, and they are constitutional. There are weak consequences for violent offenders. There have been 50,000 apprehensions of 40 people in Vancouver in one year. It is a cycle. Police ask me: What is the use? That is under the Liberals' watch. They cannot just wave around Bill C-16 and tell Canadians that everything is good now. They have the wrong criminal justice priorities.

There is the gun buyback program. Conservatives believe in keeping Canadians safe from criminals, and the Liberals believe in keeping turkeys safe from hunters. One frontline police officer wrote me and said, “As a police officer, I don't get to voice my opinion publicly. I was hired to enforce the law, not comment on politics.” He felt compelled to email me. He said the Liberal firearm buyback program is a political distraction, a waste of resources and a danger to public safety. Those were his comments as a frontline professional. Meanwhile, those smuggling guns, repeat offenders and violent criminals walk free. That is not public safety; that is optics.

Now the Liberals wonder why Canadians have lost trust. Bill C-16 needs to be judged in this context. It does not exist in a vacuum. There is every sign of the Liberals calling a snap election, including comments by the member who said Conservatives are filibustering. They are trying to develop a line. They have their trump card, their ace card. It is like they are battering a door in an arena with a flag, getting people riled up. The thing is, though, that they realize they have some vulnerabilities, and one of their biggest vulnerabilities is that they know Canadians are very concerned about public safety.

Conservatives support some of the language, some of the things the bill has brought forward, because they are actually Conservative. However, the Liberals have a poison pill. If I had another 20 minutes, I could show how they could very well make things a lot worse for Canadians with this bill. It needs to be changed and to be split. I hope the Liberals will take our advice. We are going to pass Bill C-16 on to committee stage. I very much hope they will take the Conservative recommendations to split the bill and debate our meaningful amendments.

• (1240)

**John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite's mentioning the RCMP. My father-in-law, Mike Renchko, is a very proud retired RCMP member.

Of course, the protecting victims act we are debating today is about protecting people against gender-based violence and intimate partner violence, protecting children from predators, strengthening victims' rights and addressing court delays. If there is anything before the House that the members opposite should support, it is this.

However, with our anti-crime bills, strengthening sentencing, bail reform, the anti-hate act, and protecting women and children, when these bills go to committee, they are actively blocked over and over again by the members opposite. Why is that? It is so the members opposite can stand up in the House and continue to grandstand and to fundraise off their actions.

When will the members opposite stop the excuses and support the anti-crime legislation that is before the House right now?

**Marc Dalton:** Mr. Speaker, like everything the Liberals do, this is about optics and about words. When we dig into it, we see that it is fake, like we are seeing with a lot of their projects. They have said that something is going to happen, but nothing is happening. The Conservatives are very concerned about this.

It is not about the language being used, because we agree with many of the concerns being brought forward. The language sounds great until we get deeper into the bill and read what is said, buried in the provisions. There is a provision that would allow judges to ignore mandatory minimums if they decide that the sentence would be cruel and unusual. That may sound compassionate, but it is not. It would invite endless litigation and a steady erosion of sentencing law.

[Translation]

**Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is true that Ottawa writes the Criminal Code, but the provinces are the ones that administer justice. If we really want justice for victims, then

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we need a justice system that works. That takes courthouses, courtrooms, stenographers and bailiffs. It takes resources.

Does my colleague agree that the federal government is not doing enough to fund the justice system and to help the provinces better fund the justice system? Until Ottawa provides more funding to help the provinces better administer their justice systems, victims will be the ones who suffer, regardless of what legislation we pass and how good it may be.

• (1245)

**Marc Dalton:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague from the Bloc Québécois.

This demonstrates the importance of the economy and how the federal government manages the economy. It has been completely flat for the past ten years under the Liberals. We do not have the resources to do what we should be doing and to invest more, perhaps, in health, security, transportation and all that.

What are they doing? They are running ever-larger deficits and the debt is growing. This is terrible for Canadians.

[English]

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

I want to dispel the canard that is coming from the Liberal side. The Liberals say the Conservatives want to filibuster bills. However, when the Liberals were debating Bill C-9 in committee, a highly divisive bill, the Conservatives said no fewer than 20 times that we wanted to talk about bail. The Liberals have the audacity to stand up in the House and say that we are filibustering crime legislation, when we begged them to talk about crime legislation, not just in December in committee but for the last 10 years.

When will the hypocrisy end? What does my friend think?

**Marc Dalton:** Mr. Speaker, that is a good point from my colleague. We warned the Liberals during the debate on Bill C-5 that repealing mandatory minimums would increase crime and undermine trust, but we were mocked by them four years ago.

Since then, crime is up and fear is up, and Bill C-16 would not correct the course; it would accelerate it. There are some changes, but the bill could be a lot better if the Liberals would take some of our amendments and apply them, and Canadians would be better off because of that.

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**Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola. This is my first time rising substantially in the House since the winter break, so before I begin, I do want to recognize a number of people from Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola.

I want to recognize a life well lived by Rocco Russo, who recently passed. He was a member of my Italian cultural centre, known colloquially as the Colombo Lodge. Left to mourn him are his wife, Cheryl; his children, Christopher, Michael and Robert; and his siblings Sam, Aldo and Sylvia. Rocco gave a great deal to the Colombo Lodge and to the community. He was beloved in the community. May perpetual light shine upon him.

I also learned that, regrettably, Ms. Helen Barnett passed away over the Christmas break. Helen was somebody I got to know when I worked at my first law firm after articling, where I worked with her husband, Francis. Helen gave a tremendous amount to the city of Kamloops, sitting on council and school boards, and working with all sorts of community organizations. She had a vivacious personality, and I am so grateful to have known her. May perpetual light shine upon her.

I was saddened to learn over the holidays of the death of Antonio Spada at 97 years old. Antonio leaves behind to mourn him his wife, Serafina; his children, Joseph and Angie; and his sister Felicia. I have gotten to know the Spada family through the Potestio family, and I can say that Antonio leaves behind a tremendous legacy. If legacy is demonstrated based on what we see following someone's death, following a tremendous life well lived, then we can say that Antonio lived a tremendous life and will be missed. I extend my deepest condolences to Antonio's family. May perpetual light shine upon him.

I was saddened to learn over the holidays that Alice Desmond passed away. The Desmond family members were pillars of Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola. In fact in Kamloops—Thompson—Nicola there is a street called Desmond Street. I actually worked as a prosecutor with one of Alice's children, Lynett, before she was elevated to the bench. She is now Judge Jung. The family legacy of Alice and her late husband, Pat, cannot be overstated.

Alice leaves to mourn her sisters Evelyn, Edith and Brenda; and her daughters Nola, Tannis, Lynett and Shannon and their families. In fact my best man was named Desmond Sanesh after Alice Desmond and the Desmond family. May perpetual light shine upon her. I extend my deepest condolences to her family.

I was deeply saddened to learn of the death of "Dar" Hastings in the 100 Mile House area. She was 83 years old. She gave so much work to the public and to democracy, and she was a great help. She delivered on what she believed, standing up for her values in so many ways. I cannot overstate all that she did. I had the opportunity to visit her in hospital some time ago, which I am grateful for. She really contributed to the life and vitality of the 100 Mile House area, which was part of my riding when I was first elected. She leaves behind her partner, Al Smith; her children, Paige and Tom, as well as Wade and Brian; and her sisters Candice and Jane. May perpetual light shine upon her.

I have a lot to say. Far be it from me to have a lot to say; I am sure a lot of people do, and I often do have a lot to say here.

● (1250)

So much of what the government is doing comes down to trust. I was reflecting on trust in criminal justice, and I do not have a lot of trust in the government when it comes to justice. I do not have a lot of trust in the government, period, and I will give the following example.

In pre-budget consultations, I sent the Minister of Finance nine letters about Sun Peaks, a community in my riding that has tremendous housing issues. I sent the minister a letter about the housing. In fact, I have sent three emails to the Minister of Housing. This was in private email; for the people at home, I will explain that we have a back channel for private emails, which members communicate with but we do not make public. However, not once has he even given the courtesy of a reply. In fact, I asked him whether he even got my emails, to which he gave what I would call a lame excuse.

How do we trust a government on criminal justice, when we cannot trust them on the basics like housing? The people of Sun Peaks are wondering when they will get their answer.

What about the people of Merritt? Again, we talk about trust in the government, and the Liberals say to trust them on justice, but they would not respond to my letter about Merritt, which experienced tremendous, catastrophic, flooding prior to becoming part of my riding. The provincial government pledged well over \$100 million. The then prime minister and a number of ministers here, some of whom are ministers from Justin Trudeau's government, went there and told the people of Merritt that they would have their back.

How much have the Liberals contributed? It is \$5 million; that is it. They were going to have their back for the photo op, but when it came to giving money, they were nowhere to be seen. That is why, when we think about examples of the government and trust, there is an erosion of trust.

I want to turn to something that has been mentioned in the House: the notion of filibustering the bill. In my view, this is the worst kind of politics, because it is actively misleading the public, and here is why. We as Conservatives have been accused of filibustering this and other crime legislation—

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh!

**Frank Caputo:** Mr. Speaker, the member just said that I have been. Let us talk about that.

*Government Orders*

Where was the member on Bill C-14 when we were at committee studying Bill C-9, which is a highly contentious bill that I bet the government does not have the guts to bring forward again? It was so contentious and so divisive that we, as Conservatives, asked to shelve Bill C-9 so we could move to Bill C-14, a bail bill. We actually asked the government to move forward on that bill. What did the Liberals do? They stuck with Bill C-9. How are we filibustering bills, when we are asking them to bring forward bills?

I am the last of four speakers today. We are debating the bill. Last time I checked, in the House of Commons, we debate. We could put up more speakers, because I bet no one else is going to rise to debate it, so again, why is there a narrative about filibustering? At the end of the day, we are actually saying that Bill C-16 has elements we are agreeable to and elements that we do not necessarily agree with.

However, in a democratic society, it is so important to debate these ideas, such as mandatory minimum sentences, which I have been quoted on. It was quite complimentary to hear that, and I would love to further debate the idea of a mandatory minimum sentence with a safety valve for cruel and unusual punishment, and what that means.

Would we adopt the common law definition of “cruel and unusual”? Would Parliament itself legislate something about cruel and unusual punishment, to do exactly what we need to do, which is to say that mandatory minimums should apply 99.99% of the time, and this is what the other 0.01% of the time looks like? That is what we want to do. That is why the bill would go to committee.

• (1255)

I really hope the Liberals stop with their rhetoric, because it is wrong and it is incorrect.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged, to a certain degree, because it takes a lot of bravery for the member to go against what his leader is saying. He believes that a safety valve is an effective tool. That is what he has said on the record. I can appreciate that his leader and the entire Conservative caucus disagree.

On the issue of filibustering, let us be very clear that we would have bail legislation today, had it not been for the filibustering the Conservative Party has done on Bill C-14. There are four substantial pieces of legislation dealing with the crime file, which is important to the Prime Minister and every Liberal member of the House. Canadians are also concerned about getting crime bills passed.

The Conservative Party continues to filibuster. Why?

**Frank Caputo:** Just because somebody says it, and says it loudly, that does not make it true, Mr. Speaker.

At the end of the day, there is a minority government. Its job is to put legislation forward that makes sense. God forbid that we in this place debate legislation. It is our job to debate legislation. What the member calls filibustering, I call the democratic process. How dare the Liberals accuse us of filibustering when we are doing our job?

They think we should walk in here and give them their agenda without question. That is what the NDP did with Bill C-5, and look where that got us.

[*Translation*]

**Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, ever since the Jordan decision, when the Supreme Court determined what constituted a reasonable time frame in which to try an accused, criminals who have committed serious crimes have been released into the community due to a lack of judicial resources. This is unacceptable.

Under the bill, relaxed criteria would allow judges to reassess the reasonable time frame issue. Ultimately, we need to understand that the provinces lack the financial resources to build more courtrooms, hire more prosecutors, hire more clerks, hire more stenographers and have more resources. This bill is not a permanent solution to the problem, but it is a good temporary step.

Does my colleague agree that the federal government needs to do more since it is responsible for the Criminal Code, but the provinces have to pay for the administration of justice?

• (1300)

**Frank Caputo:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Quebec for the question.

[*English*]

I actually have something here regarding Jordan. I have a great deal of time for my colleague.

As somebody who practised criminal law for 15 to 18 years, my view is that the Jordan issue is a substantial one. It has to be addressed by the House of Commons for the reasons my colleague mentioned. The other reason is disclosure. In 1988, I think, when the Stinchcombe case came out, which is the leading case on disclosure, it was not addressed. The House needs to address disclosure, and it needs to address Jordan.

Judicial vacancies are a huge problem, and something we discussed at our convention.

**Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech was correct. As we know, the Conservatives are not putting up many speakers here, but we would like to get this issue resolved.

As a new MP, I have heard all of the stories here about the victims, the testimony and what our citizens are going through, but the Liberals seem to want to debate the rights of offenders or how we should not debate the bill. All of us want to debate it to be fair to all Canadians.

*Government Orders*

Can the member expand on exactly what the protecting victims act would do, and how we would get there?

**Frank Caputo:** Mr. Speaker, I am not going to drop it. I would love to drop the bill, because it is thick, but it would make a thud, and I do not want to hurt the interpreters' ears.

It is an expansive bill. The Liberals say we are filibustering. Should we not be talking about a bill of this substance? It is a bill that would do a lot of things, yet forgets a lot of things, like addressing parts of Bill C-75 with respect to bail and parts of Bill C-5 that say people who do drive-by shootings or commit extortion with a firearm or robbery with a firearm can serve their sentences on house arrest.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Frank Caputo:** The Liberals are laughing at that, Mr. Speaker. Is it not wonderful that the Liberals think drive-by shootings, robbery with a firearm and things like that are funny?

My time is up. Let us get this done.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** The question is on the motion.

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

**An hon. member:** On division.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** I declare the motion carried on division. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**CANADA GROCERIES AND ESSENTIALS BENEFIT ACT**

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-19, Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I can see the enthusiasm on both sides of the House. My Conservative colleagues too are brimming with enthusiasm this Monday morning.

I am pleased to rise today to start the debate on Bill C-19, Canada groceries and essentials benefit act. A lot of important things are getting done in the House, but I would say that this bill is equally important—crucial, even—to Canadian families.

[*English*]

This is the third piece of legislation I have had the honour to introduce as the Minister of Finance and National Revenue. The first, members will recall, was Bill C-4, which put more money in the pockets of Canadians with the middle-class tax cuts. The second, Bill C-15, was the budget implementation act—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

• (1305)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Order.

I will invite the member to stop the heckling. The speech has just started. There will be a full 10 minutes for questions and comments when the speech is completed.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Order.

I am going to ask both sides to refrain from heckling at this moment.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne:** Mr. Speaker, let me start again. I see the Conservatives are full of enthusiasm this afternoon, but I want to make sure that they clearly understand what we are doing in the House.

The second bill, as I was saying, was Bill C-15, the budget implementation act, which would help lay the groundwork for the generational investments that have been included in budget 2025. In other words, we have a long-term vision. It is one that is focused on building a strong and resilient Canadian economy while, at the same time, remaining focused on the more immediate needs of Canadian families and Canadian workers.

All of this is part of our response to a rapidly changing and increasingly uncertain world. We know, for example, that while inflation has cooled off since its postpandemic peak, food inflation remains stubbornly high for Canadian families. Global supply chain shocks caused by tariffs, geopolitical disruptions and climate change have all caused food prices to rise around the world.

That is why I am pleased to inform the House that the Canada groceries and essentials benefit will put hundreds of dollars into the bank accounts of more than 12 million Canadians. That is very significant. Everyone in the House should rejoice that we are going to meet the moment for Canadian families.

We know that affordability is a priority for Canadians, and it is a priority for our government. I would like to believe that it is a priority for everyone here, and I urge all members of the House to work in collaboration with us and help pass the bill in the swiftest manner one can imagine. The Canada groceries and essentials benefit will deliver real help to Canadians who are struggling with the cost of groceries and everyday essentials.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

This new benefit will replace the GST credit, but more importantly, it will be more generous. As a refresher, the GST credit is a non-taxable payment made four times a year to help low- and moderate-income individuals and families. It is a way of making our tax system more equitable. However, for many Canadians, this assistance is no longer sufficient as a result of rising food costs. We are therefore proposing to increase this benefit by 25%.

In addition, this year we will add a one-time payment equal to 50% of the current benefit, because what people need is immediate support. Since 2020, food inflation has added an average of \$782 to household budgets. That is precisely what we are seeking to offset. People understand our long-term vision for growing the Canadian economy, but they also need immediate relief. That is why we are stepping up.

*[English]*

Right now, a person living alone who is eligible for the GST credit can receive a maximum of \$443 per year. That same person would get approximately \$950 in total from the one-time payment during the 2026-27 benefits year, thanks to the changes we are proposing. This is material, this is timely and this is important for Canadian families. For a couple with two children, the amount would increase from approximately \$1,086 to \$1,890. That is \$800 more in the pockets of Canadian families.

It is right that members of the House are rejoicing, and I know my Conservative colleagues are rejoicing in their hearts at being able to support Canadian families.

Making life more affordable for Canadians is the right thing to do. This is part of Canadian values. When times are tough, Canadians rise up and help each other. That is why the first thing we did with Bill C-4 was cut the income tax for 22 million Canadians. Some 22 million Canadians have received a tax cut. This is significant and, in fact, it was the first act of our government. This represents savings of up to \$840 for a two-income family.

With that same legislation, we will formally cancel the federal consumer carbon pricing, bringing down gasoline prices by approximately 18¢ a litre in most provinces and territories. We are also lowering the upfront costs of buying a new home by eliminating the GST for first-time homebuyers, saving them up to \$50,000.

- (1310)

This is a government that understands Canadians and responds to Canadians' needs.

*[Translation]*

We are also continuing to lower the cost of child care, ensuring that 900,000 children and their families can save thousands of dollars every year. We have also made Canada's national school food program permanent so that we can feed up to 400,000 children a year and save participating families with two children an average of \$800 a year. Canadian families across the country welcome this kind of help. We are implementing automatic federal benefits for 5.5 million individuals by 2028 so that Canadians can easily and reliably receive the assistance they are entitled to.

*[English]*

We are leaving no stone unturned when it comes to making life more affordable for Canadians. Affordability must be a central measure of our country's economic success. Affordable housing helps workers live near their job. Accessible child care enables more parents to fully participate in the workforce. National school food programs help families and children get ahead, and less expensive groceries and food security mean that Canadians can afford a healthy meal. They mean not having to choose between eating well and other basic needs.

*[Translation]*

The new Canada groceries and essentials benefit is going to really improve the lives of those who need it most. That is what is in this bill, so I urge all members of the House to support it. I know my colleagues care about this legislation because it helps Canadian families at a time when they need it most. This is one step we are taking to make Canadians' grocery bills more affordable. However, as I said, it is not the only one.

As the Prime Minister announced last week, we will also be implementing long-term solutions that will help us tackle food security and build more resilient supply chains.

For example, we will capitalize on the strategic response fund, the purpose of which, I would remind the House, is to help the sectors affected by tariffs adapt, diversify and grow. We are committing \$500 million from this fund to help food businesses expand capacity and increase productivity.

We will be spending \$150 million specifically to help small and medium-sized enterprises through the regional tariff response initiative. This funding will prioritize investments that expand capacity and increase productivity in order to increase the food supply and ease price pressures. I want to take this opportunity to thank the president of the Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec for the insight he gave us into measures that the government could be taking to help farmers.

In order to take the pressure off food banks, we will also be investing \$20 million in the local food infrastructure fund.

All of these investments will help us improve food security in Canada. I know that this is an issue many Canadians across the country are worried about.

*Government Orders**[English]*

To lower the cost of food production in Canada, the Prime Minister also announced that we are introducing immediate expensing for greenhouse buildings. This measure would support increased domestic supply and investment in food production over the medium and long term. We will develop a national food security strategy to make food more affordable, and we will work with the provinces and territories to standardize unit price labelling so that Canadians can shop and compare prices easily in this era of shrinkflation. I think this is something we should all be rejoicing about.

- (1315)

We are taking action on several fronts to address a complex issue that is very real for Canadians and Canadian families. There are several causes of the food price inflation we are currently seeing, many of which are outside Canada. We cannot control what other countries do, but we can control how we respond here in Canada. This bill is our response: support for food production here in Canada, stronger supply chains and help for people who need it most. This bill is part of our commitment to build a stronger, more resilient Canadian economy and make life more affordable for Canadians.

In fact, we are already seeing progress. Some everyday expenses such as gas prices at the pump, child care fees and cellphone bills have come down. Wages are growing faster than inflation and have been growing so for 33 consecutive months. Those are the facts. This is the Canadian economy, which any commentator has said is resilient.

*[Translation]*

Currently, the price of groceries and other necessities continues to be high. That is why we are taking action in a targeted and responsible manner. We are protecting the most vulnerable Canadians while remaining fiscally responsible. That is what Canadians expect. Our goal is clear. We want an economy that works for everyone. We want real economic growth that is shared by all. We want an economy where costs are reasonable and where help is available when Canadians need it.

*[English]*

We want to make sure that Canadians feel the benefits of our country's economic growth in their wallets and at the kitchen table, not just hear about them in economic reports. That starts with everyone being able to put good food on the table. That is how we build Canada strong, and that is what we are doing.

Canada is strongest when all Canadians are strong. That is why we are acting: because we believe in every Canadian. We believe in every Canadian family, and we believe in Canada.

**Jasraj Hallan (Calgary East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Liberal math is giving Canadians the highest food inflation in the entire G7. Then they give Canadians their money back, after they have taxed it, and say that this is the solution.

I have a simple question for the minister: How much will grocery prices go down after this benefit is adopted?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne:** Mr. Speaker, I like my colleague, but the Conservatives have to be disconnected from real-

ity; maybe it is because they are coming back from their convention over the weekend.

Canadians have said that the two things that matter most for them now are the price of groceries and the price of rent. We have been acting on both to make sure that life is more affordable for Canadians, and we will continue to do so.

*[Translation]*

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, what great news we are getting today from the Minister of Finance. Members of the Bloc Québécois support a measure that is designed to help the most vulnerable among us, finally.

However, I would like to remind the minister what he said a few months ago. He said that the government did not have the money to fix an injustice of its own making. I am referring to the OAS increase for persons aged 65 to 74.

How is it that the minister can come up with \$3 billion today for a measure intended to buy votes, but cannot provide direct assistance to seniors who are suffering daily?

I would be grateful if he gave me an honest answer.

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne:** Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that my Bloc Québécois colleague is not rising to applaud a measure specifically designed to help our country's farmers, especially those in Quebec.

As a matter of fact, in an effort to do the right thing and consult stakeholders, I spoke with the president of the Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec. Not only are we offering credit to families now, we are also going to offer structural assistance that will increase production in Canada. This will allow us to fund things like animal processing facility modernization, which will boost food production in Canada. Food security is among Quebecers' leading concerns and I know that my Bloc Québécois colleague is going to vote for the measure because he fundamentally knows that it is good.

- (1320)

*[English]*

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister of Finance can amplify why this legislation is so important. I know the feedback that I have received and the feedback from many of our colleagues is that affordability is an important issue. Canadians are genuinely concerned about grocery prices.

Can the minister give a clear statement of why every member of the Conservative Party should be making it very clear that they support the legislation?

*Government Orders*

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne:** Mr. Speaker, this is a very learned question from a colleague who has been a very esteemed member of the House. He understands the reality of Canadians. I know that my Conservative colleagues understand too, because if we go to any part of the country, like I said, we would know that the two things that Canadians face in terms of costs are the cost of rent and the cost of food. Obviously, there is also their cellphone bills and, for those who have a family, child care. That is why not only has the government been ensuring food security for Canadians, but we have been acting on a number of fronts to make life more affordable for Canadians.

Yes, this is about a boost and a bridge, because Canadians understand that we have a vision to grow our Canadian economy to be the strongest in the G7, but what they need now is the House to support them at this time of need.

**Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, New Democrats agree with any supports to help people with the cost of living, but one thing we have never heard from the Liberals and will never hear from Conservatives is about the runaway, out-of-control corporate greed. We are seeing big grocery stores post record profits. There is no mechanism so that the big grocery stores do not increase prices the day before this benefit comes into play. All the Liberals need to do is charge an excess profit tax on big grocery stores.

Is there a threshold for the Liberals on the out-of-control corporate greed that is now becoming normalized?

We see Loblaws with \$2 billion in profits last year alone. The minister says that there is nothing we can do here in Canada. Well, there is: an excess profit tax.

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne:** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the support of my colleague. He is an esteemed colleague of the House, and he understands well the needs of Canadians.

In my previous role as minister of industry, we raised the temperature on the big chain grocers across the nation. Remember that competition is the best way to make sure that we protect consumers, and we will make sure there is more competition in the country. Another thing that is going to help is the structural change we are doing to increase food production in the country and the food supply.

I am very pleased to see the NDP with us in supporting Canadians. They understand where we need to be on this.

**Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is ironic that today is Groundhog Day, because I have heard this speech before. It was in October 2023, when the minister promised to have groceries lowered by Thanksgiving 2023. He gave this exact same speech. It is recycled, and the Liberals are good at recycling speeches.

This is about \$3 billion in taxpayers' money. Sylvain Charlebois said the government collects \$7 billion to \$8 billion in GST on food. Did the Minister of Finance think about dropping GST on all food, so it could help all Canadians?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is a very learned member of the House and he knows well, for those watching at home, that most food products in Canada are

zero-rated when it comes to GST. He knows this measure is good. I bet the member is going to go back to his riding and talk about it, and he is going to say the House has done the right thing. This is not about politics. This is about policy. This is about helping Canadians where they are.

We are all members of Parliament in the House. We have been sent to the House with one function: to support Canadians in their time of need. This is in line with Canadian values. This is meeting the moment. This is making sure that everyone in this country will benefit from growth in our economy. We are going to be there for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is supposedly a financial expert. Meanwhile, we just had to wait 20 months for a budget, which is not something that has happened very often in history. Another thing that has not happened very often in history is having the largest deficit in Canadian history with a financial expert as Prime Minister.

Now, we have a finance minister who is patting himself on the back today. We are talking about \$11 billion over six years for Bill C-19, when the government has just posted a record deficit. Was he not inclined to even attempt to make the budget credible and consistent?

My question for the minister is simple: Are there other \$11-billion dollar surprises like this one that we are not aware of?

● (1325)

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne:** Mr. Speaker, to be honest, I am a little surprised. I have a lot of respect for my colleague, but I think that, as a Quebecker, he should stand up in the House and applaud a measure that will ensure Canada's food security.

What I am hearing from families in my riding is that their primary concern is food security, paying for groceries. Buying groceries is something that they have to do every other day, every week. The same goes for housing. That is a monthly expense. That is why we are launching major, immediate structural measures to help people with the cost of groceries, while increasing affordable housing across the country.

That way, families will not have to spend as much of their disposable income on suitable housing. I expect the Bloc Québécois to welcome this measure. It is a good measure for Quebec.

[*English*]

**Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the government has recalculated the deficit numbers. We are now in favour of Bill C-19 and a GST rebate for consumers, but I am also aware that page 348 of the budget has been reversed and now enhanced oil recovery is eligible for investment tax credits.

*Government Orders*

Given the additional ways that we are spending the public purse, or not collecting, what is the new deficit number compared to the \$78 billion it was on November 4 of last year?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne:** Mr. Speaker, it is a very good question and I would like to thank the member. She has always been very supportive, and we have been working together for a number of years.

Members do not need to take it from me. They can take it from the International Monetary Fund, which said there are really two countries in the world that stand out, Germany and Canada, because both have a AAA credit rating. We are actually in the best fiscal position within the G7. We are going to take responsible measures to support Canadians. We are going to build our Canadian economy. In fact, we have the second-fastest growing economy in the G7.

**Jessica Fancy (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as a former educator from Nova Scotia, one of the provinces that was a very early adopter of the national food program, we were feeding kids every day. I wonder if the minister could talk about that program. Also, as a rural advocate from Nova Scotia, I would ask how we are going to strengthen our supply chains as a boost and a bridge within this new programming.

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne:** Mr. Speaker, the member is right. When we talk about the national school food program, 400,000 kids are better off. That should make every member of the House rejoice. When we do structural things to help Canadians, that is what the House is all about. I can already see the enthusiasm of members of the House to support this important bill so that we can send it to the Senate and make a difference in the lives of Canadians.

**Jasraj Hallan (Calgary East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would ask for unanimous consent to split my time.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Jasraj Hallan:** Mr. Speaker, we all remember when the finance minister made a grand show in 2023, right before Thanksgiving. He said he was going to pull up his pants, roll up his sleeves, call the five major grocery store CEOs, tell them what was on his mind and make sure that grocery prices came down. He put on this grand show. Then the grocery store CEOs came and went. What happened after that? It is almost two years since he did that and now Canadians have the highest food inflation in the G7. In fact, it is one of the reasons why 2.2 million Canadians are going to food banks, a third of which are children.

