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Thursday, February 5, 2026

Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 5, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)
[*English*]

BUILD CANADA HOMES ACT

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-20, An Act respecting the establishment of Build Canada Homes.

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

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PREVENTING COERCION OF PERSONS NOT SEEKING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING ACT

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-260, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying — protection against coercion).

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I am tabling an act to prevent coercion of persons who are not seeking medical assistance in dying: to stand with people with disabilities, veterans, the elderly and all people who have faced or are at risk of facing pressure and coercion with respect to a medically facilitated death. As I do so, I want to honour the memory of Clemens von Galen. His heroic defence of the most vulnerable people, especially in fighting involuntary euthanasia, is my example.

The new bill would prevent government bureaucrats from pushing a medically facilitated death on people who are not asking for it. It would not apply to doctors and nurses, nor in any case where the patient or client has sought the information.

However, Canadians with disabilities, veterans, the elderly and people living in poverty do not want government bureaucrats telling them, when they are trying to access unrelated government services, that they should die. Canadian law envisioned that these sensitive conversations would happen between a medical expert and a willing patient, not between a bureaucrat and a citizen who is not interested, yet bureaucrats have pushed medically facilitated death on unwilling citizens again and again. This bill would have

absolutely no effect on individuals who are seeking a medically facilitated death; it is for those who are not.

This is a common-sense reform that would fill a gap in the law. I hope all my colleagues will get behind it.

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

* * *

● (1005)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—APOLOGY TO THOSE WHOSE LAND WAS EXPROPRIATED IN MIRABEL

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ) moved:

That the House call on the government to apologize to those whose land was expropriated in Mirabel, to acknowledge the collective trauma these expropriations caused for thousands of Quebecers who were forced to abandon their homes, their communities and their livelihoods, and to urge the government not to undertake such expropriations again without public consultation, social licence and appropriate compensation.

He said: Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to take people back to March 27, 1961, the day when Mirabel supposedly entered the modern world, the day when 14 municipalities and towns were dismantled. That day, the federal government delivered 3,126 expropriation notices and took possession of 97,000 acres of land. According to estimate, these expropriations affected between 1,700 and 3,000 families.

Business of Supply

At that time, Sainte-Scholastique and Sainte-Monique ceased to exist and Saint-Augustin, Saint-Benoît, Saint-Canut, Saint-Hermas, Saint-Janvier, Saint-Jérusalem, Saint-Antoine-des-Laurentides, Sainte-Sophie, Saint-Placide, Saint-André-d'Argenteuil, Lachute and Sainte-Thérèse-Ouest were also affected.

The people affected by this were fathers, mothers, children, uncles, aunts, farmers, teachers, agronomists and mechanics. On March 27, 1969, these 10,000 people all become the expropriated people of Mirabel, a label and an identity that will follow them their whole lives.

Following the announcement, the federal government went to Sainte-Scholastique. There, federal minister Jean Marchand announced between 75,000 and 100,000 jobs, a windfall of jobs that never materialized, or at least not on a permanent basis.

We were promised modernity. Pierre Elliott Trudeau came to Mirabel and promised us that we would be stepping into the modern world with all the good things that came with that. When Pierre Elliott Trudeau left the room, people did not feel reassured because their questions had not been answered, and yet the question they were asking were very simple. They wanted to know when they would have to leave, how much money they would get and how they would be paid. They wanted to know whether they would have to go work in a shop in Montreal and where their children would go to school. These were real questions that went unanswered at the time, even though they were entirely legitimate.

The people of my riding eventually came together in the early 1970s to defend the expropriated. They founded the CIAC, the Centre d'information et d'action communautaire. Members will recall Jean-Paul Raymond and Rita Léonard-Lafond, who passed away last fall and to whom I paid tribute in the House. They are heroes for defending the expropriated. However, even as a group, they never managed to find out why the area expropriated was so large, so unnecessarily large, so aggressively large.

We now know that Ottawa knew it was over-expropriating and that it was a land grab. Ottawa must have known. We now know that it knew, but it was obvious. In Mirabel, 97,000 acres of land were expropriated. I would like Quebeckers to understand that what the federal government stole was the equivalent of the island of Laval. I would like my friends in the rest of Canada to know that the area taken from Mirabel was three and a half times the city of Vancouver, nearly two thirds of the city of Toronto today or half of the city of Edmonton. I hope that people understand that everyone back home knew that it was theft and that it was unreasonable.

What was expropriated was 20 times the size of New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport, 33 times the size of London's Heathrow, 25 times the size of today's Vancouver Airport, and 25 times the size of Los Angeles Airport. It was, as I said, a theft, and a theft without fair compensation. Back home, when compensation was given, those with the right political connections were worth more than ordinary folks, as the parish priest used to say, and the offers were not negotiable. The federal appraisers were accommodating. Since they did not actually need all that land to build the airport, people lived in limbo. Some, once expropriated, became tenants in their own homes. In fact, many did, unable to clear their land or improve their farms. They lived day to day, barely getting

by, waiting for the moment when some official from Ottawa would knock on their door and tell them to leave, maybe even burning the house down, as they had seen happen to the homes of their neighbours and their children's friends. This was in a farming community where families live close together, where a father, to leave a house and land for his children, would build a new house across the road. That is what happened in Mirabel.

• (1010)

While people were being kept on as tenants in their own homes, they had to ask the federal government for permission to do anything, such as replacing the roof, building a barn, even painting a wall. There are stories of people who had to ask officials for permission just to put up wallpaper in the kitchen. They were required to ask the federal government for approval to paint their little girl's bedroom pink, and the officials would tell them they would prefer it to be blue or white. That was the level of psychological abuse that the victims of the federal government's expropriation powers were subjected to.

This federal government acquired those lands at bargain prices. We have examples, documented by historians. There is the example of Françoise Drapeau-Monette, who is listening to us today, and who was offered \$1,000 for a 20-foot by 20-foot parcel of land, while the price in the region was over \$3,000, according to independent appraisers. The federal government was paying for an airport and needed one-twentieth of what it was taking from humble Canadians at a 70% discount. History shows that if a landowner had the audacity to want to negotiate a price, federal appraisers would come back and threaten them with lower prices. For the sake of speeding things up, for the sake of a project that we were told was transformational, for the sake of bringing in modernity, the government wanted to force the people back home to accept the first offer. Things had to move quickly.

There are also reports of cases like that of Ernest Courcelle, who was offered \$40,000 for his land. He wanted to negotiate the price, so the federal government showed up at his door one morning and told him that if he did not agree today, if he did not sign today, it would be \$10,000 tomorrow. These cases are not made up, and there are hundreds and hundreds of them. In short, dozens of public servants came to steal Mirabel, an act that is an offence under the Criminal Code of Canada, not to mention arbitrary.

There is the example of the Rhéaume brothers, whose lands and homes were identical, built by the same people in the same year, and which were across from each other. One brother was offered \$63,000 for his land and the other brother was offered \$133,000 for his land. It was non-negotiable, otherwise the offers would be reduced. This reminds us of an unfortunate economic reality. During an expropriation, when the people whose land is being expropriated are not protected by laws and when those laws are weakened, it is the buyer who sets the price and it is the buyer who has the upper hand.

Business of Supply

Today we are talking about access to home ownership, a recurring theme in the House. In Mirabel, in the 1970s, the recurring theme was properties that were being stolen, purchased at bargain basement prices, from people who had many children, who were well-established in their communities, who had a reputation in the agricultural community. They were in fact unable to find alternative housing with the amounts they were being offered, and that was when they knew when they had to move out. Government appraisers acknowledged, and this is true, that this was unfair. However, they went so far as to shirk their responsibilities by pointing out that the people—who sometimes became tenants on their own land, in some cases for 18 years—had gotten a good deal on their rent from the federal government. Why were they complaining? They were able to rent their land and the federal government was such a good landlord. That tragedy is still being felt to this day.

Unlike similar lots in Quebec, some of these remain uncultivated woodlands because tenant farmers were unable to invest in clearing them. Some of Quebec's most fertile land today remains uncultivated woodland because those people were denied the right to invest. Some were tenants on their own land for two decades. They never received any compensation for the improvements they had to make to their land to earn a living.

These people are no strangers to tragedy. They have scars. In some cases, the land had been farmed for generations, and the woman had inherited the land but her husband had heart problems. He did not have it in him to fight the federal government, and his wife did not want to blow through her inheritance. There were cases of depression, suicide, domestic violence, illness, displacement and tarnished reputations. In the farming community, reputations are built over generations. All of that was destroyed in our community, for no reason.

If I were to go see my friend Éric Couvrette, as we walked toward his father's maple grove at the top of the hill, he would point to where his friend's house once stood and say that the federal government burned it down for evacuation drills, and then point to where his aunt's house once stood.

• (1015)

Then, walking towards the boundary, which ends in a cul-de-sac because there is an airport fence at the other end, there is a neighbour who is concerned about the quality of his water because of the chemicals that were used to burn down houses. He does not believe that the Montreal airports authority, or Aéroports de Montréal, is being transparent about its water analyses. This is my daily life as the representative for Mirabel.

When questioned by the Standing Committee on Finance this week, the Minister of Transport acknowledged that the federal government may have made “mistakes”. I strongly emphasize the word “mistakes”. Opened in 1975, the airport closed its doors to the public 30 years later, after much agony and three decades of broken lives. Three decades of broken lives is not nothing.

Of course, some land was returned. Brian Mulroney's government, apparently looking for government efficiencies, felt that it made no more sense for the federal government to own this land than for it to own Petro-Canada. It began to transfer land. It returned more than 80,000 acres. When entering the Union des pro-

ducteurs agricoles building in Sainte-Scholastique, there is a portrait of Brian Mulroney on the wall. Not only do these people remember the bad, they also remember the good.

This continued under the Harper government because it kept 11,000 acres in case the airport were to expand. Other lands were returned and finally the last parcels of land were returned last year. There were five left, so the wound is still fairly raw. We have a duty to remember the people who were expropriated who are watching at home today, as well as those who are no longer with us but whose sons, daughters, grandsons, and granddaughters are still around. The federal industry minister is one such person.

Battles were fought and lands were returned, but there has never been an apology. I think that these people deserve an apology from the federal government so that they can get closure. That is what the Quebec National Assembly unanimously called for in 2019 on the 50th anniversary of the expropriation. I also moved a motion to this effect last year, which was sponsored with the members for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and Louis-Saint-Laurent—Aki-awenhrak. It was a motion without notice that the Liberal Party refused to have tabled, but it is never too late to do the right thing.

That is what revived the high-speed rail project. That is where it all started. Today, we are not talking about a train, but about justice. When we bring up what happened, the Minister of Transport tells me that I am dredging up the past to try to scare people. Can he blame people in my community for still being afraid? The people of Mirabel are people you can talk to. They are really compassionate people. They are people who are capable of listening and thinking, and I am sure they are capable of forgiving, but can anyone really blame them for their lack of confidence in the federal government after the hell they have experienced?

In the wake of those events, Canada adopted modern expropriation rules. It took its time, of course, but it got the job done, and now there is fairer compensation, the right to be listened to, the right to appeal and the right to be heard by a hearing officer before a minister can determine the value of the land. At the time, the government justified what it did in 1969, 1970 and 1971 on the grounds that nothing great would ever be done in Canada again without expropriation. It told us this awful treatment was necessary and that the project had to get done faster. People's lives were destroyed for decades just to speed up a project by a few months or a year.

There is a duty of reconciliation. It was all kind of personal for the former prime minister, and I understand that. It was a family thing. It was partly his father's legacy, in whose honour they renamed the Dorval airport, where people can at least watch planes fly. They say this is a new government. I want to believe them, but governments are judged by their actions.

Business of Supply

• (1020)

People often talk about the financial cost of major projects. We are told that these projects are expensive, that they need to be fast-tracked and that they are generational investments. That may be true. In the case of the high-speed train project that reopened old wounds in my community, we believe it is a generational project, but there is very little mention of the human costs, of people being uprooted, of shattered lives. Very little is said about the impact, the scars it leaves. These scars are deeply human. It is the humble role of a private member to bring that humanity to the House and to make the House understand that Mirabel is today a place of remembrance for Quebec and for Canada. It reminds us, as we often say, that this could have happened to each and every one of us. It could have happened in each of our ridings. It could have happened in any one of our towns, and it could happen again.

The government has apologized many times. Prime Minister Trudeau apologized to many people and groups for mistakes made and crimes that should not have been committed, and rightly so. We agreed on that.

In Mirabel, every time a prime minister rises, makes amends and apologizes on behalf of the Crown to someone else while neglecting us, it reopens old wounds once again. While it will not heal them, I think that today we can come full circle historically by asking the government to apologize and not do it again.

I am sure that the government will be willing to do that, and I will be the first to invite it to my riding for that purpose. Where I come from, we are welcoming people.

Apologies put a stop to indifference. They show an openness to understanding, because unless people spend time with our constituents, they will not understand them. Apologies are like arms ready to open to people who have known nothing in life but pain, struggle, closed doors and politicians who make them feel invisible. Above all else, an apology is an acknowledgement of dignity. Apologizing, admitting to mistakes and starting fresh is one of the first lessons in civility that we teach our children. It is that important. Apologizing is part of life. We often forget that people asking for apologies are people waiting to offer forgiveness. They are people deeply motivated to prevent a 50-year battle from turning into a 100-year battle. People who demand an apology are people with no desire to fight just for the sake of fighting.

If this House or this government refuses to apologize to the people of Mirabel, they are not only refusing them an apology, they are depriving them of the opportunity to offer forgiveness in return. As the member for Mirabel, it is my profound belief that this is not the government's intention.

• (1025)

Madeleine Chenette (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages and to the Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to acknowledge that the expropriations in Mirabel are part of our history. We need to understand what it means to have lives disrupted, families displaced and communities torn apart. I was born on a farm, so I am familiar with the agricultural community. I do know what it means to have a farm.

That being said, the laws have changed. Public consultations are held. It is a legal requirement. Social licence is required, and yes, the process will be respectful.

I met with the mayor of Mirabel. I met with farmers. I met with citizens. Yes, we will do the right thing. The Bloc needs to stop obstructing a major project for our region. Bloc members must realize that the region wants to take an innovative approach to transportation. The high-speed train is a perfect example of this. With that in mind, I wonder whether our Bloc friends will stop obstructing this project and show up to support it.

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Thérèse-De Blainville for the question.

At the beginning of her question, I saw a sensitivity in her that we are not used to seeing. We know how she treated the people at Paccar. We know how she treats those people. I guess she is making progress.

It should be noted that 20 minutes after the member posted an article on Facebook about her meeting with the mayor of Mirabel that the mayor herself posted a video on Facebook where she said that for the time being, there was still no public buy-in for the project.

However, that is not what we are talking about today. Today, we are talking about something very noble and humble: apologizing. The member tells us that the federal government will not do it again. I want to believe her. I want to believe her good faith. I think that the first step to ensuring that this does not happen again is simply to acknowledge past mistakes and finally allow these people to move on.

Bernard Généreux (Côte-du-Sud—Rivière-du-Loup—Kataskomiq—Témiscouata, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Mirabel on his speech and thank him because it is a speech filled with compassion for the people of his riding. He is right to say that, whether working on Parliament Hill or in their riding, elected members are there to represent the people who elected them. I therefore offer my colleague my heartfelt congratulations.

My colleague was not an MP when all of this happened. He was very young at the time. He said in his speech that everything that happened in Mirabel was an absolute nightmare for many people at the time. Some apologies have been made by successive governments, both Conservative and Liberal.

I would like to know what additional apologies he expects for his constituents.

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, some land was indeed returned. Some was returned in the 1980s under the Mulroney government. Others were returned under the Harper government. The final expropriated plots of land were even returned under the Trudeau government. It was a long process, but throughout it all, the federal government never acknowledged that it was anything more than an administrative error.

What the people of Mirabel expect is an apology from the Prime Minister on behalf of the Government of Canada. They want us to recognize that what happened in Mirabel was a crime and that it must never happen again.

Once again, the Conservative Party has often been very open and understanding of the people of Mirabel. I think that we have almost finished the marathon today. There is only one step left to take, and I am convinced that the House will have the compassion needed to make it happen.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his speech. In all honesty, it is one of the best speeches I have heard in my six and a half years as a member of Parliament. I am very proud of him.

We have just learned that the Liberals have shown their true colours through the member for Thérèse-De Blainville. They will try to use 40-year-old slogans about the Bloc Québécois rather than apologize to the people who are asking for an apology.

Can my colleague, with the eloquence he is known for, explain to the Liberals what we are talking about today so that they understand once and for all that what is being presented in the House today is much more important than petty slogans and political games?

• (1030)

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to today's debate. I see the Minister of Transport here. I see other members here. During my speech, I saw members from Quebec who were nearly in tears listening to me. I refuse to believe that the government's position can be summed up by the crude, callous remarks of the member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

Things can get a little heated in committee with the Minister of Transport. However, we have had conversations. We have spoken in the hallways and gotten to know each other. I know he is a sensible man. I know he is a sensitive man. I know he is capable of this, and I am sure that he will recommend that his government move on to something else, so that we never have to talk about this again.

Madeleine Chenette: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we are sensitive to people's concerns, and we are taking action. I just want to mention that, with regard to Paccar, we have been taking action since October. We are working with the management team. Our Minister of Industry and her office are working on this. I am working on this. We did not need the Bloc Québécois to tell us that we needed to start working on this. We have been taking action since October, and solutions are in sight.

In that context, we know how to manage the House. One does not write to the Minister of Finance when they should be writing to the Minister of Industry. Furthermore, we do not base our work on social media. We work with people on the ground. We listen to them and take action with them.

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, I am the Bloc Québécois finance critic. I talk to the Minister of Finance. It is certainly not my first instinct to talk to the member for Thérèse-De Blainville, who is not a minister of anything. When I went to see the people at Paccar, guess what? I talked to them. I shook their hands. We were out there on the ground.

Business of Supply

Changing the subject is what someone does when they are uncomfortable with today's debate. The hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville is changing the subject. I encourage her to reflect on the history of Mirabel, I encourage her to learn more, and I encourage her to perhaps rethink her attitude.

[*English*]

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was a very impassioned speech. Obviously, our colleague cares very much about the subject and the constituents in his riding.

I am keenly aware of the Mirabel situation, being a Quebecker myself and having been born in Montreal, but I want to highlight once again that it was Brian Mulroney, a Canadian prime minister who, in his very first term, returned 80% of those lands. It was another Canadian prime minister in his first term, Stephen Harper, who made restitution with the other 11,000 acres, which were returned to the rightful owners. In between, we have had numerous years of Liberal governments that have totally ignored the subject. I am kind of taken aback by the member from the Liberal Party who is trying to change the subject and not deal with the issue at hand.

I would ask the member this simple question: Why does he think the Liberals have totally ignored this issue, which is a very important issue for the people of Mirabel and, indeed, the people of Quebec?

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is clearly demonstrating that this is not a partisan issue. Last year, I myself moved a motion without notice alongside the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk and the NDP member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. This is not partisan. Of course, the Conservative Party—both progressive conservative and conservative—has been particularly sensitive to our concerns in the past. We are grateful to them, and we are capable of saying so.

I do not want to harp on what the Liberals did not do in the past, because today, they have an opportunity to take a step forward. This is an olive branch. We are reaching out to them. I think that was clear in my speech. I think my words have been clear. We are reaching out to them, and we hope with all our hearts that this motion will be adopted so that we never have to move it again.

• (1035)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to wish all my colleagues in the House a good morning. This is a wonderful opportunity for the government, for myself, for the government team and even for the opposition team to come together and support a promising project, a major project, a project that will benefit all Canadians, particularly those living along the corridor, as well as their children and grandchildren.

Business of Supply

The Alto high-speed rail project is a perfect example of what we need to accomplish together as a country. It is a perfect symbol of how united two of our largest provinces are when it comes to tackling climate change, improving congestion and efficiency in our transportation systems, and enhancing Canadians' quality of life in their day-to-day lives, whether they will be taking this train once, occasionally or every day.

Today, I want to talk about this major project, the enthusiasm it is generating across Canada and the profound changes it will make to our economy and to people's lives. I will then talk about Bill C-15, how vitally important it is to the project's success and the consultations we are carrying out to make sure it is done right. Lastly, I want to speak directly to the people of Mirabel.

The high-speed rail project is inspiring people in Quebec, in Ontario and across Canada. There is huge public interest. We need only look at the people who are flocking to the open houses, the public consultations, to get a preview of this major project, which would be the first of its kind in North America. They are so proud. As Laval's mayor, Stéphane Boyer, said when the announcement was made in December, this is a project that will transform our country and bring Canada fully into the 21st century. The enthusiasm goes far beyond partisan lines. The former Bloc member for Trois-Rivières, René Villemure, who was the Bloc Québécois transport critic, no less, said he was relieved and delighted when the high-speed rail project was announced.

We all agree that this is a transformative, major project. The corridor that will be served by high-speed rail is home to more than half of Canada's population. It includes our major financial centres, important manufacturing hubs, world-class universities, and innovation clusters. In Mirabel, for example, the aerospace and aeronautics sector is a strong, strategic and valuable pillar of the economy. It is clearly renowned. Mirabel's aerospace cluster is known all over Canada. I have been to the region myself on several occasions. The member for Mirabel is right to say that his constituents are welcoming, but above all, they are forward-looking. Like all Canadians, they are concerned about their children's future. They want to see development in their region and investment in the institutions and capabilities that will enable continued growth.

Together with the member for Thérèse-De Blainville, the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles and the member for Les Pays-d'en-Haut, we form a core team strong enough to continuously ensure a bright economic future and offer ideas and opportunities to the people of Mirabel. We are proud of that.

• (1040)

However, when we look at the entire transportation corridor between Quebec City and Toronto, we must face a harsh reality. Our transportation system is on its last legs. One only has to take a drive down Highway 20 or the 401, or try to get around Quebec City, Ottawa or Gatineau during rush hour. We simply have to make major investments in our highways and in our rail system. We are dealing with clogged highways, overcrowded airports and a rail system where freight trains take precedence over passenger trains.

It is high time we took action. It is time to reduce the pressure on this corridor, which is critical to our economy and to Canadians' quality of life. High-speed rail will change that reality. It will sig-

nificantly reduce travel times. It will provide a reliable, modern, low-emission transportation option on dedicated tracks. It will enhance workforce mobility and unlock billions of dollars in economic productivity. The project will also help increase the housing supply. It will create more than 50,000 jobs over 10 years and lower Canada's greenhouse gas emissions by millions of tonnes. This is not just a transportation project. It is an economic transformation. It is an investment in Canada's future.

This is all the more important in the current economic climate, especially with what we are experiencing with our neighbours to the south. High-speed rail will boost long-term productivity by expanding labour markets, attracting private investment, and supporting housing growth in the country's most densely populated communities. This is an essential upgrade to a congested transportation network at the heart of Canada's most populous corridor. If Canada wants to remain competitive in an ever-changing global economy, this is exactly the kind of infrastructure we need.

However, it is also clear to us that this project cannot succeed without the support of Canadians. That is why we are doing a lot of consulting and a lot of listening. Since January, Alto and the Government of Canada have been carrying out extensive public consultations, which we announced in December, to help Canadians prepare, ask questions and fully understand the extensive rail line being proposed. In addition to the many studies already completed, Alto has launched an in-depth public consultation process. These consultations will discuss, in particular, route options, station locations, environmental mitigation measures, noise, vibrations, as well as land use and protection. These consultations include virtual sessions, an online information platform and open houses in several communities between Toronto and Quebec City. There will be more. I encourage Canadians who have not yet participated to make their voices heard.

I want to be very clear. These are not meetings where decisions have already been made. On the contrary. If someone asks, "Where will the station be?", the answer will not be, "Here is where it will be." The answer will be, "Where do you think it should be, in your opinion?" That is what real and meaningful consultation looks like.

Furthermore, Alto and the Government of Canada are committed to building and maintaining respectful relationships with indigenous communities along the corridor. Engagement with indigenous communities began several years ago and continues today through a targeted consultation process. Bill C-15 clearly recognizes the importance of indigenous knowledge and provides for its protection. This is how we build modern, linear infrastructure with and for communities.

Business of Supply

● (1045)

I would also like to set the record straight in the House: Informing people that land may be required for a project does not automatically mean the land will be expropriated. If expropriation is necessary, it would be carried out in accordance with the expropriation regime in force, with the adjustments provided for in Bill C-15. The basic rules regarding notice, objection, compensation, assessment, reimbursement of reasonable costs and access to the courts remain unchanged and continue to be governed by the Expropriation Act. Anyone who says otherwise is not being upfront.

I would also like to address a concern raised recently, namely the idea that land can be appropriated by email. Let us be very clear: This is not how expropriation works in Canada, and it will certainly not be the case for Alto, the high-speed rail project. Email cannot be used for expropriation. It is only an optional communication tool used after discussions have begun, and only—I repeat, only—if the owner voluntarily chooses that means of communication. Registered mail remains the norm and it is still fully available, even in the law. Anyone who says otherwise is not being upfront.

The high-speed rail project remains fully subject to the Impact Assessment Act. Yes, certain measures are designed to avoid duplication between federal processes, but this is a matter of making the process more efficient, not weakening it. The project will be thoroughly assessed in terms of environmental impacts, climate impacts, effects on communities, indigenous rights and, of course, long-term sustainability. Nothing in this robust assessment will weaken the project. On the contrary, it will strengthen it. Anyone who says or claims that there is no environmental impact is not being upfront.

Now, I want to address the people of Mirabel directly. This is important.

The Mirabel airport project is one of the most frequently cited examples in Canadian history of what happens when large infrastructure projects are built without taking into account local populations and the reality of communities. It is important to note that this reality has been recognized not only by critics, but also by governments themselves, as the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill just mentioned.

In April 2019, Transport Canada announced that it was restarting the process to sell or return 748 acres of land expropriated in 1969 to the previous owners. As my colleague noted, by that time, the Government of Canada had already returned nearly 90,000 acres of land to Mirabel-area residents through two separate programs in 1985 and 2008. In April 2019, the then minister of transport, the late Marc Garneau, who is in our thoughts every day, announced that Ottawa had made a big mistake 50 years earlier. It is quite clear, obvious even, that he was right. He apologized to the people of Mirabel and to the families who had fallen victim to these expropriations.

This kind of recognition is important. It conveys a fundamental truth: Governments must be able to acknowledge and learn from past mistakes instead of pretending they never happened. I can assure the people of Mirabel, Quebecers, Ontarians and all Canadians that the Government of Canada is fully aware of these lessons. I

would even go so far as to say that both levels of government are fully aware of them.

● (1050)

When a project of such major economic and national significance is being considered, it should be subjected to rigorous review. It should be subjected to thorough analysis. Everything should be done properly in the planning stages and on the ground. The expropriation of the Mirabel airport lands showed us what happens when we take the wrong approach to building. That is absolutely not what will happen with the Alto high-speed train. Anyone who says otherwise is not being upfront.

It will be located where millions of Canadians live and work, in Canada's most densely populated corridor. As the mayor of Quebec City, Bruno Marchand, said, this project will have a major impact on getting people, including workers, from point A to point B more efficiently. This is a major project for Trois-Rivières, Montreal, Laval and Quebec City.

This project meets a real need. We need to reduce congestion on our roads and get people moving faster and more efficiently.

There is this phenomenon in Canada that does not work in our favour. If all we are doing is adding another process, new wording in a law, another step or something else that does not really improve what we already have, what are we adding?

We are adding delays. Canadians are being deprived of the opportunity to use one type of infrastructure or another. We are adding costs. In this case, it will cost about \$5 billion more per year. Therefore, reducing the high-speed rail planning stage from eight to four years, which is what we are proposing, will save Canadians \$20 billion. That is a rough estimate, but an estimate nonetheless. Delays cost money.

Canadians spoke loud and clear in last April's election: It is time to build Canada strong. It is high time we get nation-building projects off the ground. It is time to stop beating around the bush and make major investments that will improve the lives of our young people and grow our economic capacity. The part of our economic capacity that hinges on trade with the United States will decrease.

Imagine a student living in Ottawa who wants to enrol in a program at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières. That student could go to class and come back the same day or go there three days a week. Imagine a worker in Peterborough, a small town, who could go to work in downtown Toronto and thus contribute to the Canadian economy while enjoying life in a small town. It is the same thing in Trois-Rivières. A business person from Laval could realistically get to Toronto to do business in record time and come home the same day.

This is a linear project. Not a single metre can be missing. It is a project that does not like curves. The high-speed train is a promising project that will be built in a 60-metre-wide corridor. I want to reassure the people of Mirabel and everyone who lives along the line. First, we will use public rights-of-way. Second, if we do need to acquire land, we will do so with as little disruption as possible.

Business of Supply

• (1055)

Third, people will be fully compensated, down to the last penny, for the market value of their land.

Three cheers for Alto, Canada and major projects. Let us make this happen.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at one point, I was afraid that the minister was not even going to mention today's motion. He eventually did address it.

What I saw, however, was that the minister used pretty much the same arguments here in the House as those presented to the people of Mirabel in 1969, namely progress and modernization. Worse still, with Bill C-15, the government is looking to bypass the normal expropriation process that exists and that is established in legislation. How can we blame the people of Mirabel for not trusting the federal government after the trauma they experienced?

The motion before us today gives the federal government an opportunity to apologize to Mirabel's expropriated residents for the horrors that were committed in 1969 and into the 1970s. However, the minister's perspective is that voting in favour of this motion is not the first step that should be taken. It is not the first thing his government should do to build trust.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, trust will be built on the ground. What are we going to do? We are going to go out and speak with the landowners, not necessarily everyone within a radius of 90,000 hectares or acres, but certainly those within a 60-metre-wide corridor connecting communities across Canada.

I would like to reiterate, for the people of Mirabel, that this process will be nothing like the processes of the past and nothing like what they went through. Time and time again, under both the Conservatives and the Liberals, the Government of Canada has acknowledged past wrongs, and remedies have been offered wherever possible. We will not make the same mistakes.

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since my colleague brought up the issue of high-speed rail, which strays a bit from the topic of the Bloc Québécois motion, I would like to know how many farm families will be affected between Quebec City, Toronto and Windsor. How much farmland will be built on as part of this project?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, the answer is as few as possible. I think I just said in my speech that public rights of way, such as highways and energy corridors, will be prioritized. Where it is impossible to avoid farmland, we will do everything we can to avoid splitting up land, to ensure that farmers can take full advantage of their lands, their fields and their entire operations. We are going to proceed on a case-by-case basis, carefully, but with the determination to advance this major project that is so coveted by all Canadians.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have come a long way since 2015. In 2015, when we were elected, the former government had unfortunately excluded every segment from Quebec City to Montreal from any projects, including a high-speed rail or even a high-frequency rail.

It is now 2026. What could my colleague, the Minister of Transport, say to my colleagues from Quebec and Quebec City about the importance of this high-speed rail for the Quebec City region?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, it is of the utmost importance to me that this project benefit the people of Quebec City and the people of Trois-Rivières. This project will enable Quebec City to continue its commercial development. It will enable educational institutions in Quebec City, such as Université Laval, to keep growing.

Yes, other people may have come up with projects that ruled out the possibility of going beyond Montreal to Quebec City. That is not our intention. As the mayor of Quebec City said and as my colleague often says, "Quebec wants in". Well, Quebec is in.

• (1100)

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the minister that, when Marc Garneau apologized, he did so on his own behalf because he did not have the authority to do so on behalf of the government.

What the Bloc Québécois is doing today is giving the government an opportunity to fix past mistakes. When someone from Mirabel reads the Bloc Québécois motion, they will wonder how any MP, particularly one from Quebec, could vote against it.

The Bloc Québécois is not against the high-speed rail project. This Bloc Québécois motion calls for reparations for past mistakes in the form of an official apology from the government, consultations and social licence to ensure that what happened in Mirabel does not happen again.

The minister is from Quebec. He is not heartless. If he is planning to vote against this motion, I really, truly want him to tell me why.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has a decision to make.

We are not done. We have a plan to propose mechanisms allowing us to increasingly ramp up the development of transportation, infrastructure and energy projects in Canada.

Almost all Quebecers support this project. All Quebecers want it to happen. The problem is that they have given up believing in it because the planning process is taking too long. We want to shrink the planning phase from eight years to four years.

The Bloc Québécois has a big decision to make about high-speed rail and its support for Alto.

[English]

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in listening to the debate, I heard two different speeches and two prerogatives over the last hour.

Business of Supply

It seems to me that the Bloc's motion is simply asking for an apology for expropriation that happened in 1969, in a formal manner, coming from the House and coming from the government. However, the government has not acknowledged the motion. All the government members are talking about is the high-speed rail. I get both sides. They both make sense.

Bringing us back to the motion, I can sympathize with the Bloc because as a first nations member, I, along with my people, experienced the exact trauma that their members have explained.

Could the minister tell us if the government has any intention to actually acknowledge the motion that is on the floor today?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I cannot, nor can anyone in this House, fix the mistakes that were made in the past, in any project.

We have to do the best we can, and the best we can do today is the process outlined in Bill C-15, the process that Canadians voted for, a process that gets big projects built quickly but respects our history, respects the lessons we have learned and respects the processes we have put in place, including assessing these projects for their impact on communities and on our environment.

[*Translation*]

Caroline Desrochers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his leadership and for making sure that the municipalities are engaged.

Despite what the opposition says, I think his speech made it very clear that we do not intend to repeat past mistakes. I can confirm that the people in my riding of Trois-Rivières are eagerly looking forward to this high-speed rail project.

In addition to the spin-offs for cities where the train will stop, the regions and rural communities can expect greater benefits as well.

I would like my colleague to talk to us about that.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Trois-Rivières who, like her predecessor, fully supports this project. We need these non-partisan voices in the House.

The project is going to benefit all regions of Quebec. I listened to my friend from the Lower St. Lawrence earlier. I listened to my friend from Lévis—Lotbinière and my colleague from Trois-Rivières. We can just imagine the impact that this project will have on a person or a farmer who will be able to board the high-speed train to go to conventions or do business in Quebec City or Montreal. Imagine a student being able to board that train—

• (1105)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrak.

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrak, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure and some emotion that I rise to take part in this debate today.

We are debating a very important motion that deals with one of the tragedies in the history of Canada, which has affected and continues to affect hundreds of families and thousands of children and grandchildren of the farmers who were shortchanged. That is why I

will be sharing my time with the member for Lévis—Lotbinière, who will provide a clear picture of the situation faced by farmers, as he is a farmer himself.

Mirabel will forever be associated with one of the greatest tragedies in our nation's history. It was the 1960s. In the mid-1960s, there was a baby boom and a tech boom, and Montreal needed a new airport. Certain areas like Vaudreuil, Drummondville, Saint-Jean and Sainte-Scholastique were considered. In the end, the federal government chose Sainte-Scholastique. At that point, the location was a foregone conclusion, but the way it was done and the way it was expanded were completely unacceptable.

It happened on March 27, 1969, at exactly 2:25 p.m., during a press conference being broadcast on the radio. Jean Marchand, the Liberal minister of transport, announced that 97,000 acres would be expropriated. I am not a farmer, so I cannot visualize how big an acre is. However, 97,000 acres is equivalent to two-thirds of the Island of Montreal. For our friends out west, that is as big as the city of Calgary. The government needed to expropriate 97,000 acres. That is 20 times the size of John F. Kennedy Airport, one of the largest airports in the world at the time. A total of 3,126 families were directly affected by the announcement, which came without any prior warning. They were directly affected without any notice. That amounts to 10,000 people. Work began in June 1970.

Yes, the government slapped together some compensation. Yes, the government said it held consultations. The outcome was that barely 17% of farmers met with someone who assessed their land. Everyone else was told that was that, thank you and goodbye. It led to human tragedies. People left their house in the morning and came back in the afternoon to find it burned to the ground. People left in the morning to work the fields and came back to find people swarming around their house, moving their belongings out.

The great Denise Bombardier reported on the situation for Radio-Canada in 1970. This is what one of the people whose land was expropriated had to say: "Of course it worries me, because we were never paid, we don't know how we'll get by. We didn't ask to leave. We were notified on March 27, 1969, and then we just waited. I was hoping things would work out for the best". Unfortunately, they did not work out for the best.

A committee was set up in 1973, but, unfortunately, Pierre Elliott Trudeau's government ignored the very valid grievances of the people whose properties were expropriated. If only it had been worth it. It was predicted that Mirabel would be serving 60,000 passengers by 2025. No more than two million passengers ever passed through during any year of operation. There was a plan to build high-speed rail, but that never happened. There was a plan to extend Highway 30, but that never happened.

Business of Supply

The airport opened for business on October 4, 1975. One of the ridiculous things about Mirabel was that international flights used Mirabel, while all others used Dorval. Awesome. That is the best way to kill an airport. As of September 15, 1997, all flights were transferred to Dorval. The last flight took place in 2014. The terminal was demolished in 2016. What a disaster. It was all for naught. The government expropriated 97,000 acres but used barely 6,000 acres, which is why this is so tragic.

In 1995, the Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, offered to return 80,000 acres to those who had been expropriated. It was the first step that needed to be taken, and he did it boldly but, above all, with a sense of responsibility and humanity. The Right Hon. Brian Mulroney did it, and he did it the right way. The debate did not end there. What we are discussing today has been debated in the House before. On November 25, 2004, the official opposition moved a motion to return the remaining 11,000 acres to the expropriated landowners.

• (1110)

Who kicked off that debate? It was the Right Hon. Stephen Harper, the then leader of the Conservative official opposition. Mr. Harper did not have any seats in Quebec at the time, but that is not important. What is important is the reality of the 3,126 families who had been expropriated and dispossessed. In a very important speech, Mr. Harper said that it had been “a savage expropriation”, “a massive injustice, an odious boondoggle”, and that the situation of the farmers had been “difficult, unjust, humiliating and...dramatic, even, at times”. He said that it was “not a matter of politics but rather a matter of goodwill and justice”. Quite appropriately, he said that “all governments can make mistakes from time to time. The problem in this saga is that the government made mistake after mistake, with no consideration whatsoever for the families that have been in the area for generations.” Stephen Harper said that in 2004.

Mr. Harper did more than just talk. When Canadians placed their trust in him by electing a dozen Conservative members from Quebec, for example, including my colleague from Lévis—Lotbinière, the Harper government gave back 11,000 acres. What is interesting is that, during the 2004 debate, the transport minister at the time was the late Jean Lapierre. According to *La Presse*, Mr. Lapierre accused Stephen Harper of raising false hopes in the public, knowing that he would not be able to follow through on his motion. With all due respect to the memory of Mr. Lapierre, he was mistaken, because that is what happened.

In 2019, the Liberal minister also sold back 750 acres. That was the Hon. Marc Garneau, a man of unquestionable and indisputable integrity and humanity. He said what he truly felt in his heart. He said that the government made a big mistake. He also said, “We learned difficult lessons, and I am sorry you were the victims of that.” That was the great Marc Garneau, whom we love and respect. Unfortunately, he was speaking on his own behalf, not on behalf of the government.

As my Bloc Québécois colleague put it so well earlier, now is the time to do the right thing to commemorate those people and, above all, avoid repeating the same mistakes. Three times in the House in recent years, the government has been asked to apologize to the ex-

propriated people of Mirabel. With the motions from the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and myself, who contributed to this, the government has refused to apologize three times.

We understand that this is a vote of the House. It is not the government itself that is taking action, but the House of Commons. I would remind all the experienced ministers whom I respect and admire that they are, first and foremost, members of Parliament elected by Canadians. That is why each of us here in the House have our responsibilities, but, first and foremost, we are members of Parliament. We have asked for an apology three times; unfortunately, the government has refused three times.

I want to say something, and I will stand by my statements. Is it because the 23rd Prime Minister of Canada had difficulty acknowledging that the 15th Prime Minister of Canada had made a grave mistake? To put it plainly, did Justin Trudeau not want to blame his father? Is that why the government refused to do what needs to be done, which is to apologize? I invite all my colleagues to consider carefully and in good faith what actually happened. They know very well, in their hearts, as Marc Garneau so eloquently pointed out, that the government made a mistake, that it was a big mistake, and that an injustice was committed. That is exactly what the motion before us proposes and calls for.

I heard our colleague say that sometimes we need to stop being partisan and work across party lines. Yes, I agree. This is an excellent opportunity to do so.

[*English*]

This is why I deeply hope that at this time, all members of the House, the government, opposition, second group of opposition and independent members, recognize that what happened to the people of Mirabel was totally unacceptable. If we have to, again, do something with great projects, we should learn and adapt our attitude based on what the people of Mirabel have lived through.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

I sincerely invite all my colleagues to recognize the grave mistake that was made in Mirabel and that it should never happen again.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased to hear my colleague. His speech was genuine and sincere. He made a call, and I support that call. He called on us to work across party lines. There are no stumbling blocks in this motion. I do not see how any member, particularly from Quebec, can vote against it.

I just want to thank my colleague and give him the rest of the time to respond to the following.

How could anyone vote against this motion?

Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, God knows that we have some very serious grievances with our Bloc Québécois colleagues, and I understand that the feeling is mutual. I do not understand why they have grievances with us, but I certainly have grievances with them.

The reality is that there are times when we can set partisanship aside because it is a matter of humanity. Yes, these people have suffered terribly; everyone recognizes that. Yes, we need to learn from these mistakes; everyone recognizes that. Yes, we need to apologize for what happened, acknowledge it and act swiftly.

Once again, I invite all my colleagues, whether they are from the government, the opposition or are independents, to act according to their conscience and recognize the tragedies that have befallen the citizens of Mirabel.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to once again acknowledge the great wisdom, great tact and nuance that my colleague from neighbouring Québec Centre regularly brings to the table.

Given everything he said about the importance of being sensitive to what happened over 50 years ago and supporting those who were affected, I would still like to ask him clearly what he thinks about high-speed rail for Quebec City and for his riding in particular.

Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, even though the motion has nothing to do with this, I want to say one thing to the member for Québec Centre, whom I respect and admire. I think it is mutual, because we have always had a good relationship, and all the better. That said, they unfortunately got off on the wrong foot.

Notices of consultation were hurriedly sent out for a process that began two days later. It is as though we learned nothing, especially since Canada as a whole was the site of the most terrible expropriation in our great history. The exact same mistakes that were made 60 years ago are being repeated.

I am being asked what I think of the project. Could we get it on track in the right way?

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for talking about the expropriation of land in Mirabel in 1969 and about the impact that decision had on people's lives. That is a painful chapter for many families who lost their homes, their land and their jobs.

Looking back, what lessons does the member think we should learn from that? How can these lessons help governments work better with communities in the future?

Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, before I respond to the substance of the question, I would just like to commend my colleague for this extraordinary show of bilingualism and for her use of French. I really appreciate it. Everyone stands to gain when we speak both official languages. I do mean both official languages and not just one or the other because, obviously, both are equal, with neither one being above the other.

On the substance, what we need to understand when it comes to how we deal with major projects in the future is that we must always consult people. That is what the motion says. It says that the government needs to avoid expropriations “without public consultation, social licence and appropriate compensation”. That is exactly what the motion says.

Once again, I am appealing to my government friends who know deep down in their hearts, minds and souls that they need to vote in favour of this motion.

Business of Supply

They must do so.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will ask my question quickly. My colleague's speech was quite eloquent and very clear.

Despite his compelling arguments, as well as the arguments made by the member before him, the member for Mirabel, it seems that the members opposite are still unconvinced. However, it seems clear to me that the Canadian government should apologize for this.

If the government refuses to apologize, is it not first and foremost because of its political stripes and its pride?

• (1120)

Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear. This government has taken some steps backwards and reversed many of Justin Trudeau's decisions. I invite the current Prime Minister to continue on that path. It is one thing to backtrack on the carbon tax. However, recognizing that an apology is in order for the people of Mirabel would make a difference. Indeed, he needs to do what the 23rd prime minister always refused to do.

I call on the Prime Minister to act like a head of state.

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do not inherit the earth from our parents. We borrow it from our children. It seems so easy for major project proponents to look at a map and draw a line. However, when that line becomes a route and valuable farmland has to be acquired for a project, we often forget where that land came from and who owns it.

If a person gets their car stolen, they are not going to be in a good mood and they might even get really angry about it, but, at the end of the day, they can buy an identical car with the insurance money. However, when a person's land is stolen, destroyed or divided, it is impossible to repair it.

Many countries were colonized by promising people land. Our ancestors left France, England and various other countries to come here and live the Canadian dream. They came to clear and farm large, fertile expanses of land. Throughout history, people valued owning land and farming it above all else. That makes sense. To feed ourselves properly, we have to harvest the fruits of the earth, which give us grain, fodder and vegetables, which then provide us with meat and consumer goods essential to our survival.

These lands were not created by providence. We have what we see today because of the hard work of generations of farmers. If we drive along Highway 132 or Highway 138, we can see the beautiful farms that are there today. They are there because of the hard work of nine, 10 or 11 generations of farmers who cleared every metre of land by the sweat of their brow in order to survive. This land did not just ensure their survival, but the survival of an entire people, the Quebec nation. There is no asset in the world as precious as this one. This is not something to be taken lightly.

We learned early on in school that, sooner or later, land came in to play in every war throughout history. Why proceed arbitrarily?

Business of Supply

We understand that there are major projects to be completed in 2026 and that they will require large areas of land. There is no getting around that. However, in order for this to work, the government needs to seek advice from farmers, who may come up with solutions themselves. They may have some clever suggestions. They will suggest routes that may interfere less with their farming operations. We should not just be consulting farmers about their land; we should be working with them.

All things considered, we must be very careful. It is certainly possible to lay pipelines on land by negotiating easement agreements. It is also possible to place power lines on land. That is another easement that farmers accept for the good of society. If they agree, we can cross their land. However, it is more difficult when part of the surface area needs to be taken away. Those are precious hectares and acres that divide the land in two or even three, depending on the provisions of the current land titles.

Do we have any idea how many families will actually be affected by the project being presented by the Liberal government? The land is divided on each side of the St. Lawrence River, perpendicular to it, three arpents wide by thirty arpents long, which is approximately 170 metres wide by 1,700 metres long. That is about six lots per kilometre. According to my calculations, we are talking about 1,950 different lots between Quebec City and the Ontario border. At three lots per farm, this could potentially affect 650 farms or 1,000 farming families. That is a lot of farms considering how many remain in Quebec. There is a good chance that this project will undermine the profitability of these farms, whose acreage value continues to grow.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to my father and mother, Armand and Rita, who were among the last pioneers to cultivate their own land after clearing it themselves.

• (1125)

I saw my father clearing our land when I was young, and I helped him cultivate it. It required a lot of physical labour. I spent my youth working on my land, picking rocks, building fences; I built them and I even took them down. Imagine what it is like to pick rocks all summer long, in 36-degree heat, to get a few more acres of cropland. However, after all that effort, we were able to enjoy the crops and forages that the land provided.

Taking acreage away from a farm and breaking up access to fields is hard for people to accept, especially when it is done without consultation. That is the worst insult to rightful property owners. Expropriation can feel worse than theft. It can feel like betrayal, like the government betraying its citizens and what they hold most dear. The Mirabel expropriations are the Crown's greatest affront to the francophone Quebec nation, almost on par with the deportation of the Acadians.

I have memories from my youth of the Mirabel expropriations. Thousands of families, entire families, including grandparents, children, grandchildren, were evicted from their homes by police at the behest of the federal Liberal government. Men and women lost their land, their homes, their livelihoods. Today, there are up to 100,000 Quebecers who are descendants of those whose land was expropriated, all for a project with huge ambitions, and look what came of it.

The Mirabel expropriations are truly a dark chapter in our history. Large-scale projects are necessary, but caution is needed to ensure that they are consistent with the reality of our country and its workers. We must always be wary of ideological projects. People need food, housing and transportation. After those things are covered, there is not much money left for anything else. Do my colleagues want to hear something absurd? Only 2% of the land in Quebec is arable, all of it located on both banks of the St. Lawrence River, and that 2% is already threatened by urban sprawl. I ask myself the following question: Do we really want to build a high-speed train that will take away our land and divide it up, in addition to promoting urban sprawl?

High-speed rail is a bad good idea. Are Canada's public transportation systems, such as trains, buses, and planes, really operating at capacity? The question hardly bears asking. If our country really wants to invest between \$200 billion and \$500 billion in major projects, I have two good ideas. First, in the manufacturing sector, we could work to become more competitive with other countries in the global market and bring back well-paying jobs in the age of artificial intelligence. Second, we could develop our minerals and mines. The Right Hon. Stephen Harper, the former prime minister with whom I had the honour of working, said that rare minerals are a way forward for Canada. Canada should put all its eggs in this big natural resources basket.

In conclusion, my attachment to the land comes from my farming DNA, from my great-grandfather Octave, who settled in my hometown, and from my grandfather Napoléon, who spent his entire life clearing land alongside my father Armand, who was passionate about the land. Now I am the steward of that land, which I am passing on to my son Jérémie so that he can cultivate it in turn, while watching his own son, Octave, take his first steps on the land of his ancestors.

We do not inherit the land from our parents. We borrow it from our children.

• (1130)

Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member moved me. He gave a moving speech, with an accurate assessment of the reality facing our farmers. Members will recall that, during the pandemic and toward the end of it, there was talk of food security and how important it is to be self-sufficient. We are faced with a bill, Bill C-15, that gives absolute powers.

In his speech, the member said that people lost their land and their homes. I would add that their physical and psychological integrity were harmed. There is no willingness to apologize on the other side of the House. Why does my colleague think that is?

Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, these kinds of questions make me very emotional.

Nothing is more precious to a farm family than the land. That land is the fruit of generations of work: nine, 10, 11, 12 generations. The land in Mirabel was the most fertile land in Quebec. There were beautiful plateaus, plains and heat units that everyone here in Quebec would love to have.

This was the federal Liberal government's worst mistake. It is a blow to the Quebec nation. Everyone who was expropriated was francophone.

Louis Villeneuve (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that my brother is a farmer.

Earlier, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons talked about past mistakes, but he also stressed the importance of consultations. The Conservatives did not include the high-speed rail in their platform during the last election. They voted against the necessary funding to complete the project, and they are going to do everything in their power to end the promise of a high-speed rail.

We need to build major projects that support Canadian workers and connect our country from east to west and from north to south.

Will the Conservatives join us instead of trying to block promising projects?

Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, the largest key projects for Canada over the next 15 to 30 years will involve massive investments in our manufacturing sector, which is really under threat right now. If we want to create jobs for Canadians, we need to invest in the manufacturing sector and in mining as well.

Rare minerals will bring in a lot of money. They will be in demand around the world. Canada can be a world leader in supplying the rare minerals that are needed for the future of tomorrow's societies. If we truly want to have major projects, we need to have projects that bring in money before that money is spent.

Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for raising the issue of the expropriation of land in Mirabel in 1969 and for reminding us of the long-term effects this has had on local families. Many people felt that they were not being heard at the time.

In the hon. member's opinion, what should the government do today to listen to communities more and to treat them more fairly when major projects are planned?

Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I would like to give a brief history lesson.

When I was young, between four and five years old, I saw families on television being expropriated from their land. It is impossible to imagine what it would have felt like for a four- or five-year-old boy living on a farm to see his house being bulldozed. The entire rural community of Quebec felt this great betrayal and the fear of having their land expropriated because major developers had simply drawn a line on a map.

Imagine what it is like to lose nine to 12 generations' worth of work for a project that may not have been worth it.

Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with some emotion that I address the House. Despite the fact that I have only just come back and that I am slowly recovering from pneumonia, I felt it was crucial that I speak. Since I am short of breath and the government's comments are enough to knock the wind out of a person, I hope I will make it to the end of my speech and, more importantly, that I will live up to the name of my riding by staying calm.

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First, I want to say that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères.

Right now, in the public arena, those who are speaking out in local newspapers are mayors, stakeholders and members of the Union des producteurs agricoles, or UPA, who are wondering what this is all about. What is the deal with the so-called consultations that took place yesterday when people did not even know any consultations were happening? In the end, a few people attended, but the whole thing was just a public relations exercise. They were not real consultations at all.

I will come back to this, but the government is simply pretending to recognize the mistakes of the past in this situation. Meanwhile, it has just given Alto the power to do whatever it wants and to do it quickly through Bill C-15. It is all in the approach.

I want to begin my speech today by quoting a song by Paul Piché that accompanied me throughout my teenage years. It really encapsulates today's debate. The people in Mirabel will surely remember it, maybe with a tinge of sadness:

In Forillon Park or St-Scholastique
Gotta make way for tourists and airplanes
Early mornin', gotta hit the bricks
We're in the way, they explained
Got played a damn dirty trick
Chased off our homes, our lands, our country.

I would add that they lost their health too. Some lost their families, and some never recovered from this betrayal. We are told here today, with all the sensitivity that technocrats like the member for Thérèse-De Blainville can muster, that a program could be implemented and that mistakes were made, but that people should get over it. That is not what is needed.

The people in charge of major projects have to show respect for human beings first and foremost and not take them for fools, and they should not pass themselves off as promoters or peddlers, as the Minister of Transport is doing.

Trust has to be earned. Crucial to earning people's trust for the high-speed train that will go through Mirabel, where a monumental, horrible mistake of historic proportions was made, is the recognition by this people's assembly of the pain, the suffering and the way people's lives were negatively affected. There must be an apology.

The government has certainly had the opportunity to apologize. On the 50th anniversary of the expropriation of Mirabel residents, the Quebec National Assembly asked Ottawa to apologize. Some Quebec MPs tell us every day that there is no need for the Bloc Québécois to stand up and ensure the voice of Quebecers is heard in the House of Commons. I have yet to hear them talk about the folks in Mirabel whose land was expropriated. I hear them talking about the big high-speed rail project, but not about the people whose land was expropriated to build Mirabel. I am not hearing them now.

• (1135)

Our debate started an hour ago, but I have not heard them voice any intention of apologizing.

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Yes, Marc Garneau apologized, as an individual, and it was a gesture worthy of the man I respect, but this motion concerns a democratic institution, the people's assembly, which includes representatives of certain parties, one of them being the party in power. As they peddle their projects, the last thing they want to do is apologize. They are certain that they know what the people of Mirabel need better than we do.

On April 3, 2019, the National Assembly of Quebec unanimously passed a motion that had the unanimous support of MPs from Quebec. It seems to me that something unanimously passed by the National Assembly is something that a Quebec member of the House of Commons should be able to bring forward, table and put to a vote here, but no. Here is the motion:

THAT the National Assembly mark the 50th anniversary of Mirabel residents' expropriation;

THAT it demand that the Government of Canada formally and officially apologize to the Québec citizens who were expropriated by the Federal Government in 1969 for the construction of the Mirabel airport.

In April 2019, the Bloc Québécois, which is the only party that passes on the unanimous decisions and unanimous votes of the Quebec National Assembly, moved the following motion in the House:

That this House acknowledge the 50th anniversary of the expropriation of land from Mirabel residents and that this House call on the government to formally and officially apologize to the people of Quebec from whom the federal government expropriated land in 1969 to build the Mirabel airport.

At the time, some members who are in the House today voted against the motion. Today, they are introducing an omnibus bill that waives important provisions of the Expropriation Act, such as the ability to appeal compensation powers.

Furthermore, the Minister of Transport is saying that people are not being accurate in their remarks. In response to a question from the member for Mirabel in the House, he wondered why the member for Mirabel did not rise to criticize the Quebec law on the grounds that its wording is the same as that of the federal law. That is false, completely false, particularly on the issue of appeals and compensation. Still, the Liberals continue to ask us to trust them. They want the people of Mirabel to say okay, they will allow the government to do what it has to do because the Liberals recognized that the airport was a mistake.

Mirabel Airport was touted as the seventh wonder of the world in the 20th century, the project of the century that needed to be built fast so we had to act quickly. What happened? It was a huge disaster. Today, the government does not even have the decency to apologize to the people who suffered and are still suffering decades later.

I would like to warn you that Alto is doing things all wrong. To quote Daniel Bélanger, another singer-songwriter I like, "it is all in the way you do it", and Alto has clearly just failed its first test. I do not know how they are going to recover from this, but clearly in our neck of the woods—it is also going to run through Lanaudière, Mascouche, Terrebonne and so on—farmers and young families are saying the project should be stalled until they are consulted, because they want to be treated equally and have their say.

As for the rail line, as hard as it is to believe, they are saying a rail line will be built somewhere in a strip not 60 metres wide, but 10 kilometres wide. They are making it up as they go along.

• (1140)

I hope my colleague from the Quebec City area will stand and support our motion because he is a man of honour.

• (1145)

[*English*]

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the heartfelt comments of my colleague. It is terrible what happened in Mirabel and what is happening now. The subject of private property is coming up a lot lately throughout the country, as well as the right to ownership of land and the security of owning our land and our families continuing to own our land in the future.

Why does my colleague think that there is possibly distrust right now in the current government on whether people throughout the country, not just in Quebec and Mirabel, might not be able to continue to own their land?

[*Translation*]

Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Mirabel said, the worst part is that people were dispossessed of their land. In some cases, their children bought back the land when it was returned. Now they are being told, without consultation, that the same thing is happening again and they could lose everything. It feels a bit like Groundhog Day. From a purely moral standpoint, it is unacceptable.

Our farmers feed us. Being a farmer means putting down roots in the land. People in urban areas do not understand that. They may be attached to their house, their home or their car. However, when someone has ties to the land, and that land is cut in half and ripped away from them, it tears out their heart.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by recognizing the honour and the sensitivity of my colleague on the other side of the House. I say that with all sincerity. I think he spoke from the heart, and we felt that very clearly.

Having said that, I believe that he may have misunderstood or at least misrepresented the scope of the consultations Alto is undertaking, which are just getting under way. Apparently, some 26,000 people have already had the opportunity to give their opinion. Over the coming weeks, consultations will be taking place at various times and in several cities, including in Quebec City on February 11 and 12.

How can anyone say that high-speed rail is being built without consultation?

Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, I did not say that it was without consultation, I said that it was with so-called consultation sessions, because these are actually information and promotion sessions for a project. They are sessions to promote a project, and people are not getting time to prepare briefs and familiarize themselves with the files.

Right now in Canada, I would say that we are witnessing something shocking that has never happened before. High finance has seized the reins of the federal government, with its sole interest being economic gain. That is why good projects or great projects can sometimes end badly, because human rights are not being taken into consideration.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the motion reads:

That the House call on the government to apologize to those whose land was expropriated in Mirabel, to acknowledge the collective trauma these expropriations caused for thousands of Quebeckers who were forced to abandon their homes, their communities and their livelihoods, and to urge the government not to undertake such expropriations again without public consultation, social licence and appropriate compensation.

Can my colleague explain how the 44 Liberal members from Quebec across the way can vote against the wording of this motion?

Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, my experience as a parliamentarian leads me to believe that if the Quebeckers sitting on the government benches vote against this motion, it is because they are being forced to toe the party line. That is why I tell the people I meet in Quebec that if they want to be defended and have their voices heard in the legislature that is the House of Commons, they would be much better off counting on us, because the Quebeckers in the Liberal Party are wilfully blind, deaf and mute.