Liberals liberalled, and Liberal math created this problem. They created inflationary deficits. If we can believe it, the Prime Minister is a worse money manager than Justin Trudeau was. Whatever deficit Justin Trudeau left, the Prime Minister said he would double it, and in fact he did. What does that do? It makes everything a lot more expensive. They do not focus on the problem that this creates. They create a problem, which, in this case, is food inflation, and then give Canadians their own money, either through printing more money or borrowing more, just to give them what my community calls a lollipop, so they can look like they are actually fixing the problem.

However, the real problem is the cost of food. How can the government say we are going to have the fastest-growing economy in the G7 and not do anything? In fact, GDP per capita flatlined all of last year, and the Bank of Canada is saying the growth in Canada will basically flatline next year, too. The only thing that is the fastest growing in the G7 is food inflation in Canada. It is double what it is in America. Food prices are rising and are double what they are in the U.S. This should not be happening. We have so much land here for farmers to grow and for processors, for us to be able to do anything and everything we want. There is one problem, and that is the Liberal government getting in the way.

It is either taxes or barriers, barriers or taxes. They have the industrial carbon tax and the Liberal fuel standard. Liberals keep taxing anything and everything they can. They have a fertilizer tax. They have a food packaging tax that costs an extra \$1 billion a year. It is not that we cannot grow and process food here. It is that the government will not let that happen.

Our energy sector is a clear example of that. We should be an energy superpower. We should be able to be sovereign and independent from the U.S., so that tariffs do not bother us at all because we have our own growing economy and are not dependent on just one country. However, because of anti-development laws and taxes like Bill C-69, the no new pipeline bill, or Bill C-48, which does not let our oil and gas leave the west coast, and the industrial carbon tax, pipelines are not getting built. Mines are not getting built. Nothing is getting built in Canada because of these Liberal anti-development laws and taxes.

The solution that would fix all of these issues is clear. It is for the Liberals to get out of the way. Let Canadians build. Let farmers farm. Let producers produce. Let Canada be what it used to be: an energy superpower, independent and sovereign. We just need the government to get out of the way. It is as simple as that.

It is a concerning fact, which we do not hear the Liberals talk about, that 2.2 million Canadians a month are going to a food bank. They are food insecure. People do not know where their paycheques are going because the government has raised taxes so high by their inflationary spending that more goes toward Canadians' taxes than it does to essentials like food and housing combined. This is not only damaging to Canadians but is fiscal mismanagement to the highest degree. Every single cost at the grocery store has gone up. We hear about moms looking for produce, double-checking and triple-checking. In fact, sometimes they delay buying what they want to buy. They are having to buy less nutritious food for their kids and going with alternatives that are unhealthy for them.

• (1330)

All of this spending has consequences. In fact, now, because of the cost of everything, with inflation rising, people are not meeting milestones that they used to be able to meet. It coincides with the low birth rates happening in Canada now. People are not graduating on time. People are not able to buy a home. People are not getting married. They cannot even go on dates, for God's sake. A lot of people are saying they cannot even afford to go on dates; forget the rest of it. They cannot leave their parents' basements. Housing is out of control. We have talked about the price of food. We have the highest food inflation in the G7.

All those milestones are being missed by Canadians. We used to enjoy them before, when a single paycheque used to get someone by. People used to be able to support their families. They were able to live in safe neighbourhoods. However, after 10 years of the same old Liberal government, Canadians cannot get by. Canadians, in fact, are suffering more than we have ever seen before. It is time to reverse all that.

It is time to bring in the Conservative plan. The Liberals have already done a good job of taking a lot of our ideas, but they are implementing only half of them. Why do they not just take all of them? We do not care about being given credit whatsoever.

Let us go ahead and let us make Canada an energy superpower again. Let us get rid of Liberal anti-development laws and taxes, get rid of the no new pipelines bill, get rid of the tanker ban, scrap the industrial carbon tax and get rid of the Liberal fuel standard. Let us get rid of the food packaging tax and stop attacking our farmers. Let them grow. Let our shippers ship. Let the tankers leave the west coast so that they can go to Asian markets and sell our product. Let us not be reliant on just one customer anymore.

Let us get back to the Canada we all used to know, where our middle class used to be world class. Now, under the Liberals, that middle class is not there anymore. It is harder and harder. The gap between the classes are getting wider and wider. That is what the Liberal government wants. It wants more people to have handouts, not hand-ups. That is not the Canada that we used to know. That is not the Canada that Conservatives will bring to Canadians.

Let us get this done. Let us start producing more here in Canada. We have gold underneath our feet. Let us mine it. Let us get it out of the ground and give Canadians what they want, a safe and affordable future.

### *Government Orders*

• (1335)

[*Translation*]

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have been working since day one to build a strong economy that works for everyone. We want people to have access to better jobs, better opportunities and better wages. Thanks to our efforts to strengthen the Canadian economy, that is what is going to happen.

In the meantime, we must be there to support people. We have already announced several measures, such as a tax cut for the middle class and the breakfast program, which the Conservatives opposed. Then there are all of our social programs, such as the Canadian dental care plan and affordable child care, which they also opposed.

Today, we are proposing other measures to help people cope with the cost of living, whether it is the new benefit we are going to put in place to help people pay for groceries and essentials, the increase in the budget for food banks or the national food strategy.

I would like to know whether the Conservatives will once again oppose our efforts to make life more affordable, or whether they will work with us to meet the needs of Canadians.

[*English*]

**Jasraj Hallan:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal over there tries to make it seem like they have worked so hard. Usually, when someone works hard, there is a result. Let us look at their results. We have the highest food inflation in the G7 after they supposedly worked hard. We had \$600 billion of good Canadian investment flee to the U.S. because the Liberals worked so hard. Unemployment is up because the Liberals worked so hard.

Maybe they need to do a little less bragging and put in some real work so that Canadians can have a safe and affordable future once again.

[*Translation*]

**Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we probably have the highest food inflation in the G7. Between 1984 and today, the number of grocery chains in Canada dropped from 13 to five, including Walmart and Costco, so the Liberals have had plenty of time to increase competition in the retail grocery sector.

*Government Orders*

What does my colleague think Ottawa should do to increase competition as quickly as possible, not only in the grocery sector, but in the economy in general?

[*English*]

**Jasraj Hallan:** Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. The Liberals have protected oligopolies, and not just in the grocery sector. If we look at telecoms and banking, we pay some of the highest fees in the entire world. It is because the government drove away competition. It supports banks merging. It supports telecoms merging, whereas Conservatives, as a core belief, believe that more competition is better for Canadians. It brings down prices.

However, the government has done such a great job with all of its anti-development, anti-growth laws and barriers that \$600 billion of good Canadian investment, jobs, and anything and everything that could have happened here in Canada have been driven out to the U.S. and other places.

**Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the last election, the Prime Minister ran on being the more responsible economic adviser type, saying he would do a much better job with our economy and would spend more wisely than his predecessor. Justin Trudeau was going to add \$154 billion to our debt over the next five years. The current Prime Minister is adding \$321 billion to our debt over the next five years, and this new program is going to add another \$12.4 billion to that debt.

Can the member speak to those people who voted for the Prime Minister expecting a more responsible Prime Minister? Is he indeed more responsible?

● (1340)

**Jasraj Hallan:** Mr. Speaker, we thought Justin Trudeau was the worst money manager in Canadian history. The current Prime Minister said, “Hold my champagne, and watch what I do.” What he did was double the deficit. Can members believe that? We did not think the deficit could get any worse. In fact, when Justin Trudeau left that deficit, it was such a bad budget, such a bad update, that the then finance minister left her job, dropped the book and ran away because she did not want to be the one to take the blame for it.

Then the Prime Minister came along and said, “Watch what I do.” He doubled that deficit, giving Canadians the highest food inflation in the G7. The Liberals are going to raise taxes even more, when Canadians have some of the highest household debt in the entire OECD. Canadians are not getting by; they are getting less. What does the government do? It spends, and that is just driving up costs even more and making Canadians suffer further.

[*Translation*]

**Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-19, which is a striking and disturbing illustration of how far Canada has fallen over the past 10 years under the Liberals. This bill is not just another piece of legislation. It is indicative of a much deeper problem, specifically how the Liberal economic vision has failed and how it has increased the tax burden on Canadians, weakened their pur-

chasing power and made daily life increasingly difficult for millions of families.

Imagine if, 10 years ago, someone had stood up in the House of Commons and said that, one day, the federal government would have to create a benefit to ensure that Canadians could put food on the table. Most of us would have thought that was an exaggeration or nonsense. At the time, Canada was known for its strong middle class, the relative affordability of essential goods and the basic idea that someone who was working could provide for their family sufficiently. However, that is not the case today.

According to data from the Consumer Price Index published by Statistics Canada in its 2026 report, it now costs \$17,600 a year to feed a family of four in Canada. This is \$1,000 more than last year, at a time when wages are not keeping pace and Canadians are watching their savings dwindle. This is not an abstract figure. This means hard choices for parents. It means unpaid bills. It means hard-working families being asked to make sacrifices even though they are not getting their money's worth because of hidden Liberal taxes.

We might be inclined to think there is always someone worse off than we are, but unfortunately, that is not the case. Food prices in Canada are rising twice as fast as in the U.S. Food inflation is at 6.2%, the worst in all of the G7. These data should set off alarm bells for all members of Parliament, regardless of political stripe, because there is a very concrete human reality behind these numbers.

This poor record is directly reflected in the drastic increase in food bank use. Food banks are now receiving an average of two million visits every single month across the country from working Canadians, seniors who paid premiums all their lives, students, and single-parent families. This is not the hallmark of a prosperous country, but the result of a government that has lost control over the cost of living. In the face of that reality, Bill C-19 is proposing to keep up the Liberal momentum: more programs, more redistribution and more dependence on government without tackling the root of the problem.

Conservatives are proposing a fundamentally different approach. We believe that taxes that punish work, effort and productivity must be cut to reduce the cost of living at the source instead of papering over the cracks with temporary measures. We believe Canadians are truly free when their income allows them to make their own choices and they do not have to wait for a cheque from the government to make ends meet. We believe economic freedom is part and parcel of human dignity.

A society where people can keep more of what they earn is a stronger and more resilient society. It is also a society that encourages individual initiative, personal responsibility and an entrepreneurial spirit. These are important qualities in any wealthy, free and productive society.

We have just returned from our national convention in Calgary. I was struck by something very simple, but very revealing: the abundance of products and the relatively low prices of consumer goods. That is no coincidence. Alberta has low income tax and no provincial sales tax, so it shows that it is possible to have a thriving economy that is attractive to both families and businesses. This model is based on a simple idea: Trust people and do not tax them excessively. Imagine for a moment what Canada could achieve if the federal government adopted the same approach. Imagine a smaller, more efficient government and freer people who are able to invest, save and plan for the future.

• (1345)

However, Bill C-19 is the very definition of an idea that only looks good on paper. It perfectly illustrates the fundamental difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives. Liberals tax, tax people from coast to coast to coast and then redistribute some of that money through complex, costly and ineffective programs. The Conservatives, on the other hand, understand that Canadians are in the best position to make informed decisions based on their needs.

Far from giving Canadians hope for better days ahead, Bill C-19 only confirms that the Liberals have failed. Canadians do not want temporary solutions. They do not want crumbs. They want a country where it pays to work again. Here are some comments I have received from concerned Quebeckers. Mr. Whissel said that the government should just lower taxes instead of coming up with a bunch of new programs that will ultimately help no one. Mr. Garceau said that when a country gets to a point where it has to send cheques to its citizens just so they can afford to eat, yet it does nothing to address the taxes it forces them to pay, there is a problem.

Mr. Spallanzani had questions about the Canada groceries benefit and was wondering what will come next. He wondered whether the next Canada benefit will be for electricity. He added that this measure that is supposed to help Canadians sounded like a communist idea. Ms. Daigle lamented the disappearance of Canada's middle class and said that the Canada benefit only helps the low-income class, while the middle class continues to rack up credit card debt. She wanted to know why there are no tax cuts that apply to all Canadians, since inflation is out of control, despite claims that wages are going up. She also said that wages in Canada have not kept pace with inflation. Lastly, Mr. Robichaud said that all the Liberals are good at is buying votes with tons of little cheques.

It is bad when Canadians are forced to put groceries on their credit cards, but it is twice as bad when the government hands out money for Canadians to put food on the table using their credit cards. This measure will directly add to Canada's debt. It will add nearly \$1.4 billion in interest over five years. This will contribute to inflation. The only winners here are the credit card companies.

Nevertheless, Conservatives will support any measure to boost people's purchasing power in these challenging times. I urge the other parties to support our opposition motion on this subject, which is on the Order Paper now and will be debated tomorrow. The motion calls on the government to immediately introduce a food affordability plan that removes the Liberals' hidden taxes on food. This includes the industrial carbon tax on farm equipment,

### *Government Orders*

fertilizer and food processors that drives up the costs of producing food, which are then passed on to consumers. It also includes the fuel standards tax, which is 7¢ a litre and is rising to 17¢ a litre, on farmers, truckers and those who bring us our food. Finally, it includes the food packaging tax, which will cost Canadians \$1.3 billion. This plan would also boost competition in Canada's overly concentrated grocery sector.

In conclusion, the Liberal government is papering over the cracks by going into excessive debt, which is ultimately going to cause our society to lose a lot of money. The astronomical deficit jeopardizes our ability to provide high-quality services to Canadians. In any event, at our convention, I saw that there is hope. A Conservative government gives all Canadians, especially young people, hope for an affordable life, for the possibility of home ownership, for lower taxes and for a safer country where life is good.

• (1350)

**Steeve Lavoie (Beauport—Limoilou, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very familiar with my colleague's riding and I have a question for him. He talked about complicated, ineffective programs. However, nearly 200,000 people in his riding have registered for the Canadian dental care plan. That suggests there is a real need.

Knowing that at least twice as many people in his riding could benefit from dental care and that people really need it, I would like to know if my colleague will help them register so that they can receive dental care.

**Jacques Gourde:** Mr. Speaker, let us think about what it takes to put food on the table after what the Liberal government has done over the past 10 years. Some 12 million Canadians will receive the grocery benefit. Have Canadians become so poor that 30% of the population needs this benefit? Why have the Liberals kept taxes so high?

They need to lower taxes. They need to leave Canadian taxpayers' money in their pockets. That way, Canadians can choose what they want while feeling confident about the future.

[*English*]

**Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am shocked by what I just heard. I asked the Minister of Finance how much money he has collected in GST on food. He said that Canadians do not pay GST on food. However, Sylvain Charlebois, the famous food professor, did an interview in Saskatchewan a couple of days ago about this very tax credit, and he said that Canadians are paying between \$7 billion to \$10 billion a year on food, and that includes granola bars, muffins and lots of the stuff kids take in their school lunches.

How could it be that the finance minister of Canada does not know how much GST his government is collecting on food?

*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Jacques Gourde:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question. Yes, GST is collected on some food and processed items, especially in grocery stores. Anytime a service is required for a product, it is taxed. That tax should be cut immediately.

That would have been much simpler than managing a program that will also cost a lot of money to administer.

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I heard some great news in my colleague's speech. He said that he would support any measure to strengthen Canadians' purchasing power.

Bill C-19 will help us support Canadians while we wait for the effects of our transformative changes to the economy to take place. If I understand correctly, my colleague will not only vote in support of Bill C-19 but also in support of our budget because, in the budget, we have a number of incentives to stimulate the economy and encourage innovation in Canada, which will result in strengthening Canadians' purchasing power.

Did I correctly understand my colleague's remarks? Can we expect that he will be voting in support of Bill C-19 as well as the budget?

**Jacques Gourde:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell my colleague that Conservatives have always supported Canadians who face food insecurity. Unfortunately, today, 30% of Canadians need to use this type of program, whereas only 3% of Canadians needed to do so in 2015. The numbers have been multiplied by a factor of 10. That is the problem. It is the result of 10 years of Liberal government. Canadians are hungry and, regrettably, this needs to be done.

**Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this measure will cost just over \$4 billion in the first year alone.

For several years now, the Bloc Québécois has been calling for a 10% increase in OAS benefits for seniors aged 65 to 74 to put an end to the discrimination that the Liberals instituted between two classes of seniors. Our request costs exactly, or almost exactly, the same amount as the benefit being announced today.

The government has repeatedly told us that our request was too expensive and that our seniors cost the federal government too much money. How can the federal government tell us that Quebec seniors cost too much money, when it has now somehow managed to scrounge up \$4 billion? Where is the logic in that?

**Jacques Gourde:** Mr. Speaker, for 10 years, we have seen that there is nothing logical about the way the Liberal government runs our country.

There are too many taxes, and the measure that the government has put in place will cost approximately \$9 billion. However, unfortunately, we will have to add to that \$1.4 billion in recurring interest for, perhaps, the next 100 years.

• (1355)

**Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to share my speaking time with the member for Shefford.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Jean-Denis Garon:** Mr. Speaker, I will try to make the most of the five minutes I have before question period.

The situation with Bill C-19 is a bit like Groundhog Day. The Liberals have decided to send out cheques and this is not the first time they have done so. This time, we have to give the government credit. In the midst of a purchasing power and cost of living crisis where people know that, even if inflation is kept under control, prices have gone up and will not be coming back down, the cheques will help give some relief to those who need it most, particularly families with children.

However, as I was saying earlier, this is an expensive measure. The cheque being sent out just before June alone—I do not want to sound cynical, but we have seen the Liberals write cheques just before elections before, and we hope that is not the intention here—represents \$3.1 billion in the current fiscal year. The government will then make this measure permanent by increasing the amount of the cheque known as the GST rebate by 25% each year. Although the government is renaming this cheque, the GST rebate cheque is a measure that was introduced when the GST was created, and it remains the same measure.

It should be noted that the Bloc Québécois requested a similar measure in 2022, in the midst of an inflation crisis. At the time, the Bloc Québécois asked for two things. First, we asked for an increase in the GST rebate when inflation, as measured by the consumer price index, exceeded the Bank of Canada's target range, or above 3%. We also asked for something important, and that is where there is a real missed opportunity in this bill. We asked for the cheque to be paid more frequently. Rather than being sent every three months, we wanted people to receive their cheque every month.

That is important. In a context where people cannot pay for groceries, where they are forced to buy groceries on credit, to go into debt and to pay 22% interest to banks, which are friends with the Prime Minister, where people are having trouble buying groceries every week, how can we tell them that they will only get help every three months? Should they just go hungry for 89 days and kill the fatted calf on the 90th day? That is not exactly realistic. I am using biblical references because I know the Conservatives will like that and that it is very educational. People are struggling to put food on the table. That is what the debt levels are telling us. These people will pay 22% interest while waiting for their cheques to come in.

Furthermore, beyond the band-aid solution put forward today, the Prime Minister has also refused to regulate interchange fees that small businesses have to contend with, and which are passed on to customers. Extremely high interchange fees stem from limited competition in the banking sector and are therefore passed on to customers, who can now use this cheque to pay these fees. We get it. That is the logical conclusion of things.

Canadians currently have a debt-to-income ratio of 176%. This means that for every dollar of net income earned in a year, Canadians have \$1.76 in debt. That also masks the growing wealth inequality. Today, the richest 20% of Canadians hold 70% of the wealth. Why am I saying this? First, because I have 50 seconds left, that part is true, but also to say that this measure falls short.

I will have the opportunity to finish my comments after question period.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

### SEBASTIAN HALMAGEAN

**David Myles (Fredericton—Oromocto, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the passing of gunner Sebastian Halmagean, a brave member of the Canadian Armed Forces. Gunner Halmagean, originally from Hamilton, Ontario, was based at the 5th Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown in Oromocto. He had just deployed to Latvia on Operation Reassurance, his first overseas deployment, with a strong sense of duty to serve his country.

[Translation]

His death is a profound loss to the Canadian Armed Forces community, particularly to those who served alongside him as he embarked on a promising career.

[English]

Our thoughts are with his family, his loved ones and all those who served alongside him. I join all members of the House in offering my sincere condolences to gunner Sebastian Halmagean's family. May his service never go unrecognized. May he rest in peace.

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### TRIBUTE TO LOCAL LEADERS

**Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Essex has recently lost three amazing individuals.

Sandy Repko was known and decorated for her tireless commitment to her community and her willingness to serve others. At the hockey rink or the basketball court, the council chambers or a fundraiser, Sandy was there with a smile, helping anyone who asked.

Tomi Hulkkonen embodied what many of us strive to become. He was a loving husband to Tiina and father to so many, a God-fearing man and a fearless leader of his brothers and sisters at United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, Local 494. My private member's bill, Bill C-241, will forever be Tomi's.

### Statements by Members

Tom Kissner was my brother in firefighting for many years. I am sure his finest memories were of walking the streets of Kingsville with the love of his life, Robin. He was quiet, but his presence was respected. He taught through example.

Sandy, Tomi and Tom were each my friend and mentor in their own special way. I thank them for leaving the world a better place than they found it. They are each truly missed.

\* \* \*

### IRAN

**Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize an important development: the decision by the European Union to designate the IRGC as a terrorist organization. This decision reflects the courage and determination of the Iranian people, who have endured the IRGC's repression for decades, including the tragic loss of life during the January 2026 uprising. For more than 20 years, democratic opposition leaders and thousands of parliamentarians from around the world have called for this designation, noting the regime's destabilizing activities across the Middle East.

This listing must be accompanied by further steps: closing the regime's diplomatic facilities, expelling its agents, cutting off its financial networks and recognizing the right of Iran's youth to resist tyranny in the pursuit of a democratic republic grounded in human rights. Canada acted by listing the IRGC in 2024, and today I call on the United Kingdom to follow suit and register the IRGC as a terrorist entity.

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### SEBASTIAN HALMAGEAN

**Ned Kuruc (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I solemnly rise in the House today to offer my most sincere and heartfelt condolences to the family of Canadian Armed Forces gunner Sebastian Halmagean, or as we knew him, Sebi.

A resident of Stoney Creek and someone I have been privileged to know and watch grow up since he was five years old, Sebastian was a gunner posted to the 4th Artillery Regiment of the Royal Canadian Artillery. He was on his first overseas deployment in Latvia, where he unfortunately passed away. Sebastian had long felt the pride and the calling for service to his country and was an outspoken advocate for more young Canadians to join the armed forces. Sebi loved his country and our military. He was a wonderful son and friend and a loyal soldier.

*Statements by Members*

I ask colleagues to please join me in sending our condolences to the family and loved ones of Sebastian Halmagean and thanking them for his service. He will be remembered for his bravery and his loyalty to his country.

Sebi is a Canadian hero. May God rest his soul.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**MIKAËL KINGSBURY**

**Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the House's attention to a great source of pride for Canada and for my riding of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles. Deux-Montagnes native Mikaël Kingsbury has been named a flag bearer for Team Canada at the Milano Cortina 2026 winter Olympics, which begin at the end of this week. Mikaël Kingsbury is an exceptional athlete and freestyle skiing icon who epitomizes excellence, perseverance and personal achievement. His remarkable career has inspired an entire generation of young people to believe in their dreams and strive for excellence.

On behalf of the people of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, I would like to sincerely congratulate him. I wish great success to him and all the Canadian athletes competing in the Olympics, which kick off this week.

\* \* \*

• (1405)

[English]

**ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay is not just home to the most beautiful rivers, lakes and valleys in all of Canada. It is also home to world-class athletes.

First, I want to congratulate my local hockey team, the Penticton Vees. The Vees have a long history of hockey in Penticton. In 1955, they won the world championships; in 2012, they won the national championships; and now, in their first season in the WHL, they just completed a 14-game winning streak. Go, Vees, go!

Then there are siblings Jasmine and Rémi Drolet from Rossland, who will be going for gold at the Winter Olympics this month in cross-country skiing. I thank them for their hard work. The whole community will be cheering them on. No one will stop Canada when we go for the gold.

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**ANNIVERSARIES OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS**

**Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, community organizations contribute to our lives in countless ways. At my annual New Year's levee, we celebrated 16 organizations in Don Valley West with anniversaries from five to 75 years in 2025 and 2026.

Today, I want to lift up five that are celebrating this year. Flemington Community Support Services, which works with some of our community's most vulnerable people, and the York Mills Chinese Community, which ensures newcomers have a great start, both

have 10 years of service. For 15 years, the Canadian Language Museum has promoted all languages used in Canada. The Leaside Garden Society has been beautifying our community for 40 years, and Glendon Campus of York University has offered 60 years of bilingual post-secondary education in Ontario.

These organizations enhance our community and provide opportunities to meet, learn and grow. It was a pleasure to honour their contributions in our community, and it is a privilege to stand in this chamber and recognize their success.

\* \* \*

**COST OF FOOD**

**John Williamson (Saint John—St. Croix, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the last year alone, the price of groceries has gone way up again. Families are spending over \$1,000 more on groceries today than just a year ago. The Liberals say it is not their fault, but that is not true. Canada has the highest food inflation in all the G7. Why are Canada's food prices so high? It is because the Liberals put a tax on food packaging, they put taxes on the farmers and the truckers who deliver our food to grocery stores, and they will not increase competition in grocery chains.

Will the Liberals back our Conservative plan for food affordability, which would let Canadians keep more of their hard-earned dollars, or will Liberals keep inflating food prices with ever-higher taxes?

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**MICHEL MARC BOUCHARD**

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Michel Marc Bouchard, the little guy from Saint-Coeur-de-Marie who became an internationally acclaimed playwright, is making Quebec culture shine on the world stage.

His name now proudly appears on the sign of the community and cultural centre of the city of Alma. Michel Marc Bouchard, a giant of Quebec culture, has always promoted love in all its forms in over 25 plays that have earned him numerous awards, both here and abroad.

Even though his plays have been performed on the world's great stages, Michel Marc Bouchard's hometown holds a special place in his heart. As he says, "I return every year. I make my way back to Lac-Saint-Jean, like how we find our way back to an old song we had forgotten. I come back to breathe in the air of the place where I grew up. I return to the familiar laughter and silences that sometimes speak louder than words."

Michel was always able to depict reality through the rules of theatre, which often speak louder than words themselves. I want to thank Michel for his work, his artistic bravery and his love of Quebec and Lac-Saint-Jean.

• (1410)  
[English]

### BLACK HISTORY MONTH

**Jessica Fancy (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we observe Black History Month, I rise today to recognize the enduring contributions, resiliency and legacy of Black communities in Nova Scotia and across Canada.

In South Shore—St. Margarets, we are home to a significant chapter in Black Canadian history. The Black Loyalist Heritage Centre in Birchtown preserves the stories of the Black Loyalists, men, women and children who sought freedom, built communities and helped shape this country despite immense injustice. Once the largest free Black settlement in British North America, Birchtown remains a powerful symbol of perseverance and hope. I want to recognize the staff, volunteers and descendants who ensure that these stories are never forgotten.

Last fall, I was also honoured to attend the unveiling of the No. 2 Construction Battalion monument in Shelburne, commemorating Canada's first and only all-Black military battalion.

Black history is Canadian history. This month is a time to learn, reflect and share.

\* \* \*

### COST OF FOOD

**Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my province of Saskatchewan has long held the distinction of feeding the world, yet Canada today has the distinction of leading the G7 in food inflation. Food prices in Canada are rising twice as fast as they were when the Prime Minister took office. In Saskatoon, there are over 24,000 visits a month to the food bank. That is a record high, and it is climbing.

Rising food prices are a direct result of the industrial carbon tax, which drives up the cost of equipment, fertilizer and food processing. Conservatives are ready to fast-track through Parliament proposals that would reverse the highest food inflation in the G7. Let us start by eliminating the industrial carbon tax and the 17¢-a-litre fuel standard tax, boosting competition in grocery chains, and cutting red tape for all farmers.

\* \* \*

### MIGUEL DOMINGOS

**Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with heavy hearts that we mourn the passing of Miguel Domingos. A cherished leader and musician, he was a pillar of the Portuguese community.

Miguel was a maestro of his beloved Banda do Sagrado Coração de Jesus of Toronto for decades and the conductor of the Banda do Senhor Santo Cristo. In their words, he stood at the helm of these marching bands, guiding their musicians with passion and an unwavering love for music. Under his baton, the bands not only flourished musically but also served as a vital touchstone for the community. Miguel's powerful operatic voice and leadership ensured that their cultural traditions remained alive, bringing joy and a sense of belonging to countless festivals, processions and concerts.

### Statements by Members

His legacy is written in the notes he taught and in the camaraderie that he fostered among the band members he mentored.

He will be remembered not only for his musical talent but also for his dedication to the arts and his commitment to preserving our unique heritage. He was a dedicated husband and a loving father. Our deepest condolences go to his extraordinary wife, Pitty, their children, family and countless friends. May Miguel rest in eternal peace.