• (1150)

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our motion is as follows:

That the House call on the government to apologize to those whose land was expropriated in Mirabel, to acknowledge the collective trauma these expropriations caused for thousands of Quebeckers who were forced to abandon their homes, their communities and their livelihoods, and to urge the government not to undertake such expropriations again without public consultation, social licence and appropriate compensation.

Those are the terms of today's debate. I think it is important to repeat them so that we know what we are debating, and also because, so far, a number of individuals who have spoken have not addressed the subject or have decided to talk about another subject. I can see a link between the subject at hand and the government's much-touted high-speed rail project. There are plans for it to pass through Mirabel, and there are plans for expropriations. That is precisely why it is so relevant to address this issue.

I think it is a shame that the Liberal members who have spoken so far seem to be in some kind of denial. There is a matter before us. They are being asked to apologize to the people of Mirabel for the nightmare they went through in the 1960s, and they are not addressing the issue. That is the matter currently before us. That is what we are discussing. I find it sad.

As we have said several times so far, we feel that this is a way to wipe the slate clean and end the debate. The government wants to be able to tell the people of Mirabel that it wants to run another project through Mirabel while they still bear the scars of the past. Before going any further and doing it again, the government should restore a bond of trust by apologizing for what happened.

That is the least it could do. That is the issue we ran with today. We want to discuss it. So far, Liberal members have barely man-

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aged to mention the expropriations that took place in Mirabel in the 1960s. They are skimming over the subject for now. I find that sad, and I hope that, by the end of this debate, there will be some progress based on what we have heard today. I hope that they will be able to vote on the issue and even support the motion. I do not think there is a single Quebecker—apart from perhaps the prime minister who caused this nightmare or his son—who could say that what happened was a good thing.

In this context, I do not understand how a government could decide, despite everything, to vote against the motion. In my opinion, the only thing that could explain that is some kind of arrogance or pride. The Liberals may think to themselves that it was a Liberal government that did this, and Liberals cannot do anything wrong or crooked, as if Liberals did only good things. The government could then stay in denial. That would be sad, because this is a historic opportunity to heal some of the wounds that still exist. I think it would be an honourable and worthwhile thing to do. In our hearts and minds, each of us should be asking ourselves these questions as we hold this debate.

I want to say a little more about what the people of Quebec went through. I think everyone in Quebec stands in solidarity with what the people of Mirabel went through back then. I think it is worth taking a look at what happened and providing some context.

On March 27, 1969, there was a shocking announcement: Pierre Elliott Trudeau's government intended to seize 97,000 acres of farmland upon which houses were built. People lived there; families lived there. Fourteen Quebec municipalities were affected. The 97,000 acres of farmland covered more square kilometres than the city of Montreal. People had big ambitions for the future airport. The vision was monumental. Eventually, it became clear that it made no sense, which is what everyone said at the time: It was so huge that it made no sense. Nevertheless, out of sheer obstinacy and perhaps, once again, hubris, the government refused to acknowledge that the vision was far too ambitious for what was needed. Those 97,000 acres were home to 3,000 families. Those 3,000 families lost their homes and were deported. They were exiled from their homes.

• (1155)

According to estimates, these 3,000 families were made up of more than 10,000 people. I find that horrific, and I think that everyone in Quebec finds what happened back then horrific, too. Today, the government has a great opportunity to take up this issue and lay it to rest. It has the opportunity to apologize and admit that it made a mistake which resulted in major problems. These expropriations caused tragedy, left land scorched and homes burned down, and led to people being thrown out of their homes by police.

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The airport opened in 1975. The supreme irony is that 10 years later, in about 1985, the government started returning the land to the owners after realizing that it had expropriated too much. The thing is, it did not give back just one or two properties; it gave back 85% of the expropriated properties. That is outrageous. It later turned out that 85% of the expropriations had been unnecessary.

Today, I understand why the people of Mirabel are shocked when they hear the word “expropriation”. Trust cannot be built by telling people to get out of the way, in the name of modernity and progress, and telling them that you know what you are doing, when, in the end, 85% of the expropriated land was surplus to requirements. That does not build trust.

On top of that, this Liberal government is saying that it has no reason to apologize, but that we can trust it because everything will be done differently this time. I am really having a hard time understanding this. As someone who does not even live in Mirabel, I am not sure I would be able to trust the government. I do not trust anyone who has such a paternalistic attitude toward the public, when they are incapable of acknowledging their mistakes and apologizing for them.

I will continue my story. To date, 85% of the expropriated lots have quietly been returned. On September 15, 1997, all international flights ceased. Around 20 years after it opened, Mirabel airport stopped accommodating international flights. The government's colossal project had amounted to pretty much nothing. Everyone started talking about a white elephant. This is a permanent stain on the history of Canada, the history of Quebec, because Quebecers are the ones who experienced it, and primarily the history of Mirabel, but also the history of the Liberal Party, it must be said.

That is not all. On October 31, 2004, commercial flights were ended. There were no more commercial flights to Vancouver or anywhere else. It was over. The airport was shut down. Worse still, in the same year, on January 1, 2004, the government went so far as to rename Dorval Airport after Trudeau, even though he was the one who expropriated the people of Mirabel. The other airport was renamed in his honour. It makes no sense, but that is Liberal arrogance.

I am truly sad because, at the time of the 50th anniversary, the Quebec National Assembly formally called on the federal government to apologize. The Quebec National Assembly called for this, it is not just the Bloc Québécois that did so. However, the Bloc Québécois also called for this because it represents the voice of Quebec, and as such it tabled a motion before the government in 2019. What was the government's response? It said no. It is unbelievable, and yet this shows how this federation, particularly the Liberal Party, generally treats Quebec: in a patronizing and paternalistic way. Then they wonder why some people want to separate. The Liberals cannot even comprehend this, because they are so right that they cannot be wrong.

Once again, they have an opportunity today to redeem themselves. They have an opportunity to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. I am reaching out to them. I invite the government to reflect on Bill C-15, in which it gives itself extraordinary powers to circumvent the normal expropriation process. I invite the government to consider Bill C-5, which has been passed and which allows

the government to circumvent all the environmental legislation to implement major projects. What is the point of these laws if the government ultimately decides to amend them or not enforce or abide by them? It makes no sense. I think the Liberal Party needs to start thinking about this. I think now is the right time to do that.

I look forward to answering my colleagues' questions.

• (1200)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I want to commend my colleague and the other members who have risen for speaking plainly and with great sensitivity. We must indeed acknowledge the mistakes of the past. However, it is now 2026, and we have learned from those mistakes. There are now ways of doing things with sound, established consultation processes.

Rather than saying that there is no consultation, does my colleague not believe that we should instead encourage our constituents to participate in this important consultation exercise?

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, the interesting thing about the consultations is that they are more like information sessions. That is the first thing. They put up kiosks and sell the project. It is not really about listening to people and taking notes. That is not really it. It is a one-way relationship where they are selling a product.

The other thing I want to note is that the people of Mirabel were surprised to see that they were not included in the planned consultations, even though most of the route in Quebec between Montreal and Ottawa passes through Mirabel. They were not included in Alto's consultations, even though they were the ones whose land was expropriated, who suffered at the hands of the federal government in 1969 and who have lived with this their entire lives.

I think Alto has made amends by announcing that it will hold consultations in Mirabel after all. However, the government cannot claim to be perfect now after the new mistakes it has just made.

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has indeed expropriated people's lands. In my riding, people are concerned about the Cowichan decision. Perhaps it is not just the federal government that wants the right to take away land.

What does my colleague think about these things, which are happening again and again?

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for her question. The government always says that it is there to protect citizens' interests, that it wants to do the right thing and that we should listen to it and trust it. However, when we look back at the past, particularly Ottawa's past, we see that, most of the time, the government acts in its own interest. The good of the people sometimes takes a back seat, especially when we are talking about people in offices hundreds or thousands of kilometres away who are making decisions without going out to talk to people on the ground and find out what they really want.

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Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are reaching out and calling for cross-party co-operation today.

Given that the next two speakers are Liberal members from Quebec, here is the question that we are all asking ourselves right now: Does my colleague believe that these Liberal members will really address the wording and the subject of the motion, or does he think that they will instead try to avoid the subject, thereby proving that the 44 Liberal members from Quebec hold absolutely no sway within their own political party?

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, if the Liberal members from Quebec decide to vote against this motion when the time comes, it will be very apparent that they are of absolutely no use in Ottawa.

That will show that sending members of the Liberal Party of Canada to Ottawa to represent Quebec means sending representatives who will take their orders from Ottawa, Toronto or the Prime Minister and who will have no say in decisions involving Quebec's interests.

I think the challenge is to show how useful it is to vote Liberal.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, reading this motion, I do not think a single Quebecker would be able to vote against it, except perhaps 44 of them. According to my colleague, which 44 Quebeckers would vote against this motion?

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, I do not have time to name the 44 ridings, but I hope that those 44 will do some soul-searching. If they need to break party ranks to defend Quebec, then so be it.

• (1205)

Madeleine Chenette (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages and to the Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

I rise today with great respect, because we are talking about a chapter that has had a profound impact on thousands of Quebeckers. The Mirabel expropriations are part of history. Lives were turned upside down, families were displaced, communities were torn apart and people had to leave their homes, their neighbours, sometimes their jobs and give up part of their identity. Yes, there is collective trauma. Yes, there is pain that takes time to heal. Even though former transportation minister Garneau apologized, we still need to be able to talk about the situation with dignity today.

I also want to explain why this issue is personal to me. I was born on a farm on Patriotes Road in Saint-Ours. Farming plays a central role in my life. In 1958, my grandparents, the Poitevin-Bourgeois family, were awarded the title of Quebec's farm family of the year. Their successors, the Préfontaine-Bourgeois family, who I am also related to, received the same award in 2018. Mine is a story of family, succession and landowners. I have a deep understanding of the value of a farm. I understand that a piece of land is not just an asset. There is a history there, a legacy. That land represents the work of several generations.

I also understand that our farmers are already facing serious challenges related to climate change, technological and digital innovation, food security, workforce and family succession. The last thing our farmers need is another source of uncertainty, so we need to be responsible in how we conduct this debate. There is a difference between recognizing a historical injustice and using that injustice to fearmonger today. There is a difference between learning from the past and remaining stuck in the past.

We cannot change what happened in Mirabel in 1969, but we have a collective responsibility to learn from it and ensure that it does not happen again. That is precisely why Canada's framework for expropriation and major projects has been completely overhauled. At the time, land was seized without warning, without consultation, without the possibility of appeal. That would no longer happen today.

The current system is based on clear and modern principles: public consultation, mandatory notices, the possibility of appeal, and fair compensation. These principles are enshrined in law and they align with the systems in Quebec and Ontario. The very reason they exist is to prevent situations like the one in Mirabel from happening again.

The heart of today's debate is not to determine whether these principles exist. It is to recognize that they are already at the heart of our modern legal framework and that they must be rigorously applied. That is part of the motion. Public consultation, social licence and appropriate compensation are not political slogans. They are legal requirements designed to protect citizens, municipalities, farmers, and affected communities.

First, meaningful public consultation is a legal requirement. It is not optional. It involves mandatory notices, structured consultations held early in the process, with accessible information and meaningful opportunities for citizens, municipalities and the agricultural community to voice their concerns. That is what we are doing right now with the high-speed train project.

Second, social licence is recognized as a condition for success, not an obstacle to get around. Any project that goes ahead against the will of a community will fail, resulting in delays, costs and loss of trust. The current framework is designed to prevent that.

Third, protecting farmland is an integral part of project assessments. Farmland is an asset that benefits society as a whole. The current rules require consideration of farmland's economic, social and strategic value. I would add that, nowadays, we all recognize how very important farmland is to our sovereignty.

Fourth, compensation mechanisms are set out in the act: independent appraisals, the right to object and compensation based on fair market value. Every piece of farmland represents a life, and these mechanisms exist to ensure justice, transparency and dignity.

• (1210)

I also want to be very clear: Liberal members from the northern suburbs are in touch with the City of Mirabel and with Mayor Roxane Thérien and her teams.

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The mayor and I had a great conversation about Alto and the consultation process last week. We are committed to keeping this dialogue going and to talking about what we need to do together to ensure that this project meets the needs of her region, her city and, of course, the regional county municipality or RCM.

We are listening to members of the public and working with municipalities to come up with practical solutions. This approach is already being used in our region. After extensive consultations with Connexion Laurentides and the seven RCMs, the Laurentides region has been working since last December to position itself as an experimentation and innovation hub for transportation and a community with everything to offer. The Minister of Transport came to our region to speak directly with elected officials, economic stakeholders and local partners. This approach, which involves consultation, collaboration and building with the region, is exactly what people expect from us.

Our role as members of Parliament is to listen, consult and take prompt action to address people's concerns and to seize economic development opportunities. I am ready to work with every member from the region and the member for Mirabel to make that happen.

I will conclude by saying that, yes, Mirabel is part of our collective memory, and yes, what happened was a historical injustice. However, respect does not mean exploiting trauma to play politics. Respect means protecting Canadians today and building the future for tomorrow.

We have made our choice: We will build the future with clear rules, with people and for future generations. The good news is that we are already on the ground. I encourage the member for Mirabel and other members from the region to come work with us to find solutions.

I am asking a clear question: When will my Bloc Québécois colleagues stop using the trauma of what happened in Mirabel as a political tool and choose to work with us to support the economic interests of Quebec and the development of the Lower Laurentians and other regions, with respect for the people, farmers and communities?

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague opposite, because she is not really answering the question being asked. She somewhat acknowledges that the expropriations in Mirabel in 1969 were a mistake, but she still refuses to apologize, which seems to be her government's position.

Normally, elected officials are supposed to set an example. I have children, two daughters, aged three and two, and right now I am teaching them to apologize when they do something wrong.

What does my colleague think I should tell my daughters when grown-ups make mistakes, when they do bad things and they refuse to apologize? What kind of example does that set for our children?

Madeleine Chenette: Mr. Speaker, clearly, the best way to apologize is to take action and to work with people on the ground. It is about building trust and working together. We acknowledge the pain caused by things that were done in the past. Of course, we must not repeat them.

The laws have changed, and it is 2026. We are ready to listen to the people once again, to be on the ground, to have the discussions that are necessary to ensure that this is a project with a future for them, for the region, for our beautiful Quebec and for the rest of Canada.

Louis Villeneuve (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is this: The wrongs have been acknowledged, that has been said, but what meaningful steps will be taken on the ground to ensure that citizens feel respected and listened to?

Madeleine Chenette: Mr. Speaker, I want to sincerely thank my colleague for the question.

We are still working on the ground, meeting with our mayors in the region. When I say that, I am not just talking about myself, but about Liberal members from across the region who are active on the ground. It is about meeting with businesses and farmers to listen to what should not be done, to ensure that Alto respects the process and that people are really being listened to. We are working hard to report back on these issues, and we are doing so on an ongoing basis. The high-speed rail is there to innovate transportation in the region, and we want to work to ensure that our local businesses benefit from it.

• (1215)

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the only question we want answered today is this: What will determine whether my colleague votes for or against the wording of the motion we are introducing today?

All we are asking is that she vote on the wording of the motion itself, on the words used in it.

Madeleine Chenette: Mr. Speaker, what I want to say at this stage is I recognize the pain and the stories from the past. The motion will be put to a vote next week, so we will be able to make the decision collectively.

In the meantime, obviously we can use the scars of the past that have caused so much suffering, but the Bloc Québécois must also bring a strong voice to the table to say that this project is important for the region and for people, that the government is prepared to engage in a consultation process, and that the Bloc Québécois is prepared to work with it to ensure that this project is flawless and can offer many benefits while respecting people's dignity.

[*English*]

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am appreciative of the topic we are discussing today, because I think it highlights the Liberals' arrogance in the fact that they can just choose to build a project in northern, not even very northern, Quebec. Today it is kind of a white elephant; there is not a lot going on, but it was overriding all the local interests at the time.

I am wondering if the hon. member will acknowledge that the project in Mirabel has been a total disaster.

Madeleine Chenette: Mr. Speaker, clearly, as I mentioned in my speech, what happened is not acceptable. However, this has evolved through regulation, which has changed. We have a process now that ensures that the voices of citizens and the voices of municipalities are heard.

Business of Supply

No decision has been made up until now, and we need to listen and consult. More importantly, we are already on the ground, talking to all the stakeholders to make sure we will have a process and a project that will build our region and build Canada.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to this important issue. I think that we are basically dealing with two things here: what has happened in the past and what we want to do for the future. There are four related issues I would like to address. I will start with the issue of public consultations. Let us look at what happened in the past versus what is happening now.

For the past few days and weeks, the Bloc Québécois has been trying to convince us that there will be no public consultations and no environmental assessments for the high-speed rail project. I would invite them to visit Alto's website, the company leading the project, since public consultations have already begun. People can attend in person, by video conference or online. The idea that there will be no public consultation, that the past predicts the future, is false. That is absolutely false.

With regard to the issue of environmental assessment, I would humbly suggest that I have likely participated in more public hearings on the environment than any other member of this House ever has. Whether with the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement in Quebec, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada or the Canada Energy Regulator, I have participated in dozens and dozens of assessment sessions on various projects in Quebec and across Canada throughout my career. As environment minister, I defended the Impact Assessment Act all the way to the Supreme Court, so if anyone here is concerned about and very interested in these issues, it is me.

There will be an impact assessment. It has already been started by the high-speed rail consortium. I am among those who think that this is an excellent project in terms of both the economy and jobs, and, of course, in terms of the environment and the fight against climate change. It will help significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. My colleagues probably know that transportation accounts for 25% of our greenhouse gas emissions. One-quarter of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions comes from the transportation sector. By 2040 or thereabouts, 24 million people will travel this corridor. It will be one of the busiest corridors in the country. It already is, but it will be even busier, as we heard a little earlier from my colleague, the Minister of Transport, not to mention ground transportation by car and air transportation, as we have often seen. This is a very important solution for reducing both air and ground traffic, but also for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Earlier we heard the Minister of Transport say that the late Marc Garneau, former transport minister in 2019, had apologized to those whose land was expropriated in Mirabel. I am not sure where the Bloc Québécois was at the time. There was compensation. The Bloc Québécois is using old political tactics. We have seen it all before. Their tactic is to muddy the waters. They bring up what happened a little over 50 years ago. The government handled things terribly, everyone recognizes that. The Minister of Transport acknowledged it here in the House earlier today. My colleague ac-

knowledged it. We all acknowledge it. That is not the way to do things, and it is not the way things are done now.

At some point, I want to hear the members of the Bloc Québécois on whether they agree with this project. It is very complicated to follow their logic. They are neither for nor against. In fact, quite the contrary. That is more or less the position of the Bloc Québécois on this project. It is one of the most promising projects in the fight against climate change. It is one of the most promising projects of Canada's history in the area of transportation. It will greatly benefit thousands of people, hundreds of businesses in Quebec and elsewhere in the country, as well as in Bloc ridings. I find it completely hard to believe that the Bloc Québécois is being so divisive with this project when it could be playing a constructive role. Honestly, I do not understand the position of the Bloc Québécois. I am very puzzled and very disappointed by the fearmongering campaign of the Bloc Québécois. In fact, they could be working with us, working with the municipalities, working with businesses and working with farmers.

● (1220)

People are bringing up farmers a lot. When I was at Équiterre, an organization I co-founded, farming and sustainable agriculture were one of our main causes. For many years, we ran a program called the Family Farmers Network. The network included more than 130 firms supplying food to 50,000 people.

We fought for land protection. We led a campaign on the issue of farmland protection and the Commission de protection du territoire agricole, Quebec's farmland protection commission. That cause is setting a precedent today in terms of farmland protection.

This issue is very important to me, and we obviously want to minimize the impact this project will have. Even though it is a good project, it will have an impact nonetheless, in part on farmland. Discussions have already begun.

It is true that we want to speed up the schedule. There is no hiding that, there is no doubt about it. Why do we want to speed up the schedule? I am one of those who believe that we can conduct good public consultations. They have already begun. We do not necessarily need a decade to carry out good environmental studies and good impact assessments.

I was the environment minister, so I know very well what I am talking about. The proposed process can work if everyone pulls together, which does not seem to be the case with the Bloc Québécois so far. For all these reasons, I am very much in favour of the high-speed rail project.

We have also acknowledged the wrongs of the past with regard to expropriations. In the case of high-speed rail, we are talking about a fraction of the land that was expropriated for the Mirabel airport. It is not 1% or 0.5%, it is far less. However, the Bloc Québécois is waging this campaign of fear among residents and farmers, and I find that extremely shameful.

Business of Supply

I invite the Bloc Québécois to follow our example. Of course, we must learn from the past, and that is what we are doing, but we must also look to the future. On this side of the House of Commons, we are firmly focused on the future, on one of the most promising and important projects in the history of our country.

• (1225)

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we support the high-speed rail project. I wanted to make that clear to the former minister. That has always been our position.

With respect to the matter before us today, I would like the member opposite to explain to me what is so divisive about our motion. The motion calls for an official apology from the government. No such apology has ever been offered. It calls on the government to acknowledge the collective trauma that the 1969 expropriations caused. It also urges the government not to do that kind of thing again and to ensure that there are proper public consultations, social licence and appropriate compensation, which the government is apparently committed to doing.

I would therefore like the member to explain to me what is so divisive about our motion. Will he vote for or against the motion?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois would have us believe that everything it has said about the high-speed train project is included in today's motion. That, however, is far from the case.

Social media is full of public comments by various Bloc Québécois representatives talking about high-speed rail in apocalyptic terms. Today's debate is limited to this Bloc Québécois motion, but the Bloc Québécois's actions over the past few weeks regarding this project are the antithesis of a healthy, constructive debate to move this project forward.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank our colleague for his excellent statement on the importance of this project.

My colleague made a suggestion. He asked how we could work together to encourage people to take part in the consultation process, instead of saying that there is no consultation, or that voicing one's opinion is pointless.

Instead of saying that and discouraging people from sharing their opinions, how can we collectively encourage all Quebeckers in the House of Commons to encourage public participation in this major project?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier in my speech, consultations began on January 15 and will continue until early March. There are various ways to take part in the consultations.

The members on this side of the House, who represent the government, are committed. We have already started discussions with municipal stakeholders, people in the agricultural sector and Canadians to both talk about the importance of this project and listen to them.

The Minister of Transport spoke about this earlier this morning. The goal of the consultations is to try to find the best possible route, given the requirements associated with the high-speed rail project,

on the one hand, and the concerns of the local population, the farmers and the municipal officials, on the other. For example, I am thinking of where the stations will be located. We want to minimize the impact. That is the goal of the consultations we have already begun.

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would invite our colleagues to tell the truth. I would like to know which one of our members talked about high-speed rail in apocalyptic terms. I do not think anyone did. The apocalypse happened in Mirabel in 1969. These people experienced the end of the world.

What we are asking for today is precaution. We are not sounding the alarm or saying that it is a bad project. We look at what is being proposed, at these kinds of infomercials being presented as pseudo-consultations, and we figure that we, as elected officials, have a job to do to protect our communities. That is what we are doing. We do not want to hinder the project; we want to protect our people.

I would encourage the member to recognize that fact and to accept that the government should apologize. A few members have recognized the substance of the motion without saying they would actually do it. It would be easy to settle this and work differently in the future. We need to provide that assurance to the public, who are worried.

• (1230)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, once again, it is clear how the Bloc Québécois operates. They are calling them pseudo-consultations. I wonder how many consultations my colleague has taken part in with the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement or the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada for him to say that these are pseudo-consultations. That is what they are calling them.

People can attend the consultations in person, by video conference or online. This is a very good way to hold consultations, but once again, the Bloc Québécois is trying to scare people. It is telling people to look at what happened in the late 1960s and saying that we are going to do the same thing—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Jonquière.

I will begin by reassuring my colleague opposite that, yes, I have participated in consultations in the past. I have a message for the people watching at home: They can take part in consultations and have a meaningful impact on projects as ordinary citizens. That is exactly what I did in the municipality of Saint-Félix-de-Valois when I attended Quebec's environmental public hearings board, or BAPE, because one of our drinking water sources was at risk.

When people throw accusations around and say that other people do not know or have never seen certain things, they should be careful about the high horse they are riding on when talking to colleagues. We are all equals, we are all elected officials. That is what I want my colleagues to remember.

Business of Supply

Now, what we are asking for today is an apology, because that has never been done. I am hearing all sorts of things that make no sense. We are being told that we want to live in the past and that we are fearmongering. That is not what we are doing.

We looked at the beginning of the project, particularly with regard to the Mirabel area, where the route was recently modified. From what I have heard about the consultations that were held, they were more like information sessions. People were told that they could look at the wonderful project to give their opinion if they wanted to. The Bloc Québécois wants to ensure that those opinions are taken into account and that the law is respected.

I liked the speech by the member for Thérèse-De Blainville, because she talked about those details. That is exactly what we want. We want the law to be respected, but we are concerned. Why are we talking about Mirabel? It is because no apology has ever been offered and we are heading back into the same territory.

The train will also pass through Berthier—Maskinongé, and I am concerned for my constituents. Some members are saying they do not understand our concern, given how good the project will be for everyone. A riding like Berthier—Maskinongé is basically a rural area between cities. We do not have any cities. The train will simply pass through our riding. I cannot say that there is a huge gain for us. The Bloc Québécois has always said that high-speed rail is a positive project, a major one, but is it too much to ask that the work be done properly? Basically, that is what we are saying this morning. Can the work be done properly, with respect for the people?

My colleague told me that I do not understand the environmental assessment process, but I hope he has seen the maps. There corridors are 100 kilometres wide. That seems excessive. Only 60 metres is required to accommodate high-speed rail.

People say that the Bloc Québécois is using this to make political hay, but the fact is people contacted us directly. I will once again make my colleague across the floor happy by telling him that I will be in Trois-Rivières on February 18, and I will be in Berthierville on February 19. I know that citizens, particularly agricultural producers, will be there to protest and may oppose the project. They are afraid because the project is being presented quickly, and they are being told that the government wants to move faster and is going to carry out incredible infrastructure projects. Last spring, the House passed Bill C-5, which gives the government the power to override all legislation on the pretext that this is a major, forward-looking project. That is where our fear comes from.

We are currently studying Bill C-15 at the Standing Committee on Finance. It is a bill that will give the government excessive powers. We have spoken out against it. The government hid this on page 300 of a 660-page document, and then they come and tell us that we have to be honest and work in good faith. I feel like saying, "let's go, come on". Can we really work in good faith?

We are looking at this, and we see that powers are going to be changed. This bill will grant powers, including with respect to section 98 on the Canadian Transportation Agency. Under our current interpretation, the government will be able to override the agency. We want assurance on that front. A government member even admitted that this would spare cabinet the embarrassment of being

contradicted by the agency. After that, we are told that we are scaremongering. We read the bills. We hear things, and, of course, we feel like reacting. Things get emotional.

● (1235)

We can imagine how emotional it was for the communities. We spoke at length about the people in Mirabel, the children who watched their fathers cry on the kitchen table.

In Forillon Park or St-Scholastique
Gotta make way for tourists and airplanes
Early mornin', gotta hit the bricks
We're in the way, they explained
Got played a damn dirty trick
Chased off our homes, our lands, our country.

In case my colleagues did not recognize it, that was from a song by Paul Piché. It is a simple reminder that this is also about human beings. We are not using that quote for political hay or anything of the sort. We know that big projects are on the horizon. We see this business-first government, clearly under corporate influence, that wants to act quickly and seems to have contempt for parliamentary work. The Prime Minister—if I may be judgmental for a second—does not look like he enjoys being here. That is what it seems like.

Our job is to make sure that our legislation is complied with. I was honest earlier when I said that I enjoyed the member for Thérèse-De Blainville's interventions. She mentioned specific acts and said that it was done under proper legislation. That is exactly what we want to ensure: that the legislation is complied with.

We have identified a number of threats in Bill C-15. It is still being studied. We are concerned that the official opposition might improve it all. We want to take precautions before changing laws. Changes to impact studies and selective modifications suggest an intent to limit the right to object. That is what we want to avoid.

Why plan for 100 kilometres when they need only 60 metres? In Mirabel, the government had to give 85% of the land back. We do not want that to happen again. I have been listening to my Liberal colleagues in good faith, as I always try to do. I am not perfect, but I always try to act in good faith.

I am looking at our motion. We are asking the government to apologize for the expropriations. It had to give 85% of the land back to people. People were tenants in their homes for years. I do not want my constituents in Berthier—Maskinongé to go through that.

A dairy farmer talked to me two days ago. He told me that he had looked at the proposed route, that he and his family were really panicking and that they would be going to the consultation in Trois-Rivières on February 18 because the route goes across a corner of his porch. He asked me if I was going to go. I am not making this up. I am not exaggerating for effect. I am telling you what a constituent told me.

I often joke with my colleagues and staff that I am too sensitive for this work. That is my situation. Maybe I am too sensitive for this work, but I cannot understand why a government does not have the courtesy to admit that what happened in 1969 was a mistake, to apologize, to acknowledge that this was a collective trauma and to promise that this will never happen again.

Business of Supply

Since this morning, government members have said all of these things and acknowledged everything that is in the motion. I can find a quote for every word and put a member's name to it. I thank them for that. It means that they are aware of it. What I do not understand is why, for next week's vote, they are unable to persuade their caucus colleagues that the Bloc Québécois's motion is not dangerous, that the Bloc is not trying to corner the government and that it simply wants the government to agree to do things right.

They have been saying this all day long, so what is the problem? The problem is that the Liberals tend to say not to worry, only to turn around and do the opposite. The government has apologized to many groups, and that is a good thing. We agree on that. It is important to acknowledge the mistakes of the past in order to move forward in a positive way. I think the people of Mirabel deserve that. I think the people of Berthier—Maskinongé who will be affected by the Alto project deserve to have it done right. They deserve assurances that their rights will be respected and that there will be a genuine right to appeal.

That is why I encourage the member to speak with her colleagues and convince them.

• (1240)

Madeleine Chenette (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages and to the Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks. There is no doubt that we, the members on this side of the House, are actively working with cabinet to always find solutions to address every aspect of this project.

I want to point out that it is entirely appropriate to listen to Canadians and to their questions. What will the repercussions be? What are the steps involved? What has been confirmed? What has not been confirmed? What mechanisms will be put in place?

These are normal questions, and we want to hear them. However, when people come to us, our duty as members of Parliament is not to tell them that they are right to be afraid. It is to inform them that we have a process in place and that we need to proceed with confidence.

If the Bloc Québécois claims to support high-speed rail, why did your party vote against funding it?

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind the parliamentary secretary that the word “you” refers to the Speaker.

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, she is forgiven; I, too, sometimes address members directly.

We can see how easy it is to acknowledge mistakes and forgive one another. It would be nice if the government apologized so the people of Mirabel can finally turn the page on this hurt and look to the future.

For my colleague's sake, I will repeat the purpose of today's motion. Earlier, she listed all the processes that protect our constituents and give them a real right to appeal. The purpose of today's motion is to convince ourselves that we can tell our constituents to move forward with confidence because the government will have made a

formal commitment to ensure that the laws are respected during consideration of Bill C-15. We want the government to work with us to ensure that those rights are not taken away.

We are not telling our constituents that they are right to be afraid. We are telling them that our analysis of the bills currently under consideration is scaring us. There seems to be a desire to skip steps. That scares me. If this drags on, there may be a decision to move forward at some point. That is what we want to avoid, and we are trying to achieve that in a very constructive way.

[*English*]

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the Bloc mentioned that there is talk of a distrust in government. I am hearing that a lot too. What happened in Mirabel is terrible. There are issues with private property across the country right now that are not being addressed, even in my province of British Columbia.

Why do you think the people of Canada, or residents, have a distrust in the current government?

The Deputy Speaker: As a reminder to the member, when using “you”, it is through the Speaker. I will not explain what I am thinking.

[*Translation*]

I would invite the member for Berthier—Maskinongé to explain what he thinks.

Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, that is, in fact, the issue today.

We have been talking a lot about Mirabel. We are being told that we are sensationalizing this issue. First of all, that is not what we are doing. We are telling the House about the history and the wounds and explaining why we are asking for this. What we want is to heal these wounds so that we can move forward in an atmosphere of trust. I call on the government to make this commitment. My message to the government is that it should make a commitment to respecting people. If it does not respect people, it will have to contend with the Bloc Québécois members. I do not think that is what it wants, since it claims it wants to work together.

Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the motion we moved calls for respect and dignity for the people of Mirabel. When I hear the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie reduce this motion to a Bloc Québécois tactic, I dare say that the cynicism he is showing today suggests that politics is wearing on him. I have known him for a long time, and this is not the intellectual integrity I would have expected of him.

Now, we have been told since this morning that we want to leave people in the past and that we only want to focus on the past. Does my colleague not believe that voting in favour of this motion would mean bringing the people of Mirabel into the future instead of leaving them in the past?

Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, what a wonderful summary by my colleague, the MP for Montcalm. That is exactly right. It is very simple.

The MPs across the aisle can try as hard as they want to demonize our approach today. We are going to bat for our people. We are going to bat for the future. However, to build the future, we need a solid foundation that was built in the past, and right now there are cracks in that foundation. Could an apology fill those cracks and appease the people? Maybe then the government could ask for people's trust, because we will be there to keep an eye on it. That is all we are asking for.

● (1245)

Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the debates since this morning and I see what the government is trying to do by suggesting that we are fearmongering and that we are living in the past.

I want to clarify something. I want to clearly state what our intentions are and also explain something that is very troubling to every parliamentarian here. I want to come back to the motion.

The motion very clearly calls on the government to apologize to the people whose land was expropriated in Mirabel and to acknowledge the collective trauma experienced by those who were forced to abandon their homes and significantly change their life plans. We are also calling on the government to learn from its mistakes and commit to not undertaking such expropriations again without public consultation, social licence and appropriate compensation.

When I looked at our motion, I was inspired by what the Prime Minister did in his speech in Davos.

The Prime Minister is a well-read man. In his speech in Davos, he drew attention to an author I really admire, Václav Havel. He talked about the power of the powerless and especially the celebrated idea of living in truth.

I would like to invite the Liberals to live in truth, so I want to explore the concept not of apology, but of forgiveness. These are two different things. The philosopher who discussed the concept of forgiveness the most vigorously was Vladimir Jankélévitch. The Prime Minister might be familiar with his work. Jankélévitch said that there is a difference between forgiveness and apology. As Vladimir Jankélévitch sees it, forgiveness is recognition of the seriousness of the offence. With this motion, what we are asking the government to do this morning is to recognize the seriousness of the offence against the residents of Mirabel. In keeping with Vladimir Jankélévitch's perspective, forgiveness is not the same as an apology, where the intent is to reduce liability or erase blame because it was involuntary.

My friend from Lac-Saint-Jean often uses the rhetoric of apologies, saying that it is not his fault and that it is unintentional. We forgive him. However, that is not what we are looking for from the government today. Instead, we are looking for true awareness. Apologies are an attempt to downplay responsibility, often by contextualizing, as my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean does and as the government also does. What we are asking for, namely forgiveness, means taking responsibility, and that is what we are doing today. We are saying to the government that it acted dishonourably in the past and that it needs to take responsibility for it. That is how a wrongdoer expresses responsibility. What we are trying to do today, what we are asking the government to do, is to take steps to ac-

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knowledge the wrong that it did to the people of Mirabel so that it never happens again. I want to emphasize that: never again. In fact, all things considered, today the Bloc Québécois is asking the government to reflect on its responsibility, something the government does not often do. We want to make the government aware that it cannot repeat the tragedy of the Mirabel expropriations by contextualizing and blaming challenging conditions that may be adverse to our economy. I say this because the danger of a tragedy like the one in Mirabel happening again is very real.

In both Bill C-5 and Bill C-15, the government is giving itself a way to shirk its responsibilities under the pretext of responding to the tariff crisis. As in the case of Mirabel, both Bill C-5 and Bill C-15 use the rhetoric of major projects that will build a new Canada to justify deviations from democracy without any guarantee of results.

I would remind the House that, last June, the Bloc Québécois vehemently opposed Bill C-5, which allowed the government to exempt proponents of major projects from the obligation to comply with certain laws. The government goes even further with Bill C-15. Consider, for example, something hidden on page 300 of the bill. There is a seemingly benign amendment to the Red Tape Reduction Act, which was passed by the Harper government.

● (1250)

The government is giving the minister the power, for three years, to exempt any company from any law, except, of course, the Criminal Code. Imagine that.

Here is what the bill says:

...a minister may, by order, for a specified validity period of not more than three years and on any terms that the minister considers appropriate, exempt an entity from the application of

(a) a provision of an Act of Parliament, except the *Criminal Code*, if the minister is responsible for the Act;

(b) a provision of an instrument made under an Act of Parliament, except an instrument made under the *Criminal Code*....

The government is telling us that these exemptions are meant to facilitate innovative projects, but we have our doubts. In reality, what the government's amendment does is place any company above any law.

It is at this point that we need to look back on the infamous case of Mirabel and what it teaches us. Rushing ahead the way we are with Bill C-5 and Bill C-15, while setting aside the principles of the law and abandoning government responsibility, is a disaster waiting to happen.

Business of Supply

As the saying goes, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. I would like to give an example of this inconsistent behaviour we are seeing. The government introduced a plan to build oil and gas infrastructure. This infrastructure is supposed to help us get through the tariff crisis. I will skip over the whole issue of co-operation in the case of the agreement between the federal government and Alberta, which was announced without British Columbia even being informed that negotiations were happening about infrastructure that would pass through its territory. I will leave that aside. Rather, the real inconsistency in the government's behaviour is that it is trying to persuade the public that its measures will address the tariff crisis.

When we take a closer look at what the government is actually doing, we quickly realize who would benefit from the creation of oil and gas infrastructure. The biggest players in the oil and gas sector are 80% American-owned. The government is in a hurry to give itself additional powers to build infrastructure without having to comply with laws so that, at the end of the day, it can give more opportunities to American companies. We could not make this stuff up.

In recent years, which large companies have made the most profit in Canada? Companies in the oil and gas sector have. For every dollar of profit, 60% goes into the pockets of American owners. Today, with Bills C-5 and C-15, the government is trying to force infrastructure projects down our throats that will have the same kind of impact we saw for the citizens of Mirabel. These infrastructure projects will benefit Americans under the pretext of fighting the tariff crisis, without respecting environmental principles.

I am saying all this because, ultimately, we realize that when the government acts in a hurry, disaster often looms. One prime example of this is what was done in the past in Mirabel.

Today we want the government to be aware of its actions, to apologize to the citizens of Mirabel and to commit to not repeating this type of mistake.

Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how can the Government of Canada ensure that the serious mistakes made in 1969 are not repeated and will not be repeated?

• (1255)

Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, the government could start by apologizing, and if it does not want to make the same mistakes again, maybe it should not give itself the means to make them. I would invite my colleague to listen to my speech again. Bill C-5 and Bill C-15 give the government the tools to make those mistakes again.

The hon. member can talk to her colleagues if she wants to prevent that from happening.

[*English*]

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue for the people of Mirabel. We are talking about families that farmed their land for generations and generations and passed it on down. It is important for Mirabel, important for Quebec and important for Canada. I cannot think of a reason why the government would not want to simply

give the good people of Mirabel an apology so they could have final closure on this.

It was two Canadian Conservative prime ministers, Stephen Harper and Brian Mulroney, who returned that land back to the people of Mirabel.

Why will the government not give some closure and apologize to the people of Mirabel and the people of Quebec?

[*Translation*]

Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. At the beginning of my speech, I talked about the speech in which the Prime Minister referenced Václav Havel and said that we should live in truth.

If the government wants to live in truth, it should take responsibility, apologize and ask the people of Mirabel for forgiveness. The only reason it would not do this is that it thinks there is a political price to pay. If that is the case, it is not acting ethically. It is simply acting in its own best interest and maintaining its image.

Personally, I invite all of my Liberal colleagues to reflect on what a good lawmaker should do.

The only possible action is to apologize.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by apologizing to my colleague from Jonquière for all past wrongs I committed against him. I hope he will be magnanimous enough to forgive me.

Now, my question for him is this: If Liberal members were to vote against this motion, especially members who represent Quebec ridings in the Liberal caucus, how does he think it would affect their influence within the governing party's caucus?

Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question.

If they vote against the motion, they will be standing up to say that they do not recognize the wrong that was done to the people of Mirabel in 1969.

Not only would they be refusing to acknowledge that wrong, they would be refusing to apologize and to ask for forgiveness. As far as their conscience is concerned, it would mean they are prepared to do the same thing again on the simple pretext that it aligns with the goal of economic development and the government's intentions.

That would be very unfortunate, but I am eager to hear my Liberal colleagues' response: Will they agree to apologize to the people of Mirabel, or will they choose to toe the Liberals' party line?

Louis Villeneuve (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, several provisions of the high-speed rail network legislation are aligned with Quebec's expropriation legislation.

Does the Bloc Québécois support that provincial legislation?

Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, those are two entirely different things.

I just want my colleague to acknowledge the facts. What he can do today is acknowledge the facts in front of him, reread the motion and speak to the motion.

If he believes that irreparable harm has been done to the people of Mirabel, I invite him to convince his colleagues to vote in favour of the motion. It would be a gesture of reparation.

If he believes that no irreparable harm has been done to the people of Mirabel, I invite him to look at history and what has been done since 1969 and to take note of it.

He therefore has a choice to make. He can either toe the government line to keep his reputation intact, or he can respect the people of Mirabel and vote with us in favour of the motion.

Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Beauport—Limoilou.

I rise today with the utmost respect for the families and communities that were affected by the Mirabel expropriations. As many here know, I have lived in the Lower Laurentians region for a number of years. My riding of Rivière-des-Milles-Îles includes Deux-Montagnes, Saint-Eustache, Boisbriand and Rosemère. It is just south of Mirabel. I have always worked in the Lower Laurentians. I raised my family there. I have connected with people from all over the Lower Laurentians and Laval. The issue that the Bloc Québécois is talking about is not abstract to me. It brings to mind faces, stories and memories.

What happened in 1969 had a profound impact on thousands of people, families that lost their homes, their lands and their communities, often without even understanding what was happening and with no way to defend themselves. At the time, we lived in Laval, and my father had a stable. That was when everyone's farms were expropriated. My father wanted to update his stable and took me, as a young girl, to buy equipment in Mirabel, in Sainte-Scholastique. I still remember how heartbreaking it was to see the deserted farmlands and the empty barns. It was so sad. That is what struck me then as a little girl. Again, I have a lot of respect for the families that went through this.

That moment in history is a wound that has not yet healed. The trauma is transferred from one generation to the next. It is important to acknowledge that with humility. I ran four times in Rivière-des-Mille-Îles and I went door knocking all four times. Every time I would meet people from the Mirabel area—it was not Mirabel at the time; it was Sainte-Scholastique, Saint-Janvier, four or five towns that merged. When I knock on doors in Saint-Eustache, I still meet people whose land was expropriated.

Recognizing this reality is not about making excuses; it is about recognizing that mistakes were made, saying that this should not have happened, and committing to doing better. Since then, our legislation has changed, our practices have evolved, and the way we work in our communities has been transformed. Today, we can no longer impose a bill without consultation, we can no longer act without transparency, and we can no longer ignore citizens. Frankly, that is a good thing.

High-speed rail is an important project for our country. Do my colleagues know that the first segment to be built will be between Montreal and Ottawa, with 25 trains running per day? Travelling from Toronto to Montreal will take three hours by train. It will take two hours to get from Toronto to Ottawa and one hour to get from Montreal to Ottawa. Also, going from Montreal to Quebec City will

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take an hour and a half. The corridor will need to be 60 metres wide for the train to pass. The project will span about 1,000 kilometres once the project is completed. Evidently, this will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 100,000 tonnes, which is huge. That is what we want: to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

At the same time, 92% of Ontarians and Quebecers support this project. Obviously, Ontario and Quebec support the project, as do the mayors of Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal, and I would add Laval as well. The first phase of consultations is currently under way. Today, in Saint-Eustache, one of the four cities in my riding, there will be consultations in the afternoon and evening. I want people to know that if they are in Saint-Eustache, they can go to the consultations today and see what is on offer. They will be able to ask questions. Now is the time.

This project will create jobs, 50,000 of them. It will use our materials. It will use our steel and aluminum. It will employ people from Quebec City, Trois-Rivières, Laval, Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto. It will bring our regions closer together.

• (1300)

It will improve our mobility. It will also support our economy. There will also be a very positive impact on the environment. This is a project that will leave its mark on an entire generation. I hope I will have the opportunity and the privilege to go from Quebec City to Windsor or Toronto. I hope I will be able to do that in my lifetime. To make that happen, we have to proceed respectfully, and that is exactly what the law provides for.

The law requires consultations. It provides for serious assessments. It promotes voluntary acquisition. It limits expropriation. It guarantees fair compensation. It recognizes the rights of communities. It puts Canadians at the heart of the process. I understand the concerns that have been shared. I understand that there are fears. I also understand the mistrust that people sometimes feel. When someone has experienced an injustice, they become more vigilant. That is normal. What the people of Mirabel went through was unacceptable. I sincerely believe that we now have the tools to do things differently. We have learned from the past. We have strengthened our laws since then, and we have changed our culture. We are a long way from the 1960s and 1970s. We live in a Canada that listens better, holds more consultations and is more respectful.

In my riding, people tell me two things: one, that they want their history to be respected, and two, that they want their children to have a future. They want jobs—good jobs. They want modern infrastructure and efficient services. They want responsible development. They want us to move forward without forgetting where we came from.

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This debate should not divide us. It should unite us all in pursuit of a common goal. We want to build a major project without repeating the mistakes of the past. We should all be united around a simple idea. It is possible to be both ambitious and humane. It is possible to build and think big while listening to people. It is possible to invest in the future without hurting communities. I sincerely believe that this bill is the key. It will allow us to bring this project to fruition, protect residents and take action respectfully.

In closing, I want to tell the families in Mirabel and the families of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles that their history matters, that their voices matter and that their experience is guiding us. I want to tell young people that we are working hard to make their country modern, fair and united. We can do both, but we must all work together to make it happen.

• (1305)

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member explained to us how passionate and inspired she was by the much-touted Alto high-speed rail project.

I did not quite understand her position on the motion being debated today. It makes me wonder. What we are criticizing is that the people of Mirabel were not part of the consultations, first of all. We are criticizing the unceremonious strategies used in Bill C-15 to fast-track processes outside the usual laws.

That said, at the end of the day, the motion we are debating today calls for an apology to the people of Mirabel. The member agreed that what was done to the people of Mirabel in the past was wrong.

How would apologizing to the people of Mirabel compromise the project that she cares so much about?

Linda Lapointe: I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

In my speech, I said that the laws have changed since 1969. We are no longer in the same place at all. Respect has become very important in all of this. There was no notice before. Now, people will be invited to participate. There are consultations. The people in the 60-metre corridor who will be affected will know it, and agreements will be made. This is a major project that will connect us. The majority of Canadians live in the 100 kilometres between Quebec City and Windsor, in the south of the country.

This will help us reduce greenhouse gases in all public transit. It will also promote tourism. It will help us economically, so that everyone will be able to visit and enjoy themselves in these beautiful cities.

[*English*]

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member references the laws being changed, the consultations and so forth. That is not the motion before us today.

If the member opposite in the Liberal Party really believes that an injustice was done in the past, the motion before us today is to simply say sorry and apologize. That means not just the government but all of us parliamentarians here. It is to bring an apology forth that will bring closure to the people of Mirabel, the people of the region and the people of Quebec, indeed of all of Canada. It is

not directly related to consultations and discussions and the merits of building the high-speed rail; it is an apology that is required to bring closure.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

Linda Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague if he has ever been to Mirabel.

Have you ever spoken to people in Mirabel? Do you know what intergenerational trauma is?

Costas Menegakis: Yes.

Linda Lapointe: Are you aware that this motion recognizes the injustice and the people of Mirabel whose land was expropriated? Acres of land have been returned, and there is still some land that is being leased around the airport.

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to remind members that when they use the word “you”, they are addressing the Chair.

As to whether I have been to Mirabel, I can confirm that I have. Mirabel airport is where I first set foot on Canadian soil.

The hon. member for Québec Centre.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank our colleague for speaking with such wisdom, sensitivity, respect and dignity.

She clearly said that everyone here today agrees on the trauma experienced by the people of Mirabel. She also said that Minister Garneau had already recognized this just a few years ago. She also mentioned that it is 2026 and that we know how to do things better now.

What would she suggest that all members of the House of Commons, including members of the Bloc Québécois, do to encourage people to participate in the consultation process on this major project, the Alto high-speed rail project?

Linda Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Quebec City.

What people need to do is get involved and go to the consultations to get the right information.

Instead of peddling information that is unverified and potentially incorrect, people need to get involved and visit the Alto website to find out more. Consultations will be held in over 100 communities. That is what I would suggest to everyone.

The Deputy Speaker: We have time for a very short question.

The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our colleague told us that she experienced trauma, that her father brought her to see some of the properties and so on. She also seems very compassionate. I would therefore like to remind her that respect was also expected in 1969. I would ask her to finish her speech.

Will she apologize on her government's behalf for what happened in 1969? Will she promise not to repeat the same thing again? Otherwise, all that is just hot air.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles has 20 seconds to respond.

Linda Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord, which is north of Mirabel, so he is surely also very aware of the situation.

He is a lawyer, after all. The laws have changed since 1985. Expropriation laws have changed. He should be realize that things are different now.

Steeve Lavoie (Beauport—Limoilou, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here today to talk about a promising project, a generational project that my children and grandchildren will be able to benefit from.

I will begin by talking about Quebec City and its strategic location in North America. In Quebec City, we are already transforming the way we travel. The tramway project marks an important turning point in urban transportation. However, let me be clear: Quebec City cannot limit itself to thinking about its future solely within its municipal borders. A modern Quebec City must also be fully connected to the rest of the province and the rest of the country.

This is where the high-speed rail line becomes essential. Quebec City will be the terminus of this major infrastructure project, the gateway to the eastern part of the country, to a region rich in history, culture and vitality. Quebec City will also be the starting point. It will be a point of departure and arrival for our students who want to study, specialize and return to better their region. It will be a point of departure and arrival for our businesses that want to expand, export, and attract talent and investment. It will be a point of departure and arrival for grandparents who want to hold their grandchildren in their arms. It will be a point of departure and arrival that brings families together. Quebec City is becoming an important strategic hub at the heart of this country's economic, professional and educational development.

This is not just an economic vision. For a long time, the residents of the Quebec City region have expressed an interest in and support for better rail service. Around 2020, when I was president of Quebec City's chamber of commerce and industry, the business community made its opinion very clear in a survey. More than 94% of people wanted a major project. That is a clear, strong message. It is a very strong message. People want modern, efficient and sustainable solutions. They want different ways to get around. They want Quebec City to play in the big leagues of connected cities.

High-speed rail is fast, frequent and reliable. For too long, inter-regional public transit has been going backward instead of forward. There are fewer bus connections, and rail service between our big cities still does not meet the needs of a mobile, active and future-oriented population. For a corridor as strategically significant as the Quebec City-Montreal-Toronto corridor, this is simply unacceptable. The needs are real. Workers need to commute. Students need to be able to get to school, get an education and go back to their communities. Entrepreneurs need to be able to do business efficiently. Too often, the options are still limited to driving and flying,

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when we should be offering modern, reliable and effective mass transit solutions.

Over the past three years, the on-time performance of Via Rail Canada trains has become a major concern for many Canadians, including in my riding of Beauport—Limoilou. We all know someone, myself included, who was late for a meeting because the train was not on time. Just for the first quarter of 2024, the reported on-time performance was under 72%. At year end, for certain sections between Montreal and Toronto, less than 20% of the trains were on time. Over 70% were late. These statistics show why it is urgent to address the root causes of the delays: priority access to infrastructure, modernizing the rail network and sustained investments in passenger rail service.

If we want to provide Canadians with a reliable, efficient transportation system worthy of the 21st century, we must learn definitive lessons from the past few years and act accordingly. There is another crucial issue that we cannot ignore: the environment. The transportation sector is one of the largest greenhouse gas emitters. Offering a credible alternative to airplanes and single-occupancy vehicles will reduce our carbon footprint. This is about making a responsible choice for future generations. A modern, electrified and efficient rail network will move us much closer to achieving our climate objectives while supporting our economic growth.

What happened in Mirabel in the 1960s enabled Canada to fundamentally transform its land acquisition framework over the past 55 years. Nowadays, projects are governed by clear requirements. Major projects must now comply with clear and rigorous requirements: public consultations from the get-go, fair and transparent compensation, mandatory notifications, waiting periods and mechanisms for opposing decisions.

• (1315)

It is precisely in this spirit that we support today's motion. It reflects the principles already enshrined in Canadian expropriation laws, including mandatory consultation, social licence and respect for the communities concerned.

The Canadian high-speed rail network act is fully in line with the modern framework. It requires consultations through the Impact Assessment Act, provides for upstream collaboration with landowners and establishes a clear, transparent and rigorous process guided by the laws of Quebec and Ontario.

Let us look at a few examples of the next steps for Canadians. Previously, there was no mandatory notice period. Now, formal notices and mandatory deadlines are required before any expropriation can take place. Previously, the federal government acted without coordinating with Quebec. Now, projects are carried out in collaboration with provincial governments in accordance with their laws. Previously, the rights of indigenous peoples were not recognized in these processes. Now, the duty to consult indigenous peoples is a legal obligation affirmed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

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Let us be very clear. High-speed rail cannot be built without these protections. This project will not be forced through at the expense of communities and landowners. Changing this legislation would not protect Canadians. On the contrary, it would kill the high-speed rail project, jeopardizing more than 50,000 jobs, up to \$35 billion in economic benefits, and a major industrial boom for the steel, lumber and construction sectors. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity.

Let us go over some numbers. I am from Quebec City and I lived through the Quebec City tramway saga. In 2021, the auditor general of Quebec City sounded the alarm, reporting that every year of delay in the Quebec City tramway project results in roughly \$100 million in additional costs. Who pays for that? The citizens do. It is public money. The longer decisions are delayed because of missed deadlines, the more uncertainty sets in afterwards. These delays are not without consequences. They have contributed to a surge in the overall cost of the project. Originally, in 2018-19, it was estimated to cost between \$3 billion and \$4 billion. Today, that figure has climbed to nearly \$12 billion to \$13 billion. This kind of overspending is not theoretical. This is billions of dollars of public money we are talking about. These choices have a direct impact on the government's ability to invest in other things, such as housing, health care, and essential services for citizens.

Acknowledging the past, learning lessons and building the future with respect and accountability: That is what this bill does, and that is why we must support it. Basically, this bill asks us a simple question: What place should Quebec City have in the Canada of tomorrow? Do we want it to be an amazing but isolated city or a fully connected, forward-looking capital city that can attract, retain and circulate talent, ideas and opportunities? I, for one, choose the latter.

The high-speed rail line is an opportunity to make Quebec City both a point of arrival and a point of departure, a symbol of our collective ambition, an investment in our prosperity and a strong step toward building a more sustainable, more connected and more ambitious future.

● (1320)

Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague was singing the praises of a 21st-century vision. Mirabel airport was a 20th-century vision.

After the Mirabel fiasco, the expropriation laws were indeed amended. I would invite my colleague to review the provisions of Bill C-15, which suspends exactly what he is referring to, in order to ensure that the process respects the people who will have to make decisions and live with this project. I invite him to reread Bill C-15, first of all.

Secondly, we are all in favour of a vision for the future, but will he vote for or against the motion to ensure that the people of Mirabel can—

The Deputy Speaker: I have to give the member for Beauport—Limoilou a chance to answer the question.

Steve Lavoie: Mr. Speaker, I have read Bill C-15 and I am familiar with it.

The idea is not to eliminate laws or regulations, but to speed up projects. Think about the major maritime corridors and how long it took to build them. Today, we are talking about a project that the government wants to build in four years instead of eight. Just look at the Quebec City tramway. In 2007, it was valued at \$750 million. Now it is \$13 billion. That is 18 times the original cost, and taxpayers are footing the bill. Between 2018 and 2026 alone, the cost quadrupled.

What we want is to reduce costs. We are talking about an eight-year timeline that we would like to shorten to four years, while respecting the provinces and their regulations.

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to hear my colleague from Beauport-Limoilou talk about the Quebec City tramway.

During the last election, the member was elected on the promise that his government would support the Quebec City tramway, while we, on our side, said that we would not invest a penny in a project that was unpopular in the region. Now my colleague is saying that the cost has risen to \$13 billion. His government has not allocated any funds for this in the budget, and we have been told that there is not even any money for public transportation in Quebec.

Can the member, who is doing a lot of work on the tramway, give us more information on that?

Steve Lavoie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the riding next to mine. I am a bit disappointed to know that he just learned that the cost is going to be \$13 billion, because it made headlines. As we know, the tramway is sacred in Quebec City.

It is going to cost \$13 billion, but the longer we wait, the more expensive it will be.

We are here today to debate a motion on the high-speed rail line. Having a fast, reliable and effective project is important to our future. The people of Quebec City want to be connected to places like Montreal and Toronto. Business people will be able to do business in Montreal and Toronto more easily and bring investments to Quebec City, which will benefit my riding and my colleague's riding.

That is what is important today, along with making sure that there are no cost overruns and that the price tag is reasonable for the public.

● (1325)

Louis Villeneuve (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Out of curiosity, I would like him to tell me how long it takes to drive from Quebec City to Ottawa compared to the high-speed train.

I would also appreciate it if he could remind the House how our constituents can be involved in this project.

Steve Lavoie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I make this trip every week. As members may know, it takes four and a half hours by car during the summer. In the winter, it takes six and a half hours. Right now, on the train, we know what time we leave, but we never know what time we will arrive.

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The high-speed rail line will represent a major change for Canadians. This also applies to me and my family, because I have to leave early because of the long drive and come back late, again because of the long drive. I have grandchildren. I said in my speech that this is important for grandparents. I know, I am a grandparent myself, and I see how important it is.

In terms of public input, public consultations are announced on Alto's site, where Canadians can also provide their feedback. I would encourage Canadians to visit that site and share their opinions. That is important. We want to hear from Canadians.

Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by stating that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

To begin, I would like to reassure everyone. I know that some Bloc members have already said this, but I will say it too: We are happy about the high-speed rail line. Is that clear now? We have been asking for it for several years, we have hoped for it, we have defended it. Now that it is here, we are happy to have it.

That said, I want to quickly review some history. In 1969, Pierre Elliott Trudeau's federal government decided to expropriate a total of 97,000 acres to build Mirabel airport. I should say that I had no idea how big 97,000 acres was, but I checked, and it is 4,268,000 square feet. I had a little trouble visualizing that too, so I did the math. That area is equivalent to 74 football fields, each measuring 57,600 square feet. That is pretty big.

In 1969, Pierre Elliott Trudeau told the people of Mirabel that he was sorry, but that he needed their land because it was in the public interest. Some people cried, as our colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles said earlier, and some children cried when they saw their parents crying. It was tragic. These people were farming and received a notice in the mail saying that the land was no longer theirs. The government said it was sorry, but explained that Mr. Trudeau had decided to take their land.