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### CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

**Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with hope and unity, and rhetoric over results, Conservatives are returning to Ottawa ready to fight for Canadians. This weekend's convention sent a clear message with nearly 90% from across our country supporting our leader, which is a landslide mandate for unity, hope and results.

We can contrast that with 10 years of Liberal failure. Housing is out of reach. Food is unaffordable. Crime is rampant, and immigration is broken. The Prime Minister changed the rhetoric, but not the reality. He grows government, divides Canadians and blocks projects.

Conservatives empower people. We would cut taxes, cut red tape, lower costs, unlock our potential and our ingenuity, and get our resources to market. This is the momentum we are seeing from Calgary, united around work, family and country.

To those carrying the country on their backs and feeling unseen, underappreciated and overworked, Conservatives see them. Conservatives will fight for them, and we will restore the promise of Canada for them.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

[Translation]

### BLACK HISTORY MONTH

**Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba (Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, February is Black History Month. It is an important time to recognize Black people's contributions to Canada's history, culture and development.

From labourers to artists, from entrepreneurs to community leaders, Black people have helped build Canada from east to west, including in my riding, Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie.

This month is also special to me personally.

### Oral Questions

[English]

For me, this moment is meaningful. It is a moment of pride, gratitude and responsibility.

[Translation]

After living here in Canada for 15 years, rising to speak in the House of Commons during Black History Month is a huge achievement for me.

This month invites us to reflect and reminds us of the importance of fighting racism and continuing to work toward equity, inclusion and justice.

[English]

Together, we must keep moving forward toward equity, justice and dignity for all.

[Translation]

Together, let us continue to build Canada strong.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

**Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what a weekend it was in Calgary. There were thousands of delegates, hundreds of observers and a resounding 87% in support of the leader. I send my thanks to the Conservatives. If there is one thing clear from this weekend, it is that the Conservative Party is a united, energetic, younger and more diverse party than ever before, and that is a direct result of this leader and his efforts.

Now that our members have made that clear, and the Liberals' fear and smear campaign dies with a whimper, let Parliament get to work. Conservatives have endorsed hopeful solutions that would ensure the return of safer streets, as well as more job opportunities and affordable home ownership for young people. These hard-working men and women who do everything right and are too often left behind by these Liberals are the people who have joined our party, who showed up in Calgary, who support this team, who knocked on doors from coast to coast, who demand action and expect results. To them I say we see them and we hear them. We are ready to get the work done, and under this leader, they will never be left behind.

\* \* \*

#### YUKON AFRICAN MUSIC FESTIVAL

**Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, dance, *dansez*, dance is the spirit of the upcoming 13th annual Yukon African Music Festival.

[Translation]

Who would have believed, in the cold, dark days of early February, that Yukon's wonderful African community would bring light, music, dance and pure joy to chase away the winter blues?

[English]

As we observe International Development Week and Black History Month, the Yukon African Music Festival, organized by

Yukon's TELIYA International Society, highlights the rich variety of African culture. Award-winning artists from around the globe will be on stage or showcasing their work, bringing Yukoners of all backgrounds together in honour of African heritage. Beyond dancing and music, TELIYA is offering workshops and events about Black history, African culture, social change, leadership, music and youth empowerment.

I ask members to join me in congratulating Leonard Boniface and the board of volunteers with Yukon's TELIYA International Society for putting together yet another amazing event. *Asante sana*. I will see members on the dance floor.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### THE ECONOMY

**Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today is Groundhog Day and, right on cue, the government is back with the same recycled ideas on grocery prices.

The Liberals promised a grocery rebate years ago, and food bank lines got longer. They spent years talking about affordability, and prices kept climbing. The Liberals promised action, but after all of that bluster, groceries will cost a family of four more than \$1,000 extra this year compared to last.

Now they are back at it again offering the same inflationary plan, \$10 a week off a \$300 grocery bill, and that is not even for everybody. Why are Canadians supposed to believe the Liberals this time?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it might be that my colleagues are more concerned about their own future, but on this side of the House, we are concerned about the future of Canadians.

There is a lot to rejoice in today. That is why the Conservatives are so enthusiastic. It is Monday, and we have good news. We had second reading of Bill C-19. That is why all the Conservatives are smiling. They know that helping 12 million Canadians is why Canadians sent us here.

We are going to build a strong Canada, and we are going to build strong families, because we believe in Canada.

● (1420)

**Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not think the minister grasps the irony of today. In 2023, that same finance minister promised that he would bring price stability to Canadians. He summoned the grocery CEOs to Ottawa, promised competition and affordability, and then delivered two more years of whatever that was.

*Oral Questions*

Now in Canada, we have the highest food inflation in the G7 and over two million people are lined up at a food bank every single month. The groundhog saw his shadow today. Will the finance minister finally see his, or will Canadians get the same Trudeau policies that we have had for 10 years?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am so happy to see that some Conservatives are actually reading and listening to what we are saying. They should listen to Canadians, because perhaps that would help them.

Twelve million Canadians would benefit from our measure. This is not something to shout at. This is something to rejoice. On this side of the house, we meet Canadians where they are. Canadians have told us, “Give us a boost. Give us a bridge.”

We are going to build a stronger economy in the G7. We are going to be here for Canadians. We are going to build Canada strong.

**John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are literally the definition of insanity.

Three years ago, the finance minister promised Canadians that the Liberals would solidify food prices. Today, he is tabling the tired Trudeau policy that failed the first time. The only results of Liberal policy are that Canada has the highest food inflation in the G7, twice that of the United States, and Canadian families are paying almost \$18,000 a year just on food.

Will the Liberals support a real affordability plan and cancel their hidden taxes on food, or will they continue with this insanity?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Daily Bread Food Bank, Food Banks Canada, Food, Health and Consumer Products of Canada, and Roots Community Food Centre, in my own riding, are all food centres that have praised the work of the government and the new groceries and essentials benefit, which many are saying will provide relief exactly when people need it.

Across the aisle, Conservatives talk, but do they ever support a good idea? No. They have no idea what to do. All they know how to do is oppose and deny the help their own constituents want and need.

**John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is going to hurt the Liberal member, but under a Conservative government, the average weekly food cost was about \$160 a week. Now it has more than doubled under the Liberals to \$340 a week.

The fact is that Liberal policies are driving up food prices to Canadians. The fact is that 2.2 million Canadians are using a food bank every single month. The reasons for the food prices are not secret: It is an industrial carbon tax and a fuel standard tax, driving up the costs on food, fuel, fertilizer and farm equipment.

Again, will the Liberals support a real food affordability plan, a Conservative plan, or will they continue to drive up food prices?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, here we go again, talk-

ing about imaginary taxes instead of the real things that help Canadian families.

Last week I met with provinces and territories from across the country, who all agree that, for example, the early learning and child care system is saving families in all of our jurisdictions, sometimes up to \$14,000 a year. That is the kind of thing that Conservatives vote against. Whether it is a school nutrition program, support for families raising children or, now, a groceries and essentials benefit that would help some of the most vulnerable in our community, they say no, even to their Conservative voters.

[*Translation*]

**Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is now leading the G7 in food inflation. Back in 2023, however, the then industry minister declared that the Liberal government had obtained a commitment from Canada's major grocery store chains to stabilize and lower prices. Then, in September 2023, the same minister threatened to use every means at the government's disposal to force these chains to drop grocery prices. In October of the same year, the minister claimed victory when he said that Canadians could expect to see discounts, price-freezing and price-matching programs.

Today, with food inflation in Canada twice as high as it is in the U.S, what happened to his promise?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that my esteemed colleague can list all of the measures we are taking to help Canadians. Indeed, 12 million Canadians are going to benefit from the new measure.

I see it in his smile today. He is happy because we have reached second reading. He is going to be able to return to his riding and tell people, “Thanks to the Liberal government, we are there for Canadians.” I see all his colleagues getting ready.

There is still more good news. I encourage him to ask me another question because the good news keeps on coming. It is Monday.

● (1425)

**Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have already said that we will not oppose giving Canadians \$10 a week in discount coupons.

### Oral Questions

However, the same minister who was responsible for industry two and a half years ago said that the office of consumer affairs would monitor grocery prices. What we are seeing right now is that grocery prices have doubled. What does the minister have to say about that?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I get the feeling that our Conservative friends want more good news.

Here goes: We will be setting aside \$500 million from the strategic response fund for structural measures in Quebec and Canada, introducing immediate expensing for greenhouse buildings, providing additional funds for food banks, developing a national food security strategy and working to standardize unit price labelling.

We are not only offering a one-time measure to help Canadian families, we are also making food security the focus of the government's work. I would invite all members of the House to vote in favour of the bill. Let us move forward for Canadians and build Canada strong.

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### PENSIONS

**Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there are pensioners who applied for their old age security benefits nine months ago and have yet to receive a penny.

That is because the government refuses to deal with the glitches in its new Cúram software. It has been aware of the problems since June, and yet as recently as Thursday, the government House leader told us that mistakes would be fixed “if there are any”. There are indeed mistakes. Officials are telling us there are; pensioners are telling us there are.

How many alarm bells will it take before the government does something?

**Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one delay is one too many, but over 98% of applicants have received their benefits promptly. The department is working hard to quickly resolve any issues that users might encounter. We will continue to improve the benefit payment process.

**Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the infamous Cúram software, which is depriving retirees of their OAS benefits, is costing a lot more than its market value. The cost overrun has reached almost \$5 billion. To give members some idea, that is roughly 10 times the cost of the SAAQclic scandal, for poorly performing software.

At that price, when problems prevent seniors from receiving their pension benefits and enjoying their retirement, I would expect the government to step in and do something.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is working diligently to resolve the cases of people who are having trouble getting their benefits. Over 98% of OAS applicants are receiving their benefits promptly. The department is working to overhaul an old system in place for decades and replace it with a system built to last

for generations. I invite the member opposite to give me the names of these people and we will help them.

**Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, imagine retiring and then not receiving your pension for nine months. Imagine how much that would affect your financial planning. Some people need their pension to pay their rent. Some people need it to pay for groceries. Imagine being in their shoes and watching this government behave as though everything were going smoothly.

The Bloc Québécois is calling for an investigation into the problems the Cúram software caused for retirees, as well as the cost overruns. Will the government co-operate?

**Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government protects seniors. We increased the old age security pension. We are providing dental care and building housing for seniors. Now, we are modernizing the digital benefits system so that seniors can enjoy better services.

I invite the member opposite to share their names with me, and we will assist them.

\* \* \*

[English]

### THE ECONOMY

**Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada has some of the highest food inflation in the G7, and Canadians are paying for it at the grocery store. Food bank use has more than doubled, with over two million visits every month by people who simply cannot afford groceries.

The industrial carbon tax raises the costs of farm equipment, fertilizer and food processors. The Liberals' fuel standard tax raises fuel prices for truckers, driving up the cost of getting food to store shelves. Even government reports admit these increases flow through the supply chain to grocery bills.

Will the government support our motion to introduce a food affordability plan to eliminate the industrial carbon tax and the fuel standard tax?

• (1430)

**Hon. Joanne Thompson (Minister of Fisheries, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is another week of the same tired notes and the same rhetoric that is intended to be nothing but obstruction.

I can tell the opposition member from Newfoundland and Labrador that I hear from her constituents regularly. They want us to continue to work on the supports that are important not just to my province of Newfoundland and Labrador but to the entire country, the true affordability measures and growth that will build this country and support workers. The Conservatives should stop the nonsense and let us get to work.

*Oral Questions*

**Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' policies will never lower grocery prices with rebates or temporary fixes. As an example, we will not block Bill C-19, but its small rebates would not make food cheaper at the checkout.

I have heard from retirees in Newfoundland and Labrador who sit just above the GST credit threshold. They would get no benefit at all, yet they face the same high grocery prices as everyone else. This temporary measure would not reduce the price of a single item in a grocery store, but it is an admission that the Liberals' policies have driven up the cost of living. They are now sending out cheques instead of fixing the problem.

Will the Liberals support our food affordability plan?

**Hon. Joanne Thompson (Minister of Fisheries, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is an absolute example of political rhetoric.

What will help families is when we support workers, when we build this country, and when we support rural communities and infrastructure. These are real supports. The \$10-a-day child care allows women to get into the workforce. The child family benefit puts dollars in the pockets of parents.

Let us stop the nonsense. People, Canadians including Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, want us to work for them. I ask the Conservatives to please stop this and to let us work together.

[Translation]

**Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is now leading the G7, but for all the wrong reasons. We have the highest food inflation. Prices have been rising twice as fast since this Prime Minister took office. The Liberals are taxing farmers and truckers. The Liberal fuel tax will cost up to \$1,000 per household. As we all know, taxing farmers and truckers means taxing families.

The Conservatives are proposing to eliminate the fuel standards tax and increase competition in the grocery sector.

Can we count on the Liberals' support?

**Hon. Nathalie Provost (Secretary of State (Nature), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, given the current situation, it is essential for Canadians to regain their purchasing power, and that is what we are working on. We are working toward that goal by creating jobs, rebuilding our businesses and providing Canadians with a host of measures. In my Conservative colleague's riding alone, the Canada child benefit will have an impact of about \$8,000 per year per child. That is significant. That is giving back.

It is no different with the special grocery benefit—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

**Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if that were working, we would know it. The only thing we know is that we currently have the highest food inflation in the G7.

My question is simple. Will this government stop taxing the middle class and instead support our plan to get rid of the fuel standards tax and increase competition between the grocery chains? It is as simple as that.

**Hon. Nathalie Provost (Secretary of State (Nature), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yes, nature is important and that means we have to fight climate change. That is why we cannot eliminate every tax on carbon. It has been demonstrated that the climate has the greatest impact on consumer price increases.

In the meantime, we are giving Canadians the means to have greater purchasing power. There needs to be less filibustering. We need to use common sense to be able to help Canadians. That is what we are doing.

● (1435)

[English]

**Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after a decade of Liberal government, Canada has gone from having the strongest middle class in the G7 to having the highest food inflation in the G7. A full-time job used to put food on the table; now it does not even guarantee a full cart of groceries.

The government keeps claiming it is helping, yet food inflation has doubled since the Prime Minister took office. Canadians are still paying for more groceries than what they would get in the rebate. It is a \$10 coupon on a \$300 grocery bill for little food. As the saying goes, give a man a fish, and he eats for a day, but give Canadians the means to provide, and they can eat every day.

If the Liberal government truly believes that no one in Canada should go hungry, will it support our motion to introduce a food affordability plan?

**Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are delivering relief for Canadians when they need it the most. According to the Canadian Labour Congress, "Strengthening the GST credit, now the Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit...will help many Canadians trying to make ends meet." For 12 million people, this support will mean more breathing room when deciding between groceries, rent, medicine and other everyday essentials. This builds on our affordability plan, which includes cutting taxes and providing dental care, child care and pharmacare for millions of Canadians.

This is about fairness and making sure we will be there to support Canadians.

*Oral Questions*

**Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, rebates do not fix problems; they confirm them. The Liberal government is offering rebates as it has run out of answers. Canadians are being forced to pay \$12 billion more in inflationary deficits because grocery inflation spiralled out of control with the Liberal government. Families in my community are demanding lower prices for food. Experts are clear: Food costs more because of endless taxes, regulations and red tape that drive up the cost of growing, shipping and buying food in Canada. When families are well fed, communities thrive.

I ask again, instead of following Trudeau's path of ineffective rebates, will the Liberal government support our motion to introduce a food affordability plan to bring relief to Canadians?

**Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member speaks about relief, and we would deliver that through the Canada groceries and essentials benefit. A family of four would receive \$1,900 a year, but to address the root causes of food insecurity, we are strengthening Canada's food supply by supporting Canadian producers and local greenhouses that are small businesses. We are building the national food security strategy so food stays affordable and available. According to Food Secure Canada, this is a "serious win" for Canadians.

**Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has doubled down again. Since he took office, food inflation has doubled. Compared to that in the United States, food inflation has doubled. Since the Liberals took power, food bank usage has doubled. The Liberal fuel standard tax already adds 7¢ per litre to the cost of fuel; the Prime Minister wants to more than double that to 17¢ per litre, further increasing food inflation.

Will the Liberal government support our food affordability plan by eliminating both the industrial carbon tax and the fuel standard tax, which would provide double the relief for Canadians?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, well, the Conservatives are back from Calgary. They heard more old—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** I would not call that an incendiary statement.

From the top, the hon. government House leader.

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon:** Mr. Speaker, in Calgary the Conservatives heard more old hits than at the Elvis tribute show at the casino, and they came back and are repeating them just the way the leader writes it out for them in the back rooms: imaginary taxes and no plan for affordability.

We have a bill before the House that would give up to \$1,800 for families to afford the cost of groceries in this country. We know affordability is a challenge; this is why we have real policy, but the Conservatives just play the old hits.

[Translation]

**RAIL TRANSPORTATION**

**Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the residents of Mirabel are once again being threatened with expropriation by the federal government. First it was the white elephant that is the airport and now it is the high-speed train.

A new rail corridor was announced for the train at the last minute, and it is going right through my community. There were zero consultations with elected officials, farmers or the residents of Mirabel.

Just like the train, these consultations are passing straight through Mirabel without stopping, even though the rail line will apparently need to go through the homes of people who are still traumatized by the expropriations of 1969.

As a first step, will the government ensure that real consultations are held in Mirabel?

● (1440)

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, consultations were held and there will be more. We are consulting all the mayors and community stakeholders in the Lower Laurentians, across the entire region, as well as in Quebec and Ontario. Guess what? Canadians are excited about this new technology, this progress.

Come on. My colleague is comparing an international airport to a small corridor that is 60 metres wide. Give me a break.

**Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals say they will discuss matters directly with citizens, but in their Bill C-15, they put a gun to their heads.

People back home are not excited to know that they may be sent an expropriation notice via email. They are not excited to know that they will not be able to dispute these notices for 30 days.

The Liberals want to get rid of the requirement to hold public hearings and conduct impact studies. They want to maintain control over the land in question for two years. Worse yet, they want to unilaterally set the purchase price of the land.

It is all in Bill C-15. This is a throwback to the 1960s for Mirabel.

Will the government back down on these measures?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, why did the member not stand up to oppose Quebec's Act Respecting Expropriation, which made it possible to build and complete the Réseau express métropolitain?

The bill is based on the exact wording of that Quebec act and Ontario's legislation, which also allows for the development of public transit projects. This is not new, and we are obviously going to negotiate directly with the property owners.

\* \* \*

[English]

### TAXATION

**Jasraj Hallan (Calgary East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister broke his promise that Canada would have the fastest-growing economy in the G7, because the Liberals liberalled. GDP flatlined in November. GDP per person flatlined in 2025, and the Bank of Canada says that Canada's growth will flatline basically all of next year. It is because Liberals drove out business investment, and the Prime Minister has done nothing to repeal a single Liberal anti-development law or tax.

When will the Prime Minister listen to Conservatives and repeal all these Liberal laws and taxes that are blocking development, so Canadians can build?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives were focused on themselves in Calgary, this country was moving forward.

Let me give a piece of news to my colleague, because he has been busy in the last few days, supporting his leader. Canada will have the second-fastest growth in the G7. That is what the international agencies are saying.

Canada created hundreds of thousands of jobs. We have seen investments coming in this country. We are building a country for the future. We have made generational investment. While they talk down Canada, we believe in Canada. We will attract investment. We will be the fastest-growing economy. We will be the strongest country in the G7.

**Jasraj Hallan (Calgary East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with Liberal math like that, it is no wonder Canada's economy is tanking and we have the highest inflation for groceries in the G7.

Businesses are postponing any type of expansion, because Liberal taxes and red tape are still making growth impossible. While this government protects oligopolies in banking, telecoms and groceries, Liberals continue to liberal by blocking energy projects and getting rid of any type of competition.

Why not just scrap Liberal barriers and taxes so Canadians can finally build?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, across the country we have great news. There are new jobs in Thunder Bay at Alstom. There are new jobs in La Pocatière in Quebec. There are new jobs in St. Thomas with Volkswagen. There are new jobs at Vale and Glencore in Sudbury. There are new jobs at Bombardier in Montreal. There are new jobs at Hitachi in Varennes. There are new jobs at K+S Potash in Bethune, Saskatchewan. Also, there are new jobs at Toyota. It is good news.

### Oral Questions

**Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a new report shows that 10% of all Canadian small businesses have been wiped out since 2020 as new closures outpace start-ups. The Bank of Canada now says that it expects only 1.1% GDP growth next year, that businesses are delaying expansion plans, and that growth in business investment is forecast to remain flat for 2026.

Businesses do not want to invest here, because regulations and taxes make it difficult for businesses to invest and grow. When will the Prime Minister listen to Conservative ideas and finally remove taxes and barriers that are stopping Canadian businesses from building and investing?

• (1445)

**Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are on a mission to build the strongest economy in the G7, and small businesses are at the heart of that. While Conservatives talk down Canada, the Prime Minister delivers, securing multi-billion dollar trade deals so that small and medium-sized enterprises can grow and scale their businesses and have opportunities not just here in Canada but around the world. Our buy Canadian policy is opening up federal contracts so that Canadian businesses can take advantage of them, ensuring that we can be our own best customer. That is the way to support small businesses.

**Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, other countries are growing faster because they are cutting red tape and encouraging investment. Meanwhile, here in Canada, over 121,000 small businesses have closed since 2020. Domestic growth is shaped by the overall investment climate. Canadian businesses are postponing projects, productivity is falling and small businesses are closing at alarming rates. The Prime Minister promised the fastest-growing economy in the G7, yet since he was elected, not a single anti-development law has been repealed, and tax burdens continue to rise.

Will the government work with us to remove its own barriers to growth and get out of the way so we can build again in this country?

**Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are not going to take advice on the economy from a leader who has never worked in it.

Let us look at economic facts. We have the strongest-growing economy in the G7 and the best net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. We are going to continue to grow our economy. Canadians cannot cash the Conservative leader's slogans. It is time for us to focus and build the strongest economy in the G7.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

**Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the first point is the promise. The Prime Minister promised that we would have the fastest-growing economy in the G7.

The second point is the results. GDP growth for November was 0%. In fact, the GDP is expected to decline in the fourth quarter. The automotive sector is down 12.6%. The forestry sector is down 2.8%.

The third point is the consequences. Businesses are delaying plans to expand, grow or invest in Canada. They are choosing the United States.

My question is simple. When will the Prime Minister put our ideas for cutting bureaucracy and taxes into practice?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are already cutting bureaucracy and taxes. We did so for 22 million Canadians a while ago. In fact, this was a bill that should have gotten more support from our colleagues.

Not only are we the second economy in the G7 in terms of growth, but more jobs are being created in Canada than the United States. Since 2025, 189,000 jobs have been created.

\* \* \*

*[English]***HOUSING**

**Chris d'Entremont (Acadie—Annapolis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it has now been 100 days since the launch of Build Canada Homes, and we are now seeing real momentum on the ground. Projects are moving faster, partnerships are coming together and communities in my riding are seeing concrete progress on affordable housing.

Can the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure tell us what has been achieved in the 100 days of Build Canada Homes and how this initiative is helping Nova Scotians and Canadians?

**Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his commitment to delivering for Canadians.

In just 100 days, Build Canada Homes has hit the ground running, delivering real—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** This is a very exciting question. It is creating a lot of excitement. Let us pause for a second.

The hon. Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, from the top, please.

**Hon. Gregor Robertson:** First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his commitment to delivering for Canadians.

In just 100 days, Build Canada Homes has hit the ground running, delivering real results in dealing with Canada's housing crisis. We have signed major agreements with provinces, territories and

cities. We have advanced six major federal land projects. We have lined up thousands of affordable homes, with tens of thousands more coming. Shovels will be in the ground this year.

In Nova Scotia alone, we are working with the province to deliver 1,430 homes faster, smarter and more affordably.

● (1450)

**Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, 20 minutes from my place, people can look across the Canadian border at affordable homes that look exactly like the ones selling for double the price in our country. Nearly half of young Canadians now say they have considered leaving their province just to afford housing. Two of my daughters moved out of B.C. to afford a home. Now they want to come back, but prices are worse than ever, and new home sales in Vancouver are down 56%.

Does the Prime Minister even care that young people are priced out of home ownership?

**Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should study the facts. The price of housing across the country is coming down. Average rents are coming down. Mortgage rates have come down.

Our plan is working to deliver on affordability. We saw solid housing starts in this last year. We are focused on delivering that affordability with all types of housing across the country, in partnership with communities, provinces, territories and indigenous nations.

**Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this did not happen by accident. Homes did not just suddenly become unaffordable on the Canadian side of the border. Government policy made them that way, and that is why sales are collapsing. Builders are laying off workers, and young Canadians are forced to leave.

Will the Prime Minister admit that his housing policies are the reason young Canadians can afford a home 30 minutes across the border but not here? Will he finally remove the roadblocks that are driving our talented kids out of Canada?

**Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to the most aggressive investment in affordable housing in Canadian history. That starts with the first-time homebuyers' tax break of \$50,000. The members opposite stalled it all through last year. We are bringing that forward and delivering it for young Canadians.

*Oral Questions*

We have \$13 billion in this budget to deliver for Build Canada Homes, making sure we are building co-op housing and affordable rental housing, with \$1 billion for supportive transitional housing to help solve the homelessness crisis.

[*Translation*]

**Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for several years now, young Canadians have been finding it increasingly difficult to purchase their first home. Over the past decade under the Liberal government, home ownership among 30- to 34-year-olds has fallen by nearly 10%, and eight out of 10 Canadians say that buying a home is something only rich people can dream of. Not to mention that 90% of gen Z and millennials say they are really concerned about the housing crisis.

How can the Prime Minister claim that his plan is working when young Quebeckers are realizing that, despite their efforts and hard work, they will never be able to afford a home?

**Hon. Nathalie Provost (Secretary of State (Nature), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have to work to get results, and that is what we are doing. My children are familiar with the issue raised by my colleagues opposite. I have four children. They want to own their own homes, and we are going to find solutions.

That is why we have committed to Build Canada Homes. We are already taking action. We also made an announcement with the Government of Quebec in support of infrastructure, because we need more than just houses. We also need water and electricity. We also need roads and schools. We are committed to this.

My colleague and his team are hard at work. We want homes for our children. That is what we are doing.

**Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, despite an unprecedented home ownership crisis, with young families struggling to become homeowners, only five out of every 10 new homes built are intended for purchase. The rest are intended to be rentals. On top of that, 38% of builders are saying they have been forced to lay off workers this year, and 86% of them are concerned about the future of their businesses. Basically, the government is promising construction, but delivering hot air. Even the Bank of Canada has acknowledged that real estate activity is moderate and often even declining.

When will the Liberal government finally take real action, remove bureaucratic barriers and give young Canadians real access to home ownership?

**Hon. Nathalie Provost (Secretary of State (Nature), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the first-time homebuyers' tax credit is a real solution for young people who want to become homeowners, and it is one of the practical measures that we are taking today to give them access to home ownership.

My colleague also mentioned the challenges facing the construction industry. In fact, what we are hearing from the construction industry is that it needs measures like the ones we are taking to revive the market. Jobs will be created in construction. Jobs will be created to renew our industries. We are creating a more efficient industry. This means more jobs and more purchasing power for Canadians. We will get there. To do so, we need to work as a team.

• (1455)

[*English*]

**Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in my community, police officers, firefighters, paramedics and nurses cannot afford to buy homes in the communities they serve. Eighty-seven per cent of Canadians are now worried about the housing market, and 86% of builders say they might not survive the next 12 months. In the middle of a housing crisis, homebuilding should be accelerating. Instead, home sales are down 45% in the GTA.

When will the Liberal government finally cut bureaucracy, speed up approvals and get homes built so that Canadians can afford a home?

**Hon. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government has a plan to double housing construction across the country. That plan is stuck at the finance committee because Conservatives like to complain about young people not having a home to buy. However, when the solution is right in front of them, they obstruct and they block the progress of our bills.

We are going to double housing construction in this country, and we will do it with or without the Conservatives.

**Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is the same Liberal government that campaigned on building at speeds not seen in generations, but in the last year, home sales are down 45% in the GTA. The Canadian Home Builders' Association warns that allowing these conditions to continue will create a lost decade for home ownership. The longer the government delays, the more businesses will close and the more Canadians will lose their jobs. Canadians were promised a path to owning a home and they are still waiting.

When will the Liberals get their bureaucracies out of the way so Canadians can afford a home?

**Hon. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister and our entire caucus was in Alberta, we heard about the need to move quicker on the construction of homebuilding, and that is what we are delivering. Our plan will double construction for homes right across this country, for rental and for purchase, and it is going to respond to the needs of the youth of Canada. Our plan is stuck because the Conservatives refuse to move it out of the finance committee.

When will the Conservatives stop talking and start acting in order to help us build this country?

*Oral Questions*

**Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, according to a Missing Middle Initiative report, 69% of Canadians say unaffordability is reshaping who can live in their communities, and nearly half of young Canadians have considered leaving their city or province just to find an affordable home. Meanwhile, ownership-focused housing starts have fallen from 69% to 49%, and Canadian home builders warn that this could be a lost decade of home ownership. The Prime Minister promised hope for first-time buyers, but young Canadians see falling sales, lower home ownership rates and the Canadian promise slipping out of reach.