I will spare my colleagues the details of the legal saga that ensued. Obviously, most of the people contested the expropriation notices. The federal government said no and insisted that it was in the right, that the land was not worth anything more. There were debates, it ended up in court, and then people were finally compensated with amounts that, as members might expect, were not enough to buy a comparable property or house. It was nowhere near enough. That was in 1969.

In 1985, the federal government said that it believed it had made a mistake and taken too much land. It then decided to give the land back. That is what was announced, but the land was not actually returned. It was resold. People were told that their land was being given back to them, but that they would have to pay for it. Obviously, people did not have the money for that. The compensation they had received 15 years earlier was not enough. Some of them took out mortgages and bought back their land, while other properties were bought back by different people.

We are not talking about small parcels of land here. It was not a matter of expropriating a few extra acres and saying that they were going to put them back on the market. No, it turns out that 85% of these football-field-sized properties were not needed. The federal

government admitted as much in 1985, 15 years after kicking everyone out. Fifteen years later, the government said that it had made a mistake, but did not even apologize. The government said that it made a mistake and was going to put the land up for sale.

That, too, is obviously a tragedy. It is tragic to see that we did not even need that airport, after the people of Mirabel were told that the expropriation was for the public good, that they were participating in the history of Quebec and Canada, that their land was being taken, but that they were pioneers and heroes and that, thanks to their land, the nicest and most efficient and effective airport in the world would be built. In 2004, the government said that it was wrong about that too and that it was closing the airport, and the airport was indeed shut down.

When asked what would happen with the flights, the government said that they would go back to Dorval. To add insult to injury, the Dorval airport was renamed the Pierre Elliott Trudeau airport. It was the ultimate show of disrespect. I do not know who the genius was who came up with that idea, but that was a nasty blow the federal government dealt to the people of Mirabel.

• (1330)

Over the course of 35 years, billions of dollars of our own money were spent to build an airport, compensate people whose lands were ruthlessly and needlessly expropriated, and then demolish the airport by paying even more billions of dollars. This whole adventure cost us a pretty penny, not just in terms of money, but also in terms of tragedies involving people, families and companies.

It is no wonder that the people of Mirabel have been left traumatized. Some may say that they are overly sensitive. I encourage my colleagues to go back and listen to the stories we heard, because, even after all this time, it is mind-boggling.

I listened to our Liberal colleagues. In the moment, as they were speaking, I was happy. I was saying to myself that they understand that this was a terrible thing that must not be repeated. I was happy about that. The member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles was telling us about trauma, although I do not recall her exact words. Her father took her to visit a plot of land. Hearing that, I thought that they are on the same page as the rest of us, that they realize that what was done was not right, that it was cruel. That is reassuring.

The Bloc Québécois motion is simple. We are not talking about high-speed rail. First, we want Parliament to ask the government to apologize. When someone messes up that badly, the least they can do is apologize. Second, we want the government to recognize the trauma that its extraordinarily awful mistakes caused to these people. It seems to me that, when someone does something like this, it is fairly easy to admit that a mistake was made, especially considering 85% of the land has been given back and the airport has been shut down. The mistake is obvious, in any case. Third, we are asking the government to commit to not doing it again, to not undertaking such expropriations again without public consultation, social licence and appropriate compensation. What is so terrible about this motion?

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If I were a Liberal member, I would hurry to say that my government, the government I inherited, that is, the Liberal government at the time, made a ridiculous mistake and it apologizes. If I were a Liberal member, I would say that I apologize on behalf of my government and on behalf of the Canadian government of 1969. I would think that would be the first thing to do. Second, I would acknowledge the trauma that it caused, as several members have already, including the member for Mirabel a few moments ago. I would say that I recognize that trauma. Third, I would say that I think such a thing must never be allowed to happen again. I would therefore urge the government to be careful never to make the same mistake. I almost heard that, but the words “I apologize” were missing. It is not complicated. We teach our children to say it in preschool: When someone misbehaves at school or with their friends, they apologize.

The people of Mirabel, the people of Quebec and I would go so far as to say the people of Canada expect a greater show of responsibility from their federal government. I fail to understand why we cannot do that. I urge my colleagues to apologize, to acknowledge the trauma, to promise never to do it again and to compensate people. I do not have much time left, but I will talk about compensation.

As it stands now, the high-speed rail project, which, as I said, we are very enthusiastic about, is unfortunately exempt from every landowner protection mechanism that exists in Quebec and Canada. Bills C-5 and C-15 throw them right out the window so that the promoters can do whatever they want, whenever they want, however they want.

Representatives from Alto said that they did not want to ask for too much, but that they wanted a 10-kilometre wide by 1,000-kilometre long right-of-way between Quebec City and Toronto to make sure that the rail line is in the right place. That is a 10-by-1,000-kilometre area where properties have not yet been expropriated. People have houses or farms there, but they can neither renovate nor mortgage nor sell their properties. Their hands are tied now that Alto has published their map on the website.

We were talking about fearmongering earlier. There is no need for that; people can simply go on Alto's website and they will see the map. They will know that they are in the corridor. Cities like Boisbriand, Rosemère, Sainte-Thérèse, Mirabel—I will not name them all since I only have a few seconds left—are all impacted by that right-of-way. People cannot sell their homes. It is impossible to sell a house in a situation like this. Not a single bank will give a mortgage loan. Renovations make no sense. Why throw money down a bottomless pit?

They need to be compensated and consulted, and we need to make sure not to repeat what happened in 1969.

● (1335)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the member likely listened carefully to what was said this morning and early this afternoon. As he rightly pointed out, he heard several concerns, memories, recollections and stories of all the trauma experienced by the people of Mirabel. However, he may not have listened to everything that was said.

For example, it was said that members of the House are encouraged to invite their own constituents to participate in the extensive consultation process currently under way in Quebec and, presumably, in their own ridings. How does he plan to encourage the people in his riding to participate in this consultation process?

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I must be dreaming, Mr. Speaker.

He is asking me what I am going to do to encourage my constituents to no longer endure the damage that the federal government has inflicted on them. We are clearly not on the same page.

I am asking the government to apologize, to repair the damage that has been done and to commit to never making the same mistake again.

I would also like to correct something I said. I will not be sharing my time with the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, but with the member for Repentigny.

[English]

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are having two debates here. The government is trying to sell high-speed rail, but nobody I have seen get up today opposes the idea of high-speed rail. I think our Bloc colleagues are suggesting that we do not repeat history.

I will take a different approach. In terms of what happened to first nations, a lot of education had to happen before we could start to understand what we are trying to reconcile. I think what the Bloc is getting at is that we should educate Canadians on the dangers of expropriation, based on the past, so we do not repeat it in the future.

Would my colleague from the Bloc agree with that statement?

[Translation]

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Mr. Speaker, unless I am mistaken, I believe my colleague is a member of a first nation, which may explain why he thinks it is so important not to repeat the mistakes of the past and not—I do not want to use a bad word—to savagely expropriate property from people who have owned it for generations.

Yes, there will be consultations. We are told that we can be sure of that and that people will attend. However, for now, no consultations have been scheduled in Mirabel. We are still waiting. The people of Mirabel are being told to watch the corridor. They are being told that that they are being targeted, that they will have to leave their homes and that no one knows how much they will be given, when this will happen or how it will be carried out. They are being told that there may or may not be expropriations.

This is unacceptable. This is causing serious harm that could easily be avoided with a little better planning. This is unacceptable.

● (1340)

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, again, I think the only ones who do not understand why it is important to support this motion are the Liberals. I think that everyone in the House is wondering how anyone can vote against this motion. I think that my colleague eloquently demonstrated that.

Now, I would like to take my colleague to another issue.

This government passed Bill C-5 under a closure motion. Does that not fly in the face of what the Liberals have been saying about holding consultations and how everything will be done properly and that environmental laws will be respected?

By making high-speed rail a project of national interest, Bill C-5 would allow them to ignore all these laws.

Is there not a contradiction here?

Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, who is always so insightful, for his question.

Yes, of course there is a contradiction. The government tells us not to worry, because it will consult with the people and everything will be fine. Yet the same government, under a closure motion, decided to pass legislation that allows it to bypass all the protective measures we have put in place. They are bypassing these measures, they are allowing Alto to do so, and we are being told not to worry because they are going to consult the people. Are they taking us for fools?

Let us take a look back. Since the past is supposed to be an indication of what the future holds, I must say that it is quite worrying when you look at what happened in Mirabel.

Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today is a particularly important day for us because it reminds us, among other things, of the deep wounds we carry. After all, we are talking about nearly 2,000 families who were literally uprooted by the construction of the Mirabel airport in 1969. Those scars have not yet healed.

What we are seeing today is a certain arrogance and a lack of consideration, and that is why our motion, our opposition day, is so important. Simply raising the possibility of expropriating some of these lands a second time obviously reopens a collective memory that remains very sensitive among the people of Mirabel, and even across Quebec for those who witnessed what happened in Mirabel at the time. Charging ahead like a runaway train is certainly not the way to get social licence for high-speed rail.

We are talking about social licence for projects. However, the government is doing exactly the opposite of what it takes to get social licence. We are talking today about a major public transit project. We often talk about all of the environmental measures that this government has backtracked on over the past year. It is a long list. One recent example is the \$5 billion in cuts the government has made to the Canada public transit fund. However, with this high-speed rail project, the government may be able to show that it has not completely given up on public transit and that it can complete a project that will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve people's quality of life and improve transit.

However, the government must understand that, if people are not involved in the decision-making process early on, they are bound to resist, particularly in the case of the people of Mirabel, who have experienced a major collective trauma that the government is forcing them to relive by hastily imposing a process and holding consultations that are not even worthy of the name. These are not even actual consultations. They are more of a display that people can stop by to look at, a kind of happy hour consultation, when greater tact should be exercised to ensure that the people of Mirabel do not feel pressured into things.

Business of Supply

Today, we are asking the government to make amends and apologize. The government has not yet given any indication that it is willing to do so. I find that extremely worrying, because even the mayor of Mirabel said she does not know what is happening on the ground. She said that the government is literally ramming the project through and riding roughshod over the people.

Citizens are not the only ones who will be affected; agricultural businesses will be as well. I can tell you what is happening in Lanaudière, for example, where the Union des producteurs agricoles has already mobilized. It is concerned because the government is planning a route that will break the area up over a 10-kilometre swath. People are wondering where the route will go. There is no way that consultations in Terrebonne for example, several dozen kilometres from their town, will generate genuine social support for this project. For one, these consultations will not actually be consultations. Again, the project is important, but right now it is being poorly managed. The problem is not the project, it is the way it is being carried out.

By handling a consultation in this way, they are essentially refusing to listen to the concerns of the public and of farmers. I would also add the concerns of industries, businesses and SMEs located within this 10-kilometre-wide corridor. People are wondering if they are going to be expropriated. Why consider such a large area when we know full well that a railroad track is not 10 kilometres wide? When we talk about taking the population's concerns into account, it is because the population has a socio-historical connection to the region. Not listening to the local population is not only a flagrant lack of consideration, but also a recipe for disaster, undermining solutions that would enable Canada to enter the 21st century.

● (1345)

I want to reiterate what the mayor of Mirabel, Ms. Therrien, said. She learned through the media that the proposed route would pass through her territory. She is a mayor, but she learned about it from the media. Imagine how disrespectful that is. She even had to take steps to meet with Alto, voice her concerns, and remind them, among other things, of the importance—and this is serious—of properly consulting the people of Mirabel.

What is happening today in Mirabel demonstrates how important it is for the government to apologize, because what is happening on the ground shows how little progress the government has made, how insensitive it is to the reality of the people of Mirabel and how insensitive it is to the reality of the people of Quebec.

Even in its statement on January 28, Alto's message was clear. The mistakes of the past must not be repeated here. However, if the mistakes of the past are not to be repeated, then we must remember the expropriations.

Business of Supply

The government passed the Expropriation Act to prevent this from happening again. However, the Liberal government included clauses in the current budget to suspend parts of the act, such as the obligation to hold meaningful public consultations. It will therefore be free to ignore what the mayors of Mirabel and other cities, such as Terrebonne and Mascouche, are asking for. They spoke out just yesterday, demanding meaningful public consultations. Worse still, for this project, residents may be notified of expropriation by email. Imagine announcing that by email.

An hon. member: That is awful.

Patrick Bonin: What a shameful lack of consideration for the public. Mr. Speaker, this is very concerning.

The Liberals' condescending approach is to push projects through without any real discussion. That breeds mistrust, even with respect to potentially positive initiatives to support things like the fight against climate change and transportation for Canadians, and especially for Quebecers.

What we are seeing is that the government is sabotaging its own momentum. Instead of moving forward, it is backtracking. Obviously, we are calling on the government to hold serious consultations with mayors, citizens, farmers and businesses. We are talking about their lives and the place where they live, but so far, no public consultations have been held in Mirabel, or at least no meaningful consultation, and so we are waiting for some new dates and locations.

There is a new new process that will increase accountability when it comes to consultations. Every consultation process must have a record of proceedings. People have the right to know what is being said and it needs to be archived somewhere. People's concerns need to be documented.

It is very worrisome to see a project worth tens of billions of dollars start out like this. Obviously, I would add to that Bill C-5 and Bill C-15, among others, which will allow the government, and therefore Alto, to circumvent the provisions of the Expropriation Act.

Let us come back to the 1969 experience. It has shown how deeply the federal government already traumatized an entire population, even without the excessive powers granted by these bills. Imagine what they will be able to do now with these bills. Imagine how far they will go, especially considering that Bill C-15 gives significant powers of expropriation and the right of first refusal to Alto, among other things, in order to speed up the construction of high-speed rail.

By trying to move too quickly, there is a risk that things will once again go off the rails. Rushing things and doing them poorly seems to be the government's modus operandi when it comes to major projects. We will certainly also refuse to allow selective use of the Impact Assessment Act, because we need impact assessments that are worthy of their name, that are comprehensive and that allow for genuine consultation. We are currently seeing exactly the opposite from the government.

• (1350)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague understands and clearly noted some of the benefits of the Alto project: the equivalent of 100,000 cars being taken off the road; a 50% reduction in travel time; greater reliability; higher frequency; a more comfortable journey; and the creation of 51,000 good jobs.

Already, 26,000 people have participated in the consultation process that is only just beginning. How does my colleague plan to encourage other people, including those in his riding, to take part in this consultation?

Patrick Bonin: Mr. Speaker, let us go back to the reason for this opposition day. We are talking about Mirabel and the need for an apology. With all due respect to my colleague and his question, I am a bit disappointed that he did not comment on the Mirabel case.

That said, we already know the answer. People want more consultations, real meetings, in more places, with more dates, not just displays, but actual, proper consultations, as is normally done in Quebec.

[*English*]

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the motion is an apology to the residents of Mirabel for expropriation.

I am using this opportunity for educational purposes. I did not know about this happening back in 1969. I get why the Bloc has put this motion on the table, so that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past. The government seems to be reluctant to support the motion.

In terms of expropriation, what is the member's understanding of where this takes place? Does it take place within the environmental assessment, or does it take place outside the environmental assessment that provides some type of pathway for high-speed rail?

[*Translation*]

Patrick Bonin: Mr. Speaker, if things were done properly, there would be a real environmental assessment, a real project and a real authority that people could trust. Then people could have their say. At this point, that is not the case.

Normally, a final project is presented for people to comment on. In this case, there is only a 10-kilometre-wide route, and people are worried about that. Above all, they do not want to relive the trauma they experienced, which is still very real for the people of Mirabel. That is what worries us.

Today, it is important that the government recognize this, make amends and apologize to the public. It is important that it improve its consultation process, which is tearing communities apart or, at the very least, scaring many people, and rightly so.

• (1355)

Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the debate, members from Quebec have refused to say whether they will vote for or against our motion, preferring instead to simply toe the party line. If, during the vote, a few courageous members stood up, but the entire cabinet remained seated, does my colleague not think that this would illustrate that they have no sway over government decisions to ensure that Quebec's voice is heard within this government?

Patrick Bonin: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, what I have witnessed since the start of this new Parliament is that the entire Quebec contingent on the government benches always toes the government line. They are not here to defend Quebec's interests.

My colleague's question is entirely hypothetical, because I doubt that even a single Quebec Liberal member will rise to support the motion calling on the government to apologize. I would be very honoured to see that happen, but sadly, I will believe it when I see it, because no one has dared to break from the party line so far. When it comes time to defend Quebec's interests, all they do is defend the interests of the government.

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know why the Liberals refuse to apologize. Historically, they have always ended up apologizing when there was a scandal.

What does my colleague think about that? Why will the Liberals not say that they are sorry?

Patrick Bonin: Mr. Speaker, I will turn the question back to our Liberal colleagues. Why will they not apologize?

It is unbelievable. They have no reason not to. I think that they need to rise above the fray for once. What we expect from this government is respect for the people and respect for Mirabel.

The Deputy Speaker: Before I recognize the hon. member for Les Pays-d'en-Haut, I would like to point out that there is a lot of noise in the House. I want to make sure the hon. member has all the time to which he is entitled.

The hon. member will be interrupted for statements by members and oral questions. He will therefore have just over two minutes, and then he will be able to continue after oral question period.

That said, the hon. member for Les Pays-d'en-Haut has the floor for his speech.

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Trois-Rivières.

I am pleased to rise in the House for the first time in 2026 on behalf of my constituents in Les Pays-d'en-Haut.

Before we talk about the future, we need to acknowledge the past. The Government of Canada recognizes that the expropriations carried out for the construction of the Mirabel airport in the late 1960s left deep scars on the people of Mirabel. Families and communities were profoundly affected. The difficult memories associated with these events have never completely faded for many Quebeckers. Apart from the member for Mirabel himself, I am surely the person in the House who has travelled the most through the Mirabel area.

Statements by Members

As an engineer in Mirabel, I built roads, replaced culverts and worked on water mains, sewers, bike paths and parks. During all this work, I had the pleasure of meeting the people of that beautiful city and working with their employees, specifically those working in technical services. I met the new mayor, who truly has the best interests of her constituents at heart. Whether it is Saint-Janvier, Saint-Benoît, Saint-Hermas, Sainte-Scholastique, Saint-Augustin, Sainte-Monique or Saint-Canut, each sector of Mirabel is unique, but together they form a city and an RCM, because it is a city-RCM, which is a real force for our region. We are proud to work with the people of Mirabel on a wide range of issues.

We can build major projects in Canada without repeating the mistakes of the past. The Bloc Québécois wants Canadians to believe that building high-speed rail will harm their communities.

I will have more to say after oral question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is official: The Prime Minister is suffering from amnesia; he is the Professor Calculus of the climate crisis.

We all remember that, in his previous life, the Prime Minister was the UN special envoy on climate action and finance. He even headed the Net-Zero Banking Alliance, but he seems to have forgotten that. Not only is he backtracking on the emissions cap for the oil and gas sector, not only is he prepared to authorize a new pipeline, but now we learn that the Canada pension plan is injecting \$7 billion into new fossil-fuel assets. That is the complete opposite of what he used to advocate, and it is what we call flip-flopping and betraying people's trust.

How can we convince banks and investment firms to turn their backs on oil and gas in order to comply with the Paris Agreement when the Liberal government is doing the exact opposite?

I know there are Liberal members who want a green tax system. Now is the time to stand up and denounce the deadly direction of this government, which is headed for disaster at full speed.

*Statements by Members**[English]***REV. DR. ARUNA ALEXANDER**

Chris Malette (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the loss of a community champion in the Bay of Quinte region, a person of deep faith and conviction, and also a dear friend, Rev. Dr. Aruna Alexander. Immigrating to Canada as a young woman and studying divinity at the University of Toronto, Aruna was ordained by the United Church of Canada, dedicated her life to breaking down barriers and fighting racism across society, and later became the passionate leader of the Bay of Quinte chapter of the United Nations Association in Canada.

Aruna was a force of nature and someone who did not suffer lightly the denigration of the noble intentions of equity, diversity and inclusion. She lived them every day.

I want to send my condolences to her husband, David, her family and her congregations. I will miss her wisdom and humour greatly, and I hope everyone in the House can help me send condolences to her loved ones.

* * *

ELGIN COUNTY OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC ATHLETES

Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise with tremendous pride to celebrate two remarkable athletes from my riding who are carrying our proud Canadian flag on the world stage.

This year, our Olympic and Paralympic hockey teams will feature two hometown heroes whose talent and determination embody the very best of Elgin County and of Canada. From Rodney, the great Bo Horvat will don the maple leaf with our Olympic team for the first time, and from Wallacetown, James Dunn returns as a star on our para ice hockey team. Their dedication, resilience and unwavering commitment to their sport inspire us all back home.

Bo and James's achievements reflect the strength of our communities and the spirit of every young athlete who dreams big. All of Elgin County, and I think I can say all Canadians, will be cheering them on every step of the way. We are so proud of them both, and we want to tell them, "Keep your sticks on the ice and bring home the gold."

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Michael Coteau (Scarborough—Woburn, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to mark Black History Month, to honour Black excellence, resilience and brilliance across our great country. This year, 2026, marks 30 years since Black History Month was formally recognized in the House. However, we know that Black history goes back centuries here in what we call Canada.

From early settlers to abolitionists, community leaders, artists, athletes, entrepreneurs, public servants and politicians, Black Canadians have touched all parts of Canada's history and continue to shape this great country. Black History Month is a time not only to reflect on our past but to celebrate our achievements and recommit

to building a future rooted in equity, inclusion and opportunity for all. This month and every month, we recognize Black History Month here in this great country, Canada.

* * *

*[Translation]***SERGE BOULANGER AND DAVID LECLERC**

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to two paramedics from the Richmond—Arthabaska riding whose courage and composure deserve to be recognized.

On January 8, when a major fire raged on in a building on King Street in Richmond, Serge Boulanger and David Leclerc, paramedics at the Coopérative des travailleurs d'ambulance de l'Estrie, performed an act of extreme bravery. Quickly arriving at the scene of the fire and seeing that vulnerable people were still inside, they did not hesitate to enter the smoke-filled building to evacuate an elderly tenant who was completely unaware of the danger. Their quick, thoughtful and safe response undoubtedly saved a life, in addition to coming to the aid of the affected patient.

Beyond their regular duties, they have demonstrated an exemplary sense of duty, courage and humanity. On behalf of all my colleagues in the House of Commons, I want to sincerely thank them for their exceptional commitment.

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● (1405)

MILAN-CORTINA 2026 OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Hon. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan-Cortina officially open tomorrow, and more than 3,000 passionate athletes from around the world will compete in the sports they have mastered to get there.

More than 200 athletes will wear Canada's colours with heart and courage, and for the first time, there will be more women than men.

Sherbrooke will be proudly represented by Kim Boutin, Félix Roussel, and Jordan Pierre-Gilles in short track speed skating; Antoine Gélinas-Beaulieu in long track speed skating; and Marion Thénault in freestyle skiing. Nutritionist Martin Fréchette will keep our athletes in top shape.

To our Olympians, I hope that this event will be an opportunity for you to go above and beyond and live your passion to the fullest. Go for gold, have fun, push yourselves and, most importantly, know that the whole country is cheering you on.

Go Canada! Go Sherbrooke!

[English]

SHIPBUILDING IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Jonathan Rowe (Terra Nova—The Peninsulas, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador has a long history of building boats and protecting North America during the wars. Unfortunately, it seems like the Liberal government is overlooking our province as it builds its icebreaker maintenance facility.

In my region alone, we currently have four industry ports sitting idle: Marystown Shipyard, Cow Head facility, the Bull Arm Fabrication Site and the retired navy base of Argentia. Newfoundlanders have used these sites to build vessels, ferries and even large oil rigs. With all these previous projects, our tradespeople have become the best boatbuilders in the world, but over the last Liberal decade, these sites have been empty. Now Newfoundland and Labrador has 74% of its tradespeople unemployed.

We have the ports. We have the people. Let us get a government that gets our people to work.

* * *

SOPILKA UKRAINIAN DANCE SCHOOL

Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year, the Sopilka Ukrainian Dance School, located in my riding of Winnipeg South Centre, is celebrating 55 years of preserving and sharing Ukrainian culture.

Sopilka began as a small Ukrainian language class and grew into one of Manitoba's most respected dance schools. The school was founded in the early 1970s by Vicky Adams, a constituent of mine and a lifelong champion of Ukrainian culture, education and community life. Her extraordinary contributions were recently recognized with a King's coronation medal, reflecting decades of volunteerism and leadership, including her deep involvement with the Holy Family Ukrainian Catholic Church.

For generations of young people, Sopilka has been a place where discipline, history and cultural pride are passed down. Through performances across Manitoba and beyond, Sopilka has helped ensure that Ukrainian traditions remain vibrant, visible and proud.

I congratulate Vicky Adams, artistic director Kristina Frykas, dancers, instructors, families and alumni on 55 remarkable years. Here is to many more.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economy is on life support and the country is in recession watch.

Bloomberg reports that “per capita GDP is still falling, and the economy is growing at only one per cent annually.” GDP growth in November was 0%, and real GDP is expected to decline 0.1% in the fourth quarter. The news for business is bleak. Businesses are postponing their expansion plans. These numbers matter. When our economy is not growing, Canadians get poorer.

The Liberals want to blame outside forces instead of taking action here at home. The Prime Minister promised the fastest-growing

Statements by Members

economy in the G7, but has not gotten rid of a single anti-development law or bureaucracy. He only needs to listen to our ideas and introduce a plan that gets his government's barriers and tax burdens out of the way so Canadians can build.

* * *

[Translation]

REPRESENTING QUEBEC AT THE MILANO CORTINA OLYMPIC GAMES

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, many of us were dismayed to hear that Quebec would not be represented on the Canadian men's hockey team at the Milano Cortina Olympic Games.

Quebec has always produced outstanding players, and the Quebec Maritimes Junior Hockey League has won more Memorial Cups in recent years than the Ontario or western leagues. However, Quebec players are absent from the team, and the French language risks being absent as well. This decision by Hockey Canada shows a complete lack of consideration for Quebec.

Surprise, surprise. Quebec can still cheer on one of our own at the Olympic Games. Phil Pietroniro is originally from Saint-Eustache. He spent part of his time in junior hockey playing with the Val-d'Or Foreurs, where he helped the team win the 2014 President's Cup. Now he is an Olympian on the Italian national team.

From Saint-Eustache to Milano Cortina, with a stopover in Abitibi—Témiscamingue, Phil Pietroniro will allow Quebecers to cheer on one of our own by proudly shouting “Viva Italia!”

* * *

● (1410)

[English]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT WEEK

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, International Development Week is a moment to reflect on how global challenges are connected and how smart investments can create lasting change.

One of the major drivers of food insecurity is climate change, especially in the world's most vulnerable communities. That is why Canada is investing in women and economic empowerment as part of its international development efforts.

Statements by Members

I joined Mennonite Central Committee Canada, Canadian Lutheran World Relief and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank for a breakfast on the Hill. Speakers shared that Canada's ODA investments are delivering results, and that when women have access to resources, education and leadership opportunities, families eat better, communities grow stronger and local economies become more resilient.

This International Development Week, I would like to thank all organizations, team members, volunteers and donors for their contributions to making Waterloo, Canada and the world a better place. Their efforts demonstrate what it means to be Canadian, and by working together, we can deliver prosperity through partnerships.

* * *

HOUSING

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised to build homes at a speed not seen since the Second World War. That was the rhetoric, but it was just an illusion because the CEO of Build Canada Homes came to Parliament this week and told us that, in fact, just nine homes are built and move-in ready.

That is the reality, and it is a stark and disappointing reality for young Canadians who face it every day. Their ambition to own a home has turned into disappointment, and that disappointment is turning into defeat. New home sales are down 45% in the GTA, and the Canadian Home Builders' Association warns that we are in for a lost decade of home ownership.

On this side of the House, our Conservative message is one of hope, as it always has been. We have offered the government several positive solutions such as to incentivize towns and cities to reduce development charges, tie funding to results, not just promises, and reward those who build.

For the sake of the next generation, will the Liberals please stop obstructing these ideas and get out of the way?

* * *

2026 OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, February 6, the 2026 Olympic Winter Games will officially open in Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy.

I want to extend my best wishes to all Canadian athletes competing, with a special cheer for those representing the national capital region: Zachary Connelly, Mike Evelyn O'Higgins, Antoine Cyr, Paul Poirier, Kayle Osborne, Isabelle Weidemann, Katherine Stewart-Jones, Rachel Homan, Emma Miskew, Cédrick Brunet, Jared Schmidt, Hannah Schmidt and Valérie Grenier.

[*Translation*]

I cannot help but express my pride by recognizing our local hero, Ivanie Blondin from Orléans, who will be defending her title as a speed skating champion.

[*English*]

I wish the very best of luck to every Canadian athlete. Canada is behind them all the way.

Go, Canada, go!

* * *

COST OF FOOD

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three years ago, the finance minister met with major grocers, promising to stabilize food prices. Since then, Canada now leads the G7 in food inflation. Now he is rolling out another temporary rebate of about five dollars a week for a \$300 grocery bill. We will take it, but it barely makes a dent.

Meanwhile, according to Food Banks Canada, almost 20% of food bank clients are employed full time. Food inflation is now hitting working Canadians hard. Food inflation is now twice as high as when the Prime Minister took office.

Local food banks in my riding are feeling it too. The Wheatland County Food Bank reported record demand in 2025, with the highest numbers it has ever seen.