When will the Liberal government stop the bureaucracies, stop the rhetoric and the taxes that block construction, and finally deliver results and homes that young Canadians can afford?

**Hon. Adam van Koeverden (Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while it is heartening to hear the Conservatives talk about affordable housing, it would be nice if they actually voted in favour of some of the policies that would help get affordable housing built.

A couple of years ago, we invested a novel \$1.5 billion into new co-op housing builds, and that means that there are 3,500 units under construction right now. We are having Canadians move into those homes. We are ramping it up. We are building more affordable housing. The Conservatives continue to stigmatize affordable housing, calling them shacks and Soviet-style housing. The Conservatives talk a really good talk on housing, but they should vote in favour of some policies that actually get them built.

**Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, touting a fourth Liberal housing bureaucracy is an admission that the first three bureaucracies failed.

The Bank of Canada said housing activity is subdued or declining in most cities. New home sales are down 45% in the GTA, 52% in the Golden Horseshoe and a staggering 56% in Vancouver. Builders are laying off workers, projects are being shelved and first-home buyers are being squeezed out. After years of broken Liberal promises, rhetoric and photo ops, home ownership is slipping out of reach at unimaginable speeds.

Will the Prime Minister admit his approach is failing, work with Conservatives and finally drop the photo ops, rhetoric and costly bureaucracies that are obstructing young Canadians from finding a home?

**Hon. Adam van Koeverden (Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives talk a good talk on affordable housing, but when it comes time to actually vote in favour of policies that get affordable housing built, they are nowhere to be seen. For the last year, they have been filibustering in committee, making sure that really important policies do not follow through. They ought to stop filibustering in committee.

We have a first-time homebuyers incentive. We have more shovels in the ground, and housing starts were up last year. Conservatives talk a big talk on housing, but it is time to walk the walk.

• (1500)

**Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the last year, new home sales are down across the country. They are down 45% in the GTA, 52% in the

Golden Horseshoe and 56% in Vancouver. The Canadian Home Builders' Association said that allowing these sale conditions to continue will create a lost decade for home ownership in Canada. The Prime Minister promised that the Liberals would help Canadians buy their first homes, but home sales have plummeted during his time as Prime Minister and young Canadians are losing hope.

When will the Liberals adopt our plan to remove the HST from all new home builds so more Canadians can afford to buy a home?

**Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is puzzling to hear the Conservatives saying anything about affordable housing when they have never done anything historically to support it. We have a \$13-billion Build Canada Homes agency coming through and taking action, delivering with provinces, territories and cities across the country. Last week, we announced 750 homes for Nunavut, which has the biggest housing challenge in the country. We are delivering those affordable homes this year. The Conservatives need to step up to the plate, because we are knocking it out of the park on housing.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## HEALTH

**Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my mother-in-law has Alzheimer's. I know how devastating this disease can be.

She is far from alone. Every day, 300 Canadians are diagnosed with dementia. Although there is no cure, we know that community initiatives can make a big difference for people with dementia and their families, friends and caregivers.

Could the Minister of Health tell us what steps the government is taking to ensure that Canadians with dementia have access to the health care they deserve?

**Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question and take this opportunity to wish him and all our colleagues a happy Black History Month.

Last week, we announced more than \$4 million in funding for innovative community initiatives that help us better understand dementia and improve the health and quality of life of those living with dementia and their families. For example, one of these projects, conducted in partnership with the Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre, will provide increased support to underserved populations.

[English]

### AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

**Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on Friday, 1,200 auto workers in Oshawa worked their last shift. Families are hurting and good Canadian jobs are moving south, all while the Prime Minister stalls on a trade deal with the United States. Remember that when he was asked about those stalled talks, the Prime Minister said, “Who cares?”

Those 1,200 auto workers in Oshawa are watching today. They want to know: Does the Prime Minister care now?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have been to Oshawa. I have met with the workers. I know how much they are frustrated and anxious. That is why we are standing side by side with them. That is why, also, I have been in contact with Unifor, their union. I have been in contact with GM itself. That is also why we are getting our money back from GM. That is also why we have restricted GM's access to the Canadian market. We will invest in those who invest in us.

**Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is the same drivel the minister was trying to sell to auto workers three months ago. Nothing has actually gotten better. Let us start with how it started. They said they were the ones who could negotiate with Donald Trump. Let us look at how it is going: 700 auto workers have lost their jobs in Ingersoll, 3,000 auto workers have lost their jobs in Brampton and 1,200 have now lost their jobs in Oshawa.

We need to get beyond these talking points. I have a simple question for the minister: When will these auto workers actually get their jobs back, instead of these tired words?

• (1505)

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have no lesson to take from the Conservatives, who bailed out GM and protected their executives rather than their workers. That is exactly what they did at the time. What we are doing is coming up with a plan. They have no plan whatsoever. We presented it to Premier Ford. What did he say? He said it was a really good plan. We will have good news soon.

**Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is really sad for auto workers to hear this secret plan. This secret plan for auto workers sounds an awful lot like “the cheque is in the mail” or “the dog ate my homework”. Do we know what is not secret? It is the 5,000 auto workers who have lost their jobs and now have to figure out how they are going to put food on their tables and how they are going to pay their mortgages in a cost of living crisis caused by the Liberals.

I ask the minister to please get beyond her talking points and to please stop saying that she is standing up for workers when 5,000 workers have lost their jobs. It is a simple question: When will these workers actually get their jobs back?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this government was the first one to cre-

### Oral Questions

ate jobs in the auto sector. At this point, there are 3,000 new jobs in St. Thomas because of the Volkswagen battery plant, which they are against. At this point in the last year, 3,000 more jobs were created in Windsor at the Stellantis and NextStar plant because of this government, and they are against it.

Stop being against auto workers. We are an auto nation. We believe in them and will invest in them.

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### INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

**Fares Al Soud (Mississauga Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the global landscape is changing, and countries around the world are looking for ways to attract talent in critical and emerging industries. Canada has delivered globally impactful scientific breakthroughs, is home to world-class institutions and now has one of the world's largest international research attraction programs: \$1.7 billion to bring the best and the brightest from across the world to Canada.

Can the Minister of Industry please tell the House how the talent attraction strategy will solidify Canada as the best country in the world for research, science and discovery?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at a time when certain countries are cutting research, at a time when academic freedom is under attack, we believe in science and we believe in research. That is why we have launched our new talent attraction strategy with a budget of \$1.7 billion to attract the best and the brightest to the country. This is one of the biggest budgets on earth to make sure that we bring them to our country.

To all those watching us or listening to us right now, please come to Canada. We have lots to offer, and we can make sure that they feel at home.

\* \* \*

### THE ECONOMY

**Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, 0.0% was Canada's GDP growth number in November. The fourth-quarter growth number is expected to be negative. Following 10 years of near-zero per capita growth, 2025 was another lost year for the Canadian economy. The Prime Minister promised the fastest-growing economy in the G7, but he has not repealed any of the government's anti-development laws and taxes.

*Government Orders*

Conservatives have a plan to cut regulations and taxes. We are here to help. Will the Prime Minister adopt our plan?

**Hon. Eleanor Olszewski (Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience and Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the world has changed, but it is pretty clear, after the Conservative convention this weekend, that the Leader of the Opposition has not.

Conservatives keep going back to the same old attacks, demonizing diversity and denying climate change, but we have a plan. We are focused on what Canadians actually care about: supporting families and building Canada in a changing world. That is why we announced new affordability measures, including the groceries and essentials benefit, which will help up to 1.3 million Albertans.

It is time that Conservatives get serious.

\* \* \*

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said in Davos, “there is a strong tendency for countries to go along to get along”. Well, the moment for Canada to show up is here. Canadian-made parts have been found in weapons killing civilians in Gaza, Sudan and Yemen. A Canadian-made armoured vehicle was seen in Minneapolis the day ICE shot and killed Alex Pretti.

Will the Prime Minister live by his words “to stop pretending, to name reality,” and support Bill C-233, the no more loopholes act, so that Canada is not complicit in these horrific acts against humanity?

• (1510)

**Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I urge the member opposite to be accurate in her representation of Canadian law. First, Canada has one of the strongest export permit regimes in the world. Second, Canada has not approved any new permits for items to Israel that could be used in the current conflict in Gaza since January 8, 2024. Third, all permits suspended in 2024 remain suspended and cannot be used to export to Israel.

Again, I urge accuracy.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[*Translation*]

**CANADA–INDONESIA COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT**

The House resumed from January 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-18, An Act to implement the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between Canada and Indonesia, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** It being 3:10 p.m., pursuant to order made on Wednesday, November 5, 2025, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-18.

Call in the members.

• (1520)

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

(*Division No. 62*)

**YEAS**

## Members

Aboultarif	Acan
Aitchison	Al Soud
Albas	Ali
Allison	Alty
Anand	Anandasangaree
Anderson	Anstey
Arnold	Au
Auguste	Baber
Bailey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Bardeesy	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Belanger (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River)
Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt)	Bendayan
Berthold	Bexte
Bezan	Bittle
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Block	Blois
Bonin	Bonk
Borrelli	Boulerice
Bragdon	Brassard
Brière	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Caputo	Carney
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Chambers
Champagne	Champoux
Chang	Chartrand
Chatel	Chen
Chenette	Chi
Chong	Church
Clark	Cobena
Cody	Connors
Cooper	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dalton	Dancho
Dandurand	Danko
Davidson	Davies (Niagara South)
Dawson	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
DeRidder	Deschênes
Deschênes-Thériault	Desrochers
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Diotte
Doherty	Dowdall
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan	Dzerowicz
Earle	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Epp
Erskine-Smith	Eyolfson
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake)	Falk (Provencher)
Fancy	Fanjoy
Fergus	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Fry

*Speaker's Ruling*

Gaheer  
Gallant  
Gasparro  
Gazan  
Genius  
Gill (Calgary Skyview)  
Gill (Calgary McKnight)  
Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan)  
Gladu  
Gould  
Grant  
Groleau  
Guglielmin  
Gull-Masty  
Hajdu  
Hanley  
Harrison  
Hirtle  
Hoback  
Hogan  
Housefather  
Iacono  
Jackson  
Jansen  
Johns  
Joseph  
Kelloway  
Khalid  
Kibble  
Klassen  
Konanz  
Kram  
Kronis  
Kusie  
Lake  
Lantsman  
Lapointe (Sudbury)  
Lattanzio  
Lavack  
Lawrence  
LeBlanc  
Leitão  
Lewis (Essex)  
Lightbound  
Lobb  
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)  
MacDonald (Malpeque)  
MacKinnon (Gatineau)  
Majumdar  
Malette (Kapusking—Timmins—Mushkegowuk)  
Mantle  
Mazier  
McGuinty  
McKenzie  
McKnight  
McLean (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke)  
Melillo  
Mendès  
Michel  
Miller  
Moore  
Morrison  
Motz  
Myles  
Nater  
Nguyen  
Normandin  
Oliphant  
O'Rourke  
Patzner  
Perron

Gainey  
Garon  
Gaudreau  
Généreux  
Gerretsen  
Gill (Brampton West)  
Gill (Windsor West)  
Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)  
Goodridge  
Gourde  
Greaves  
Guay  
Guilbeault  
Gunn  
Hallan  
Hardy  
Hepfner  
Ho  
Hodgson  
Holman  
Hussen  
Idlout  
Jaczek  
Jivani  
Joly  
Kayabaga  
Kelly  
Khanna  
Kirkland  
Kmicic  
Koutrakis  
Kramp-Neuman  
Kuruc  
Kwan  
Lamoureux  
Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)  
Larouche  
Lauzon  
Lavoie  
Lawton  
Lefebvre  
Lemire  
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
Lloyd  
Long  
Ma  
MacDonald (Cardigan)  
Mahal  
Malette (Bay of Quinte)  
Maloney  
Martel  
McCauley  
McKelvie  
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)  
McLean (Calgary Centre)  
McPherson  
Ménard  
Menegakis  
Miedema  
Mingarelli  
Morin  
Morrissey  
Muys  
Naqvi  
Nathan  
Noormohamed  
Ntumba  
Olszewski  
Osborne  
Paul-Hus  
Petipas Taylor

Plamondon  
Powlowski  
Ramsay  
Redekopp  
Rempel Garner  
Richards  
Robertson  
Romanado  
Ross  
Royer  
Sahota  
Sarai  
Savard-Tremblay  
Scheer  
Schmale  
Sgro  
Shiple  
Sidhu (Brampton South)  
Small  
Solomon  
Steinley  
Stevenson  
Strahl  
Stubbs  
Tesser Derksen  
Thomas  
Tochor  
Turnbull  
Valdez  
Van Popta  
Vien  
Villeneuve  
Wagantall  
Watchorn  
Weiler  
Williamson  
Zahid  
Zimmer

Poillievre  
Provost  
Rana  
Reid  
Reynolds  
Roberts  
Rocheport  
Rood  
Rowe  
Ruff  
Saini  
Sari  
Sawatzky  
Schiefke  
Seeback  
Sheehan  
Sidhu (Brampton East)  
Simard  
Sodhi  
Sousa  
Ste-Marie  
St-Pierre  
Strauss  
Sudds  
Thériault  
Thompson  
Tolmie  
Uppal  
van Koeverden  
Vandenbeld  
Viersen  
Vis  
Warkentin  
Waugh  
Wilkinson  
Yip  
Zerucelli  
Zuberi— 332

## NAYS

Members

May— 1

## PAIRED

Members

Fuhr  
Lalonde  
Godin  
Leslie— 4**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

[English]

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on International Trade.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, the time provided for Government Orders will be extended by 12 minutes.

\* \* \*

## POINTS OF ORDER

VOTING PROCEDURES IN THE HOUSE—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on January 28 by the chief government whip concerning voting procedures in the House.

*Speaker's Ruling*

Following the taking of the recorded division on the opposition motion earlier that day, the government whip rose to inform the Chair that the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley had voted both in person and electronically, but that he was not in his seat during the roll call. In response, the Chair informed the House that only his electronic vote would count.

After the deferred recorded divisions were completed that day, the government whip expressed concern that members could vote in their seat and then leave the chamber to vote again electronically, possibly casting their vote differently. He asked the Chair to provide clarity on the procedures involved in this situation or to ask the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to look into the matter.

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

The Standing Orders do consider the possibility of a member voting both in person and electronically. Standing Order 45(12)(c) states: “[I]n the event a member casts their vote both in person and electronically, a vote cast in person takes precedence.”

The present situation was slightly different than the one contemplated by this standing order. The member was not in his seat when he voted, which usually has the effect of nullifying one’s vote, at least when the matter is brought to the attention of the Chair. This is what occurred last Wednesday. However, since the member also properly cast his vote electronically, the electronic vote was therefore counted.

As I observed on January 28, 2026, the situation was not ideal. It was indicative, however, of the evolution in the practice that happened since the implementation of electronic voting in March 2021.

It is not uncommon now for members to vote in person, realize that there may be some issue with their vote, and cast their vote again electronically. This has happened, for example, when a member realizes that they came in late or that they needed to leave during the voting process. The Chair believes all parties have benefited at one point or another from these gradual adjustments and, until last Wednesday, had not formally complained.

[*English*]

The Chair continues to encourage members to maintain proper decorum during the taking of a recorded division, including by being in their seat to hear the question and to vote, when they are present in person. If members choose to vote electronically, they should leave the chamber quickly and discreetly to vote, without causing disruption, and stay out until the vote is completed. If they cast a valid vote in person from their seats and, for one reason or another, also cast their vote electronically, the former will of course continue to take precedence.

I thank all members for their attention.

REQUIREMENT OF A ROYAL RECOMMENDATION FOR BILL C-222—  
SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I also would like to read a second ruling.

[*Translation*]

In my statement of October 20, 2025, on the management of Private Members’ Business, I expressed concern that Bill C-222, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code (death of a child), appeared to infringe on the Crown’s financial prerogative. At the time, I encouraged members who wished to make arguments about whether or not the bill requires a royal recommendation to do so.

While no formal arguments were submitted to the Chair, the sponsor of the bill, the member for Burnaby-Nord—Seymour, in his opening intervention during debate at second reading on October 24, 2025, stated his view that the bill requires a royal recommendation and that he was working with the responsible ministers to acquire it. Likewise, during his right of reply on January 29, 2026, the member again acknowledged the need for a royal recommendation and raised the possibility that this may occur following committee stage.

[*English*]

In assessing whether the bill requires a royal recommendation, the Chair is guided by section 18.9 of House of Commons Procedure and Practice, fourth edition, which states:

A royal recommendation fixes not only the allowable charge but also its objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications. For this reason, a royal recommendation is required not only in the case where money is being appropriated, but also in the case where the authorization to spend for a specific purpose is significantly altered.

Bill C-222 seeks to ensure that parents who qualify for parental benefits under sections 23 and 152.05 of the Employment Insurance Act continue to do so for the period set out in the act if their child passes away during the benefit period. It also amends sections 206 and 206.1 of the Canada Labour Code to ensure that an employee entitled to maternity or parental leave remains entitled to that leave if their child passes away during the leave.

The Chair is of the view that the bill extends the conditions under which an individual is eligible to access parental benefits, and that this in turn has the potential to result in additional charges on the consolidated revenue fund. In light of these facts, and given similar precedents with respect to bills that would have extended the length of the benefit period for employment insurance, the Chair must agree that the bill requires a royal recommendation.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

The House can proceed to vote on the bill at second reading later this week, but a royal recommendation must be provided before it can proceed to a final vote in the House at the third reading stage, unless the bill is amended in the meantime in a manner that removes the need for a royal recommendation.

I thank all members for their attention.

[English]

**Hon. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order with respect to your first ruling. I do want to thank you for taking the opportunity to respond to my point of order so quickly. I listened to your ruling thoroughly. I discussed it with my colleagues, and there is still some confusion around this.

The member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley was sitting in the House, rose and was identified by the Table as voting in a certain direction. He then got up, left and voted via the application. You have just said you will always accept the vote that is done in person instead of the electronic one if it is done both ways. What you are basically saying is that because the member was here personally and sitting in his seat, you should be accepting that vote. However, the member then got up and left.

Therefore there is still some confusion around the rule, and perhaps this is something that needs to be discussed among the House leadership to come to some kind of conclusion. My objective is to ensure that this does not continue to happen in the future and that we can safeguard against it.

**The Speaker:** The member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley was not in his seat when he voted.

**Hon. Mark Gerretsen:** He was called by the Table.

**The Speaker:** Well, I guess that was an error, but the point is that he did vote electronically afterwards. In the absence of an in-person vote's counting, the fallback was on the electronic vote.

However, I stressed the other day that the situation was not ideal, because it does not really respect proper decorum, and I appeal to all members to respect proper decorum.

In this new procedural environment for voting, which includes electronic voting, an electronic vote can apply if the in-person vote was not legitimate.

[Translation]

**Martin Champoux:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to clarify something, because I find the point of order raised by the government whip interesting.

In your decision, I understand that the situation applied to the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, but the point raised here is nevertheless very interesting. In the case of a member who votes in person from their seat, then leaves the House before the end of the vote and later votes electronically, the vote in the House obviously does not count, because the member left their seat before the votes were tallied.

However, I do not fully understand the decision and it remains unclear to me. Am I to understand that the initial vote cast in the House, which was valid until the member left the House, can be replaced by the electronic vote cast afterwards? In a way, then, that cancels the vote cast in the House and a new one is cast electronically, which will be considered valid. I just wanted to confirm that.

**The Speaker:** That is correct.

### Routine Proceedings

• (1535)

[English]

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Mr. Speaker, of course it is not usually a practice to debate a Speaker's ruling once it has been delivered, but here we are. I would just maybe offer a couple of thoughts.

The most important thing is that members are able to vote. We would hate to have a situation where constituents of a given riding do not have their representative pronounce on a bill or a motion, because of a technicality. The rules around decorum are there as an assistance to the Chair and to the Table. We can imagine the chaos if MPs were walking around, milling around, putting their hand up or having their name called out as they were moving around the table.

Therefore the rules are there to preserve decorum so votes can be orderly. Those rules are not there for the same reasons that, in the NFL, if a toe touches the white line then it is not a touchdown. They are there to provide some structure and some order. I hope we do not get too bogged down in rules for the sake of rules but accept the spirit of the rules that are there.

The hon. member's suggestion is very valid. The House leaders and whips do our very best to make sure that our members respect the rules. Every once in a while there are mistakes, and usually there is grace afforded members from all parties and all caucuses. I suggest we take these conversations off-line.

**The Speaker:** We have heard from all parties, and that is where we will end with this matter.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### PETITIONS

#### DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

**Karim Bardeesy (Taiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting a petition that was brought to my attention by Federico Sanchez and was signed by 44,869 Canadians. Clearly it has struck a chord.

Political honesty and public trust are critical cornerstones of our democracy. This petition touches on those themes and draws inspiration from a white paper by the Institute for Constitutional and Democratic Research, in Wales, where mechanisms are being considered to formally hold politicians accountable when they commit deliberate deception.

#### FIREARMS

**Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting two petitions today.

*Routine Proceedings*

First, I rise again to present another petition on behalf of the residents of Skeena—Bulkley Valley, specifically law-abiding citizens who do not agree with the Liberals' failing confiscation plan of firearms. Provinces and police associations do not agree with it. Even the Parliamentary Budget Officer has estimated that the program will cost over \$750 million of taxpayer money.

The petitioners of Skeena—Bulkley Valley want the government to stop going after law-abiding citizens and to go after criminals instead.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

**Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition I rise to present on behalf of the residents of Skeena—Bulkley Valley is asking the House never to expand MAID to people suffering from mental illness. It is clear that the people of Skeena—Bulkley Valley believe that Canadians with mental illness should be met with supports, treatment and hope.

Mental illness is treatable, and recovery is possible. People who are suffering should be offered suicide prevention treatment, not assisted dying.

**Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise and to present a petition on behalf of residents of Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North who write in support of Bill C-218, an excellent bill by my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City, which seeks to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to people with mental illness. We believe that it would be an egregious expansion; that there should be supports offered to people who have mental illness, such as suicide prevention and other supports; and that it is not necessary to make that expansion.

It is an honour to present the petition from constituents on that issue.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

**Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to stand and present a petition from the folks in my riding who are really concerned about the Liberals' Bill C-9. The petition says Canadians are concerned that the Liberal-Bloc amendments to Bill C-9 could be used to criminalize scriptural passages, that the state has no place in the religious text or teachings of any faith community and that freedom of expression and freedom of religion are fundamental rights that must be preserved.

Therefore the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to protect religious freedoms, uphold the right to read and share sacred texts, and prevent government overreach when it comes to matters of faith.

● (1540)

CLIMATE CHANGE

**Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, petitioners from Saanich—Gulf Islands and elsewhere are calling on the government and Parliament to take note of the scientific warnings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report. There are particular warnings related to what happens if we overshoot the 1.5°C global average temperature increase as against what the temperature was before the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.

Petitioners point out that we are currently on track to significantly overshoot our 2030 Paris Agreement target. Not only could this result in health effects that are considered environmental effects, but as the petitioners are physicians, they are also calling on us to take note of the World Health Organization's warning that “climate change is the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century.”

The petitioners therefore call on Parliament to work, across all departments and every portfolio of federal and provincial parties, toward the elimination of emissions and the preservation of a healthy environment. They call for a nationwide carbon pricing scheme and the rapid transition toward green energy and net-zero infrastructure across Canada.

The petitioners signed themselves as the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment and physician mothers of Canada.

WILDFIRE RESPONSE

**Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour today to table petition e-6823, which is sponsored by Jim Abram from Quadra Island and is signed by over 699 Canadians.

Petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to partner with the private sector in collaboration with potential first nations partners to retrofit a portion of Canada's retired CC-130H Hercules fleet to turn them into large air tankers for wildfire suppression.

Second, they call on the government to deploy these aircraft under a national wildfire response shared with provinces and territories, and, where appropriate, international humanitarian and emergency missions, and to consider the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre for managing deployment under a transparent cost-sharing framework with initial operating capability by the 2027 wildfire season.

Third, petitioners call on the government to prioritize this made-in-Canada solution, leveraging Canadian engineering and protecting lives, communities and the environment. They cite that wildfires Canada-wide have increasing intensity and cost, demanding bold, timely action.

I want to thank Jim Abram and the 699 Canadians who signed the petition.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

**Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition on behalf of Canadians in regard to Bill C-9.

The petition calls on Parliament to support people of all faiths so they can live according to their beliefs without discrimination or government interference. People who signed the petition are calling on the government to uphold and protect freedom of religion and freedom of speech, which are fundamental rights in our democratic country.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, many Ukrainian settlers came to Canada in order to escape the conflict and instability that has been caused by the illegal Russian invasion. Many of them have settled in rural communities and gained employment, become entrepreneurs and so forth.

They are asking for Parliament to work with provincial jurisdictions, in particular in my case in the province of Manitoba, to respond, hopefully favourably, with respect to how we would be able to ensure that settlers are afforded the opportunity to continue on and to ultimately even become permanent residents, through a sense of co-operation between Ottawa and provincial and territorial governments.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

**Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today on behalf of Canadians across this country who have been tuning in to the committee study of Bill C-9. They are concerned that the Liberal and Bloc amendments to Bill C-9 could be used to criminalize passages of scripture.

The state has no place in the religious texts or teaching of any faith community. Freedom of expression and freedom of religion are fundamental rights; therefore, the petitioners call on the Liberal Government of Canada to protect religious freedom, uphold the right to read and share sacred texts, and prevent government overreach in matters of faith.

**Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today on behalf of members of my community, Canadians who are concerned with Bill C-9 and the attack on religious freedom and freedom of expression proposed by the Liberal and Bloc members, and in particular their proposal to amend the Criminal Code to remove long-standing safeguards for the good-faith expression of sincerely held religious beliefs and the preaching and discussion of religious texts such as the Bible, the Quran and the Torah.

Petitioners in my community therefore request that the government withdraw the proposal and instead promote and protect freedom of expression and freedom of religion.

• (1545)

**Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise on behalf of Canadians, including those in my own constituency, who are alarmed by what the Liberal government would do through Bill C-9. They are concerned that in spite of claims that Bill C-9 would protect communities from hate, in actuality it would expose faith communities to harm from the government for daring to express their faith and to quote religious texts.

*Government Orders*

Petitioners are very concerned by this proposed infringement on religious liberty, which was aggravated of course by comments from the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture, who argued that there should be prosecution for citing certain religious texts.

Petitioners are calling on the government to withdraw Bill C-9 and focus on upholding freedom of expression and freedom of religion.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

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GOVERNMENT ORDERS

*[Translation]*

CANADA GROCERIES AND ESSENTIALS BENEFIT ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-19, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** The hon. member for Mirabel has five minutes and 30 seconds remaining.

**Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, for your sake, I will only take five minutes and 25 seconds.

As I said earlier, we support the bill because times are hard and food inflation is real. Prices have gone up faster than inflation. Even when price increases do slow down, prices will remain high. It is often children who are affected, and this credit has been designed to support families in particular. As I said, I have a few things I want to note.

First, there is the problem of consistency. How does the government have more than \$4 billion to spend on cheques within the next 12 months? As I said, I am not presuming anything, but the Liberals have made a habit of sending out one-time cheques just before an election. These one-time cheques and this increase will cost about as much as it would cost to put an end to the discrimination between the two classes of seniors. However, only a few weeks ago, the government said that enhancing old age security was too expensive. I understand that it is a matter of making political choices. Sooner or later, the government will have to take responsibility for the fact that it made a political choice to not support seniors and that it was not a budget issue, given the facts as we know them today.

*Government Orders*

Second, why introduce this bill a few days before the Conservative Party convention, when everyone knew that the official opposition was going to devote its time this session to the cost of living? That does not detract from the merits of the bill, but it does make us wonder why this was not included in the fall budget. Generally, for reasons of budgetary transparency, especially for a measure as important and as permanent as this one, the expenses associated with the program are costed over five years. We are told how these measures will be financed so that we, as parliamentarians, are able to monitor the state of the public finances. That is particularly true at the Standing Committee on Finance.

Once again, we still have this issue of transparency, so why did the minister not include this in his spring economic update? That would not have prevented the government from sending cheques to people at the end of June, because that is what the bill says. The budget appropriations are coming, and Parliament will rise at the end of June. This could have been presented in the economic update. This raises questions.

Why is there still so little being done about competition? To date, the best the minister has been able to do is create a voluntary code of conduct for grocery stores. That is like keeping a predator unmuzzled but asking it not to bite when it sees prey. There is no way that would ever work.

People in Quebec, including farmers, are opposed to how that code of conduct works. Why repeatedly prevent parliamentarians from having accurate information on public finances? This is not a criticism of the measure itself. All it shows is that the government, and the Minister of Finance in particular, is improvising. The minister is particularly good at that. They are improvising at the expense of the most vulnerable, because this measure could have been included directly in the fall budget.