The Liberals can blame global factors all they want, but the reality is that their fuel standard adds 7¢ a litre today and 17¢ tomorrow, and that hits farmers, truckers and the cost of food for every family. We would think Liberals would stop obstructing common-sense solutions and actually cut the cost of food for Canadians.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT WEEK

Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, we mark International Development Week, a time to recognize the people and partnerships that help build a safer, healthier and more prosperous world.

At a time when the world is facing growing conflict, humanitarian crises, climate change and economic uncertainty, international development work is more important than ever.

I want to thank Canadians working across the international development sector in NGOs, multilateral institutions, community organizations and public service, who dedicate their skills and compassion to improving the lives of those around the globe. Their work supports women and girls, strengthens health and education systems, responds to emergencies and helps communities build resilience in the face of instability and poverty. Often working in difficult and uncertain conditions, they reflect the best of Canada's values: co-operation, respect and shared humanity.

International development is all about partnership, dignity and long-term impact, and it remains essential to building a more stable and connected world for all of us. On behalf of the House, I want to thank them for their commitment and their service. I thank them for their work.

* * *

● (1415)

SEBASTIAN HALMAGEAN

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, I had a heartbreaking conversation with Kru Alin Halmagean, a friend of mine who had just learned of the loss of his heroic son, Gunner Sebastian Halmagean.

Since Confederation, countless Canadians have answered their nation's call to serve, sacrifice and, all too often, never come home. Prime Minister Borden, speaking in 1916, remarked:

...[on] the solemn truth that the nation is not constituted of the living alone. There are those as well who have passed away and those yet to be born. So this...responsibility comes to us as heirs of the past and trustees of the future.

Sebastian told his father, who shared with me, that he wanted every young person to know that sacrifice and commitment to the Canadian Armed Forces was noble and worthy.

I want to thank him for his service and his ultimate sacrifice, offer my prayers and love to his wonderful family and, on behalf of all Parliamentarians, say that we will never forget what he gave us.

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[Translation]

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Abdelhaq Sari (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, as part of Black History Month, we celebrate the Black community's history, resilience, and its important contributions to Canadian society.

This is an everyday reality in Bourassa, thanks in particular to a large concentration of Canadians of Haitian origin and from around the world, whose commitment and solidarity enrich my riding and those of my colleagues here.

For generations, Black women and men have contributed to Canada in all areas, strengthening our cohesion and shaping a more just and inclusive country.

Black History Month is a time for remembrance, but also a time for pride and recognition. It reminds us that diversity is a strength for our country.

Oral Questions

Beyond our differences, beyond our origins, we are one people and one alone, united by the values of dignity, respect and solidarity.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need hope. They need the hope of affordable groceries. However, since this Prime Minister came to power and promised to be judged by grocery prices, costs have been rising twice as fast, the fastest among all the G7 countries. I asked the Prime Minister why. He said it was because of our weak dollar. He is the one who should be protecting it.

Can the Prime Minister explain why he has given us a weak dollar and expensive groceries?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to a letter dated January 24, 2026. In it, the Leader of the Opposition invited his colleagues to turn the rhetoric into reality.

What we are seeing right now is obstruction. Canadians asked us to present a plan to grow the Canadian economy, to protect Canada's sovereignty, to ensure that Canadian families, seniors and young people have a promising future.

Will the Leader of the Opposition support the government in passing the 2025 budget?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since we are quoting people, he is the one who said in 2023 that he was going to stabilize grocery prices by Thanksgiving. It is now more than two years later, and the cost of groceries is rising twice as fast. We actually have the worst food inflation in the G7, and the finance minister who caused these problems is still here.

Why does the Prime Minister continue with the inflationary taxes and deficits that make food unaffordable for Canadians?

● (1420)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take the liberty of helping the Leader of the Opposition. He is the one who wrote on January 24, 2026, "Time to turn rhetoric into reality." It is time to stop the obstruction.

I know that the Leader of the Opposition was likely very preoccupied with his own future recently, but had he seen the measure that we announced to ensure food security for Canadians, he would have noticed that there will be a benefit to help families and that \$500 million will be invested into producing more food. The most important thing is that he now has an opportunity to support the government in helping Canadians.

Oral Questions

[English]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberal government, and under that particular minister, auto production has fallen by half. After the Prime Minister was elected promising that he would protect the auto industry and get a deal with the U.S. by July 21, he broke both of those promises. Since then, there have been job losses at CAMI Ingersoll, GM Oshawa, Stellantis Brampton and Paccar in Quebec.

Today, he finally flip-flopped on his cherished EV mandate, but he is bringing in a new subsidy for people to buy American-made automobiles. Why is he forcing Canadian workers to pay taxes to subsidize American vehicles?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know it is Thursday, but I have good news for the Leader of the Opposition. I have very good news for him and for Canadians. It is called the Canada auto strategy. In fact, today the Prime Minister of Canada was standing up for Canadian workers and the Canadian industry for the future of the industry in this country.

The Conservatives can yell as much as they want to, but the workers know what we have done for them. They know what we are doing today and what we are going to do in the future. We will build Canada strong.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister was in charge of industrial policies as the minister of industry while automobile production fell in Canada by half. Now, under the Prime Minister, we have lost 5,000 more auto jobs.

Here is the deal that he announced today: The American President will continue to tariff Canadian-made automobiles going into the U.S. while Canadian taxpayers will be forced to subsidize American vehicles coming back into Canada. Instead of subsidizing American vehicles and killing Canadian jobs, why will he not take our plan to take the GST off of Canadian-made automobiles?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will tell the Leader of the Opposition that, under my watch, for the first time in Canadian history, we got a European manufacturer to invest in our country. It is called Volkswagen. It is called St. Thomas. It is called the car of the future. Volkswagen has invested a record amount in Canada.

The Conservatives can yell as much as they want, but the people in St. Thomas know who did it. They know what we are doing today, and they know we are going to support our workers, our industry and the auto sector in this country. We will let the Conservatives continue to criticize.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he is literally yelling for us to stop yelling.

This is an example of the Liberal illusion. The Prime Minister has put in charge of finance the former industry minister, who is responsible for auto production in Canada falling by half and the present collapse of auto production and jobs in our country. The Prime Minister broke his promise to negotiate a deal with the U.S., and now he wants to subsidize U.S.-made vehicles.

Why not take the taxes off Canadian-made vehicles so we can bring home jobs to our country?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not need to speak loudly because Canadians know what we did. If he wants to look at what we did under my watch, let him talk about Windsor and about NextStar.

What we did was see where the puck was going. That is truly Canadian. We are making sure that we build not only the auto sector of today but also the auto sector of tomorrow. We understood, and it is not even just Canadians. Bloomberg said that Canada would have the most complete supply chain when it comes to EV. We are proud of our record. We are proud to invest in Canadian workers, and we will build the industry of the future together.

* * *

● (1425)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bloomberg just said that the economy in Canada is shrinking under that minister and the Prime Minister.

Going from failed economic Liberal policy to failed immigration Liberal policy, Liberals have unleashed an extortion crisis by allowing Bishnoi gangsters into our country without screening. Now they are allowing them to stay here even after they are convicted if they make a phony refugee claim. Conservatives moved a motion at committee to kick extortionists out of our country after they have been convicted; Liberals voted it down.

Will they join with us, stop obstructing and pass an amendment to the law so we can kick extortionists and fake refugee claimants out of Canada?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to extortion, the Conservatives have been uniquely unhelpful in advancing the laws that police are telling us they need to combat it.

I received a message this morning from Patrick Brown, the mayor of Brampton, saying that the Peel Regional Police have asked him to pass along the message that the strong borders act is necessary to provide lawful access to help law enforcement break up extortion rings. For months, Conservatives have obstructed measures that would make bail and sentencing tougher on extortionists.

It is one thing to stand up and make noise in the House of Commons; it is another to get the laws adopted. Let us do the job Canadians demand.

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[Translation]

PENSIONS

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, some pensioners have not received their OAS benefits in nine months. Public servants warned the government last summer that it was due to Cúram. However, the Liberals did not listen to public servants. Instead, they silenced them.

This is what the government told public servants to do: Do not let Canadians know that delays or errors in payments are due to Cúram.

Why is the government going after whistle-blowers instead of helping pensioners?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the department is making every effort to quickly resolve issues related to claims. This involves improving training so that staff are able to process claims more quickly. We are already seeing some positive signs that this training is producing results.

Our office has reached out to the members opposite. If they know of any urgent cases, I encourage them to contact my office so we can address their problems.

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, some seniors are not getting their OAS pension. Instead of helping them, the Liberals are trying to protect themselves. This is extremely troubling, because the same Cúram software that is experiencing major failures will also be used for employment insurance and the federal pension plan.

By downplaying the problems instead of fixing them, the Liberals are creating the perfect conditions for a fiasco that will make Phoenix look like a minor hiccup.

When will they fix the problems instead of intimidating public servants?

Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is protecting seniors. We have increased old age security. We are providing dental care, and we are building housing for seniors.

We are now modernizing the digital benefits system in order to provide seniors with better service.

I invite the member opposite to give me their names, and we will help them.

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we frankly have to wonder whether the ministers read the francophone media. If they did, then they would stop downplaying the problems faced by pensioners who are not receiving their OAS pension. If they did, then they would also know that public servants have been forced to become whistle-blowers because they are fed up with being silenced instead of supported.

Oral Questions

Enough is enough. There are pension mistakes because of the Cúram software, as every public servant has said. The Liberals seem to be putting more energy into trying to put a lid on the problem than solving it. When are they going to take action?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do read the francophone media, but I also work in English and French, as do many people in the House.

● (1430)

[English]

I will also say that we have focused all our resources on making sure that we get through the waiting list. It is shrinking every day. I thank the civil service for making the effort to learn this system and learn it well.

As I mentioned, we have been in contact with these members of Parliament. If they have urgent cases, I ask them to please send them to me. We have not yet received any names.

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TAXATION

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three years ago, the finance minister promised to stabilize food prices, and he did so, but at record highs. Canada now has the worst food inflation in the G7. It is twice as high as when the Prime Minister took office and twice as high as that of the U.S.

Now the minister is offering another temporary rebate that will not lower the price of a single item, while admitting that his so-called historic summit, when he got CEOs to come to Ottawa, was a failure.

The Liberals voted against our common-sense motion yesterday to lower food costs. Why will the Liberals not just take the taxes off of food?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the real question is why will the Conservatives not vote for the Prime Minister's economic plan? The plan gets projects built quickly; puts a trillion dollars of investment into our economy; uses Canadian lumber, Canadian steel and Canadian ingenuity; and uses the great union work of our Canadian brothers and sisters to build our country strong.

I just want a date from the hon. member. When will the Conservatives pass the budget implementation act, the Prime Minister's plan to build Canada?

Oral Questions

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows that I am talking about a grocery plan, but it does not actually lower the price of groceries. It is a \$10 coupon on a \$300 grocery bill, and that is insulting. The rebate will not lower a single price. Of course, this comes after the Liberals put forward a budget, which this plan was not even in. Meanwhile, they keep hiking the fuel taxes and the packaging taxes, driving food costs higher, and blaming everyone else for their decade of failure.

Why will the Liberals not lower prices? If they will not do that, why will they not take the taxes off of food?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, do members know what is insulting to the constituents of Thornhill? It is when that member votes against the very things that they themselves are saying are useful.

In fact, it is not just her constituents. Certainly the food banks in her riding would say that the announcement the Prime Minister made on the GST, on the essentials benefit, on strengthening our food security, on supporting food banks and on supporting producers is exactly what we need to do for food security in this country.

The member needs to get on board and stop voting against the very constituents she represents.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is doing everything possible to ignore the reality that Canadians are facing in their daily lives. Food inflation in Canada is twice as high as it is in the United States, and the temporary measures that the Liberals are offering will not result in a single grocery price reduction. They had an opportunity to collaborate yesterday and pass our motion, which would have lowered prices at the grocery store, but they voted against it.

Why is it that the Prime Minister's personal agenda always comes before the needs of everyday Canadians?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a Prime Minister with world-class business and economic experience. We have cut taxes for millions of Canadians. Just last week, we announced a groceries and essentials benefit that will put up to \$1,900 in the pockets of working families.

The Conservative leader has never had a job in the economy. He continues to obstruct. He continues to talk rhetorically. It is time for that leader to get on board and help us build Canada strong.

Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is travelling around the world and making big speeches, but what is he really achieving for Canadians? Food inflation is twice as high as when the Prime Minister took office, and Canada now leads the G7 in food inflation.

The Prime Minister promised to be judged by the prices at the grocery store. Yesterday, Conservatives tried to help by presenting a real solution to lower grocery prices for Canadians, yet the Liberals voted against this common-sense motion.

Will the Prime Minister now eat his words, because Canadians cannot?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister is doing is creating investment in Canada, investment that has made it such that Canada created more jobs than the United States, not more per capita but more jobs. I hope the Prime Minister keeps travelling and bringing home those jobs.

• (1435)

Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada leads the G7 in food inflation; prices are rising twice as fast as in the United States, but yesterday the Liberals voted against the Conservative plan to lower food costs. The industrial carbon tax is driving up costs for farm machinery, fertilizers and food processors. When we tax the farmer, we tax every Canadian.

When will the Liberals work with us to cut the unnecessary industrial carbon tax and the 17¢-a-litre fuel standard tax, which are driving up grocery prices?

Hon. Jill McKnight (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from British Columbia is asking a question about something that is incredibly important to all Canadians. Guess what: The government has taken steps to address this. We are introducing the groceries and essentials benefit, which is going to put money in the pockets of families so they can acquire the things they need. A family of four will receive up to \$1,890 this year and \$1,400 for the next four years. We are taking action to support the families in B.C.

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[Translation]

HOUSING

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we know, since the Liberals came to power, the cost of living has gone up, grocery prices have gone up and rents have gone up. For single mothers and ordinary people, things are tough, and it is getting harder and harder to pay the rent at the end of the month.

Can the Prime Minister confirm that all members of his cabinet and his MPs agree with the idea of personally helping vulnerable people access affordable housing?

Hon. Nathalie Provost (Secretary of State (Nature), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to consider the needs of our constituents. The strategy we are adopting is based on restoring purchasing power to Canadians. That is essentially what we are focusing on.

I know you said you are going to vote for in favour. That is important to us. This approach also includes strategies for food, and the budget includes strategies for job creation. We need co-operation, not obstruction, from our colleagues on this, as well.

The Speaker: To be clear, I will not be voting unless it is a tie vote.

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

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague across the way has not read the news because this morning, *Le Journal de Montréal* reported that a single mother is the victim of a heartless landlord, who is trying to evict her from her home, and his wife, who refuses to communicate with her in French.

Is the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard aware of his lack of empathy and moral compass?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what that has to do with government administration.

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AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals should never have cancelled the rebates for buying electric vehicles. It is good news, then, that they are being reinstated for vehicles manufactured here or in countries with which we have free trade agreements, such as European countries. The problem is that the federal government is blocking affordable electric cars from Europe. Ottawa has decided that these cars, which are good for everyone on the planet, are not good for Canada.

Will the government offer consumers a choice and allow European electric cars in?

Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we welcome these electric vehicles because our rebate applies to countries with which we have free trade agreements, including European countries.

Our auto strategy includes many incentives to encourage people to adopt electric vehicles and make the future as electric as possible here in Canada. That is exactly what our policy is doing.

Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, restoring purchase incentives for vehicles is a small step forward, but that only matters if the vehicles can actually get into the country.

This does not erase the Liberals' generational setbacks on sustainable mobility. They have cut \$5 billion from public transit while subsidizing oil companies to the tune of tens of billions of dollars. They are making deals with Alberta for a dirty oil pipeline at the very same time they claim to be encouraging electric transportation.

Oral Questions

When it comes to the environment, with the Liberals, why is it always one step forward and a thousand steps back?

• (1440)

Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's question, but once again it is the opposite.

Our announcement today includes the development of a national network of EV charging stations with an investment of \$1.5 billion. It is a national project that includes Quebec to welcome this green future and electric vehicles to Canada.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, new home sales in the GTA have fallen to their lowest in 45 years, putting 100,000 jobs at risk. Home ownership among 30-year-olds to 34-year-olds has dropped from 62% to 52%. Young Canadians are losing hope; 93% of gen Z and millennials are worried about housing, and nearly half of them are planning to leave their home communities.

The Prime Minister promised to help Canadians buy their first home, so after nearly a decade, why are sales collapsing and builders are laying off workers, and why is ownership getting farther and farther out of reach?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a good day to be asking that question.

We introduced the build Canada homes act this morning, precisely to make sure that young Canadians have access to affordable housing going forward. We have dedicated \$13 billion in the budget. We need the support of members of the House to pass that budget to invest in young Canadians. We do not need obstruction on the build Canada homes act, which would make sure we have a lean-meat agency to deliver that funding to young Canadians.

Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we should not be surprised the minister is talking about his build Canada rentals project, but home ownership is what is collapsing. In 2020, 69% of housing starts were for ownership. Today it is 49%. New home sales are down 45% in the GTA, and builders are laying off workers.

I have a very simple question for the minister: Does he really and truly believe that creating a fourth federal housing bureaucracy, without reducing taxes, fees or all the approval delays, would really make it easier for Canadians to buy their first home?

Oral Questions

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that the member opposite does not care about renters. In my city, half the population rents housing, and we certainly do not discriminate against people who choose to buy or those who choose to rent. Many Canadians do not have a choice; that is why we have to make affordable housing options possible for all Canadians to make sure they have a safe home.

We do not need any delays in the House to the budget or to the build Canada homes act. We need to deliver affordable housing for Canadians. I hope the member will support us with our bill.

Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a new report from the Missing Middle Initiative warns of a lost decade for home ownership. For every 100 new adults, there will be only 12 housing starts intended for ownership. Nearly half of young Canadians say they have considered leaving their city or province because of housing costs.

Now the market is seizing up. New home sales in the GTA have hit a 45-year low, putting 100,000 jobs at risk. Builders are laying off workers, and they fear they may not survive.

When will the Liberals adopt our plan to get their bureaucracy out of the way so young Canadians can buy—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing and Infrastructure.

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is critical that we build housing in the GTA that is affordable. We want to get the industry back building affordable housing for Canadians, certainly in the GTA but also across the country. We are seeing good housing starts in many cities across the country, but we are just getting started with affordability.

We need to deliver, with members around the House, on the build Canada homes act, with no obstruction. Let us get to building.

Amarjeet Gill (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, young Canadians are being locked out of home ownership. Home ownership is collapsing; for 30-year-olds to 34-year-olds, it fell from 60% to 52%. Supply is broken; for every 100 new adults, only 12 ownership homes are built. Sales are crashing; they are down 45% in the GTA and 56% in Vancouver. Builders are laying off workers, 100,000 jobs are at risk and 93% of young Canadians are worried.

When will the Liberals adopt our plans and get out of the way so young Canadians can buy their first home?

• (1445)

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combating Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have good news for the House. Just today we tabled the build Canada homes act, and we are hopeful that the Conservatives will not obstruct the bill as they have been doing with our budget that provides more affordability measures to Canadians, so Canadians can have that dream of buying their first home and so they can live in affordable housing.

That is the dream of all Bramptonians; that is what I hear from my constituents. The act would help us meet those goals.

Burton Bailey (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal housing crisis is hitting communities of every size. The City of Red Deer has been asking for a meeting with the housing minister for months to address its housing concerns. Despite the fact that the minister has been written to four times, it seems like Red Deer is too small for him to care to respond. I sure hope Red Deer is not being ignored because it does not deliver Liberal votes like Toronto and Vancouver do.

Will the minister finally agree to sit down with the City of Red Deer, listen to its issues and admit that mid-size cities are facing a housing crisis too?

Hon. Eleanor Olszewski (Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience and Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, Conservatives in Ottawa are out of step with Conservatives in Alberta.

Alberta's Minister of Social Services has praised the pace of housing delivery, saying that we are getting shovels in the ground and roofs over the heads of Albertans. Thousands more low-income Albertans will have a safe, durable and affordable house they can count on.

Federal Conservatives say they want to work with us, but they cannot even work with their own Conservative colleagues on delivering housing for Albertans.

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AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the auto sector is facing the biggest challenge in a generation. Unjustified and unjustifiable tariffs from the United States on our auto sector are leaving our auto workers under a cloud of uncertainty.

Our government stands behind our auto sector, our communities and the workers who are facing these new realities head-on. Can the Minister of Jobs and Families please tell the House how the newly announced auto strategy will transform Canada's auto industry, protecting our workers today and building the vehicles of tomorrow?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member of Parliament for Mississauga East—Cooksville for his unwavering support for auto workers and the sector. Canada's auto workers and all workers are the backbone of our economy. When our auto sector workers come under attack, our government stands with them and protects them.

Today the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Industry announced Canada's new auto strategy, taking action on what we can control. We are investing \$3 billion from the strategic response fund to support the industry and \$570 million to support re-skilling and upskilling workers.

This is how we build Canada strong: We stand together when times are tough, and we—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal minister says that they stand with auto workers. What it looks like is that they stand with Donald Trump, because while Donald Trump imposes 10% tariffs on every single vehicle that comes into Canada—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The member may start over. I did not hear anything unparliamentary in that.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal minister just said that they stand with auto workers, but it sure looks like they stand with Donald Trump. Let me explain. While Donald Trump imposes 10% tariffs on every single vehicle that comes into Canada, the Liberals have passed an EV mandate that is actually going to give Canadian taxpayer dollars, in the form of subsidies, to American-made EVs. One cannot make this up. Fewer than 5% of Canadian vehicles will qualify for this EV subsidy.

Why are the Liberals contributing to Donald Trump's buy American instead of preserving jobs in Canada?

Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member and the party opposite think we are on the wrong side of Canadian sovereignty, they have another thing coming.

Our approach is all about Canadian sovereignty. It is all about investing in the companies that invest in us. It is all about embracing the future of electrification. It is all about embracing our workers, who are the best workers in the world.

For the members opposite to talk down Canadian sovereignty or to talk down the sector in this moment of real challenge, when we have an opportunity to solve it, is really beneath them.

• (1450)

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is time for a bit of education for these Liberals. Less than 5% of vehicles manufactured in Canada will qualify for this EV rebate; the

Oral Questions

rest will come from the United States and other foreign manufacturers.

Imagine being an auto worker in Brampton who was supposed to manufacture the Jeep Compass EV. That job went to the United States. That Jeep Compass EV being manufactured in the United States is actually going to be subsidized by our taxpayer dollars. That auto worker in Brampton is looking at this Liberal government, and at how this is going to benefit Donald Trump, and asking, What the hell is going on in Ottawa?

The Speaker: We have to watch our language.

Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is what the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association had to say about today's announcement. It “welcomes the government’s automotive strategy announced today. Funding to support renewed purchase incentives and a robust charging infrastructure strategy will help continue to drive EV adoption, and CVMA members are well-positioned to support the shift to electrification through diverse product offerings.”

That sounds like Canadian sovereignty to me.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Clarke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2014, under the then Conservative government, the New York Times declared that Canada's middle class was the richest in the world. Now our middle class faces skyrocketing costs and taxes, a stagnant GDP per capita and a declining standard of living.

The Prime Minister promised the fastest-growing G7 economy by building major national projects. However, the Liberals built none, and they continue to build none.

The time to act is now. When will the Liberals collaborate with Conservatives and finally bring prosperity back to our great land?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have good news for my friend. Today, Trans Mountain said it will be increasing the amount of oil it transports by 10% on the first of three optimization projects. That is how we build Canada.

Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Clarke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it always worries me when the government opens up with “I have good news”, because it rarely is.

What we are asking for, and what Canadians want, are new pipelines and new projects. The amount that the Liberals have approved is absolutely zero.

Oral Questions

The government needs to reverse course, which has led two million Canadians to food banks, admit that its policies have failed, embrace Conservative principles fully and collaborate with Conservatives to bring prosperity back to our country.

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives keep asking for pipelines. We just gave them one.

We are building thousands of jobs in Darlington.

We are building. They are not.

Fred Davies (Niagara South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bloomberg reports that Canada's economy is on life support. Canada's GDP growth was zero in November. Productivity continues to fall, and the Bank of Canada expects just 1% growth next year, with business investments being postponed. How bad is it? Homebuilders in Niagara have laid off 60% of their framers due to stalled residential construction.

The Prime Minister promised the fastest-growing economy in the G7, yet growth has stalled. Will the Prime Minister please adopt Conservative ideas that remove barriers so Canadians can actually build and grow again?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that what constitutes good news for Canadians does not always constitute good news for Conservatives. However, let me give them another piece of good news. The first major national project breaks ground this spring, the Contrecoeur port terminal expansion project, which is an expansion of our east coast container port capacity.

We are going to build more stuff. We are going to put more stuff on boats. We are going to send more things to more places around the world, expand our trade, put people to work and build Canada strong.

• (1455)

Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada made international headlines this week with economists stating that our economy is on life support and the country is already on recession watch. Our per capita GDP is falling, residential construction is flat, businesses are postponing expansion, and the Liberal government's anti-development laws and taxes remain in place.

Will the Prime Minister work with Conservatives and introduce a plan to remove the barriers that are preventing Canadians from building, investing and working?

Hon. Maninder Sidhu (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, speaking of building, we are building big. The port of Montreal expansion project has 7,000 construction jobs and over 1,000 permanent jobs. Darlington nuclear has 18,000 good-paying jobs and clean power for generations. LNG Canada in B.C. means thousands of jobs in Canadian energy, reaching new global markets. That is cranes in the ground, paycheques in pockets and Canada building big.

Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister sells himself as a master of economics, yet

Bloomberg reports our economy is on life support. The Bank of Canada expects economic growth to shrink in the last quarter and to grow by only 1.1% this year.

Canadian workers want to build and produce, but the government is holding them back with its anti-development laws and high taxes. The Prime Minister promised the fastest-growing economy in the G7, yet he has not delivered, and Canadians are paying the price.

When will the Prime Minister listen to the Conservative Party's ideas and introduce a plan that gets the government's barriers and tax burdens out of the way so Canadians can build?

Hon. Buckley Belanger (Secretary of State (Rural Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 10 long years, Conservative members from Saskatchewan have said Canada is broken. Conservatives have stifled opportunities that Saskatchewan had in potash, uranium, oil and gas. The list goes on.

Well, Saskatchewan is on this side of the House. We are going to work hand in hand with Saskatchewan to join the rest of the country and build a great future. This is about economic and social justice for Saskatchewan. We are going to deliver that.

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to Bloomberg, Canada's economy is on life support and we are now on recession watch. Growth has stagnated, and real GDP is expected to decline. Forestry and logging are down 2.8% for the third month. The Prime Minister has not delivered on his trade promises, and sawmills in Yellowhead are paying the price.

Since the Liberals love our ideas, why do they not remove the industrial carbon tax, fuel standard and anti-development laws so Canadian businesses can succeed?

Hon. Evan Solomon (Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the contrast could not be more clear. We like to build; they like to block. We are building our auto sector with a new auto strategy; they are blocking. We are building affordable housing; they are blocking. We are investing in defence; they are blocking. We are making life more affordable for families with the GST tax credit; they are blocking. We like to build; they like to block.

Oral Questions

Jim Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the latest data from Rosenberg Research is deeply concerning. Manufacturing output is down, forestry has declined for three consecutive months, and paper mills in northern Ontario are closing. The Prime Minister promised the fastest-growing economy in the G7. Instead, the government has failed to remove a single anti-development policy.

When will the government adopt our plan to restore economic growth by reducing red tape, lowering taxes and allowing Canadians to invest, work and build?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the former premier of Alberta said, “you can't deal with the reality of the [tariff] threat by pretending it is not there”, but the Conservatives would rather obstruct. We have \$2.5 billion allocated in budget 2025 to attack this problem. I ask members to please support the budget.

* * *

HOUSING

Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recently hit 100 days since Build Canada Homes was launched, and we are already seeing real momentum on the ground. Projects are moving faster, partnerships are coming together, and communities are seeing concrete progress on affordable housing.

Would the Minister for Housing and Infrastructure please update the House on all we have accomplished and what more is to come?

• (1500)

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question and her great work.

We have got right to work with Build Canada Homes. Since the launch, we have been signing major partnerships with provinces and cities. We have six major development sites on federal lands. We are delivering over 7,500 homes, with tens of thousands more in the pipeline right now, with the Build Canada Homes act that was introduced this morning, which we expect the support of this House on.

We are establishing a lean, efficient agency that is 100% focused on delivering affordable housing for Canadians. We ask for the support of all members in the House.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PENSIONS

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Liberals have created an IT fiasco. The Cúram system, which is used to pay old age security benefits, has gone from \$1.75 billion to \$6.6 billion. Worse still, 93% of public servants give it a failing grade. Employees are reportedly under strict instructions not to blame the software when communicating with the public.

How could the Liberals have failed so badly? What will the minister do about the software? Did the minister approve these irresponsible increases?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, transforming a 60-year-old system is not an easy task. I want to start by thanking the employees at ESDC who are working so hard to make sure seniors get their benefits on time and with accuracy. In fact, that is exactly what has happened, as 98% of the cases have gone through. I will say that we are working diligently on the remaining outstanding cases where people who have signed up have not yet received their benefits.

If the member opposite or any member of Parliament has an urgent case, we can accelerate those cases in situations where people are in dire need, so I would ask them to please contact my office—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

[*Translation*]

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister's own employees say that the system does not work. Our seniors built our country and paid taxes their entire lives. Now there are some who have to wait eight months to get their money. It is unacceptable. I have a specific example. Martial Lavoie in my riding is still waiting. Do members know what Mr. Lavoie did? He postponed his retirement because his help was needed. There was a need for employees. He remained in service. Now he wants to retire and he cannot get his money.

What does the minister have to say to Mr. Lavoie? He is listening right now.