Why not send out monthly cheques? No budget allocation would be necessary since the change is a change of frequency. It would have no impact on the consolidated revenue fund. Instead, the government continues to send cheques every three months to people who do their grocery shopping every week. Why is the government using people's 2024 income to calculate their benefit amount? It is to make sure that the government knows exactly how many people qualify and so that no new people qualify for the one-time check in the very short term. Food inflation is at an all-time high, but the government is using people's income from before President Trump was elected to determine whether they qualify for support today. We need to look into those issues.

As I said, we are in favour of the bill. We think that, generally speaking, it will do more good than harm. Again, there are some transparency issues with this government. We raise these transparency problems in Parliament. I see that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is listening. He knows that we have concerns about this. I have no doubt that in the coming weeks, the government will make an extra effort to ensure that, as important measures such as this one are introduced, parliamentarians get a chance to monitor the state of public finances adequately and in a timely manner, especially when the government introduces measures like this one that will be financed directly through debt.

• (1550)

[English]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate many of the comments the member put on the record this afternoon. It pleases me, the degree to which we have wonderful support coming from the House on this particular piece of legislation and ultimately for seeing it go to committee.

I understand that the Bloc, and I suspect the Conservatives, have genuine concerns in regard to the bill's ultimate implementation and maybe want to talk about some potential alternatives. However, recognizing the principle of supporting Canadians in a tangible way by providing them that additional disposable income to help out with groceries is hopefully something all of us can agree on. That is why it is so important that we pass the legislation.

Would the member not agree that one of the best places to have that substantial dialogue is at the committee stage and then to continue on in third reading at some point?

[Translation]

**Jean-Denis Garon:** Mr. Speaker, I do not agree with the parliamentary secretary. With all due respect, I think that implying that no real dialogue happens in the House of Commons is, once again, a bit of a slap in the face to democracy and ultimately sends the message that the House of Commons is just for show and there is no point in going to committee. I believe in democracy. Sometimes people need to meet one another halfway. Sometimes people need to raise their voice, when necessary.

I am pleased to see that the parliamentary secretary recognizes that we are not taking a partisan approach. Now I will be a little more partisan, or at least it will seem that way, and remind him that we proposed this measure back in 2022 when inflation was at 7% or 8.5%. We suggested increasing the frequency of payments and doubling the amount at that time. We were told that it was a bad idea. I guess a thousand nights or so can bring good counsel. I am glad that the Liberals have finally decided to implement a measure like this.

[English]

**Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have seen this before. We saw this in 2023 when the Liberals rolled out the grocery rebate. Today, we have the highest grocery inflation in the G7, so I am just wondering. Does the member expect that this will lower grocery prices, or will it be a one-time payment to Canadians, where they go to the grocery store, groceries are going to cost about \$300 a trip and they get a \$10 coupon?

Does he believe this will lower the price of groceries for Canadians over the longer period?

*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Jean-Denis Garon:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is asking an interesting question on the short term versus the long term. Obviously, we have a permanent problem. The price increases are here to stay. Sending out one-time cheques to address a permanent problem may seem like an attempt to curry favour with voters. Now, members need to understand that the government finally, after 10 years in power, took a few little steps to improve competition in this country. We supported this, and I personally participated in studying it at the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology.

Competition, however, is a long-term issue. It takes time for new companies and new investments to enter the arena. Right now, as we know, the circumstances surrounding international trade are not very conducive to foreign direct investment, among other things. That is why it is a good measure. Now, on the matter of sending out temporary cheques to solve a permanent problem, I agree that this may not be the most appropriate measure at present.

• (1555)

**Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this measure was not included in budget 2025. It materialized out of thin air. It is a one-time cheque, which means that it is clear it is a vote-buying scheme. It aims to address the increase in the cost of living, which was in fact created in part by the measures of this government.

What are my colleague's thoughts on this?

**Jean-Denis Garon:** Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that the two main items in the market basket of individuals and families are housing and groceries. In terms of housing, we have a government that has implemented immigration policies and thresholds that they themselves recognize are inappropriate and are, in fact, impediments to successful immigration, which involves people coming here and having all the tools they need to thrive, find a job, find housing and so on.

Clearly, the Liberals like to say that they are a new government but it is still the same old government that has been in power for 10 years, even though they have a new leader. It is the same party. In fact, I believe that the Liberals are in part responsible for the increase in the cost of the most important items in Quebecers' market basket.

**Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we are speaking to the bill introduced today, Bill C-19, on the GST credit.

It is a start, in that it provides some necessary relief, but it does not go far enough. Bill C-19 seeks to provide financial relief to millions of Canadians against a backdrop of the persistently rising cost of living. My colleague from Mirabel just explained the Bloc Québécois's position on the bill in detail. He is a tough act to follow, but I will nonetheless reiterate that we support the bill in principle because the Bloc Québécois is well aware that this help is more than welcome.

However, it must be said that the government has missed an opportunity to do better in a fairer and more sustainable way. The bill provides for a one-time payment equal to 50% of the annual GST credit for 2025-26, to be paid by June, and a 25% increase in the GST credit starting in July for a period of five years.

According to the government, this will help approximately 12 million people at a total cost of \$11.7 billion over six years, including \$3.1 billion for the one-time payment. We acknowledge that this measure is definitely going to provide some real relief over the short term.

My crystal ball is no better than anyone else's, but this seems to us like more of an electioneering ploy than a planned measure, given that the government opted for one-time payments rather than immediately and permanently increasing the regular payments. This raises questions.

I also listened to an interview, which I intend to listen to again, with the Estrie Association coopérative d'économie familiale, an economic co-operative that helps families with their budgeting. This organization seemed to be saying that no one can afford to turn down this assistance. In times of inflation, it may be helpful, but ultimately, it is unclear whether it would have been better to do something more predictable, planned over a longer term. This approach is ad hoc rather than planned.

It is tempting to send out one-time cheques when an election is being contemplated. That is what the government must be thinking.

A similar measure, known as the grocery rebate, was adopted back in 2023. What people need is not a one-time special cheque, but rather an income that is predictable and adapted to their actual expenses.

While researching comments made about the bill, I read an interesting quote from Clay Jarvis, a banking expert at NerdWallet Canada. He called it a "considerate move" but said that "a few hundred dollars spread out over the course of a year won't be enough to stabilize struggling households". He wondered about that, and it is obviously a valid point.

There is a fundamental problem with providing quarterly payments to deal with a monthly reality. Apart from the one-time cheque, the GST credit is paid every three months. This is a problem because some expenses, such as rent, must be paid every month. Groceries need to be purchased every week, and credit card bills have to be paid every month. This means that many low-income people have to go into debt between payments. With interest rates often above 20%, this can really trigger a poverty spiral. That is why the Bloc Québécois has long been calling for the GST credit to be paid monthly. We even brought it up again in the last campaign as a way to help people in these somewhat troubled economic times with inflation.

### *Government Orders*

There is something else that we have noted. I am speaking on this topic today because I have been critic for seniors for quite some time now. There is a direct link to the incomes of seniors. Allow me to explain. Low-income seniors are among the main beneficiaries of the GST credit. Many of them live on a fixed income, which comes primarily from OAS and the GIS. Seniors are also being hit hard by increases in housing costs, food costs and health care costs.

• (1600)

That is why the Bloc Québécois has long been calling for another way to help people cope with inflation and this somewhat uncertain economic period, namely by increasing OAS for seniors aged 65 to 74. The government has refused. My colleague from Mirabel railed against the government earlier today because it kept saying that it could not afford that measure. Now, according to Bill C-19, there are billions of dollars available and the government will cut one-time cheques rather than implement a long-term measure that would allow for better budget planning.

That leads nicely into the topics of debt, inequality and political choices. Household debt continues to rise. People owe \$1.67 for every dollar of disposable income. That is high. Meanwhile, the wealthiest households' financial assets are skyrocketing: 70% of financial assets are held by the wealthiest 20%. Housing is becoming less and less affordable, food inflation remains high, and food bank use is spiking.

I recently began reviewing SOS Dépannage Moisson Granby's annual report, which highlights a continued increase in requests for food assistance, particularly among seniors. Reports from organizations working with the homeless also show an increase in the number of seniors living on the streets. We can see that this is a reality.

As for the GST credit, we know that it is one of the few tools that is well targeted to help the most vulnerable. However, it should be made much more effective. There is an inconsistency in the government's budget planning. The Bloc Québécois is wondering why this measure was not included in budget 2025. It is nice to make these kinds of announcements, but at some point someone needs to explain where the money is going to come from. We could have debated this when the budget was tabled.

When the Bloc Québécois asks the government to adopt measures for seniors, it keeps saying that it does not have enough money. Now that the budget has been tabled and we are even talking about its implementation bill in committee, the government proposes this measure. Now it finds billions of dollars to implement these one-off measures. Let us not forget that one-off measures do not help in the long term. Many organizations are already wondering what is going to happen once this top-up ends in a few years. Will there be other measures for helping low-income individuals and struggling families? Money is not the problem. This is a political choice.

To wrap up, of course we will be supporting Bill C-19, because people need help. However, we in the Bloc Québécois would like to point out that this assistance is insufficient, poorly structured and, most importantly, does not fix the problems with the GST credit, which should be paid monthly to reflect the expenses that people have to pay each month. Helping the most vulnerable, including se-

niors, is not about sending a cheque from time to time. It is about ensuring they have a stable and predictable income that allows them to live with dignity, month after month.

Aside from the increase to OAS, some seniors say they want to work, first to balance their budgets, but also because they still have the energy to do so. This brings us back to the issue of the senior workforce and their desire to remain in the labour market. Once again, the government is putting obstacles in their way. That is why, in the bill we introduced, we also addressed the income that seniors should be able to earn without having their GIS clawed back. The GIS supports seniors who are struggling the most. These folks would sometimes like to earn a little more money while remaining active, but they are penalized for doing so. These things needed to be considered.

There is one last thing that could have been discussed. It is important to recall that inflation will not be fixed simply by sending a cheque. We could have talked about climate change and its impact on price inflation, the lack of competition among grocers or the increase in housing costs. What can be done about the commodification of housing? All of this has an impact. As I said, people are increasingly turning to food banks. Does the government want to help food banks, or would it rather help people have an income that allows them to live with dignity and access decent housing, so they can feed and take care of themselves properly—in short, grow old with dignity?

• (1605)

[*English*]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what we have before us in Bill C-19 is recognition of the importance of providing an increase in disposable income to support individuals in acquiring their groceries. This is the essence of the legislation. We are not talking about just this year. Over the next few years, Canadians will continue to receive that extra bump up from the grocery rebate. This is, again, to take into consideration the inflation on groceries.

I wonder if the member would recognize that having it over the next four or five years is actually a positive thing. From listening to her, I know she would like to see it as a permanent thing, but at the very least, we are recognizing the need today to assist people in dealing with food inflation.

[*Translation*]

**Andréanne Larouche:** Mr. Speaker, I think I more than covered that in my speech. The Bloc Québécois made a proposal, and we believe it is one way to help people who are truly in need. We were told that there was no money to increase OAS for people aged 65 to 74 who did not receive anything, yet money was found for this benefit. I would point out, however, that the cost is the same, or nearly the same.

The government tends to introduce measures that are more electioneering in nature. One example is the GST credit, which was not appropriate for helping people, or the one-time cheques distributed to just about everyone, including people who did not need them. That is why the Bloc Québécois said that this GST credit is clearly more targeted, but it does not solve the problem in the long term. What will happen to these households in a few years?

[English]

**Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to build on a theme that just came out of the last question from the Liberal side. My colleague spoke about it in her speech. The fact is, this was not part of the federal budget. The budget was just tabled a few months ago, and now all of a sudden the Liberals are finding another \$12 billion to give this sort of short-term relief, or band-aid solution, to an underlying issue around food inflation. She talked about the two-tier system for seniors the Liberals have created.

Does she have any understanding, from dialogue she has had with the Liberal government over the last few years, of why this is the approach it is choosing instead of actually coming up with long-term, sustainable solutions to address food inflation and costs in Canada?

[Translation]

**Andréanne Larouche:** Mr. Speaker, I addressed that a little in my speech. It breeds political cynicism. The government did not act until it sensed it was in hot water, or once it saw an electoral opening or opportunity. As I said earlier, my electoral crystal ball is no more accurate than any other.

This government is presenting measures that might look extremely appealing at first glance. In the past, the Liberals were good at doing that instead of finding solutions. We need only think of the impact of the cost of climate change on food. The OAS pension is our universal system. Why not spend the same amount on a long-term initiative rather than a one-time measure?

Unfortunately, governments tend to focus on the short term, not the long term, when it comes to helping people.

• (1610)

**Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Shefford on her speech and on her commitment to seniors. When the measure proposed by the government in Bill C-19 ends in five years, seniors especially but also families will be faced with the prospect of losing it. There is also a growing number of seniors, particularly those between 65 and 74 years of age, for whom my colleague has been advocating for a long time.

Can my colleague talk to us a little about the anxiety that seniors, especially low-income seniors, are facing over a measure that will help them for a while, until they are eventually left with the anxiety of losing their increased GST credit in five years' time?

**Andréanne Larouche:** Mr. Speaker, in five years, people will still need to pay for groceries and rent. Where will we be economically? No one can predict that.

### Government Orders

One thing is for sure: It is time we thought about solutions that will help people and give them some predictability. This measure will make people think they have a little more money now, but that they have to be careful because they do not know what will happen next. That means that people are still in a state of economic uncertainty, which adds to their stress. We know that stress and economic uncertainty are determinants of health.

\* \* \*

[English]

### VACANCY

SCARBOROUGH SOUTHWEST

**The Speaker:** It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, namely Mr. Blair, member for the electoral district of Scarborough Southwest, by resignation effective earlier today.

Pursuant to paragraph 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed a warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

[Translation]

The hon. member for London West.

\* \* \*

### CANADA GROCERIES AND ESSENTIALS BENEFIT ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-19, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address the House today on this bill that is very important for all Canadians.

[English]

This is especially important for those who sent us to the House to represent them. As we just came back from the break, we have had the opportunity to chat with many constituents who have spoken to us about the state of what we all know, the state of where finances are for Canadians. Many Canadians are looking for opportunities to be able to afford to put food on their table, to put their kids in child care and to afford dental care and many other needs that they have.

It is a privilege and an honour to lend my voice to support Bill C-19, the Canada groceries and essentials benefit act, which is an important priority for our government. We were elected with the promise that we were going to do our best to bring costs down for Canadians. We want to create new opportunities for Canadians across the country.

*Government Orders*

That is why the first thing we did was cancel the divisive consumer carbon price as of last April, directly helping Canadians save money at the pump. It is also why we delivered three major tax cuts and supercharged homebuilding to increase supply and lower housing costs. We also introduced the automatic federal benefits so that millions of Canadians can receive the support they qualify for. Of the many things we have done as a government, I think this is a game-changer. We know there are so many families that are not receiving the supports they need because they either are not able to file or have not been in the right spaces to learn how to file their taxes. We have seen an increase in Canadians receiving the supports they need because of this.

Last week, the Prime Minister announced the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit, which we know would help more than 12 million low- and modest-income Canadians to afford their day-to-day essentials. I hope the colleagues who were heckling a little while ago will also help us pass this legislation and not just heckle it, and that they will help us pass the legislation as soon as possible, to be able to deliver these supports and make life more affordable for Canadians.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

This new benefit will replace the current GST credit, but it will be much more generous. For one, the credit will increase by 25% for five years, starting in July 2026.

Second, we will add a payment this year that will be equivalent to a 50% increase in the current benefit.

[*English*]

As global prices continue to surge, the increase will be considerable and will make a real difference for Canadians struggling to put food on their tables. This measure would particularly target low and modest incomes. Again, this is what Canadians were talking about on the campaign. This is what Canadians continue to talk about now. As the world changes, we see the different needs that Canadians have. We have to be a government that can step up and support Canadians and meet them at their point of need.

I want to take this opportunity to mention that I am splitting my time with my colleague the member for Winnipeg North.

Right now, a senior living alone who is eligible for the GST credit could receive a maximum of \$543 for 2026 and 2027. That same person would get approximately \$950 in total from the one-time payment in the 2026-27 benefit year. Thanks to the changes that we are proposing, this is real money that would go into the pockets of Canadians to help them.

[*Translation*]

For a couple with two children, the amount will increase from about \$1,086 to \$1,890. That is approximately \$800 more going into Canadians' pockets. I am a parent. We know how much \$800 can make a difference for parents, for single parents, for many parents across Canada. This new benefit will be indexed to inflation, meaning that the amounts paid to Canadians will increase each year in line with the rising cost of living.

[*English*]

We are not going to stop there. Our government has also announced a suite of measures to tackle food insecurity, to support producers and to strengthen supply chains across Canada over the mid and long term. Last September, we also launched a new strategic response fund to help sectors impacted by tariffs, and we have committed \$500 million from this fund to help food businesses expand their capacity so that they can strengthen Canada's food supply for the future.

We have also committed \$150 million under the regional tariff response initiative to specifically help small and medium-sized businesses in the food sector, as well as the organizations that support them. We will allow food growers to fully write off the cost of new greenhouses immediately, allowing them to free up the capital they need to expand production, which will also translate into lower prices and better food security for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister also announced \$20 million in funding to enable food banks and other local, regional and national organizations to provide more nutritious food to families in need.

We are currently developing a national food security strategy to address the root causes of food insecurity. This strategy will help strengthen national food production and improve access to nutritious food in a way that is very affordable.

[*English*]

This strategy would also include measures to implement unit price labelling and support the work of the Competition Bureau in monitoring and enforcing competition in the market, including food supply chains. We are doing this because we promised it to Canadians. This is what I said earlier. We went to the electorate and said that this is what we were going to do as a government. We are going to work together to find every single measure we can find to make life more affordable. Canadians have been impacted by COVID-19, the tariff war that we are experiencing right now and many other factors that are external. We need a government that is able to meet the moment and make sure that we are responding to Canadians' needs.

*Government Orders*

This new legislation would build on significant action to lower costs for Canadians and protect essential programs. Our middle-class tax cut would save money for 20 million Canadians. We are going to eliminate the GST for first-time homebuyers on new homes costing up to \$1 million. We are taking action to help Canadians keep more money in their pockets, and that is what families across Canada need right now. What is more is that we removed the consumer carbon price as of last April, which we know is helping reduce fuel costs in most provinces and territories, including lowering prices at the gas pump.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Our middle-class tax cut alone will save two-income families up to \$840 this year. In the future, it is expected to save Canadians more than \$27 billion in taxes over five years. As I said earlier, most of this tax relief will go to people whose incomes fall in the two lowest tax brackets. We are eliminating the GST for first-time homebuyers on new homes up to \$1 million and reducing the GST for first-time homebuyers on new homes between \$1 million and \$1.5 million. We will also enable first-time homebuyers to save up to \$50,000.

[*English*]

We tabled budget 2025, which was the Canada strong budget. Budget 2025 proposes making the national food program permanent for Canadian families. This is something that has been well received across Canada. This program helps 400,000 more children each year receive healthy meals in their schools, and participating families with two children will save \$800 on groceries. The budget also proposes to start automatically delivering federal benefits to low-income Canadians through the Canada Revenue Agency. We will continue to ensure that the federal benefits to which they are entitled, including those they may not be aware of, are also received through these measures that we have put forward.

I see that my time is coming to an end. I am not able to finish my speech, but I am happy to answer and take questions in the House.

However, one thing I want to say before I end my speech is that all of us came to the House because Canadians asked us to respond to their needs. We told Canadians that we were going to make life more affordable. Even Canadians who live in Conservative ridings want to see us remove the obstruction. They want to see us move forward in making life more affordable for all Canadians, so I hope that my colleagues are going to do exactly this, that they are not going to stand in the way, that they are not going to obstruct and that they are going to support us in making sure that we can respond to what Canadians sent us here to do in April 2025.

**Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always good to see my hon. colleague, who is my riding neighbour.

She mentioned in her remarks that the Liberal government, as an affordability measure, removed the consumer carbon tax. However, in a previous speech in the House, she said, “The central plank of our climate plan, the federal carbon pricing system, is giving Canadian households more money back in climate action incentive payments than they pay in.”

Was she misleading then, or is she misleading now? I am just having trouble reconciling these two contradictory statements.

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga:** Mr. Speaker, I called it a very divisive tax because the Conservatives made sure that Canadians could not get the truth about this tax. This was money that was going into Canadians' pockets and we had to respond. We will continue to respond to the needs of Canadians when they ask us to because they elected us to do so.

Maybe the Conservatives can stop obstructing and actually respond to the questions that Canadians have, even in Conservative ridings.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lestiguj, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague. I am willing to work with her on this important matter. There is a food bank near me in Gaspésie that has had to turn away people. Let us imagine these people, who must overcome their shame and who show up to get food, but who are unfortunately turned away because so many people showed up that the food bank worker had to screen applications. I spoke with this worker in December. It is heartbreaking.

That is what we are talking about today. There are people who cannot feed themselves. It is not all their fault. Often, we hear that people are not working hard enough. That is not the issue. The issue is that food inflation has increased so drastically. That is a known fact.

My colleague wants us to work together. The Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-19. Are she and her government willing to support us with regard to increasing OAS?

• (1625)

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga:** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague's question and I appreciate all the work he has done. I look forward to continuing to work with him.

On the matter of food banks, I just told the House that we are increasing the amount that we give to food banks across Canada by \$20 million in order to respond to this issue. As my colleague said, it is an issue that is heartbreaking. This is not a topic for a light debate, given that people's lives are at stake.

*Government Orders*

As I mentioned earlier, there are also measures that will help seniors in Canada as well as seniors in Quebec. I am willing to continue to work with my colleague to address issues of affordability across the country.

[English]

**Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one of the most devastating things for us to see within our communities is the ongoing food insecurity. I just want to take a moment to thank the amazing grassroots organizations that are supporting people through food banks, making sure that food is on the table and providing supports for everyone. This benefit would absolutely help ensure that people are able to keep food on the table. I would like for the member to talk a bit about what the long-term plan is. Yes, we are in the business of supporting people, but we also want to make sure that there are long-term solutions.

Can the member highlight some of those long-term plans? I would appreciate it.

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the work my hon. colleague does for her constituents.

I did talk about the national food security strategy that this bill proposes. I think the quicker we can pass this bill, the faster we can have discussions around the long-term plans addressing food insecurity in Canada and supply chains across the country. We saw what happened with COVID-19, and we know that we are vulnerable when we do not have the infrastructure in place to be able to address these issues.

I appreciate that my colleague is raising this really important question in the House of Commons to make sure we are all mindful of the fact that these issues can happen at any time. COVID-19 or a similar situation could happen again, and we have to put the infrastructure in place to be able to address those issues in the future. I think that the national food security strategy and the national housing strategy, as well, are measures that would work together to ensure that we have a plan and that we are capable of meeting the moment when necessary with the partnerships that we have built across the country.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-19.

It was not that long ago, just back in April, when Canadians had a vote and elected the new Prime Minister of Canada, along with 70 new Liberal members of Parliament. Through that last election, a number of issues really came to the surface. The whole idea of building Canada strong, building healthier and stronger communities, is something the government and the Prime Minister have been focused on since day one. We have seen substantial legislation and budgetary measures to demonstrate very clearly to Canadians that this is a government and a prime minister who genuinely care and will do whatever they can to be there to support Canadians.

I have heard lots of discussions and a lot of debates on the issue of how we have our greatest asset, the Prime Minister, going abroad, travelling and bringing in investments, bringing in trade opportunities and export opportunities in particular, and talking about the importance of jobs and how important those things really are,

along with the idea of building Canada strong by building capital projects. It is all very critical. At the same time, it is really important that we recognize what Canadians' immediate needs are. The issue of affordability is very real, and it is there. We have a prime minister and a government that are responding once again to that issue.

Members should recall that one of the very first actions the Prime Minister of Canada took was to get rid of the carbon tax.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, he should be applauded for taking that action; I agree.

Another action he took was to give a tax break, reducing taxes for 22 million Canadians. These are the types of initiatives that were taken shortly after the last election.

We continue to look at ways we can support Canadians. When we take a look at the grocery prices as a whole, we see that Canada is doing relatively well compared to the rest of the world in terms of the cost of some basic products like eggs, milk, apples and so forth. However, we realize that inflation and food costs are going up and we want to be able to assist Canadians, especially those who really need that assistance. That is what Bill C-19 is all about. It is about being there to support Canadians who really need that support, and we have come up with a way of doing it that is not only for this year but for a number of following years. From my perspective, it clearly demonstrates a government that is responding to a need that is there, even though our overall inflation rate is relatively under control, especially when compared to other nations of the G20, if I may say that.

We are genuinely concerned about food inflation. That is why the Prime Minister made an announcement dealing with greenhouses and what we could do as a government to support the building of greenhouses. It is about food security. It is about how we can enhance opportunities to stabilize food prices into the future, so that we are not as reliant on other trading partners or on the climate to the same degree. We are talking about literally millions and millions of dollars being invested to ensure that we can see companies expand in terms of food production.

• (1630)

We are recognizing that food banks do play an important role. They have played an important role in society, not just in the last few years but for decades now. When I was an MLA many years ago, food banks played a very important role, and that continues today. The Prime Minister and the government have recognized the need to support those organizations, which is why we are putting in \$20 million. These are initiatives that are there to really help.

I have listened to the Conservatives respond to this legislation. What was the finance critic's plea? The best thing that the government can do is "get out of the way".

**An hon. member:** Hear, hear!

**Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, they say, “Hear, hear!” and they applaud.

We also hear it from the leader of the Conservative Party, and we have witnessed first-hand the types of actions the Conservative Party would take if it were given the chance to govern. These are the far right Conservatives. Do not get them confused with progressive Conservatives. I feel for those Conservative members of Parliament who are so-called “red Tories”, or progressive in their thinking, who genuinely care about how social programming and government policy can give a lifting hand. The current leadership just had a convention, and I was amazed in terms of how much support he received from within the Conservative right. Anyone who is a progressive or red Conservative has to feel uncomfortable with the direction of the Conservative Party, because their mentality is “get out of the way”. We heard it today, and we have heard it for months coming from the leader of the Conservative Party.

What does “get out of the way” mean? The Prime Minister and the government made a decision that the national school food program was successful and that we needed to make it permanent. This is a program that has been needed, not just in the last few years, but since the 1980s, and maybe even earlier than that. I remember standing in the Manitoba legislature, listening to individuals such as Sharon Carstairs back in the 1980s, saying that we needed to feed children in schools, because they cannot learn on an empty stomach. This is not new, but with the Conservatives’ “get out of the way” attitude, we can see that they would get rid of this program that the Prime Minister and government have put into place, which members across the way have called a “garbage” program. We have even heard some members say that it does not even feed children. It is constant misinformation.

These are the types of programs that matter. Canadians in Conservative ridings want these programs. Millions of Canadians are benefiting from the dental program. For the first time in many years, some seniors are getting the dental work that they have been wanting, because of that program. We have a Prime Minister and a government reinforcing the importance of that program, and the Conservative Party’s response is “get out of the way”.

We have to know that today’s Conservative Party, the far right, will get rid of these programs. Would they bring in a program such as Bill C-19? No, because in the comments they make, they would say, “Forget that and just do something permanent. Get rid of the GST,” or something like that. I am waiting for them to come out with that particular policy. I think it is only a question of time. That is how far gone they are.

This is a focused attempt to support Canadians, even in Conservative ridings. They want to see relief; C-19 provides them substantial relief. It shows that the government is listening, much like when the Premier of Manitoba made a statement about the cost of milk in order to minimize the inflation on milk in the province of Manitoba. Manitobans appreciated that. I believe that Canadians as a whole understand what the Prime Minister and government are doing through Bill C-19. That is the reason that in all likelihood it will only pass on division. The Conservative right does not want to vote in favour of it; they just do not want to—

### *Government Orders*

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for York—Durham, International Trade; the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville, Agriculture and Agri-Food; the hon. member for Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, Justice.

[*English*]

**Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we can tell by the member’s speech just how important this bill is, because he talked about food insecurity for about two minutes and then spent about eight minutes on a far right wing-nut theory that he thinks he has a handle on.

However, I do have a legitimate question for the member. When he brought forward this bill, I asked the finance minister how much GST Canadians pay on food. He said that Canadians do not pay GST on food. On a radio show in Saskatchewan, Dr. Sylvain Charlebois, the food professor, said that Canadians pay between \$7 billion and \$10 billion a year in GST on food.

Does the finance minister not realize how much GST Canadians are paying on food?

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I am at a condo on Metcalfe and Lisgar, and there is a Farm Boy nearby. Maybe the member and I could go there and buy some eggs, milk and bread. Then we could see if there is any tax on those three items or the groceries Canadians want to buy.

This is an imaginary tax, and the Conservative Party is trying to give Canadians a false impression around it. The member knows full well that the items I have referred to, those basic groceries, are not being taxed. The member knows that, but it will not stop the Conservative Party from saying otherwise, unfortunately.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

• (1640)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** That is enough with the grocery lists going back and forth.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[*Translation*]

**Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is quite a privilege to hear a speech from the member for Winnipeg North. We were lucky today. What are the chances?

That being said, I would like to hear his comments on the mechanics of his government. Why did his government choose to cut a cheque instead of permanently increasing OAS and therefore seniors’ incomes?

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Is it because the OAS delivery system is failing and more and more seniors are not receiving it, regardless of the government House leader's claims that it is a simple error and that sometimes there are IT bugs?

The situation for seniors is critical and must not be trivialized, especially when we know that the cost overruns for this system are 10 times greater than for SAAQclie. The cost has shot up from \$1.75 billion to \$6.6 billion. In fact, we were supposed to get answers on this at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts today, but so far, the government is refusing to be held accountable.

My question for my colleague is the following. Why not go ahead and increase OAS? Is it because his government has failed at making sure these payments go through?

[*English*]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, ultimately, I believe this is the most effective way for the government to support grocery relief for Canadians.

For Canadians, including single parents, some with three children, and those on a fixed income, many of whom will be seniors, the most effective way of ultimately delivering and putting the money in the pockets of Canadians is done through exactly what Bill C-19 is doing. There is that one-time enhancement payment and then an ongoing increase that will be there for the next four or five years. It increases disposable income in order to deal specifically with the issue of food inflation.

**Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated the member's speech. Talking about context and how we are supporting Canadians, whether it is through Bill C-19, the Canada child benefit, the dental care program, pharmacare, supporting seniors through New Horizons, Canada summer jobs, etc., it builds a safety net for Canadians.

It boggles my mind that the party opposite refuses to support Canadians. Maybe the member can help us understand why the opposition does that.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the short answer is this. It is because the leader of the Conservative Party, which has really gone far right, I would ultimately argue, takes this "just get out of the way" attitude, as if government does not have any role to play in terms of assisting Canadians in any fashion whatsoever. We have seen that demonstrated day after day. I believe, from a national perspective, that the government does have and must play a role in supporting Canadians.

**Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry.

It is a privilege to rise in the House and once again represent my neighbours in Newmarket—Aurora.

Today I am speaking to Bill C-19, the Canada groceries and essentials benefit act, but before I go any further, I want to take the opportunity to thank the Newmarket Food Pantry, the Aurora Food Pantry and the countless volunteers and community organizations who work every day to make sure that the most vulnerable in our community have food on their tables. I have visited them. I have

seen the shop floors and heard the stories. They are struggling to keep up with the demand. Every month that goes by is a record month. Our community is incredibly generous, but generosity is not enough.

After months of advocacy, the government has finally acknowledged what Canadians have been telling us all along, that food insecurity in this country is real, is growing and is serious. Given the magnitude of the food affordability crisis, I support this temporary groceries and essentials benefit to lift families who are struggling, and because this infusion was asked for by Food Banks Canada.

That said, when Canadians are facing historic cost of living pressures, we have a responsibility to focus on solutions that do not just offer relief today but actually make life more affordable tomorrow. Conservatives have been putting forward those solutions: Scrap the taxes that increase the cost of food, boost competition in grocery chains and reverse the massive inflationary deficits.

Canada has created a homegrown affordability crisis. Food inflation in Canada is disproportionately higher than in countries around the world. In fact, it is the worst in the G7. When we pile taxes on farmers, food processors and truckers, the very people who make sure that food shows up on our table, those costs do not disappear; they get passed on to Canadians at the checkout. When grocery stores do not face competition, prices go up and profits soar.

The now Minister of Finance stated, in 2023:

I will continue to keep a close eye on Canada's largest grocery chains, the food processors and other industry actors to make sure that the price of food in Canada will be stabilized. It's just the beginning!

He was keeping an eye on them, so it is under his watch and the Liberal government's watch that prices have continued to soar.

When the government doubles down on its inflationary deficits, the value of our money declines, and everything we buy is more expensive. Families across this country are doing everything they can to keep up. They are exhausted. Too many are watching their paycheques fall further behind the cost of everyday life. Many of my constituents have told me plainly that every bit helps, and I respect that, but they have also told me that they do not want to live at the mercy of government handouts. They want to be able to have the dignity to provide for themselves, for their children and for their families. We need to take decisive action to fix this problem for the future.

*Government Orders*

● (1645)

Today, countless times, I heard several members of the Liberal government stand up in this very House to say that Canadians are overjoyed. Not a single Canadian has told me they are overjoyed when they visit the grocery store. In Newmarket—Aurora, I hear constantly about the cost of groceries. I hear from parents, seniors and young families. They tell me grocery bills have become the most unpredictable expense in their household. Some are using credit cards to cover the cost of food, as they are being pushed to their limits.

Yes, an increased groceries and essentials benefit would provide some relief. To be specific, it would be \$10 a week in relief, but Canadians also deserve transparency. This rebate was not included in the government's budget. It was not included in the \$78-billion deficit presented in November. It will cost \$12.4 billion over five years and nearly \$1.4 billion in interest charges over five years. Parliamentarians have not been told how this will be paid for and neither have Canadians. This matters because borrowing to fund rebates does not lower the cost of food; it fuels the very inflation that is crushing families.

To be clear, this very credit was offered in 2022, and it was meant to solve deeper issues of affordability, but we still have the problem. The idea did not work, yet the government is choosing to recycle it.

The people of Newmarket—Aurora elected me to advocate for fiscal responsibility and for policies that actually reduce costs. What I hear is not a demand for endless temporary programs. I hear a call for stability, predictability and lasting affordability. Here are the facts: Food inflation in Canada has reached 6.2%. This is double that of our neighbour, and it is higher than it is in France, Italy and Germany. It is, in fact, the worst food inflation in the G7.

This year, it will cost about \$17,600 to feed a family, and that is up \$1,000 just from last year. According to the MNP Consumer Price Index, 71% of Canadians expect the cost of living to get worse and 41% say they are “\$200 or less away from...insolvency”. These are kitchen table realities.

Here is another reality that hits me deeply as a mother: One-third of food bank visitors are children. This should stop every single one of us in our tracks. We need to appreciate the urgency, but also bring forward long-term solutions.

I spend a lot of time chatting with my neighbours in Newmarket—Aurora to learn what is important to them. There is one conversation that stuck with me. A mother stood at her doorstep and broke down in tears as she explained the impossible choices she is making because her dollars do not buy as much as they used to. She was not asking for sympathy; she was asking for solutions. As a mother myself, I feel this deeply.

Her story is not unique. I hear it through emails and surveys and at community events. Canadians are working hard, but they still feel like they are falling behind. In my first speech in the House, I said, “inflation is the slow undoing of a family's dignity”. When fiscal discipline disappears, the consequences are not rhetorical. They show up at the grocery store. They show up when the rent is due. They show up when families decide which bill can wait.

● (1650)

The choices we make here shape the daily lives of Canadians. That responsibility should push us all toward policies that are lasting, and Conservatives have been putting forward those solutions. We need to end this homegrown affordability crisis with solutions for the future.

**John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Newmarket—Aurora gave a thoughtful speech. She has genuine concern for the families, parents and seniors who are facing affordability issues in their communities.

In the city of Hamilton, the average family income is significantly lower than other parts of the province, so this issue is particularly acute in the areas that I represent. A credit of \$7,500 over five years is substantial assistance, but the member talked about the need for long-term measures to decrease food prices. In this bill, there are measures for the strategic response fund and the food security program, as well as funding for increasing the domestic production of food.

I am wondering what other recommendations might be brought forward if this were to proceed to committee.

● (1655)

**Sandra Cobena:** Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague's riding well. I used to cover it when I was in the financial sector.

As I mentioned in my speech, Canadians have been pushed beyond their limits. They are doing everything they can to make ends meet, and they are exhausted. On that basis, every little bit helps. This \$10 a week will provide some sort of relief, but the reality is that we need to address the root of the problem. This rebate idea was presented and offered, in 2022 to be exact, and it did not solve the problem.

The Minister of Finance, then minister of industry, said he was watching the prices of groceries, but it did not solve the problem. We need to address the root cause of the problem, which is over-taxation, lack of grocery chain competition and massive inflationary deficits.

[*Translation*]

**Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we at the Bloc Québécois have long been proposing an increase to the GST credit, and we think it would have been better to increase this amount regularly starting now, rather than making a single payment by June.

We agree with the subsequent 25% increase, but we propose paying the credit monthly because we know that the most vulnerable are really struggling financially. Since credit cards and other bills have to be paid every month, this would give these individuals more stability, allow them to pay less interest, and, I think, make better use of that money.

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

[English]

**Sandra Cobena:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's suggestion.

In speaking to my neighbours in Newmarket—Aurora, any sort of relief would be helpful at this moment. Monthly relief would also be helpful to them, but I do want to reiterate that Canadians have been asking for serious long-term solutions to the root of the problem that is driving up the cost of food disproportionately compared to other G7 countries. When we refer to other countries, we know that this is a Canadian homegrown problem, and it is because of the overtaxation and lack of competition.

**Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech was very compassionate. The rise in the cost of food is also an issue in my riding and in my community. People want government to prioritize lowering these costs. They are struggling and cannot put food on the table to feed their families.

I am wondering if my colleague could share how food insecurity is affecting her community, especially mothers, and the difficult choices they are being forced to make.

**Sandra Cobena:** Mr. Speaker, I inevitably think of this one mother, a single mother of three, I met in Newmarket. She is a mother of three boys. When I knocked on the door, she was very reluctant to open the door, and I later understood why. She is struggling to pay her rent. When I introduced myself after she opened the door, she burst into tears and told me she cannot keep up with the rent and that she does not know what she is going to feed her boys next week.

That is the reality that Canadians are living through, particularly mothers. This is a serious problem that deserves urgent solutions.

**Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise on behalf of the good people of Stormont—Dundas—Glengarry and be on the record discussing the latest Liberal legislation. This time it is their attempt to address ever-increasing grocery prices under their watch. The piece of legislation we have before us, first and foremost, is frankly an admission of failure.

It was only two months ago that the Liberals tabled their budget with an \$80-billion deficit, and here we are two months later, and they are adding another \$12 billion over the coming years, and their latest rebate program would do little to address the core root issue of food prices and increasing costs at the grocery store.

I think it is important, as I start my comments today, to provide Canadians a reminder, a lay of the land, of where we are when it comes to grocery prices and food prices in this country and the Liberal record of the last 10 years. When the Liberals came into office in 2015, parents with two children could go to the grocery store and, for \$160 a week, they could get their groceries. Over the course of the last 10 years, we have seen grocery prices double in this country. After carbon taxes, red tape and endless deficits causing inflation, it now costs more than \$340 a week for that same family of four to go to the grocery store. That is a double-digit increase, on average, every single year that the Liberals have been in office. It is more than 10%, on average, per year.

It is a fact, and this is the government's own data from Statistics Canada, that it is going to cost the average family of four \$17,600, on average, just to feed itself this year. That is an expected increase of \$1,000 at the grocery store checkout for families this year. That is the reality of the record of the last 10 years and why we are in a situation where the government needs to offer more rebates to Canadians. It is because of its failed record, when it comes to food prices, and I will get into the reasons and what we can do to stop it in just a few minutes.

We are also seeing this situation play out with the stats at food banks right across this country. There are 2.2 million Canadians using a food bank every month in this country, and as always, I am grateful for those local food banks that are working very hard in our community of SDG to support thousands and thousands of families and individuals in their time of need. Whether it is the House of Lazarus in Mountain, Agape in Cornwall, the Salvation Army and Saint Vincent de Paul in both Cornwall and Alexandria or the Community Food Share in Dundas county, they are doing an incredible amount of work in very trying circumstances.

When I speak to those organizations, they tell me that the usage in the last couple of years has doubled and the increases are only going up and getting worse. As a matter of fact, the Agape Centre in Cornwall had some pretty eye-opening statistics when it had its annual general meeting last fall. It now uses over a million pounds of food to help people in the city of Cornwall alone. There were nearly 40,000 visits to its food bank and 31,000 visits to its soup kitchen and meal program, and it has helped thousands of individuals. When I did some rough math, I realized that nearly one in every 10 people in the city of Cornwall is using the food bank today. That is not sustainable, and it is a damning indictment of the record of Liberal governments after 10 years in office.

The Prime Minister has been in office for the last year. Let us take a look at the specific record of the Prime Minister. Right now, under his leadership after one year, food inflation has doubled to 6.2% and is the highest of all the countries in the G7. We talk about this as a homegrown problem in our country because the Liberals try to blame everybody but themselves for the situation we find ourselves in, with the highest inflation in the G7. They blame tariffs and global factors, but let us make this very clear: Every other G7 country has those same issues of battling tariffs and battling global factors, but our food inflation here in Canada is only going up.

The rebate that is being offered is far from a real and long-term solution. Conservatives have said we would let this pass, because at the end of the day it would be about \$10 extra a week, when we break it down, for a grocery bill that often costs hundreds of dollars for individuals or families.

• (1700)

This is an admission of failure because the Liberals just tabled their budget two months ago, and they are admitting now, just two months later, that they need to smash glass and spend an extra \$12 billion over the course of the next couple of years to try to get it under control.

This is only if someone qualifies. If someone does not receive the GST credit, they do not qualify for this benefit. There are going to be millions of middle-class families struggling to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads that are going to get zero dollars in rebates from this latest Liberal proposal.

I do not give the Liberals too many compliments. I would give them a bit of a backhanded compliment, if I could. They are the best at announcements. They make everybody feel like the cheque is in the mail, that everybody is going to get it and that it is coming soon. The fact is that a majority of Canadians, and those in the middle class who are struggling to get by, are not going to get it. The Liberals did this with the rent rebate. We can remember they said they were going to send \$500 to millions of Canadians. A very small percentage of Canadians qualified for and received that rebate. It is all announcement. It is rhetoric. It does not meet the reality of the moment that we are in.

Conservatives have done a good job while the Liberals try to paint a rosy picture of what is going on. It is far from the reality. They have a lot of rhetoric that does not match the reality. What the Liberals are doing is not addressing the root cause of the issue. They are offering a rebate, but it is going to do absolutely nothing to slow down the rate of inflation. In fact, when we add \$12 billion in deficits and spending, we are fuelling the inflationary fire that is causing the inflation of food, housing and other general expenses.

I get asked what Conservatives would do. I want to be very specific with my time today and provide Canadians with an alternative. It does not have to be this way. We do not have to accept this sacrifice argument from the Prime Minister and say that this is just the way it is going to be, that Canadians need to accept that we have the highest food inflation in the G7, that there is nothing we can do about it and that it is not something the Liberals are causing. That is far from the truth.

There are several things and several taxes the Liberals have in place on food that we could scrap immediately. Conservatives have said we are willing to support legislation and fast-track it through the House of Commons if it would tackle the root causes that we face in this country.

One is the industrial carbon tax. The Liberals cancelled, finally after years and years of stubbornness, the consumer carbon tax. However, it is important for Canadians to remember that the industrial carbon tax remains in place. It taxes farmers, fertilizer, businesses and trucking organizations that are shipping our food all across this country. It is driving up the price.

A key thing that I think is important for Canadians to know is about the latest carbon tax that is hidden and baked into the price of gas and diesel in this country. That is the new fuel standard tax. People do not have to take my word for it. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said the rules that the Liberals put in place in July 2023

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have required that gasoline and diesel used in Canada meet certain reduction requirements. Right now, because of that, it is adding 7¢ a litre to the price of gasoline and 6¢ a litre to diesel. They have said that, by the year 2030, it is going to be 17¢ a litre on the price of gas and 16¢ a litre on diesel.

Do members remember the phony rebates, where the Liberals said to not worry about the carbon tax and that people were further ahead because they got more in rebates? They have all admitted that was nothing but a scheme. There are zero rebates when it comes to the new fuel regulations and when it comes to the industrial carbon tax. Canadians are paying the bill when it comes to that. Conservatives have called to scrap the industrial carbon tax, scrap the new fuel standard and the fuel tax that they have in place.

We are not stopping there. We have the food packaging tax and the plastics ban that the Liberals are imposing on Canadians. It is now estimated that the packaging tax on food is going to cost about \$1.3 billion more because of all the red tape and regulations.

At the end of the day, we can get inflation under control by getting our deficits under control. We cannot have endless \$80-billion deficits in this country. We cannot continue to fuel the inflationary fire. Conservatives are going to get rid of the industrial carbon tax, the new fuel tax and the food packaging tax, and get inflation under control so we can get food prices under control.

• (1705)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member talked about how they are going to get rid of this and they are going to get rid of that as the Conservative Party. We know and understand that the Conservative Party has a certain mentality. That mentality has been demonstrated yet again today, which is just to get out of the way and get the government to stop providing for Canadians.

It appears as if the Conservatives are prepared to allow this legislation to go through. I am grateful for that, because I believe that this legislation, in a very targeted way, is going to help 10 million Canadians on the issue of affordability, particularly with dealing with grocery prices.

My question to the member is on the attitude the Conservative Party has of getting out of the way. Does he genuinely believe that programs such as the national school program for nutrition, which is now a permanent program, and the dental program are programs that his own constituents would not support?

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• (1710)

**Eric Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, it sounds like gaslighting to me, because the reality is that, after 10 years, the Liberals have driven up food costs and housing costs. Housing costs have doubled. Food costs have doubled, and it was under their watch. Now they are pretending that they have the solutions to fix the very problems they created.

Here is the reality when we talk about getting out of the way: It is getting taxes lower in this country. That is what Conservatives stand for; it is a key principle. We remember the carbon tax that the Liberals had in place for years. They said that people made money on the carbon tax because the government gave so much money back in the rebate. We had a Liberal member speak today and say that the Liberals cut the carbon tax to save people money at the pumps. They are finally admitting that their carbon tax cost money. The industrial carbon tax and the new fuel standard are doing the same thing and driving up the cost of food, the cost of trucking and the cost of groceries in this country. Those are examples of what we would do to get out of the way.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lestiguj, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I think that, like me, my colleague is concerned about the impact inflation is having on people.

I would like to share that, shortly before Christmas, I was walking around Chandler, in my riding. I stopped at an arena to chat with people. One of the volunteers, who might have been over 65, came up to me, took me by the arm and asked me what we are doing here, because he cannot make ends meet on his old age pension. That is what inflation really means. It means people are eating less, or not eating as well, and it certainly means people are feeling stressed.

We support the government's proposal, but we believe that more needs to be done. Would my colleague agree to work with us, the Bloc Québécois, to push for more money in seniors' pockets by increasing old age security for people aged 65 to 74?

[*English*]

**Eric Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, Conservatives are always in favour. The line I use is that money is better spent by someone who earns it than by somebody who collects it. For seniors, small businesses and all families in this country, the more money that stays in their pockets in the first place to afford groceries, to afford rent or a mortgage and those costs of living, the better off they will be.

I am all in favour of measures, but when we talk about inflation, it is important that the Bloc support our effort as well to axe the industrial carbon tax and scrap the fuel standard. For those families out there paying 7¢ going up to 17¢ a litre more in gasoline with zero rebates, it is going to drive up their day-to-day expenses, and it is going to make food more expensive to ship in every part of this country. When we talk about lowering inflation, there are two concrete measures we can do to lower food prices and stop these massive increases we are seeing.

**Tako Van Popta (Langley Township—Fraser Heights, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-19, the proposed Canada groceries and essen-

tials benefit act, is legislation introduced by the Liberals whereby they would give a handout to Canadian citizens to fill the gap they created in the first place. First, they erode Canadians' wealth by economic mismanagement, and then they give a temporary benefit and boast about their generosity.

Perhaps the member could expand on his earlier comment, which is that the introduction of this legislation is really an admission of failure.

**Eric Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I have used this line before so I apologize for the repetition, but it is like asking the arsonist to put the fire out, which is kind of what this whole situation is. The Liberals have created this mess over the course of the last 10 years, and now they are pretending to be the answer to all of these problems.

We have seen this rebate program before, back in 2022 or 2023, give or take. The Liberals had this temporary rebate that was given back to Canadians. What did we see? It did not address food prices, which have only gone up by record numbers since then. We are seeing more Canadians use a food bank. At the end of the day, inflation is still out of control, and our deficits are still out of control. They have learned nothing over the course of the last couple of years.

**Brendan Hanley (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Pickering—Brooklin. I am thankful for this opportunity.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Affordability in Canada is a challenge that Canadians face on a daily basis. In the north, daily costs like food, fuel, housing and transportation are all higher, so any effort to improve the lives of Canadians is particularly important for northern residents. That is why I am pleased to participate in this debate today following the tabling of Bill C-19, the Canada groceries and essentials benefit act.

When I am home and I go run errands, it is a great opportunity to chat with voters and support local businesses, but also to see firsthand the constant rise in food prices. I am lucky in that I can buy what I need, but I know that it is getting harder and harder for many Canadians to buy all the groceries they need for their families. Whether we are talking about fruits, vegetables, meat, eggs or fish, everything is a bit more expensive now.

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In recent years, many Canadians have been feeling the pinch of rising costs, and our government is committed to continuing to find ways to help those who need it most. We are focused on making Canada stronger. We continue to support Canadians through the programs they rely on, such as affordable child care, the Canada child benefit and the Canadian dental care plan. In addition, we are building housing and infrastructure at a pace never seen before.

However, while we wait to see the long-term benefits of these investments in Canada, our government needs to give Canadians a helping hand to make ends meet. That is the purpose of these new measures, including the Canada groceries and essentials benefit, which will help Canadians cope with rising costs. We are stronger when we take care of each other and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

[English]

That is why we are moving forward with actions to make life more affordable for Canadians. With the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit, our government is going to put more money back into Canadians' pockets.

This past weekend, I was talking with constituents. Many have taken notice of this new benefit and how it will help Canadians who are bearing the highest burden of the affordability crisis that we are in. I know that this measure will greatly help many people in my riding, especially seniors and families.

As the Prime Minister announced last week, the Canada groceries and essentials benefit will replace what was formerly known as the goods and services tax credit, and it will be more generous. The amounts paid will increase by 25% for five years, beginning in July 2026, and we will index this benefit to inflation, so payments go up every year to match future increases in the consumer price index. Notably for the short term, we are also providing a one-time payment equivalent to a 50% increase this year.

What does that mean exactly for Canadians? It means a family of four will receive up to \$1,890 this year and about \$1,400 a year for the next four years. For a single person, that person will receive up to \$950 this year and about \$700 a year for the next four years.

I am pleased to say that the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit will provide additional significant support for more than 12 million Canadians. It is a measure to truly support Canadians who need it the most. That is why Food Banks Canada recommended we support Canadians in this way. Many Canadians will be able to afford nutritious food to feed their families thanks to this new benefit. I will therefore encourage my colleagues to support Bill C-19, so we can roll it out as soon as possible.

After the one-time payment is made this spring, eligible families and individuals will receive the enriched regular payments under the Canada groceries and essentials benefit as of July 2026. The benefit will be paid quarterly, at the start of the quarter, to permit timely access to the funds to help families with day-to-day expenses.

This new benefit is an important step forward to support Canadians, but we are also moving forward with other important measures. Again, Yukoners have taken note of this.

[Translation]

For example, the government is setting aside \$500 million from the strategic response fund to help businesses address the costs of supply chain disruptions without passing those costs on to Canadians at the checkout line. For the same reason, the government is creating a \$150-million food security fund under the regional tariff response initiative for small and medium enterprises and the organizations that support them.

Our government is also introducing immediate expensing for greenhouse buildings. Thanks to this measure, producers will be able to fully write off greenhouses acquired on or after November 4, 2025, and that become available for use before 2030. This measure supports increased domestic supply and investment in food production over the medium term.

Our government is also aware that food banks across the country are under pressure, as many Canadians need support. That is why we are investing \$20 million in the local food infrastructure fund. This measure supports food banks and other national, regional, and local organizations to deliver more nutritious food to families in need.

However, I want to point out that our government understands that long-term solutions are needed to address food insecurity. Now more than ever, we need to tackle the root causes of food insecurity. That is why we are developing a national food security strategy. This new strategy will strengthen domestic food production and improve access to affordable, nutritious food.

There will also be measures to implement unit price labelling and support the work of the Competition Bureau in monitoring and enforcing competition in the market, including food supply chains.

● (1720)

[English]

Our government is focused on building a stronger economy to create more career opportunities and higher wages. In parallel, we are introducing measures, like the one I just discussed, to bring down costs and make life more affordable in communities across the country. By doing so, we will empower more Canadians with greater certainty, security and prosperity.

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We have already moved forward with many measures to make life more affordable. For example, we have made the national school food program permanent, providing school meals for up to 400,000 children each year and saving participating families with two children in school an estimated \$800 annually on groceries.

We have also cut taxes for 22 million middle-class Canadians by lowering the first marginal personal income tax rate from 15% to 14% as of July 1, 2025. With this tax cut, we are providing relief of up to \$420 a year per person or up to \$840 a year for two-income families.

The government also cancelled the consumer carbon price, effective April 1, 2025, directly helping most Canadians save money at the pump.

[*Translation*]

Our government recognizes that many Canadians who are under pressure because of the cost of living need immediate support. That is why we are providing them with rapid support through Bill C-19, which will implement the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit. This new benefit will provide significant and immediate support to Canadians who need it most, while the government puts its plan to build the strongest economy in the G7 in motion.

[*English*]

This benefit would help many Canadians put food on the table and help them make ends meet; therefore, I encourage all my colleagues to support Bill C-19.

**Lianne Rood (Middlesex—London, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in his speech, my colleague mentioned something that I had previously mentioned in the House: the root cause.

I think Yukoners can agree that food prices have gone through the roof. One thing about Yukon Territory is that it can get its groceries by truck instead of needing to have them delivered by plane. One of the reasons groceries can be so expensive for all Canadians is that there is still an industrial carbon tax on all the trucks that have to truck the groceries, whether it is to the Yukon or to southwestern Ontario. From farm to fridge, we are still paying the industrial carbon tax.

The root cause of all the food price increases in Canada is directly related to government policies. I am wondering if the member opposite would agree that the Liberals need to address the root cause of the food price increases, which is their policies, and to change their policies to bring food costs down so farmers can afford to produce food at a good price.

• (1725)

**Brendan Hanley:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for her frequent visits to the north and for her advocacy for the north. However, that is where we will have to part ways.

What the member points out is a perceived link between industrial carbon pricing and food prices, which actually does not exist. We are looking forward to building a modern economy, and part of that is sticking with progressive policies. We are looking forward to examining where we can find the true root causes and how we can increase our food sovereignty and food autonomy as a nation looking forward.

[*Translation*]

**Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this government has perfected the art of devising band-aid solutions. Putting big band-aids on big problems is a good look for the government, since it creates the appearance of coming to people's aid.

A measure is being introduced to assist people for five years. After that, these people will probably feel some anxiety, especially seniors, the most vulnerable in society, whose numbers are only going to grow as the years pass. In five years, the government will have to leave the band-aid in place or peel it off. No one knows and no one will know until immediately prior to an election, which is highly likely by the way.

I would like to know whether my colleague thinks that the government should introduce measures that allow interested seniors to return to the labour force without their GIS benefits being clawed back. Could measures be implemented to make it easier for seniors to return to the workforce or that improve worker conditions to help them better cope with the skyrocketing cost of living?

**Brendan Hanley:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for drawing that parallel with band-aids and health measures.

This measure is a very important solution for the coming years, because it will work like a bridge. With all the other measures we are putting in place to strengthen Canadian sovereignty and the economy, we anticipate that things will be easier for everyone in a few years.

The important part for me is that there are targeted actions for the coming years.

[*English*]

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member for Yukon's sharing his insights. As someone who has visited Yukon Territory, I know it is a very different experience in the Yukon than it is for constituents within the riding of Waterloo. The constituents within the riding of Waterloo want members to work together. I know that the Conservatives had their convention this weekend and are coming with a new approach to say they want to help Canadians.

The legislation would benefit the constituents in the riding of Waterloo. The sooner we can get it passed and enacted, the greater benefit they would receive, and sooner. I would like to hear from the member what the benefits would be to the Yukon, and what the benefit would be of all members' coming together to recognize the importance of helping Canadians during these times. What would the legislation do for them?

*Government Orders*

**Brendan Hanley:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Waterloo for her advocacy.

This weekend, I was speaking with many of my constituents, and I think this is a moment when Canadians everywhere, in the north and across the country, are expecting us to work together. In that vein, I am hoping we can all work together in the House to have the bill pass as soon as possible.

**Juanita Nathan (Pickering—Brooklin, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in today's debate on Bill C-19, the Canada groceries and essentials benefit act.