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are happy to help any seniors who find themselves in dire need. As I said, we are making progress. They are a very small percentage of the over seven million Canadians who have been successfully transferred to the Cúram system. This system brings us into the modern age, which is what Canadians want. In fact, seniors can now apply online and have a fully automated process to get their benefits started.

In cases where things have been done the old way, with paper forms, often there is missing information, and there may be other challenges. We have put additional resources into ensuring we get through those cases and can help people like Mr. Lavoie.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in addition to expropriating farmers from their land, the Liberal government is closing agri-food research centres. The Sainte-Foy research centre in the riding of the member for Louis-Hébert is one of seven agricultural research centres that the Liberals just randomly closed.

Canadian science and innovation are built in these centres. They drive our productivity.

How does the Prime Minister justify his decision to prioritize consultants and foreign-based projects rather than cultivate expertise here at home, which feeds Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it warms my heart that the Conservatives are now concerned about science and research. I am happy to reassure them that the federal government will continue as the largest agriculture researcher in this country. In fact, just last month we invested \$9.7 million with the Government of Saskatchewan in science and research.

We are not going anywhere. We still have 17 centres across the country. We are going to work with our stakeholders and with academia to make research better than it has ever been.

* * *

● (1505)

HOUSING

Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, in Rankin Inlet, the NDP caucus heard from one Inuk who shared that he has waited for 11 years for a house. There are 17 people living in his two-bedroom unit. His story is all too common in Nunavut.

The government is acting on what I have told it. Nunavut will receive 50 more homes added to the 700 originally promised in the budget. This is a good start.

Will the minister keep working with Nunavut to address the worst housing crisis in Canada?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very excited to share that the Government of Canada, the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated reached an agreement to deliver up to 750 homes in the territory. Build Canada Homes will lead this work using innovative factory-built components to get homes ready faster.

We are prioritizing Canadian materials. We are supporting Inuit-owned businesses and creating lots of job and training opportunities. This partnership will make a real difference on the ground.

I thank the member for her leadership in helping to bring more homes to Nunavut, much-needed affordable homes. I encourage all—

The Speaker: The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Aaron Gunn (North Island—Powell River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have good news. The Canada Energy Regulator has rejected Brookfield's plans to send Canadian hydroelectricity to the United States with almost no benefit to the people who live here, and has instead recommended a full licensing process and review. However, the final decision still rests with the Minister of Natural Resources.

Will the minister commit to accepting the Energy Regulator's recommendations and ensuring that Canada's national interests always come first?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me reassure the member across the aisle that our government is working closely with the Government of British Columbia to build an affordable, reliable and clean electricity grid that meets the significant surge in demand that we are expecting in the years to come. As the member opposite said, this matter is currently before the Commission of the Canada Energy Regulator, which makes its decisions independent of the federal government in the best interests of Canada's ability to meet its domestic energy needs.

* * *

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the state of emergency in Cross Lake Pimicikamak is now over 40 days old. The army came, made recommendations and left, and where is the federal government? It is still brainstorming solutions. Meanwhile, evacuees remain stranded in cities without adequate supports.

When will Ottawa move past talking points and, at a minimum, implement the army's recommendations and uphold their constitutional responsibilities to support people returning to a safe home?

Hon. Eleanor Olszewski (Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience and Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my friend across the aisle that emergency management, our department, was in contact with that nation.

From the commencement of the power outage, we have worked, as has Indigenous Services Canada, to make sure that, firstly, we sent the Canadian Armed Forces, and secondly, there were sufficient people on the ground to help evacuate and provide benefits to the region.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as International Development Week comes to a close, I know I and many of my colleagues in this place have met with dozens of front-line workers from development organizations who are reeling from a broken promise. During the election, the Liberals promised and the Prime Minister said that we would “not cut foreign aid” or development assistance, but the budget showed a cut of \$2.7 billion.

We used to be known in the world. Lester B. Pearson, when he was prime minister, set the global target for development assistance, yet here we are, falling through the cracks and not delivering.

Will the minister commit to reviving the Pearson target?

Hon. Maninder Sidhu (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we remain committed to our long-standing international assistance priorities. We will continue to fight poverty; to support gender equality; to strengthen health, food and education systems; and to build climate resilience. We will continue to deliver urgent humanitarian aid abroad.

The measure of our work is in the partnerships we build to deliver development outcomes at scale.

* * *

● (1510)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe CPAC refers to this moment as the crown jewel of its weekly programming. Because it is Thursday, I am wondering if the government House leader can update the House as to the business for the rest of this week and into the next week.

I wonder specifically if the government has had the time to analyze and absorb the Conservative leader's letter calling for concrete, common-sense proposals to not only deal with the cost of living crisis but also strengthen Canada's position against things like unfair tariffs, ideas like getting rid of the capital gains tax on investments that are reinvested in Canada. I wonder if we will see legislation on that rather than a complicated rebate scheme that will see Canadian tax dollars go to subsidize the purchase of foreign-built EVs, and if we can expect any legislation that would include the Conservative idea of getting rid of the GST on all Canadian-produced vehicles. Those are the types of concrete measures that would not only lower the cost of living for Canadians but also help build our economy.

Will the government take us up on that offer as we extend our hands across the way for common-sense solutions, or will it once again double down on failed policies of the past?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a lot to digest. I think all Canadians will appreciate this metaphor at this time of year. If I hear the faint sound of the ice cracking in the wall of Conservative obstruction that this Parliament has encountered, the obstruction of our criminal law legislation, the obstruction of the Prime Minister's economic plan to bring \$1 trillion of investment and to build Canada strong, if what I hear is the faint sound of that dam cracking, that means that spring

Business of the House

might be on its way and the opposition may put down their tools of obstruction and join us in building our country strong.

In the meantime, this afternoon we will continue with debate on the opposition motion brought forward by the Bloc Québécois.

Tomorrow, we will have the debate on the Standing Orders and procedure pursuant to Standing Order 51, a very hotly awaited moment in the parliamentary calendar.

On Monday of next week, we will call Bill C-10, an act respecting the commissioner for modern treaty implementation, at second reading.

I would also like to inform all hon. members that next Tuesday and Thursday shall be allotted days.

[*Translation*]

On Wednesday, we will begin second reading of Bill C-20, an act respecting the establishment of Build Canada Homes, tabled earlier this morning by my hon. colleague, the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada.

Finally, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, at the conclusion of Oral Questions on Friday, February 6, 2026, the House observe a moment of silence for the late Honourable Kirsty Duncan, and that afterwards, a member of each of the recognized parties, a member of the New Democratic Party and the member of the Green Party each be permitted to make a statement for no more than five minutes to pay tribute, and that the time taken for these proceedings shall be added to the time provided for Government Orders.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. minister's moving the motion will please say nay.

There being no dissenting voice, 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)

*Business of Supply***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

• (1515)

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—APOLOGY TO THOSE WHOSE LAND WAS
EXPROPRIATED IN MIRABEL

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our Bloc Québécois colleagues want Canadians to believe that building a high-speed rail line will harm their communities, that it will be done without consultation and without the measures we have put in place over the past 60 years. They are trying to justify their opposition to high-speed rail and their goal is to kill the project before the legislation is even passed.

They have joined Conservatives in the past to try to cut the initial funding required, and they are trying to do it again today by blocking Bill C-15. Indeed, their actions are quite fitting, given their name

I want to be clear. Expropriation remains a measure of last resort. Negotiating with landowners will always be the preferred approach. That principle will not change.

[*English*]

Before turning to Bill C-15, I want to acknowledge what we have heard in recent weeks. Since public consultations began, residents of the Mirabel region have raised concerns about land acquisition, expropriation and the need for direct, respectful engagement. We have heard those concerns clearly, and I can confirm today that Alto will be holding an in-person public session in the Mirabel area later this month, to ensure transparency, dialogue and accountability.

I want to explain why Bill C-15 is necessary for this linear project and how it is maintaining appropriate protections for landowners. Bill C-15 is necessary because the high-speed rail initiative is unprecedented in Canada. It involves a corridor of nearly 1,000 kilometres, crossing hundreds of communities and requiring the acquisition of hundreds of pieces of land. Because of the time, cost and complexity involved, land acquisition represents one of the most significant risks to the project, particularly if we are to begin construction in 2029, as announced.

The current federal Expropriation Act is a statute of general application. It was not designed for a project of this scale or this complexity. Without a framework adapted to this reality, delays multiply and costs escalate, precisely what communities and taxpayers want to avoid.

[*Translation*]

The land acquisition measures in Bill C-15 are not intended to increase uncertainty. They provide tools to help the government coordinate more effectively and get shovels in the ground faster while maintaining fundamental protections for property owners. Some of these measures have raised concerns, and I want to address them directly.

First, contrary to what has been said, expropriation does not take place over email. The intention is to allow communication by email only when the owner has indicated that this is their preferred method of communication and has provided their email address. This is an additional method of communication that supplements, rather than replaces, those provided for in the law.

Second, a prohibition on work does not mean that owners lose the use of their land. They will be able to continue their existing agricultural or commercial activities. Owners will also be able to carry out normal maintenance, repairs or work needed to keep their land from deteriorating.

Third, Bill C-15 does not prevent landlords from putting their buildings up for sale or allow the federal government to set land values.

The right of first refusal is a management tool that informs Alto when an owner is ready to sell. Owners remain completely free to put their property on the market. This tool simply allows Alto to acquire the property on a priority basis at a price previously agreed to by the owner.

The Government of Quebec has even given this power to the municipalities in recent years. It is called the right of first refusal. It allows cities to protect strategic or sensitive land without affecting the owner's property value. In my riding of Morin-Heights, municipal council used this tool to acquire and protect one of the most beautiful pieces of land in the municipality. It is called Castel-Marie, and it is one of the municipality's most stunning parks. The tool works well for buyers and transferors. I can vouch for that.

• (1520)

[*English*]

We must also be honest with Canadians about what it takes to deliver projects of this magnitude.

High-speed rail is one of the most ambitious infrastructure projects in our history, a true nation-building initiative. Projects of this scale cannot be delivered without using adaptive tools. This project cannot advance responsibly without these land acquisition measures. Inaction would not preserve the status quo. It would mean delays and higher costs. Importantly, these measures are not unheard of. They are aligned with similar provincial regimes, including Quebec's act respecting expropriation and Ontario's Building Transit Faster Act.

The economic stakes are significant. High-speed rail will create tens of thousands of jobs, strengthen productivity, improve regional connectivity and deliver lasting economic benefits for Quebec, Ontario and Canada as a whole. Every year of delay carries real costs for workers, businesses, taxpayers and communities.

[*Translation*]

I support the construction of high-speed rail and Bill C-15. I am asking my Bloc Québécois colleagues to stop blocking the project and get on board.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I salute my colleague. Indeed, a whole series of regulations has been established over the past 60 years. However, none of them did anything to prevent the tragic events that occurred in Mirabel in the 1980s.

Bill C-5 was passed last June. We have the ability to suspend laws and impose certain things. Furthermore, a proponent can sit down privately with a minister and, without consultation, the government can decide to circumvent the regular process. However, it seems to me that my colleague stood up to vote in favour of this measure.

How is it that today he seems to be ignoring the fact that we passed this bill and that it erases many of these fine regulations adopted over the past 60 years?

Tim Watchorn: Mr. Speaker, we all recognize that what happened 57 years ago in Mirabel is unacceptable. Today is my birthday, and I am 56 years old. That means that what happened in Mirabel happened before I was born, but it is still unacceptable. It must be said that we have evolved over the past 60 years. Laws have changed. Protections are in place, and the government will respect them.

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since my colleague is a member of Parliament for a region neighbouring Mirabel and knows the area very well, could he tell us what he is hearing in his riding in terms of support for the Alto project in the Lower Laurentians?

Tim Watchorn: Mr. Speaker, in Les Pays-d'en-Haut, everyone I talk to about the high-speed rail project is very much in favour of it. We have been talking about it for far too long. The current government has decided to move forward. I think this is a big step forward in getting cars off the roads. It is a big step forward in creating jobs. It is a big step forward for public transportation.

[English]

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, listening to the debate today, I hear two conversations: One is for an apology for past expropriations, and one is for the fast-tracking of a high-speed rail. To be honest, I did not know about these issues before today, but in doing some research, I am more interested in the process and the mechanics.

Can my colleague across the way answer whether the same mechanics, in terms of expropriation and land acquisition, will apply to a pipeline being fast-tracked and built to the west coast of British Columbia?

Tim Watchorn: Mr. Speaker, today I am going to talk about high-speed rail. I will leave pipelines to the experts in that domain.

I would just say that everything that has evolved in the last 60 years has brought us to where we are today. Too many people have talked about making a high-speed rail line. We are going ahead with a high-speed rail line, and we are going to do it in record speed. I hope our colleagues from across the way will pass Bill C-15 and get on the train with us.

Business of Supply

• (1525)

[Translation]

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton is asking me to wish my colleague from Les Pays-d'en-Haut a happy birthday, so I, too, am wishing him a happy birthday.

Now my colleague is asking us to get on board by passing Bill C-15 so that we can move faster. That is precisely why we are raising the red flag. We are saying that we must not rush this. In 1969, the government went way too fast, and ended up having to give back 85% of the land. Today, we are in a situation where the government wants to reserve a 100-kilometre-wide strip for a project that requires only 60 metres. We are afraid that history will repeat itself. That is what we are trying to explain to our colleagues.

I think that, with his sensitivity for Quebec, my colleague should convince his caucus to agree to apologize.

Tim Watchorn: Mr. Speaker, the width of the corridor initially proposed is intended to prevent land speculation. It was not possible to set a minimum width, because the public has to be consulted.

We are going to consult the public to make sure we put the rail line in a location that is completely acceptable to everyone.

Caroline Desrochers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, I am a new member, and I am extremely proud to represent the riding of Trois-Rivières, which, for the first time in decades, is fortunate to have a woman member representing it. Together, we are going to do some great things.

When I told my friends and family that I was considering going into politics, they told me that I would get eaten alive, that I was too conciliatory, too naive, that I only saw the good in people. Guess what? It is true that I approach things with a glass-half-full attitude, and it is true that I sometimes view things through rose-coloured glasses and think that there is always a solution, because at the end of the day, there is one fundamental thing that underpins all the work we do here in the House and that we should all be able to agree on, namely, civic duty. All 343 members of the House have the privilege of coming here every day to move things forward for all Canadians and to find solutions to the problems they face, regardless of the political stripe of the member who represents them.

As a 25-year veteran of the federal public service, I am non-partisan by nature and I get behind good ideas and good solutions, no matter who brings them forward. However, I have to say that my opposition party colleagues' political games and obstruction are starting to try my patience and good will. Here in the House and in committee, we bring concerns to the table. People agree that these concerns are important and that we need to talk about them. Then they say that what we are proposing is no good after all. When we point out that our proposal is what they asked us for, they say that it is no good and that they are concerned about something else entirely anyway.

Business of Supply

We see that every day on everything from affordability to Criminal Code reforms to strengthen the justice system, as we saw yesterday. Today's motion by my colleague, the member for Mirabel, is yet another example of that. I find it irresponsible and deplorable for parliamentarians to completely ignore the facts and move a motion suggesting that the current framework is the same as what we had in 1969. Let me be clear: We recognize that what was done 57 years ago should never have happened. We recognize that the people of Mirabel were hit hard and still bear the scars. When the last of the expropriated acres were returned in 2019, the late minister of transport acknowledged that a big mistake had been made and that it should never have happened. My colleague, the hon. Minister of Transport, reiterated these comments this morning.

What I find unacceptable is trying to scare the citizens of Mirabel with statements that my colleague knows full well are not true. I know that my colleague is a diligent and well-informed person, that he has certainly read the budget implementation act, that he has certainly read the high-speed rail network legislation, and that he must be well aware that the Expropriation Act of 1985 has been radically amended to include consultation in the process. He surely knows that the high-speed rail legislation modernizes it and introduces additional measures. For his information and, above all, for the benefit of the people of Mirabel and all those around the corridor of this major project between Peterborough and Quebec City, I would like to reiterate some of the principles. Once adopted, if the obstruction stops, the legislation will guarantee consultation through impact assessment, support consultations with indigenous peoples and provide greater clarity on regulatory processes. In short, the project will not go ahead by overriding communities and landowners.

I will now speak for a few moments about the high-speed rail project. I know that my Bloc Québécois colleagues have been trying very hard since this morning to say that this is not the subject of the motion, but that is a bit like taking people for fools. We know that the Bloc Québécois and Conservative members have already voted together against the funding needed to launch this project.

Canada's first high-speed rail network is a transformative, generational project that will give Canadians the transportation system they deserve, one worthy of a G7 country. High-speed rail will generate approximately \$35 billion a year in economic benefits and create more than 51,000 jobs by increasing productivity and improving mobility between regions. High-speed rail will quickly connect economic hubs, boost tourism, cut travel times in half, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, stimulate the development of affordable housing along the Toronto-Quebec City corridor, and provide jobs for those along the route, including in rural communities. These communities need those jobs and need this economic boost.

● (1530)

It is important for the regions, it is important for the people of Trois-Rivières, and I know it is also important for the people of the neighbouring riding of Berthier—Maskinongé.

Under our new government's new buy Canadian policy, Alto will use hundreds of thousands of tonnes of Canadian steel, wood and concrete to build the high-speed rail line, along with structures, facilities and electrical infrastructure. In fact, Alto and its partner, Ca-

dence, have begun talks with the Canadian steel industry to better understand what it can provide and how we can help it provide what is needed.

Few infrastructure projects in Canadian history have generated this much industrial demand. Attempting to block this is kind of irresponsible. I am speaking to both opposition parties through the Chair. This is one of a series of major projects that our new government has promised to build, projects like the port of Contrecoeur and housing and other investments we will be making in the north.

Canada is facing ongoing U.S. threats against the steel, wood and aluminum sectors, so it is time to stop playing political games and put the interests of Canadians and Quebeckers first. As a matter of fact, 76% of Quebeckers are in favour of the project.

The first stages of the consultation process for Alto are now just starting, and Mirabel is included. Consultations will also be held in the riding of Trois-Rivières and in the riding of my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé in the coming weeks. These consultations will take place in more than 100 communities along the corridor. There will be discussions with municipalities and undertakings with potentially affected landowners. There have been many discussions with the Union des producteurs agricoles, round tables on various topics with stakeholders, open houses and an online portal, which has already received more than 26,000 submissions.

Let me be clear: The experiences of the residents of Mirabel in 1969 constitute a historic injustice. We acknowledge that it should not have happened. However, the process has changed radically over the past 57 years. It changed radically when the Expropriation Act was amended in 1985. It will change radically once we pass the bill that is currently before Parliament, Bill C-15, which includes the railway right of way legislation.

We have worked very closely with Ontario and Quebec to draw inspiration from the expropriation laws in those provinces so that we can be as aligned as possible with the provinces and move forward as quickly as possible with a very productive program.

High-speed rail can be built without repeating the mistakes of the past. This is an important project for Quebeckers and for the people of Ontario as well. It is an important project for Canadians. It promises nothing but benefits. All project stakeholders have agreed to consult each other and ensure that the project delivers as many positive benefits as possible.

If my colleague is interested in helping his constituents, I strongly encourage him to focus his energy in constructive ways by supporting the measures we propose to make life more affordable, to build more housing, to preserve our social safety net and to build Canada strong, rather than persist in filibustering during parliamentary committees and here in the House of Commons.

When I got into politics, my goal was to help people. I really felt that we would be able to work together, hand in hand with the parties, at such a crucial time in Canada's history, a pivotal moment in our lives and in the lives of our businesses and workers, as well as the lives of Quebec families and Canadian families, who live in uncertainty.

Let us stop playing political games, work together and move forward.

● (1535)

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech and for mentioning me in it. She is my riding neighbour and normally I really like her, and I still do today, but I have to correct some of the things that she said. She is accusing us playing political games and engaging in obstruction, which is absolutely not what we are doing.

What we are calling for is what she mentioned in her speech. We want the government to acknowledge past mistakes and commit to not repeating them. The Liberals have been saying that all day, so they should agree with it. As for the high-speed rail project, we have said repeatedly that we support it. We just want it to be done right.

When we think of Mirabel, where 85% of the expropriations had to be cancelled afterwards, and when we think about the current project, where the government wants to keep a 100-kilometre corridor open when it only needs 60 metres for the project, we feel concerned. That is only natural.

There has been talk about laws, and I also like those laws. Under section 98, approval must be obtained from the Canadian Transportation Agency. That is one of the existing protections. However, Bill C-15 will do away with that. My colleague needs to reconsider part of her speech. I would like her to share her thoughts on the Canadian Transportation Agency.

Caroline Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, I very much like working with him too.

I would just like to correct something. The current corridor that Alto and Cadence have put forward is a 10-kilometre-wide corridor, not 100-kilometre.

I am coming back to what I said earlier in my speech. People say no, that is not what we want to talk about, we do not want to block the project, but that is exactly what it is. That is what I mean when I talk about political games.

They say they do not want to block anything, but in fact they are blocking things. They are blocking things by talking about other things. They are blocking things by talking about something that is so emotional that we cannot say anything against it. So that is really what I mean when I talk about political games.

Business of Supply

[English]

Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is actually along the same lines as my colleague from the Bloc's. In her speech, the member referenced lessons learned from the past, and that a consultation is part of the expropriation process. However, I read and hear, right in my office, about the farmland potentially being expropriated in Clearview Township for DND's project. Consultations occurred, but they were right in the heart of harvest season for the farmers who are so affected. How is that effective consultation?

All parties support strengthening Canada's defence, but how is taking 4,000 acres of prime farmland and consulting with farmers in the middle of harvest season appropriate?

[Translation]

Caroline Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, consultations have already begun. Even though construction is expected to start in four years, consultations have already begun. They were held in Montreal and will continue. The door is already open. The approach is that, even though we do not have all the information yet, we have already begun consultations to understand the different communities along the route, what they expect, what they want and what matters to them. Consultations have also begun.

I encourage my colleagues to speak with the farmers in their ridings. I have. I have spoken with representatives of the UPA, the Union des producteurs agricoles. They have begun to be consulted. Discussions are already under way.

I encourage you to get informed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member needs to address her questions through the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague, the member for Trois-Rivières, hears when she is out and about in her riding. How are people responding when she talks about the Alto project, especially since one of the stations will be in Trois-Rivières?

An hon. member: That is a very good question.

● (1540)

Caroline Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, the people of Trois-Rivières are very excited about this project happening at long last.

This project will enable people to get from Trois-Rivières to Quebec City and Montreal much more quickly. It will provide eco-friendly transportation and enable people to get around without cars. Trois-Rivières has a university and three CEGEPs. This will really bring incredible economic growth to our region.

When I talk to people, everything they have to say is positive. They cannot wait for it to get under way. They are very excited to get this project started as soon as possible.

Business of Supply

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I think this is a first for me in the House, but I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Saint-Jean.

I would also like to thank Emily Gough, who has been part of my team over the past few months, as the parliamentary interns will soon be leaving. I am extremely grateful to her for her contribution. I think many of us can attest to her hard work. I wish her the best of luck in her new position.

Expropriation is a complex process that requires exceptional tact. It is a process that cannot be done by cutting corners. My region, Abitibi—Témiscamingue, felt this very strongly in recent years.

I am thinking of the Osisko project in Malartic in the early 2010s. In a church in 2006, the Osisko company presented an ambitious plan for a larger open-pit mine. It was the beginning of a process that would lead to the relocation of 205 residences, and it was not an easy process. In fact, my father served on the transitional committee, acting as a mediator in the process.

Compensation began three years later. However, there were many challenges. The negotiated settlement strategies caused a great deal of stress for many of the citizens affected. Relocation began even before the project was approved by Quebec's Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement.

For many of the municipality's citizens, this was very traumatic.

Mr. Speaker, could you ask people in the room to shout more quietly? I know it is directed at someone in particular, but it is loud.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Yes, I am going to ask for order in the House.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, for many residents of the municipality, this was a deeply traumatizing chapter. The cohabitation guide went a long way toward improving the social climate. Still, when the company proposed this major project, one that would revitalize the municipality, it tore the community apart. At such times, standing in opposition takes courage because, in small municipalities where everyone knows everyone, one feels like a target.

Something similar happened again recently. While the people of Rouyn-Noranda were waiting for the results of the ministerial authorization in March 2023, residents and even the mayor all learned simultaneously that the neighbourhood near the Horne Smelter would become a buffer zone. Once again, 200 families were affected by the news. Uncertainty affects the people there people to this day.

Yes, compensation is paid in these situations, but it is not necessarily enough to meet the needs of the people affected. That requires negotiations, but above all, it requires time, empathy and compassion.

That is one of the reasons why, in 2022, the Université du Québec en Abitibi—Témiscamingue, or UQAT, took the lead in creating the Laboratoire sur l'acceptabilité sociale de l'exploitation

des ressources naturelles, a laboratory focused on the social acceptability of natural resource development. It brings together researchers, organizations and members of the public who collaborate on developing social acceptance mechanisms that respect the concerns and interests of the various parties involved. In our region, it involved taking a step toward improving dialogue so that we could identify mechanisms better suited to today's reality. An expropriation process, where people are presented with a decision made in advance, no longer works. People want to have their say. I hope that UQAT's example will serve as inspiration to the government.

I was the indigenous relations critic for a long time. The consultation process that the government put in place for Bill C-5 was deplorable. The government sent a letter and then said that it had consulted with first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. The government basically gave five days' notice then said that the consultation had been done. However, consultation does not necessarily mean agreeing with a project. It is not just a matter of saying that someone has been heard. It involves actively participating in discussions, trying to understand each other's points of view, trying to find solutions together to address everyone's concerns and reaching out to each other.

That is precisely what the people of Mirabel are asking for: to have their say. They want to feel heard, to be able to share their concerns and to get answers. They do not want to find out from the media or in a coffee shop that the high-speed rail project is going to pass by their homes or through their farmland.

Moving fast with this kind of project never works. The current government wants to override every law. It wants to steamroll people and move very quickly. We know what that leads to: IT contracts with skyrocketing costs. It leads to projects that fail miserably. All this happens because, instead of doing things right, they want to rush—at the speed of a high-speed train.

Since I am now the critic for agriculture and agri-food, I will echo the words of Marcel Papin, president of the Lanaudière section of the UPA, who said that everything is moving too fast, and no one is taking the time to answer the real questions. That is exactly the mistake that is being made in most major projects, both in my region and here today.

Farmers have significant concerns. Guillaume Alary, a farmer and president of the UPA of L'Assomption-Les Moulins, points out that the government does not need to expropriate land to break up a farm, it simply needs to split the farm up. Stéphane Alary, president of the Outaouais and Laurentians regional section of the UPA, said that agricultural land is often chosen first because it costs less for the developer. He also questions the idea of splitting up land, asking, "How will producers get their hay? They're not going to put a footbridge over every piece of land that's cut off." That much is clear.

That is precisely where agricultural producers need to be reassured. The government needs to consult with them, listen to their concerns and meet with them. Sure, it can send a registered letter or an email, but the decent thing to do is to go and meet with people and talk to them.

• (1545)

Alternative solutions will have to be found to allow them to access their lands. It is also important to recall that many people still remember the expropriations of 1969. Some of them will experience a second time what farmers of that era experienced, that is, the expropriation of their land only to have it returned later. One local farmer told the Mirabel newspaper *Le Nord* that many farmers he knows were able to reclaim old lots and short strips but then resold them, because there was the possibility of a second expropriation. Another farmer told *Le Nord* that, if we are as important as the government claims we are, why is Alto not holding real public consultations in Mirabel? That is a good question.

Examples from my region have made it very clear. A mining company that takes responsibility and engages in discourse with the public is more likely to obtain social licence. That certainly takes time, but it is always the best approach.

The same farmer also added an interesting comment, noting that by giving this project to a federally created firm, the Liberals seem to want to wash their hands of it. That is problematic. These stories from agricultural producers deserve to be heard. Today, I spoke on their behalf. I want them to know that the Bloc Québécois is listening to them. We are here to help them. Major projects require us to do things right. We are not dealing with a parcel of land; we are dealing with people who have put their hearts into their land. They have made it their home, their community.

Farming is a generational story, from father to son. This land represents a family history. Six to 10 generations of hard-working people took care of a piece of land in that part of Quebec, the Mirabel region. It is often said that the Mirabel region is home to the best farmland in Quebec, the most fertile land in Quebec.

In closing, I would like to remind the House of the great Serge Bouchard. While acknowledging that modern humans wanted to live in cities, he spoke with admiration of the old farmer, the one who cleared the land, who loved and walked the land. As he said so well, the land is what makes the ancestor culturally unique. We need to think of them in this process as well.

• (1550)

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank our colleague, the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, for his speech.

I fully agree with him and his colleagues that what happened in Mirabel in 1969 is unacceptable, should not be repeated and will not be repeated.

Now, I would like the member to give us his point of view, his opinion on the merits of a high-speed rail project such as Alto. We know that this is a linear project, 60 metres wide. Does the Bloc Québécois, and this member in particular, think it is appropriate to build high-speed rail in Canada?

Business of Supply

Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from the Laval region, with whom I had a productive discussion yesterday on social licence issues that are currently affecting the people of Rouyn-Noranda. I thank him for his sensitivity on this issue.

Obviously, I would like to see high-speed rail go all the way to Rouyn-Noranda. We would be happy to be able to get to Montreal, Ottawa or other big cities a little faster than we can currently. The question is not whether or not we want high-speed rail, because the Bloc Québécois is obviously in favour of it. It is about how things are done.

People in Mirabel are being asked to drive an hour or an hour and a half to give their opinion, depending on traffic. I am sorry, but that is unfair. When I take Highway 15, I always get stuck in traffic coming off Highway 117. Farmers in Mirabel had to go to Laval, because initially there were no consultations in Mirabel. That is why we are saying that the process was rushed and that people were not respected. That is the crux of the problem and that is why we are holding this opposition day today.