We are at a pivotal moment in Canadian history. We are all bearing witness to a rapid change in the global landscape. Trade shocks are hitting countries around the world, and geopolitical threats are intensifying. This transformation is thrusting workers, businesses and whole economies into a state of uncertainty.

As the Prime Minister said recently at the World Economic Forum in Davos, "We are in the midst of a rupture, not a transition." He argued that the rules-based order is fading, but there is still much that can be done. Canada's new government is focused on what it can control, and a big part of taking things into our own hands is building a strong economy to make life more affordable for Canadians.

Of course, our plan would generate big payoffs for Canadians over time. However, we know that many Canadians are feeling the financial squeeze of everyday expenses right now. They want immediate relief, and we are delivering. Our government is proposing the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit to help more than 12 million low- and moderate-income Canadians afford day-to-day necessities right now. Alongside this benefit, we are also proposing a one-time lump sum payment based on eligibility for the goods and services tax credit.

The positive impact of the Canada groceries and essentials benefit and the one-time payment would come quickly, when Canadians need it the most. If the legislation receives swift royal assent, the support would start rolling out as early as this spring. I urge all hon. members to pass Bill C-19 without delay so we can ensure that Canadians get this much-needed relief as soon as possible. I know the Canada groceries and essentials benefit would be a difference maker for so many Canadians, including Canadians in my riding of Pickering—Brooklin.

The benefit would be indexed to inflation and would build on the existing GST credit. Our government has designated the benefit to provide \$11.7 million in additional support over six years. To help address affordability challenges, the benefit would provide a one-time top-up payment equal to a 50% increase in the annual 2025-26 year value of the GST credit. This support would be paid out as early as possible this spring, or no later than June 2026. It would deliver \$3.1 billion in immediate assistance to individuals and families already getting the GST credit.

There is more. In addition, the value of the Canada groceries and essentials benefit would increase by 25% for five years, starting in July 2026. This expansion would deliver another \$8.6 billion in support over the 2026-27 to 2030-31 period, and would ensure that the benefit goes to half a million new individuals and families.

Combined, these measures would deliver extra support of up to \$402 to a single individual without children, \$527 to a couple and \$805 to a couple with two children. For example, a single senior with \$25,000 in net income would receive a one-time top-up of \$267 plus a longer-term increase of \$137 for the 2026-27 benefit year, for a total increase of \$402. In total, for the 2026-27 benefit year, they would receive \$950, including the top-up.

Here is another example. A couple with two children and \$40,000 in net income would receive a one-time top-up of \$533 plus an increase of \$272 for the 2026-27 benefit year, for a total increase of \$805. In all, for the 2026-27 benefit year, the couple would receive \$1,890, including the top-up.

● (1730)

I want to be clear on my next point. At these levels, the government would be offsetting the rising cost of groceries beyond the overall inflation growth that we have experienced since the pandemic. After the one-time payment is made in the spring of 2026, eligible families and individuals in Canada would receive the enriched regular payment under the Canada groceries and essentials benefit as of July 2026. The benefit payment would arrive quarterly, to ensure families can use the funds to help with their day-to-day expenses.

As we know, the benefit would be only one example of the many ways we are supporting Canadians. It would be in addition to existing benefits such as the Canada child benefit, the Canada disability benefit and the guaranteed income supplement. The new Canada groceries and essentials benefit would not only help Canadians at a difficult time; it would also support our drive to build the strongest economy in the G7.

Canada's new government has been relentlessly focused on bringing costs down for Canadians. Above all, the government will empower Canadians by helping them get ahead and reducing their cost of living. When Canadians keep more of the money they earn, they can better support their families, invest in their communities and build the future they want.

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The government is committed to improving affordability in Canada, and our actions have been fulfilling this pledge. Through measures such as those outlined in budget 2025, we have taken important steps to ease the financial pressure on Canadian households. For instance, as part of Bill C-4, we are eliminating the GST for first-time homebuyers on new homes up to \$1 million and reducing the GST for first-time homebuyers on new homes between \$1 million and \$1.5 million.

We are also delivering major tax cuts. Since July 1, 2025, Canadians have been paying less tax after the government announced lowering the first marginal personal income tax rate from 15% to 14%. The rate reduction, which is currently before Parliament as part of Bill C-4, would apply to taxable income of up to \$58,523 in 2026.

This change would ensure that nearly 22 million Canadians benefit from tax relief of up to \$420 per person, saving two-income families up to \$840 this year. Notably, most of the tax relief would go to Canadians with income in the two lowest tax brackets.

The government has also cancelled the divisive consumer fuel charge, directly allowing Canadians in provinces and territories where the fuel charge applies to save money with the price they pay at the pump. This action has reduced gasoline prices in most provinces and territories by up to 18¢ a litre in comparison to 2024-25. It has also helped to lower headline inflation.

Actions on affordability, such as those I have highlighted today, are key examples of how the government is empowering Canadians to shape their own future. In the words of the Prime Minister, we cannot control what other nations do, but we can control what we build for ourselves.

• (1735)

**Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one thing I am trying to wrap my head around is that they are talking about how important Bill C-19 is and how important this initiative is, to give some money back to Canadians. That in itself should really be a signal to Canadians that the Liberals have failed when it comes to grocery price inflation. Canada has the highest food inflation in the G7 right now, and it has been that way for a while.

If this was such an important initiative, why was it not in their fall budget? Why did they have this “come to Jesus” moment now, to put cheques in mailboxes for the election they want?

**Juanita Nathan:** Mr. Speaker, what is important about the bill right now? The bill is timely, to put money back in the pockets of people for them to use right now. It is true that we have to tackle the root causes of food insecurity, and we are developing a national food security strategy. Strategies like that take time in terms of domestic food production and improved access to affordable, nutritious food. In the meantime, measures such as this do help everyday Canadians.

• (1740)

[Translation]

**Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my esteemed colleague for her speech. It was clear that she carefully weighed every word.

That being said, one thing I feel the government has not weighed is the impact this will have on national debt, because we know that everything this government does only adds to the debt. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, we are talking about an additional \$12.4 billion of debt over six years. Meanwhile, there is no direct increase in seniors' income. There is no increase to OAS. What will happen in 2031? Inflation will have eaten away at everyone's income and people will not have a penny left.

Is that a responsible measure?

[English]

**Juanita Nathan:** Mr. Speaker, all programs cost money, and this program, at this time, is timely and needed. We need to do what we can for all Canadians, and that is what the government is doing.

**Brendan Hanley (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member was in her home riding of Pickering—Brooklin over the weekend. I wonder if she can describe a bit what this means for her own constituents in Pickering—Brooklin.

**Juanita Nathan:** Mr. Speaker, in Pickering—Brooklin, a large number of constituents are seniors. I got a lot of calls from members of my riding, thanking the government for such a program, because even getting \$100 extra means a lot to seniors at this time. The government is doing an excellent job. Seniors whose yearly incomes are lower than \$25,000 would definitely benefit from this program.

**Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I just asked the member a question, and she did not have an answer. Food price inflation has been an issue for years and years. If this was so important, why was this not championed at the cabinet table? Why was this not in the budget that was presented last fall? They would have had that \$3 billion in the already massive deficit that they delivered to Canadians.

I would like the member to answer why this initiative was not in the budget, if it was so important to the Liberal Party of Canada.

**Juanita Nathan:** Mr. Speaker, the budget last fall had many things in it that lowered costs for our constituents. The Conservatives always and every day talk about food costs. We have come up with this plan to help all Canadians, and we would really like the Conservatives to help us pass this bill so we can help all Canadians.

**Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the member for Calgary Centre.

It is an honour to rise today to speak on behalf of the people of the Long Range Mountains on Bill C-19, and to explain why Conservatives will support this legislation while also being honest and transparent with Canadians about the serious affordability challenges it does not solve.

The government is saying that this measure is intended to help Canadians manage the rising cost of groceries and essential goods. We Conservatives will not obstruct or delay help reaching people, because any relief is better than none for Canadians who are struggling right now, but supporting the bill does not mean we are pretending that it solves the problem Canadians are facing. Canadians deserve honesty and transparency about what the bill does and, just as importantly, what it does not do.

With respect to transparency, the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed this morning that the entire cost of this measure will be borrowed, adding approximately \$1.397 billion in new interest charges over the next five years, which is money Canadians would pay just to service the debt. When affordability measures are funded through borrowing, Canadians pay higher inflation, higher interest rates and higher taxes. Conservatives believe that short-term relief should not come at the expense of long-term affordability. Accordingly, supporting the bill before us does not mean ignoring its shortcomings or pretending that this half measure is a response to a serious problem that is facing Canadians.

In addition, this measure is a drop in the bucket compared to what Canadians are paying at the grocery store. For most households, it will be gone after only a few trips, while prices continue to rise week after week. It will offer short-term relief but do nothing to change the reality Canadians face every single time they buy food. Canadians understand that a temporary credit may help cover a bill but does not change the prices on the shelves.

Our responsibility as parliamentarians is not only to pass measures that provide short-term help but to be honest with Canadians about whether these measures will actually improve their lives in a lasting way. This is an even more concerning issue where I come from. According to Food First NL, Newfoundland and Labrador is facing a profound food security crisis. In 2024, 30.1% of people in our province lived in a food insecure household, well above the national average, placing us among the highest rates in Canada. That is roughly 158,000 of our neighbours struggling to afford the food they need and want, and things have only gotten worse.

Food costs have continued to rise faster than incomes, and while families everywhere feel the pinch, the crisis is even more acute outside of our urban centres. Rural and smaller communities face higher food costs and greater barriers to accessing affordable, nutritious food than those in urban centres, underscoring that people in my riding are bearing a disproportionate share of the hardship.

Compounding these pressures is our rapidly aging population. Nearly one in four residents in Newfoundland and Labrador is now 65 years or older, which is the highest share of seniors in any province in Canada. This demographic reality means a larger por-

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tion of low-income, fixed-income households, who are particularly vulnerable to rising food prices and who spend a bigger share of their limited income on essentials.

This combination of high food inflation, rural cost pressures, and an older, lower-income population shows why measures like Bill C-19, while they may be well intentioned, do not go far enough to address the depth of the crisis people are facing in Newfoundland and Labrador. As a result, people are certainly anxious, paying attention and immediately responding to my office. What I am hearing from constituents is consistent and clear. This measure may help briefly, but it does not keep up with grocery prices that continue to rise month after month. To them, real affordability means prices coming down and staying down.

Canada now has the highest food inflation in the G7. Food inflation is double what it is in the United States. This tells us that it is a made-in-Canada problem. Statistics Canada shows that an average family of four is expected to spend approximately \$17,500 on food in 2026, which is an increase of almost \$1,000 from 2025.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, these pressures are felt even more acutely. Our province relies far more heavily on imported food than many other parts of the country do. A significantly higher share of what ends up on grocery store shelves must be shipped in, often over long distances and through multiple transportation points.

● (1745)

That means when fuel costs rise, when regulations increase transportation expenses, or when supply chains are disrupted and produce sits on a transport truck in the ferry lineup for multiple days and is spoiled, those increases show up faster and more sharply in Newfoundland and Labrador. Policies that add costs anywhere along that chain have an outsized impact on families in our province.

Canadians are making decisions today that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. They are buying cheaper food, not because they want to, but because it is all that they can afford. They are skipping fresh produce, stretching meals and cutting portion sizes so groceries last a little longer. Seniors are choosing between filling prescriptions and buying enough food for the week. Young Canadians are telling me they cannot save for a home or pay off student loans to truly start their lives because their budgets are stretched so thin with the grocery prices.

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This is what persistent inflation looks like in real life. It is not one bad week or one unexpected bill. It is the stress of watching prices rise while income stays the same. It is the exhaustion that comes from constantly adjusting, cutting back and falling further behind despite doing everything right. Canadians are asking for seriousness, and they are asking for policies that recognize how hard life has become and that respond with some more permanent solutions.

I have heard from retirees whose incomes sit just above the GST credit eligibility threshold. They receive no benefit under this bill, yet they face the same grocery prices as everyone else. They are struggling daily to afford good, healthy food. They are asking a fair and reasonable question: Why is help with food insecurity limited to some Canadians, while others facing the same costs are excluded entirely?

I have also heard from people who returned to work temporarily to fill gaps or support essential services. Because of that short-term income, they have been pushed out of eligibility altogether. Their long-term financial situation did not improve, and their grocery bills certainly did not go down. They are now left uncertain about whether they will receive this benefit at all, despite facing the same rising prices as everyone else. One message to my office summed it up clearly: If a policy does nothing to change prices, it does nothing to fix affordability. A payment that arrives once is quickly swallowed by rising costs, and families are left facing the same grocery bill the very next week. Without addressing inflation and the policies driving it, the benefit disappears while the problem remains. That observation captures the core weakness of Bill C-19.

In addition, this measure is not new. In 2022, the Liberal government doubled the same GST credit. Canadians were promised relief. Food prices continued to rise. Food bank use increased. Affordability worsened. When governments choose income supports instead of tackling cost drivers, inflation continues to go unchecked. Prices rise. Benefits follow. Families are left chasing higher costs with temporary relief. The cycle is not sustainable for households or for public finances.

To understand why grocery prices continue to rise, we need to be honest about the role of government policy. Governments cannot control global weather patterns or international markets, but they do control taxes, regulations and spending decisions. When fuel costs rise, food becomes more expensive to grow, process and transport. When the government taxes industry, those costs are passed on to consumers. When deficits grow unchecked, inflation erodes purchasing power for everyone. The government insists there is no tax on food. Canadians know that is not true in practice.

Clean fuel regulations increase the cost of gasoline and diesel. The industrial carbon tax increases the cost of operating farms, processing facilities and transportation networks. These costs do not disappear. They are built into the prices at every stage of the supply chain.

Conservatives support helping Canadians through a difficult period. That is why we will allow this measure to move forward so that any relief is not delayed. However, we also believe Canadians should not be left with the impression that the legislation represents

a permanent or comprehensive solution, because real affordability comes from lowering the costs built into prices in the first place.

For those reasons, we will support Bill C-19, but we will continue to press for lasting affordability for Canadians in Newfoundland and Labrador and across the country.

● (1750)

**Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Long Range Mountains for her speech and for supporting Bill C-19.

The member opposite mentioned being honest about the impact of government policies. We have seen in the last year that gas prices have actually been reduced in Canada by about 17% to 20%. At the same time, we have seen grocery prices increase by about 5%.

Does she really believe that by reducing the industrial carbon tax, it is going to have a significant impact on reducing the price of groceries in Canada? We have already seen that the price of gas going down in Canada has not had that effect.

**Carol Anstey:** Mr. Speaker, before I became a member of Parliament, I was an entrepreneur for many years. I understand how, when entrepreneurs incur costs, those costs eventually get passed on to consumers. Canadians understand that as well. I do believe that removing the industrial carbon tax would contribute to helping with the rising food crisis that Canadians find themselves in.

● (1755)

[*Translation*]

**Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague was talking about, among other things, reducing the carbon tax. However, the more the government supports the oil industry and subsidizes oil companies, the more greenhouse gases that are emitted, which increases the effects of climate change like flooding, wildfires and so on. This is a cost that trickles down to the people. Climate change has a price.

In addition, it is true that part of the increase in the cost of living comes from the government's policies. For example, the Parliamentary Budget Officer determined that poorly thought-out immigration policies and the immigration thresholds caused a 25% increase in the cost of housing.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

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[English]

**Carol Anstey:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I just want to say that Conservatives believe that tackling the climate crisis can be done while also spurring on the economy. We believe in technology, not taxes.

While we have heard, in many cases, that increasing taxes on consumers will somehow contribute to solving the climate crisis, we have a different approach. We take climate change seriously, but we believe in a different approach: supporting technology and not taxes in this regard.

**Tako Van Popta (Langley Township—Fraser Heights, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech was very inspiring.

One thing I have noticed consistently during my years in the House is that when it comes to managing the economy, the Liberals always attack the symptoms and not the underlying problems. It is like taking an aspirin when surgery is required.

The Bank of Canada has said repeatedly that our lagging productivity metrics, when compared to those of our trading nations, are the problem. It is a crisis, and it is undermining Canadians' purchasing power.

Could my colleague comment on the importance of the government's doing the hard work of attacking the underlying root problems so Canadians can get their purchasing power back again and not have to rely on handouts from the government?

**Carol Anstey:** Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, we always want to recognize that people are struggling right now. We understand that sometimes these measures are important, but we do not believe in a system where people are chasing higher payments and adding to inflation, not providing real, long-term solutions.

We believe that the government has a responsibility to really dig into the increased costs along the supply chain and also to spur on investment in the economy, which is why removing the increased costs would give relief to consumers and would also make us more competitive and spur on investment, which grows the economy, grows people's paycheques and also provides real, long-term solutions.

**Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is great to see my colleagues in the House of Commons, and I am happy to address the bill that is before the House, Bill C-19, the Canada groceries and essentials benefit act. It used to be called the goods and services tax credit, but in a nice marketing move, we are going to change the name, because before this bill, Canadians have been having trouble paying for their essentials. It is one of the things that we have to get to the heart of.

What the government is proposing is a one-time payment. It would be an added bonus of 50% this year for what used to be the GST rebate and would now be the Canada groceries and essentials benefit. It would go up for a family of four from \$1,100 to \$1,890, which would be a significant increase this year, but then it would be carved back to \$1,400 next year and the years following, so that would be a reduction. That is a little strange. I will address that later in my speech.

This is in response to grocery inflation rising by 6.2% year over year, and notably the highest in the G7 group of countries. It is more than double what it is in the United States, which is our nearest neighbour and a country that has the same sort of transportation network that we do as far as getting our food.

I am going to deviate here a bit to talk about something that is the root cause of this, which is government debt. Right now, the government is about \$1.3 trillion in debt. In February 2025, one year ago, StatsCan estimated that \$527 billion of that \$1.3 trillion was international finance. We have to borrow from offshore to fund the debt. The problem is that the money has to come from foreigners and future taxpayers that are going to pay for today's consumption.

Projected interest costs for this year in the budget were an astounding \$55.6 billion, which is about \$2,500 per Canadian family. I ask members to remember that 40% of that is held by foreigners, so 40% of \$56 billion is about \$22 billion in interest payments alone that leaves Canada and pays international money managers, but it will get worse because there is no slowdown for these interest payments.

The projected interest payments over the next five years are \$330 billion, so it is growing. If we maintain the 40% held by foreigners, 40% will go to offshore money managers, so Canadian taxpayers will be giving them a projected \$132 billion over five years, if the government sticks to its spending limits, which it has not been able to do thus far. Members can think about how much money is going out of Canadian taxpayers' pockets into those of foreign money managers.

In 2015, before the Liberals were elected, the amount of Canadian government debt held by foreigners was 27%. About one and a half times that amount is held in foreign accounts now. Let us acknowledge that there is not enough capital in Canada to fund the government's overspending, so it has to go offshore. The government has to pay international finance managers to fund Canadians' consumption. Our economy is getting worse, and our government is spending like it has the money, which I assure members, it does not. It is borrowing from foreign bankers and paying a high price, which will get higher the more the government increases debt and misses more fiscal targets.

This brings us around to another input factor. Barely two months after delivering a much-delayed budget with a prospective deficit of over \$78 billion, we are now suddenly adding over \$3 billion more to this year's deficit, and over \$10 billion more over the five-year horizon so that people can afford to eat. That is according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

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Something the government overlooked when it planned its deficits and borrowing plan was the ability of people to eat. This legislation was not in the budget two months ago, and the Conservatives have been pointing out the food inflation hurting Canadians across the country. It is mystifying that the economists in charge on the other side did not foresee this because inflation is not a symptom of government deficits; in fact, it is a feature.

• (1800)

The most common way to pay back, in the future, for overspending today is currency debasement. That means Canadians' dollars buy less in the future. More food does not appear out of nowhere; it just gets more expensive.

Mysteriously, the government is planning to give Canadians more this year in the rebate than next year or in the following years. Here is the problem with that. I guarantee more inflation next year and yet fewer government rebates. It almost seems like a Liberal formula: to throw out a whole bunch of cheques and see how Canadians respond and if Liberals should call an election in the process. If the Liberals had a majority here, would they be proceeding with this, or would they be continuing to debase Canadians' currency in this way? Forget about those pesky Conservatives, who keep telling Canadians how their cost of living is out of control.

In 2026, families are expected to spend about \$1,000 more on groceries than last year. This rebate will make up about \$790 of that increase and about \$300 more going forward, when groceries are going to be even more expensive. Canadians are still falling far behind in feeding their families. Food, life's essential, is the very bottom layer of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. If someone is not feeding their family, they are resorting to anything to get them fed. No wonder Canadians are increasingly turning toward food banks, with 2.2 million Canadians accessing food banks every month. That is astonishing. That number has doubled since 2019, yet the Liberal government refuses to address the direct cause, which is its own fiscal policies.

On the one hand, the Canadian dollar buys less; on the other hand, the government's policies ramp up the cost of Canadian food production and delivery increases with the industrial carbon tax, a hidden tax that makes Canada less competitive and adds a cost burden on consumers. In addition, the clean fuel tax and taxes on food packaging add more to Canadians' food bills. It is hard to believe this food inflation is unique to Canada, but it is. It is hard to believe it is not a design of the government's actual policy direction.

The government is debasing our currency. That means our dollars buy less. The agenda of managing decline is not the answer. We need to turn this around and make Canada a more prosperous nation again. Canada is borrowing money excessively. We are borrowing money from foreign money managers, Canadian taxpayers are leaking billions per year to these international moneylenders, and now it is obvious we are borrowing more from foreigners so Canadians can afford to eat. If the path we are on is not clear yet, it should be. I will tell the government to get its fiscal house in order. The path it has put this country on is not sustainable.

• (1805)

**Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have said many times now that the Canada groceries and

essentials benefit would help 12 million Canadians, but what about the other 28 million Canadians who are struggling with rising grocery prices? Why not adopt policies that will bring down the cost of groceries for all Canadians, such as cancelling the industrial carbon tax, the federal fuel standard or unnecessary food packaging regulations, all of which drive up the price of groceries for all 40 million Canadians?

**Greg McLean:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right. The government is targeting 12 million Canadians here with more rebates going out the door. The issue, of course, is that the government's role is to take taxes in through a whole bunch of forms, including hidden taxes, and then redistribute them to people they think deserve that money. The question is, can we not just have a better economy if we do not pull those taxes out in the first place? That would benefit all Canadians, and they could afford food much better.

The Liberals need to stop taking with one hand and giving out a little more with the other hand. That would be a huge solution for all Canadians.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since the member entered this place, I have found him oftentimes to be reasonable. The words he shared today really demonstrate that, at least to constituents in the riding of Waterloo, who often ask if this House can be functional. Today, seeing the deputy leader of the Conservatives move a motion for this legislation to advance so Canadians can receive the supports they need is a demonstration that the House can function. We would like to see the House function on legislation such as the crime bills, and constituents in Waterloo would like to see that as well.

I would like to hear from the member whether he agrees that we can have constructive feedback and conversation. We can always do better and do more, but it is important that we take the wins for our constituents to ensure that the government and all members of Parliament are able to deliver for constituents. I know that is what constituents in the riding of Waterloo want.

What are the constituents in the riding of Calgary Centre expecting from members in the House?

**Greg McLean:** Mr. Speaker, that is an important question. Working in the House, getting things done for Canadians, is important. The bill would ease food costs for a portion of Canadians. Of course we are going to get behind that, because we see the policies that have driven up those costs. We need to make sure we address that. People's ability to eat is a very important part of what we have to address.

We agreed to one day of debate. We will be moving this forward, as my House leader indicated earlier. This is about a constructive Parliament and getting good things done for Canadians.

However, what I noted in my speech is that we need to address the underlying cause of why this is happening, and to get ahead of it, because otherwise we are going to be in a constant cycle of just putting more cheques out, putting more fuel on the inflationary fire and causing more problems down the road.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his interesting remarks on the country's debts. It is well known and accepted by everyone: more debts equals less freedom.

Now, my question is as follows. When the government has to address certain issues, is it better for the state to go into debt or for households to do so? What we are seeing is that household debt has increased fairly significantly in the last quarter.

Does my colleague not think that, for measures like the one we are discussing today, it is better for the state to go into debt than for households to go even further into debt?

**Greg McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I must apologize, as I did not fully understand the question from my Bloc Québécois colleague. I think he asked what we intend to do about the increase in household debt, which is significant.

For the moment, I think it is important to give more money to people who need it to feed themselves. However, we also need to fix the federal government's funding system, which is causing inflation, and food inflation in particular. That is impacting Canadians. These two issues go hand in hand, and it is important to address them together.

[*English*]

**Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be dividing my time with the member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan.

We are debating Bill C-19, the Canada groceries and essentials benefit act. Listening to the speeches all day today, the debates, I cannot help but ask, why this bill? It is mainly for two reasons: first, Canadians cannot afford to pay their bills and they cannot afford to buy groceries; and second, this was a promise made by the Liberal government to reduce grocery prices.

The name of this bill is a bit misleading because it does not affect grocery prices; this is actually a tax rebate. In fact, if we look at what is happening in Canada, the opposite is happening in terms of what the Liberal government promised around getting control of grocery inflation. In fact, the opposite is happening. Grocery costs have gone up and are still going up. Inflation did rise to 2.4% from 2.2%, but groceries rose to 5%. In that respect, Canada, in terms of inflation, especially groceries, is the best performing country because Canadians cannot afford groceries. This is crazy.

I understand what it means not to be able to afford groceries. I was a councillor and a chief councillor for a small first nations band

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on the west coast of B.C., and it was one of my goals to make sure that people could afford groceries and pay their bills and build their own lives without government help. For members who do not know anything about the Indian Act, the Indian Act is basically built on government funding, and a lot of first nations leaders try to get away from that dependence.

However, in this case here, Conservatives will be supporting Bill C-19 mainly to try to stop some of the pain Canadians are going through. An example of some of the pain Canadians are going through is that one in five Canadians have skipped paying bills to buy food in Canada. Some Canadians are skipping meals because they cannot afford them. They are making decisions on whether or not to keep the lights on or to feed their children or themselves. This is in Canada.

When they are not celebrating food banks, the Liberals are actually celebrating this tax rebate. I am trying to get the logic of this down. They are celebrating the fact that they are imposing hidden taxes on Canadians, and they want Canadians to be grateful that they are going to give some of that money back. In my riding, \$1,800 will not cover rent for one month. What these Liberals are celebrating today is \$10 a month. They want Canadians to be grateful, yet they are not even fulfilling their election promise.

The Prime Minister himself said he should be judged by prices at the grocery store. This is not going to affect prices at the grocery store. It is a stopgap measure for one year. Those middle-income families, if they qualify, will maybe get a cheque, maybe. However, like everything else, there are qualifications.

I have heard some of my colleagues here saying that we do not mind when Liberals steal Conservative ideas. In fact, the Liberals got elected on a Conservative platform: axe the tax, build pipelines and negotiate with Trump down in the United States. However, on all accounts, four or five of those promises could not be fulfilled by the Liberal government. I do not know why it could not fulfill those promises. Maybe it could not fulfill them, or maybe, by choice, it would not fulfill them.

Here is another broken promise: They were saying they were going to address affordability at the grocery store. The question arises in the same context: Do the Liberals want to address grocery prices? Will they or, by choice, will they not?

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• (1815)

I have heard it said many times that two million people a month visit food banks in Canada and 700,000 of the people served are children. That is heartbreaking, especially when we consider that a portion of that population is middle-class income earners, people with jobs and mortgages, who 10 years ago did not have to worry about a tax rebate or skipping a bill. In today's day and age, when people skip a bill, there are consequences for them: a mortgage going into default or a car being taken away. It is happening because people have to make a decision on whether or not they should eat.

What the Liberal government has not said is that out of the 40 million people living in Canada, there are 10 million people living with food insecurity, meaning that they are not sure where their next meal is going to come from. I cannot help but be surprised by that as a first nations leader, coming from an area where we actually resolved unemployment and resolved the economy by supporting LNG, mining and forestry.

I came to the House of Commons and found out that all of Canada is in the same boat that we, as first nations, were in 20 years ago: just trying to pay the bills, find a job or be independent so we could chart our own future.

In fact, Canada is going in the opposite direction. Now people are starting to get a good understanding of what it feels like to be a first nations person living in Canada, where there are no economic opportunities, where people cannot afford their bills and are dependent on government money. Canada is losing auto manufacturing and lumber jobs to the United States. Now we do not even have a plan to defend Canada's borders. If there were a plan, there would be no money for it because there is no economy.

The idea that the Liberals took as their own from the Conservatives was to build our national defences, build pipelines, axe the carbon tax and negotiate with the U.S.A. It is all going to hurt Canadians today and tomorrow, especially when we consider the massive deficit that the Liberal government has incurred is going to be paid for by our children and our children's children.

I, like many other members, get asked what Conservatives would do. The Liberals got elected, but they could not implement the promises that they took from the Conservatives.

What more could we do? We could get rid of the hidden taxes. The clean fuel regulations are going to add 7¢ a litre to fuel this year, which will rise to 17¢ per litre in 2030, and not just at the pumps but also for shipping goods and services. We should get rid of the industrial carbon tax, which adds cost to shipping, farming and groceries. The food packaging tax is adding costs at the grocer's level that are going to get passed on to consumers.

By the way, Canada in its wisdom has said it is going to lift the plastics ban for plastic straws and other goods to be shipped to the United States, which will make life affordable for people in the United States but not do the same for Canadians. Everything is going to the United States. Our government gave Stellantis auto manufacturing \$220 million, and what did Stellantis do? It went to the United States and invested in its auto manufacturing sector.

This is all talk and stopgap measures, while real people are suffering and trying to make decisions that affect not only their daily life but also their future. We cannot afford to keep going like this. The government should take a page from first nations leaders who say we should look ahead seven generations when making decisions.

• (1820)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-19 is a piece of legislation that will at least be a sincere and genuine attempt by the government to provide assistance to individuals through a program that will see significant amounts of money helping with the issue of affordability of groceries.

The Conservatives like to give this impression that Canada is broken. Today we have heard a lot about Canada having the worst inflation in the G7. If we go back for the last five years and take a look at the cumulative inflation rate, there might be one or two countries in the G7 that actually have done better than Canada on that front. When the member talks about thinking about future generations, that is exactly what the government is doing. That is one of the reasons we have Bill C-19.

**Ellis Ross:** Mr. Speaker, that was not a question. That was a bit of a ramble, but the member is always getting up and asking about what we are doing here, talking about things. It is because we were elected to come here to debate these issues. I made a commitment long ago to make sure that, if I was in opposition, I would hold the government to account. The member just got through saying that the bill will address grocery prices, but no, it will not. It is a tax rebate. The people who actually take advantage of that tax rebate, if they qualify, are going to have to decide how they use it: to pay the rent, the phone bill, the mortgage or the grocery bill. That is a tough decision.

[*Translation*]

**Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech and I think we are more or less on the same page when it comes to supporting Bill C-19. We consider it necessary because of the imperative need to support Quebeckers and Canadians through the extremely harsh financial circumstances facing families.

Once again, however, I get a sense that we are good at extending support programs to help people in need, but not so good at creating measures that will help people gain wealth with dignity, improve their work skills or find new sources of employment. We know that artificial intelligence is going to replace many jobs in the coming years.

Apart from tax breaks and cheque- or program-based support measures, like the ones this government often advances, would my colleague not agree that we should equip people to deal with the challenges awaiting them in the future, which will be numerous in the employment field, and which will certainly be all the more costly unless we start addressing them now?

[*English*]

**Ellis Ross:** Mr. Speaker, I 100% agree. We should be looking at the capacity of vulnerable Canadians. In fact, that is what we have been doing in Skeena—Bulkley Valley for a number of years, and it does pay dividends in terms of independence. Those people are making good paycheques that actually contribute to the economy in Canada, which has been shrinking in the last 10 years in terms of oil, gas, forestry and mining. I do not think we have actually begun to see the real level of hurt that Canadians are going to see in the future.

• (1825)

**Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to talk for a few minutes about what is actually causing some of the food price inflation. The outlook for net farm cash receipts went down 15% in 2025. What do farmers do if they have less cash? They produce less food. The economy just shrunk by 0.5% in the last quarter, meaning that we have less production in our country.

If farmers are producing less and the economy is shrinking, what does my colleague think is going to happen with a cash influx to people, when there is going to be more cash chasing fewer goods?

**Ellis Ross:** Mr. Speaker, that is basically how a responsible government is supposed to look at the economy. Basically, capital is going to leave and jobs are going to leave. The brain drain is going to happen. In the case of agriculture, we are going to have to import more food, and the government is actually considering supporting the International Maritime Organization's shipping carbon tax. It is another hidden carbon tax that would not even go to Ottawa. It would go to some agency in New York or Geneva.

By the way, one of the things that I find ridiculous is the Liberals' questioning the hidden taxes when there are farmers on this side of the House who are saying that they can see the cost and it is going to have to be passed on to consumers. As such, these are not imaginary taxes.

**Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley for what he shared. It was very provocative, and it brought back some memories. Normally when we get up to speak, we try to give the interpreters a bit of a heads-up of what we are going to say, but his intervention hit home for me.

It reminded me of my childhood growing up below the poverty line under Trudeau senior. It was a time when my mother and I had to go to the Salvation Army to get a \$10 food voucher, which back then was a lot of money. We did not have a car. We did not have a TV. We struggled to put food on the table. There were times when we did not have much in the cupboard. By the miracle and grace of God, someone would show up in our driveway with a bunch of groceries. I may have moved on, but I know that these are the types of

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people I represent in Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, and the generosity of those people is second to none.

When I say this hits close to home, it is because the Moose Jaw & District Food Bank is just a few blocks away from my riding office. Last week, the executive director, Jason Moore, made it clear what families in my riding are facing. He said about this government's grocery benefit, "It'll help, but it's not going to be a fix everything solution for food banks." Mr. Moore understands what many working families in Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan know all too well, which is that even those earning modest incomes often fall through the cracks. Their household incomes put them above the benefits threshold, but they are still struggling with bills that have become unaffordable. This reference is to those who have access to food banks. What about those who do not have the access to food banks in their communities, like my mother?

Conservatives will support Bill C-19, because families need help right now. We will let the bill before us pass, because every dollar matters when families are choosing between groceries and other essentials. However, let us be honest about what this is. It is a band-aid solution that barely covers a few trips to the grocery store. This is a recycled Trudeau-era policy that would provide temporary relief without addressing the fundamental problem of driving grocery costs through the roof.

I have heard my colleague from Winnipeg North from across the way say that the Prime Minister is focused. He will keep saying that, and he will repeat it, but the Prime Minister is looking at life through a straw. He needs to take the straw away, open up his eyes and see the problems. The Liberals need to take the focus off trying to make themselves look good and focus on the root issues, the root problems that we are facing and that every household in Canada is facing.

We are supporting families in this crisis, but we refuse to pretend that the bill would fix anything. While the government offers hand-outs with one hand, its policies continue to drive up costs with the other. If it wants to be transparent, then disclose all the taxes that go into something. I remember doing that as the mayor of my city of Moose Jaw. In their tax roll, we showed everyone where their taxes were going, and we should be able to do that for the constituents of our ridings when they are going to the grocery store. They should understand where their taxes go so that they understand the costs that are being driven up by the Liberal government.

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● (1830)

The government consistently dismisses Conservatives' concerns about taxes driving up food costs. When we point to the industrial carbon tax, clean fuel regulations and regulatory burdens throughout the supply chain, the government claims that food inflation is simply a global issue affecting everyone, but the facts tell a different story. Canada now leads the entire G7 in food inflation at 6.2%. This is worse than the United States at 3.1%, worse than the United Kingdom at 4.2% and worse than Germany, Japan, France and Italy. Food policy experts confirm that most of Canada's food inflation is now policy-induced, with carbon pricing embedded throughout the supply chain.

If food inflation is truly a global problem, as the government claims, why does Canada have the worst food inflation in the G7? What is the government doing differently that is making groceries more expensive for Canadians than they are for families in every other major developed economy? The answer is clear. It is a policy failure. While other G7 nations manage global pressures, Canada has added layers of domestic costs that make us uniquely uncompetitive.

Saskatchewan feeds Canada. We are one of the world's largest producers of wheat, canola and pulses. When policy costs drive up input costs for Saskatchewan farmers, those costs do not disappear. They show up in the grocery stores across the country.

The industrial carbon tax affects every stage of food production: the fuel for tractors and combines, the transportation to move grain, the fertilizers to grow crops and the processing facilities that turn commodities into food. Clean fuel regulations add another seven cents per litre on the diesel and gasoline that farmers depend on. These are not abstract policy debates; they are direct cost increases that get passed through the supply chain.

When it costs more to grow food in Saskatchewan, it costs more to buy food in grocery stores from Victoria to St. John's. The cruel irony is that working families in Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan pay the higher grocery costs caused by policies hitting their neighbours' farms, but many earn just enough to be cut off from the grocery benefit. They face policy-driven food inflation without getting the government's band-aid solution.

We cannot tax the people who grow the food, process the food and transport the food, and then act surprised when food becomes unaffordable for families. Instead of addressing Canada's position as the G7 leader in food inflation, the government offers temporary handouts while doubling down on policies that are driving costs higher.

Real food affordability requires addressing root causes by removing the industrial carbon tax burden on farmers, processors and transporters; eliminating the clean fuel regulations that add seven cents per litre to agricultural food costs; and cutting the regulatory red tape that makes Canadian food production less competitive than our G7 counterparts. However, the government will not do that. It would rather give families a few hundred dollars to pay for the inflated grocery bills its policies created. It is like breaking someone's leg, offering them crutches and expecting them to say thank you. It is more than breaking a leg; it is breaking people's spirits.

Conservatives will support Bill C-19 because, when families are struggling, we will not play politics with their grocery bills, but supporting temporary relief does not mean accepting permanent policy failure, and we will continue to point that out. The government must acknowledge that Canada does not lead the G7 in food inflation by accident. We lead because of policy choices and bad governance.

Families in Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan and across Canada deserve better than recycled band-aid policies. They deserve a government that makes food affordable by making food production competitive. It is time to stop taxing food and start feeding families.

● (1835)

**Hon. Adam van Koevorden (Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.):**

Mr. Speaker, I know it is convenient for the Conservatives to say that a GST rebate is from Justin Trudeau's playbook, but as a kid who grew up in the eighties and nineties, when there was a GST rebate that helped lower-income families and my family, I would like to call that into question. It is an age-old Canadian policy that has worked for decades, a means-tested way to get money to the families that need it the most.

Throughout the member's speech, he referred to industrial carbon pricing in an erroneous way. Perhaps he can cite a source or some data to back up what he said, because what I have here is that industrial carbon pricing, such as Canada's output-based pricing system, has a negligible or net-zero impact on consumer food costs and actually makes some sectors more competitive, lowering costs.

Does the member have an example of industrial carbon pricing having an impact on food? The science does not back it up, so I would love to hear it.

**Fraser Tolmie:** Mr. Speaker, all I have to do is go into my riding and speak to a farmer.

[Translation]

**Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague for his resilience considering the challenges he has overcome, which have no doubt made him stronger.

While we are talking about the rising cost of living, he is focusing a lot on the carbon tax. I have a question for him.

Does he not recognize that global warming, the accelerating deterioration of the climate, the increased flooding, the increased droughts and the extremes we are seeing more and more frequently are affecting food costs? Our farmers are facing increasingly difficult conditions and cannot produce as much as they did before global warming caused such rapid climate deterioration.

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

[English]

**Fraser Tolmie:** Mr. Speaker, when I speak to farmers, one of the biggest challenges they have dealt with is drought, but that has happened throughout their farming history. In fact, if we go to the University of Regina and look at the history of drought, it has happened since 1902. There are large periods within our history that show that there have been droughts.

One of the things that the Liberal government could do is step up to the plate, partner with the provincial government and help with the Upper Qu'Appelle water program to actually help farmers and contribute. What would actually happen is that there would be sustainable crops, and there would be a better return on investment. With the carbon tax, we do not know where the money goes. It is like a slush fund for the Liberals.

I appreciate the question that has been brought forward, but I have never met a farmer who did not know how to recycle and did not know how to look after their land better than the Liberal government.

• (1840)

**Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals claim they care, yet they create a problem and end up coming up with a solution for it that is short term. A member across the floor, when talking about the school food program, said that parents should be grateful because they do not have to spend the \$800 on food that the government is spending on a food program in schools.

I am just wondering what the member might have heard in his riding about having the government feed people's children when they have the ability to do that on their own, which is their preference.

**Fraser Tolmie:** Mr. Speaker, earlier on, I talked about pride. One of the things that someone wants to be able to do, as a father or mother, is provide for their family. When people cannot provide for their children because the Liberal boot is on their throats and the Liberals then turn around and say they have started up a food program, I think parents would prefer to be able to send their kids to school with food that they have provided for them as opposed to a program initiated by the Liberals.

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

As I said, I faced challenges growing up and lived below the poverty line. It was not until the mid-eighties when the Conservative Party got into power that we really started to flourish and jobs and growth in this country really started happening. It was a great day to see former prime minister Trudeau walk in the snow and the Conservatives have a seat at the table.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 6:42 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, Bill C-19, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, is deemed read a second time on division and referred to a committee. Accordingly, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am increasingly concerned that the government views the current logjam and the acrimony that seems to exist between Canada and the United States as beneficial to its political fortunes. Every time the U.S. enters the news cycle, it distracts from the Liberals' record of failures here at home: the highest food inflation in the G7 and a shrinking economy in the last quarter.

Despite its "Canada strong" rhetoric, the government continues taking actions that, in my opinion, appear to sabotage our relationship with the United States. For example, there is the decision to reconsider Canada's purchase of the F-35, a jet that the military has said is the right jet, and a decision by the Prime Minister to go to Davos and give a speech that draws a dishonest equivalency between the United States and China and then goes on to squarely and firmly poke the President in the eye. If they are entering a negotiation, why would they do that?

I therefore have a simple question for the government: What is the plan here?

**Patricia Lattanzio (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are right to expect that when the government engages abroad, it is to bring home opportunities, more secure jobs, more resilient supply chains and more diversified markets. That is exactly what the government has been doing, helping Canadians navigate economic headwinds, opening new opportunities in fast-growing regions and defending Canadians against unfair trade measures.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

The pressures faced by Canadian workers and producers across the country are real and deserve acknowledgement from the House. From farmers navigating sudden tariff announcements to auto workers facing disrupted North American supply chains to steelworkers dealing with unfair trade measures, Canadians in sectors across the country feel the impact of global economic turbulence. In a world of rising protectionism, Canada cannot retreat behind its borders. We must face these challenges head-on.

Canada has traditionally depended on a narrow set of markets, particularly the United States, for the bulk of our exports. That closeness remains a strength, but overreliance has left Canada vulnerable to sudden shifts in the trade policy of our southern neighbour. That is why trade diversification is at the forefront of our economic strategy. Modern agreements expanded economic diplomacy and targeted trade missions that create new opportunities for Canadian goods and services. These efforts include ambitious targets like doubling non-U.S. exports over the next decade.

At the leadership level, that engagement includes the Prime Minister's recent visit to China, which focused on stabilizing the bilateral relationship, addressing trade irritants affecting Canadian exporters and reopening channels for Canadian agri-food businesses. When countries impose tariffs on Canadian products such as lumber, steel and aluminum, canola or autos, this government does not back down. Instead, it addresses unfair measures with calibrated responses to protect Canadian industries while working intensively to remove barriers through negotiation. That is what responsible governance looks like: standing up for our industries, being honest with Canadians, working toward negotiated solutions and supporting impacted sectors and workers.

To answer the member's question directly, the Prime Minister will continue to showcase the best of Canada in order to open new markets, secure new jobs and reduce the leverage any single market can ever yield over Canadian livelihoods.

• (1845)

**Jacob Mantle:** Mr. Speaker, as a follow-up, the Minister of Public Safety reported that importers owe the Government of Canada in excess of \$2.3 billion in customs duty. The purpose of the CARM system, the CBSA assessment and revenue management system, was to simplify reporting at the border to make it easier for the CBSA, the Canada Border Services Agency, to collect and account for goods. Instead, outstanding amounts have in fact grown over the last several years, from about \$1.8 billion in 2022 to \$2.3 billion as of October last year. To put that into context, about one-third of the entire revenue that the CBSA collects in a year is outstanding.

Why is performance getting worse, and what is the government doing to collect that outstanding duty?

**Patricia Lattanzio:** Mr. Speaker, the truth is that tariffs on steel and aluminum, canola, lumber, autos and other sectors are not the result of Canadian engagement; they are part of a global surge in protectionism driven by decisions in other capitals. The government will continue to defend the rules-based trading system, protect our workers and create new trade opportunities for our businesses.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

**Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to rise on behalf of the wonderful

hard-working farmers and producers in the constituency of Yorkton—Melville and across Canada.

While I speak tonight in the dead of winter, it is important for all Canadians to know that a farmer's work does not end with the harvest; it is a relentless, continuous job of meticulous planning, precision and execution, where success from year to year is not guaranteed. Farming families are subject to market forces, unpredictable weather patterns and other phenomena they cannot control. However, they all hope they can reasonably rely on their own federal government's attitude toward food production and the tools they need to get the job done.

Before the House recessed, I asked the minister direct questions specifically about fertilizer production in Canada. Fertilizer production is essential to Canadian agriculture and to our food security. Across the country, over 118,000 Canadians are directly or indirectly employed by the industry, many of them in rural regions like Yorkton—Melville, where these jobs are the backbone of the local economy, and yet, instead of supporting this vital sector, the Liberal government is punishing it.

I asked the minister why the Liberals insist on maintaining a \$1.3-billion industrial carbon tax on Canadian-made fertilizer. I asked why they have chosen to impose bulk fertilizer label changes that will cost the industry over \$120 million. I asked why they have no problem with the industry's losing \$48 billion through their 30% by 2030 emissions target. Every one of these costs must be either absorbed by the industry or passed down to the consumers. Both cases result in higher costs for food for Canadians.

Consider for a moment that the Prime Minister was elected in part on the promise that he would lower grocery prices. He even told Canadians to judge him by the prices they pay at the grocery store. Less than a year into his mandate, the bill is already in. Since he became Prime Minister, food inflation has doubled, to the highest level in the G7. It is double that of the U.S. The government can no longer hide behind global excuses when every comparable country is doing better than Canada.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Food inflation is a homegrown problem driven by high Liberal taxes on farmers, fertilizer producers and food processors, combined with inflationary deficits that make everything more expensive. The trickle-down consequences are devastating. In Canada, a G7 nation, food banks had nearly 2.2 million visits in a single month last year. The 2026 food price report estimates that it will cost \$17,600 to feed a family of four, \$1,000 more than last year. Those are debilitating costs for any middle-class family, let alone families that are already struggling to get by.

Both consumers and farmers are being squeezed from every direction. Operating costs have risen 2.5% in a single year. Higher energy prices drove up fertilizer costs, the cost of fuel for farm equipment and the cost of transporting food from the farm gate to the store. Producers were forced to take on 14.1% more debt in 2024, the largest annual increase since 1981, when, we remember, Mr. Pierre Trudeau was here.

These are family farms, multi-generational operations. The government is pushing them closer to the brink. Conservatives have offered a clear and common-sense way forward. We have called on the government to scrap the industrial carbon tax on fertilizer and on farm equipment, eliminate the 17¢-a-litre fuel standard on gas and diesel and axe the billion-dollar food packaging tax, all hidden taxes that drive up the cost of food for everyone.

Sadly, the Liberals have already rejected this proposal. As we get closer and closer to another growing season, farmers and producers are faced with a government that is entrenched in its ideology and unwilling to act on affordability. It is unwilling to, at the very least, get out of the way of our fertilizer producers and farmers so they can do what they do best: feed this nation and feed the world.

● (1850)

**Wade Grant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know some people think one should not do this after February 1, but I would like to wish you a happy new year, because it is the first time I have been able to engage with you.

The purpose of Canada's industrial carbon pricing system is straightforward and fair. Large producers should take responsibility for the pollution they produce. That is the principle at the heart of the policy and one that Canadians understand instinctively. When pollution has real costs for our health, our environment, our economy and our future, those costs should not be absorbed by families, taxpayers or future generations. Instead, it seems that the opposition has not taken the time to understand the substance of our environmental policies.

What I do know is, within billions, the \$57 billion in decarbonization relating to industrial carbon pricing infrastructure.

The industrial carbon pricing system is not a tax designated to punish industry. It is a performance-based system that applies only to Canada's largest emitters and is carefully calibrated to maintain competitiveness while driving cleaner growth. Facilities are charged only on emissions above a set standard, which rewards companies that operate more efficiently and invest in cleaner technologies. Those that innovate pay less; those that pollute more are expected to pay more.

This approach is essential for Canada's economic future. Global markets are moving quickly toward low-carbon production. Major trading partners are introducing carbon border measures and clean procurement standards. Countries that fail to reduce industrial emissions will face growing trade barriers and investment risks. Industrial carbon pricing helps ensure Canadian products remain competitive in a world that increasingly values low-emissions production.

The system also provides flexibility. Facilities can reduce emissions directly, improve efficiency, switch fuels, generate credits or purchase credits from others that outperform their targets. This market-based design keeps costs down and allows businesses to choose the most cost-effective path forward, rather than imposing rigid rules or blanket changes.

It is also important to be clear about what this policy does and does not do. It does not apply to families at the checkout counter, it does not apply to farms, and it is not the driver of rising grocery prices. Food inflation has been shaped by global energy shocks, supply chain disruptions, climate-related crop losses and international market volatility, pressures that are being felt well beyond our country's borders.

Abandoning the polluter pays principle would not make Canada more competitive; it would make us less prepared. It would leave Canadian industries exposed to future trade penalties and undermine the investments already under way to modernize our economy. Our approach ensures that heavy industry does its fair share, innovation is rewarded, and Canada remains a strong, credible trading partner in a rapidly changing global economy.

● (1855)

**Cathay Wagantall:** Mr. Speaker, our farmers are the cleanest in the world and have the most innovative farming in the world. They should not be penalized. Judging from the empty rhetoric we have heard from the government in recent days, farmers and producers are in for another season of uncertainty when it comes to keeping their businesses competitive.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

It is also clear that Canadian families must brace for another year of pain at the checkout. Last week, the Prime Minister admitted something Canadians already knew: that he has no plan to stop food inflation, which is now the highest in the G7. Instead of real solutions, Canadians are getting recycled, half-baked, Trudeau-era, Carney-condoned policies. The grocery benefit is a temporary stop-gap that ignores the root cause of rising prices. The Liberals have created massive inflationary deficits and piled on taxes that increase the cost to grow, ship and sell food. They prefer to have Canadians destitute and forced to accept their dependence on Liberal handouts. People can see right through it. They know that every dollar spent by the government comes out of the pockets of Canadians. They know that yet another government program is failing to get to the root of the problem the Liberals have caused.

Conservatives have put forward real solutions that the Liberals voted down. We remain ready to work with the government to cut hidden Liberal taxes on food and—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

**Wade Grant:** Mr. Speaker, industrial carbon pricing is about fairness and economic responsibility. When pollution imposes real costs, those costs should be borne by the largest emitters, not by families and not by farmers. The system is designed to protect industrial competitiveness, reward efficiency and align Canada with global clean market rules. Scrapping it would not lower grocery prices or strengthen industry; it would weaken Canada's position at a time when clean production is becoming a condition for access to global markets.

Our focus is clear. It remains on a strong economy, fair rules and long-term competitiveness.

## JUSTICE

**Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour, as always, to rise on behalf of the people of Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, all of whom have seen first-hand the rise in crime that has taken place over the last 10 years, aggravated largely by Liberal reforms to bail and Liberal reforms to criminal justice that have made it easier for repeat, often violent, offenders to be out on the streets.

This is why I spent much of the summer engaging with members of the community, members of municipal governments and members of law enforcement, to hear their concerns and bring them to Ottawa, not just as a member of Parliament but also as a member of the House of Commons justice committee, a committee I was tremendously honoured to be appointed to because I wanted to have a hand directly in addressing some of these issues.

I was quite frustrated when the very first bill that came before this committee from the government was not a bill fixing the bail system. It was not a bill reforming sentencing. It was not a bill that was beefing up mandatory minimum sentences. It was, in fact, a bill that took aim at freedom of expression and religious liberty. I am talking, of course, about Bill C-9, the very first justice priority identified by the Liberal government.

This is a bill that I have spent a lot of time on, engaging with representatives of faith communities and, basically, all communities

that feel it will infringe on their rights. I have had round tables in my own riding with faith leaders, and I have had round tables and town halls across the country. Thousands of Canadians have come out personally to these to share their concerns. Countless more have phoned our offices, emailed or dropped by. I believe one group said 40,000 phone calls were made by their volunteers to Liberal members of Parliament, urging them to withdraw Bill C-9.

I cite that now to show the priority issue that we have seen from the government when it comes to justice. In my question to the Secretary of State for Combatting Crime, I said that Canadians wanted action on real crime, not thought crime. I am pleased that between then and now, finally, my Liberal colleagues on the justice committee have agreed to do what we tried, I believe, close to 20 times to get them to do in December, which was to set aside this divisive and toxic Bill C-9 and focus on bail.

I am very pleased that, right now, the justice committee is working on Bill C-14, a bill that, despite not going far enough, is at least a response to some of these concerns that we have heard. We similarly have a bill that just today was referred to the committee, Bill C-16. Again, I believe it has flaws, but at least it is tackling the real criminal justice priorities that Canadians have identified.

The question that I was asking the Secretary of State, a question that I reiterate tonight to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, with whom I have the great privilege of serving on the justice committee, is whether the Liberal government has truly heard the concerns of Canadians, whether its justice priorities are in dealing with the revolving-door bail system, acknowledging the role that Liberal laws have played in making that problem what it is today, and whether it will commit now to focusing on these real criminal justice priorities and not on this bill that countless Canadians have said will infringe on their rights.

Can we get that commitment from the parliamentary secretary right now?

*Adjournment Proceedings*

• (1900)

**Patricia Lattanzio (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Elgin—St. Thomas—London South's question is deeply misleading. That member asserts that the Liberals rejected not about 20 but 17 attempts to advance critical bail reforms. That is simply not true. What we rejected were Conservative attempts to derail and kill the combatting hate act. That bill would make it illegal to publicly display hate symbols when the goal is to promote hatred against a group of people, treat crimes motivated by hate more seriously by creating specific hate crime offence when someone commits a crime because they hate a group of people, and make it a crime to intimidate or obstruct people's lawful access to places like churches, synagogues, mosques or other spaces used by identifiable communities.

These are not new ideas. They were direct recommendations from the House of Commons' fighting anti-Semitism report, a report that Conservative members supported. When the member talks about attacks on religious freedom, let us be honest: We are the party of the charter, the very same party that literally wrote freedom of expression and religion into the Constitution. What Conservatives are doing is simply running around telling church and mosque leaders that freedom of religion is under attack and then passing the hat to fundraise off a claim they know is false. They are not defending faith. They are using faith communities as ATMs.

On bail reform and Bill C-14, I must correct the record again. The reality is that, out of those so-called 17 attempts, I was the first to move a motion to fast-track Bill C-14 and send it back to the House, and the Conservatives voted against it. If anyone listens carefully to that broadcast, they can literally hear them voting no and saying they need more time to study. We have been studying bail reform since September at the justice committee. Police chiefs, police associations, municipalities and the premiers of Alberta, B.C. and Ontario have all called for the passage of Bill C-14, yet Conservatives once again said they needed more time.

There is no more time to study. It is time to act and pass Bill C-14. Let me remind the House that all last fall Conservatives refused to pass Bill C-14, our bail and sentencing reform act to keep violent offenders off our streets. Even after police chiefs across the country called on them to act, they said no. Now suddenly they support fast-tracking the bill. We do welcome that change, but let us be clear that this urgency was missing when it mattered the most. It is better late than never, I guess, but let us not rewrite history.

This government is serious about crime, about victims and about real solutions. We will protect communities from violent offenders,

and we will protect Canadians from hate and intimidation at the same time. Let us stop the misinformation, stop the obstruction and get to work on keeping our communities safe.

**Andrew Lawton:** Mr. Speaker, I did not know there was a secretary of state for revisionism, but here we are. From the party of the charter that was just found a couple of weeks ago by the Federal Court of Appeal to have trampled on the civil liberties of Canadians, I find that a little rich.

When the parliamentary secretary dismisses the concerns about Bill C-9's attack on religious freedoms, she is actually saying that the Conference of Catholic Bishops, the United Church of Canada, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Rabbinical Council of Toronto, the Canadian Council of Imams and the National Council of Canadian Muslims all know less about religious freedom, their values and their ability to uphold and preach these values than the Liberal government does.

Will she say right now that she knows better than all of these people who have lined up to denounce Bill C-9 in whole or in part, particularly the removal of long-standing protections for religious speech?

• (1905)

**Patricia Lattanzio:** Mr. Speaker, we are here to talk about bail reform, so I would hope that the member opposite would stay on topic.

After the Conservatives' refusal to pass Bill C-14, the bail and sentencing reform act, before Christmas, I welcome the members opposite's recent support of a Liberal motion to study Bill C-14 in three days and move it forward. Canadians will be watching the justice committee this Wednesday when Bill C-14 goes to its final clause-by-clause stage. Conservatives say they deeply care about bail reform. If that is true, then let us see them pass it on Wednesday and report it back to the House for a third reading.

I really hope the member opposite does not once again spend hours in committee talking about cats and dogs just to run out the clock. This bill is way too important, and I hope the Conservatives will support us in fast-tracking it.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:06 p.m.)



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