[*English*]

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this debate is really the Bloc asking for an apology for an expropriation of land that happened in 1969 and for the past not to be repeated, but I think we are coming across one of the fundamental problems that comes along with fast-tracking. Everybody understands the need to build our economy, build pipelines and build high-speed rail, but we have some fundamental human problems that come up when we talk about fast-tracking, which may override some fundamental issues.

If everybody understands the need to support—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Let us have a little order.

The hon. member.

Ellis Ross: Mr. Speaker, if everybody already sees the need to build up the economy, would an official apology from the government not actually be a big step in terms of clearing up the right-of-way for a high-speed rail?

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, what happened in Mirabel is one of the biggest frustrations in Quebec's history. Not only did the government expropriate people from some of the finest agricultural land in Quebec, it left major scars and trauma in its wake for an airport project heralded to become Canada's largest international airport, as members will recall. Then Canada decided to centre all of its political and economic decisions in Toronto. Obviously, that impacted airports. In the end, the needs to be served by the large Mirabel airport were ultimately met in Dorval, the site of the international airport.

The supreme irony of all this, and perhaps another reason why we need an apology, is that the other airport was named after the person who led the expropriations in the riding of Mirabel. I think that the Liberal government needs to make some serious apologies on behalf of previous prime ministers.

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are happy about that because we feel that the people in the Conservative Party agree with the apology. That is interesting.

However, I have also heard several Conservative colleagues express concerns that speeding up major projects and moving too fast can sometimes lead to mistakes, like what happened in 1969. The Conservatives voted in favour of Bill C-5 in June.

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

• (1555)

Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, yes, it is always ironic to see members of the official opposition supporting closure motions. It is as though the Conservative Party had cast itself as a government-in-waiting and decided that it was great because, when they are in power, they will be able to take advantage of these botched processes.

I would still like to mention something about Bill C-5 and the Conservatives. When I presented them with an amendment to exclude the Indian Act from the process, because it would have excluded indigenous people from consultations, the Conservatives voted in favour of our amendment. That meant we could not steamroll indigenous peoples, and I am grateful to them for that. That is why the federal government is coming back with the Bill C-15. To me, this is a historical aberration.

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that it is a pleasure to rise today to speak during our opposition day debate, except that I am doing so because the people of Mirabel, and potentially other places in Canada, are experiencing a situation that is distressing, to say the least.

Our motion today stems from the idea expressed in a simple quote: those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. That is exactly what we want to do with our opposition day. We want to ensure that, at a minimum, history is properly understood, and by offering an apology, we can provide assurances that it has been understood so that we can avoid repeating the same acts that were catastrophic in Mirabel, among other places, some 50 years ago.

All of this is taking place in a rather interesting historical context, because, not so long ago, the Prime Minister gave a rather intriguing speech at the Quebec Citadel in which his rewriting of the facts showed, at best, a lack of knowledge about Quebec's history and, at worst, contempt for it.

We therefore have to wonder whether the government cares at all about Quebec's reality or whether it is just focused on moving forward as quickly as possible with the high-speed rail project. At the risk of repeating what my colleagues have already said, we support that project. What we have a problem with is the approach that is being taken.

From what we have seen, there is cause for concern when the government gets involved in a project. We are seeing that right now with the Cúram software. The government is telling us that it is going to hold consultations. However, in a project already riddled with cost overruns, the government is not even listening to its own officials when they say that there are flaws, that the software they have implemented is poorly designed. We therefore have to wonder whether the government will really listen to the public.

The government keeps telling us that it will follow best practices, that it will ensure that the studies, consultations and discussions with the public are conducted properly. However, at the same time, the government has given itself the right to completely rewrite these best practices. It is on the ice and rewriting the rules of the game in the middle of play.

I listened to most of the speeches by the Liberals today. I find it interesting that when asked about the content of our motion, no one seems willing to commit. However, our motion is quite simple, and I would be curious to know which part of the motion makes them hesitate to say right away that they are willing to vote in favour of what we are proposing today.

Our motion reads as follows:

That the House call on the government to apologize to those whose land was expropriated in Mirabel.

It is also a unanimous request from the Quebec National Assembly. We are constantly being told that it was a disaster and that it must never happen again. In that case, what would it mean to offer an apology?

The second point of our motion reads as follows:

[That the House call on the government] to acknowledge the collective trauma these expropriations caused for thousands of Quebecers who were forced to abandon their homes, their communities and their livelihoods...

My colleague from Mirabel, among others, gave some striking examples of this this morning. Even on the government benches, they were talking about this trauma. It seems easy enough to acknowledge.

Finally, the motion says:

[That the House] urge the government not to undertake such expropriations again without public consultation, social licence and appropriate compensation.

The Liberals are telling us that this is what they want to do. Why is it a problem, then, for them to support the motion? I wonder about their real intentions and I wonder how they will vote on our opposition day motion.

Business of Supply

The Minister of Transportation, who is also the Leader of the Government government in the House of Commons, somewhat set the stage this week regarding the government's approach to this issue. I would like to quote some of the answers he gave to my colleague from Mirabel during oral question period. He said this:

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.

His answer tells us a lot. I will not say that he is trying to mislead the House because that would be giving his comments more weight than they deserve. The law he is referring to allows people in Quebec who receive an expropriation notice to challenge that decision, either the right to expropriate or the amount that will be allocated, before Quebec's administrative tribunal or the Quebec Superior Court.

• (1600)

Meanwhile, the government used Bill C-15 to amend the Expropriation Act so that the transport minister can set a price without a hearing, so there is no comparison between the two acts.

Alto, the company responsible for the project, is giving itself a right of first refusal, which will limit what owners are able to do with their property. This will limit the choice of buyers. The financial offer made to them will be non-negotiable. For example, a farmer who has a right of first refusal imposed on his land would not even be able to farm it. Who would want to buy such land? That alone will have a huge impact on the price.

There is also the fact that sections 9 and 10 of the Expropriation Act require the appropriate minister to hold public hearings on a planned expropriation, but Bill C-15 explicitly repeals that obligation. That means what the government is saying is that there will be no public hearings like there are under Quebec law.

The Minister of Transport said earlier that if we agreed with what happened in Quebec City, we should agree with what is happening here. I am tempted to say that he was misleading the House, and not just the House. In another response to my colleague, the Minister of Transport said this:

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.

What he forgot to mention is that those 60 metres will be located in a 10-kilometre-wide corridor where a right of first refusal may apply. Alto is reserving this corridor for the high-speed train, and it informed people of this through email. People are panicking, particularly in Mirabel, a place whose wounds from the expropriation that people experienced 50 years ago have yet to heal.

Knowing that they may not be able to resell their homes, even if the rail line does not end up passing through their property, and that they will not be able to renovate, repair or do any work until they find out whether there will actually be an expropriation, creates

anxiety and panic that serve absolutely no purpose. That is what happens when the government moves too quickly, ignoring the scars of the past I talked about and showing a kind of disdain, or perhaps a lack of knowledge of history.

The minister insists that there will be consultations. The initial round of consultation is to take place between January 15 and March 29. We have just learned that there will be consultations. When farmers are on their land, working or preparing their fields, they do not have time to submit briefs on such short notice. The same goes for municipalities, most of which have newly elected councils. They are just beginning their debates and the implementation of their budget. The consultation period is very, very short. The format of consultation is also problematic. They want to host happy hours and to present the major components of the project online. Is that really consultation?

After that, the next step would be in the fall. There will be about nine months between the first part and the second part of the consultations, for a project that has been discussed for more than 10 years. We are in a situation where the saying "let us slow down to speed up" really applies.

I will not have time to go into the next point in detail, but I know my colleagues have already done so. A whole lot of provisions governing major projects and expropriations are completely set aside in Bill C-15. That will allow this project to move forward much too quickly. The project itself is not fundamentally bad, but it is not always possible to do something quickly and do it well. This is a striking example of that.

The government is giving itself a lot of leeway, and that is why we have concerns about the upcoming bill. We fear it will be rushed through without any real consultation and that, in the end, the government will do exactly the opposite of what is in our motion, which is quite simple. It is about recognizing the trauma experienced by the people of Mirabel 50 years ago, apologizing to them, and ensuring that it never happens again.

• (1605)

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, as I said to our colleague who spoke before, what happened in 1969 is obviously unacceptable and inexcusable. We will not do it again, and it will not happen.

Now, with this high-speed rail project, we are still a long way from the final route. Consultations are currently under way to determine the route. Could my colleague tell us why it would be a problem to hold these pre-consultations before getting to the heart of the matter a little later?

Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, there is a problem with the speed at which it is being done. It was only recently announced that the consultations would be taking place from January 15 to the end of March. We are told that there will eventually be a second, more definitive route and that the next consultations, in the fall, will be on that second route. Things are moving extremely quickly for something that affects a very sensitive and specific segment of the Quebec population, but that resonates everywhere.

Business of Supply

Once again, this has been dragging on for more than 10 years. It makes us wonder whether the only reason things are moving so quickly is to allow Alto's senior management to check the right boxes at the end of the year and receive the bonuses that go with it. That shows contempt for the entire population. People are asking questions and will not have all the answers. They will certainly not have enough time to properly assert their rights.

[English]

Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have noticed over the last 10 years that the Liberal government has always been very quick to apologize. I am just wondering why the government suddenly seems to be so incredibly hesitant to apologize for something that we know really should not have happened.

[Translation]

Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, there are several examples we could give. It seems we have devoted a few Bloc Québécois opposition days to calling for an apology, including for the October crisis. We were not exactly told that it was inexcusable. Apologizing for the Acadians also seems challenging.

In this case, I find it completely mind-boggling. We are told that what happened 50 years ago is inexcusable, but no one is willing to offer an apology.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my comment is somewhat along the same lines.

When we debated a motion six years ago on an apology for the victims of the October crisis, we were told that it belonged to the past. A few weeks ago, when we were talking about the Prime Minister's speech on the Plains of Abraham, we were told that we were living in the past and that what matters is jobs, the economy, public services, etc. However, they are the ones who chose to make that historic speech, by the way. I am just saying. In other words, they did it, but we were not supposed to blame them for what they said.

My colleague was a lawyer in her former life. When she practised law, when victims came to her about something that happened to them, did she just tell them that the harm they had suffered was in the past? Did she tell them that they had to move on with their lives?

Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, if I had done so, I probably would have been disbarred.

Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague about the government wanting to shorten environmental assessments from five years to two years in spite of the extremely sensitive context of Mirabel.

• (1610)

Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, that simply supports the theory that the government wants to move much too quickly, likely for the sake of interests that are completely at odds with those of the people, but that is not all.

Aside from dealing with environmental studies, the Impact Assessment Act seeks to better understand the health, social and economic impacts of a project. However, the government is prepared

to scrap all that with this bill. That is already set out in Bill C-15. It completely sets that aside when convenient.

If the government wants to move quickly, it is to serve other interests than those of the people. That is what keeps us up at night. It is not the project itself that is the issue, but the way in which it is likely to be carried out.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Employment; the hon. member for Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, Natural Resources.

Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in today's debate. Before I get into my speech, I would like say two things.

First, I want to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Châteauguay—Les Jardins-de-Napierville.

Second, I, too, would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of one of my staffers. MPs are nothing without their teams to do the day-to-day work. They support us and assist us. Yesterday, I had the pleasure of attending an awards ceremony where Louise Goulet received a certificate of recognition. Louise has been working with me for 10 years and she helped me with my first election campaign in 2015. She is always there faithfully serving the extraordinary interests of the people of Hull—Aylmer. I am very grateful to Louise, as well as to Martin, Nicolas, Rania, Madou, Elsa and Valérie for all of their help.

I also want to say that, next week, after several months of working with the hon. member for Côte-du-Sud—Rivière-du-Loup—Kataskomiq—Témiscouata, Shane Atienza will be moving to my office for the coming months. He is a parliamentary intern. This is an extraordinary program, and I encourage all members to submit a request for an intern at the next available opportunity.

High-speed rail will fundamentally change the way people travel between Quebec City and Toronto. It is going to provide faster, more reliable and more sustainable service in the busiest corridor not only in Canada but, frankly, in North America. Cutting travel time in half would mean travelling from Ottawa to Montreal in less than an hour, from Ottawa to Toronto in less than two hours. This will not only change everyday travel patterns, it will expand access to jobs, talent and markets.

This increased connectivity will strengthen regional supply chains, support labour mobility and create conditions conducive to stronger economic growth. It will bring communities and businesses closer together, support new investment and innovation, and provide Canadians with a modern, reliable, low-emission means of transportation that will strengthen our competitiveness.

Business of Supply

The high-speed rail initiative is necessary because the current transportation infrastructure has already reached its limits. Within the next 15 years, the population will increase to as many as 24 million Canadians living in the corridor between Quebec City and Toronto. We know full well that our highways are already operating at maximum capacity when it comes to traffic. It is very important to have a new rail system available. As I said, this train will be fast, reliable, and will truly serve Canadians.

In a time of global economic uncertainty, the high-speed rail initiative represents a historic opportunity to invest in Canada's future. This is a strategic step toward building a more resilient and competitive economy, one that is better positioned to withstand external pressures, including the growing threat of tariffs.

Major infrastructure projects like this one create jobs. For the high-speed rail project, we expect to support more than 50,000 jobs during the design and construction phases alone. This project will draw on Canadian expertise, including engineers, land surveyors, architects and rail specialists. It will also generate strong demand for Canadian materials and services.

• (1615)

The proponent of this project, Alto, estimates that the combined effect on productivity, the labour market and tourism will result in an annual increase of \$35 billion.

The benefits extend far beyond the immediate impact. In the long term, high-speed rail will connect major hubs across provincial borders, creating a more resilient economy by facilitating interprovincial trade. This is a priority we all recognize in the current economic climate.

This fully electric high-speed train will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This will be equivalent to taking more than 100,000 cars off the road. This legislation also ensures that the impact assessment process will apply to every segment of the project, placing consultation and environmental protection at the very heart of this initiative.

I was involved in the launch of this project. The mayor of Ottawa was there. The mayor of Gatineau was unable to attend because she was at another event, but she wanted to be there. The City of Montreal unanimously passed a resolution to promote and support this project.

This is a project that has been discussed for decades. Now that we have reached the point where we can take action, there are people who want to slow down the process. This is no longer acceptable.

This project is clearly in the best interests of everyone, Quebec, Ontario and Canada as a whole. It is time to take action.

The federal government's buy Canadian policy is essential to strengthening our national industries and supporting good jobs for Canadians. As we move forward with high-speed rail, we will prioritize the use of Canadian-made materials whenever possible. These measures will help to create an environment favourable to Canadian products and strengthen our domestic industrial capacity.

As we move forward with this transformative initiative, we are encouraged by the clear signals of support from Quebecers. This project is supported by the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal and several several chambers of commerce in the corridor between Quebec and Ontario.

This is a tremendous opportunity to transform our country, modernize our economy and create infrastructure that will be used for decades, if not a century.

By building a faster, more efficient and more reliable rail network, the high-speed rail initiative will strengthen the capacity of Canada's supply chains and stimulate long-term growth.

This initiative, which has the support of provincial partners, is enthusiastically welcomed by municipalities and aligns with national priorities, reflects a shared commitment to modern infrastructure, strong domestic industries and a connected and competitive Canada.

I am certain that, together, we are investing in a future in which Canadians will benefit from greater opportunities and our economy will be more resilient, more dynamic and better positioned to succeed in a rapidly changing world. It is a project for the 21st century.

• (1620)

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague. I appreciated his speech. I know he is a sensitive person. We got to know him when he served as Speaker of the House in the last Parliament.

I would like to come back to one part of his speech. I agree with most of his speech, but not the part when he said that this has been taking too long, that we need to move quickly and that slowing down would be unacceptable. I invite him to come to my riding, Berthier—Maskinongé, to talk to people there about the designated 10-kilometre corridor, and tell them that they might know in nine months whether they are part of the 60-metre corridor, because no one is sure yet sure and consultations are just getting under way. Meanwhile, they can no longer do any work on their land, they can no longer apply for a mortgage, they are completely frozen. I invite him to talk to these folks about the importance of moving faster. Does he not think that the project could have been better planned by now, so as not to terrorize a 10-kilometre wide area in which a 60-metre wide corridor will be built?

Hon. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé for his question. I have a great deal of respect for him. We have worked well together.

I invite his constituents to take part in the consultations, which have already begun. I myself took part in a consultation here in the national capital region. The place was packed. People were there to share their perspectives, to offer advice, and to propose changes. I found that the project proponents listened to us.

Already 26,000 Canadians have taken part in the consultations, and I would encourage my colleague's constituents to do the same, to share their concerns, and to put forward innovative solutions.

I think that we will end up with an excellent project for all Canadians.

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[English]

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, there are a lot of Canadians watching us who will be affected by this high-speed rail network and the right-of-way, which I heard is going to be 10 kilometres wide. For those watching at home who are wondering what is going on, we are talking about consultations and high-speed rail, yet the motion is simply asking for an apology to the people of Mirabel for the expropriation that happened in 1969.

Is there any appetite for the government to respond to the motion on the floor today and what the Bloc is proposing?

[Translation]

Hon. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to correct the premise of my hon. colleague's question.

What exists right now is a proposal to identify the general corridors. Part of the project involves consulting the communities to identify where things will broadly go. Following the consultations, it is possible that by some time next fall Alto may have identified a specific location or route. From there, we will be able to hold more in-depth consultations.

However, I would like to correct the assertion that the corridor will be 10 kilometres wide, because in reality it will be only 60 metres wide.

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I noted my dear colleague from Hull—Aylmer's enthusiasm for this project.

Can you tell me whether, in your riding, the people of Hull—Aylmer are as interested and just as excited about this project as you are?

• (1625)

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

The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure my dear colleague from Quebec that there is a great deal of enthusiasm for this project. It is not because the project will pass directly through Hull—Aylmer. Unfortunately, it will not, as much as we would like that. In our community, we are preparing a proposal for a tramway in Gatineau.

What is more, this tramway is a project that I have been working on since I was elected in 2015. I proposed it because I knew that a tramway was a modern way to transport people and provide a public transit system. We already know that our roads are too congested.

Hon. Nathalie Provost (Secretary of State (Nature), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is truly a privilege for me to rise in the House of Commons today to speak to the important motion moved by the member for Mirabel.

From what I understand, the Government of Canada fully recognizes that Canadians have concerns about expropriation. There is a reason why we have been talking about this all day. We also recognize the harm caused to the many families whose farms were ex-

propriated in 1969 to build the Montreal-Mirabel International Airport. Such action should never have been taken and must never happen again.

I was born in the riding of Berthier—Maskinongé. I heard about this when I was very young, and I am very aware of the hurt it caused in the community. However, today, we are in a different place, and we believe that the community, the Government of Canada and our institutions have learned that this is not how things are done today.

I would therefore like to assure the House that these considerations are taken very seriously and that the expropriation regime has undergone major changes over the past 57 years. However, what concerns me today and what has prompted me to speak is the fact that our Bloc Québécois colleagues have been tight-lipped about their support for the high-speed rail project and that their action could prevent it from moving forward.

There is also a lot of disinformation, and disinformation is plaguing our organizations, our teams and our communities. It is important to provide our constituents with accurate information, and today, I do not believe that we have the full picture of what the Alto project will look like and how it will unfold.

Just this afternoon, I heard a Bloc Québécois colleague say that because the Alto project was included in Bill C-5, there would be no consultation and it would be exempt from the various regulations. I would like to state that this is simply not true. There is a real consultation process under way and a real impact assessment process that will take place. There are consultations to build social licence.

The motion, which I have here in front of me, refers to the importance of not undertaking expropriations again without public consultation, social licence and appropriate compensation. That is precisely what we are putting in place. It is an organized, structured process based on fundamental values in which market value, eligible costs, and guarantees that the affected parties are treated fairly and consistently are respected. They have the right to negotiate. They even have the right to go to federal court if they are not satisfied with the settlements. We are no longer in the same place.

When applying the procedure, the government exercises caution and due diligence. As the member for Châteauguay—Les Jardins-de-Napierville, I believe that things will be done, and done well. However, I also want to ensure that our colleagues understand that we will preserve the fundamental protections that safeguard property owners' rights by ensuring a fair, consistent, and respectful process for all involved.

The Bloc Québécois claims that the high-speed rail corridor, which is 60 meters wide, will cause the same historical injustices suffered by the citizens of Mirabel. That is not true. That is not fair either. The footprint of this project represents less than 1% of the area covered by the Mirabel airport. The project will include a rigorous consultation process and, as I mentioned earlier, environmental assessments that are only possible with the passage of the high-speed rail network act.

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Contrary to the Bloc's assertions, this bill therefore requires that the impact assessment process apply to all segments of the project. This includes extensive consultations in Mirabel and along the entire route, including in the riding where I was born, Berthier—Maskinongé.

This process complements the consultations that were just launched by Alto. We know that Alto will be holding consultations in more than 100 communities, working with elected officials, holding public information sessions, and communicating regularly with people along the route. As well, not only do the vast majority of Quebeckers support high-speed rail, but so does the Government of Quebec.

Our high-speed rail network act is based on discussions with the Government of Quebec and is modelled on Quebec's expropriation law.

• (1630)

The Bloc Québécois's fear campaign against our high-speed rail legislation would not protect Canadians. Instead, it would derail the project, putting at risk more than 50,000 jobs, up to \$35 billion in GDP, and a unique industrial opportunity for Canada's steel, forestry and construction industries.

The Bloc Québécois's approach also jeopardizes emissions reductions equivalent to taking 100,000 cars off our roads. It puts at risk lucrative contracts for local businesses in rural communities all along the route. It compromises this opportunity to show the world that Canadians have the drive, the ingenuity and the expertise to get big projects built.

The Prime Minister has been clear. We must build the transformative projects needed to better connect Canada, grow our economy and support our workers. I am deeply concerned about the disinformation and fear campaign orchestrated by the Bloc Québécois, targeting Quebeckers from Quebec City to Montreal, Laval and everywhere in between, in order to derail the promise of high-speed rail.

We know that in order to successfully build a high-speed train, we need to avoid the mistakes of the past. Our high-speed rail legislation does exactly that. I encourage the Bloc Québécois to stop playing political games, listen to Quebeckers and stop abandon its mission to derail the high-speed rail project.

Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge two of my colleagues, Caroline Mireault and Daniel Tessier, who are celebrating their 10th year of service in the riding. These people support us, and they are also the ones who field comments from constituents who see projects like this coming and wonder, for example, why there is no consultation in their town.

Representatives of the Union des producteurs agricoles de Lanaudière came out and said, "We certainly do not intend to let a scenario like the one in Mirabel happen again." These are agricultural producers saying this.

I am wondering why my colleague is not prepared to accept our request today, to apologize for what happened in Mirabel and to en-

sure that there will be adequate consultations, which is clearly not the case according to the people on the ground.

Hon. Nathalie Provost: Mr. Speaker, we recognize what happened and the devastating impact that the expropriation in Mirabel had in the 1960s and 1970s.

However, when people today relate that example to high-speed rail, they are preventing us from achieving our objective of promoting, but also of creating a major project that will reduce our greenhouse gases resulting from transportation.

We are open to consultation. There will be a truly rigorous consultation process where things will be written down, documented and reported. Early consultations are already taking place, but we need to formalize the project to enable more formal and meaningful consultations.

Of course, the people at the UPA will be part of those consultations.

[*English*]

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member referenced the potentially devastating effects of expropriation, and in her speech she spoke about fairness and respect.

I could not help but notice that she has afforded none of that in her fanatical drive to steal firearms from law-abiding firearms owners in Canada. I wonder, with police associations rejecting her gun grab, would she apologize to them today?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Nathalie Provost: Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised at the direction this discussion is taking.

In fact, more than 70% of the population across Canada supports the bill. A great deal of respect is being shown in this process. Compensation is offered precisely because the owners of the firearms that are now banned purchased them in good faith, as legal gun owners. That is why they will be compensated. I believe respect is being shown.

• (1635)

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I fully support what my colleague is saying, even though that is not what we are talking about today. She has my full support and the support of all my colleagues here.

Let us come back to today's topic, which is high-speed rail. Like my colleague, I, too, am an engineer and, as such, I can say that a project like this one is complex. It takes time to get everything in order. We are being accused of moving too quickly, but does my colleague think that completing the studies within four years is moving too quickly?

Hon. Nathalie Provost: Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians want us to move quickly. This is not a time to dilly-dally.

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If we work together as a society and as a community, we are capable of conducting proper, meaningful and respectful consultations where we listen to each other. We are capable of defining how we want to carry out this project and obtaining reparations if necessary to find solutions.

Even though this project is very technologically complex and will require a lot of land, I think it is a good thing. Four years is not too long. We have been waiting for this for 30 years.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's speech, just as I have been listening to all of our colleagues' speeches for a while now, but there is something that I do not understand.

Our motion is written in three parts. Regarding the apology to the those whose land was expropriated in Mirabel, the Liberals tell us that it has been done and that they agree with it. As for acknowledging the trauma, they tell us that it has been done and that they agree with it. As for not undertaking such expropriations again without public consultation, social licence and appropriate compensation, they tell us that that is fine and that they are already doing that.

Why are they not voting in favour of the motion if they agree with everything?

Hon. Nathalie Provost: Mr. Speaker, it is not up to me to determine how the vote will go next week. However, all throughout the debate, in everything that we have seen in the House, and in discussions outside the House and on social media, the Bloc members are implying that we are an irresponsible government and that this project is trampling over everyone and disregards the rights of farmers, when that is absolutely not the case.

That is why we have been hearing my Liberal colleagues trying all day to set the record straight: This is a good project for Quebecers and for Canadians, and we need to work together to make it happen.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I did not think it was my turn to give a speech. If I had known, I would not have fought to ask a question so quickly. I would have saved a few punches for my speech. In any case, I will be repeating some of what I said.

I am pleased to rise in the House now to speak to the motion we are moving on our opposition day today. I will read the text, which has three parts:

That the House call on the government to apologize to those whose land was expropriated in Mirabel, to acknowledge the collective trauma these expropriations caused for thousands of Quebecers who were forced to abandon their homes, their communities and their livelihoods, and to urge the government not to undertake such expropriations again without public consultation, social licence and appropriate compensation.

I might have personally added something else. Now I am not proposing an amendment today, but if I had a fourth point to add, it would be this: To remove Pierre Elliott Trudeau's name from the Montreal-Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport, which is our gateway to the world, and give it to the Mirabel airport, so it would be renamed the Mirabel-Pierre Elliott Trudeau airport. Why not give the name of a complete failure to a monument that is just as

much of a failure? It seems to me that this would be more appropriate, since he was the one responsible for the mess in 1969. It would also reflect his function as usurper, as well as his role in completely disrespecting people's rights. This is the same man who, in October 1970, locked up poets and free thinkers without a warrant. That is the point I would have added. I am just throwing that out there to my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, regrettably, I am hearing some discussions. Can we ask members to take their discussions outside?

• (1640)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Indeed, if members want to have side conversations, they can leave. We must have some order.

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Quite often, the questions we get later on come from the people who did not listen. Then they ask us about things that we repeated about 15 times during our speech.

Before I continue, I should mention that I will be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague from Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Listuguj.

Now let us briefly discuss a few points. We know that the proposed route, even though it is not final, will result in the expropriation of land belonging to Mirabel families who, in many cases, are still affected by the brutal expropriations that took place during the construction of Mirabel Airport in 1969. We are talking about more than 3,000 families whose land was expropriated, and the government did not even use all of the expropriated land. Some are seeing their former properties taken away a second time. Most of these people had to leave the region and uproot themselves to rebuild their lives elsewhere.

Despite its direct responsibility, Ottawa has never been willing to apologize to the people of Mirabel. There have been apologies outside of Parliament, it is true. The late Marc Garneau, may he rest in peace, offered one in 2019, outside the House. However, there has never been an institutional apology from the House to those whose lives were completely turned upside down.

The government is presenting the consultation process as a gesture of courtesy. It is in no way related to citizens' grievances. The government is saying that a public consultation is under way. However, new dates are supposed to be scheduled in Mirabel. Do we have those dates yet? I do not know. If someone across the aisle has the answer, I would be very open to hearing it during questions and comments.

One of the things we have heard repeatedly in the speeches so far is that things have to move quickly. Things always have to move quickly. They have to move very quickly. That is exactly what happened in 1969. Things moved too quickly for something that was not worth it, for a project that was a blatant failure and for which we are still paying the price today. There are still families who have been affected by this.

Sometimes people tell us that all that is in the past, that it is history. We heard that when we proposed our motion on the events of October 1970 back in 2020. We heard it last week when we asked questions about the Prime Minister's speech on the Plains of Abraham. We were told that we were living in the past. What interests them are jobs, the economy, social services, Canadians' rights and so on. However, they are the ones who chose to give a speech on history. They talk about history, pick it up and dust it off when it suits them, but the last thing they want is for us to talk about it.

I asked my colleague from Saint-Jean a trick question earlier. I asked her what would happen if, in her former life as a lawyer, someone had come into her office and said he or she had been the victim of some situation or other some years back, only to have my colleague tell that person to stop living in the past and move on. She answered that she would have been disbarred. The same is true here, in this case.

There is something else we often hear as well. We are told that over the past 60 years, an entire consultation system has been built. In Quebec, there is the well-known Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement, or BAPE, which does exceptional work. A whole consultation framework has been established, which means projects can no longer simply be imposed or pushed through while ignoring people's wishes.

Let us not forget that during the last week of the parliamentary session in June—when people were suffering through a heat wave, when the bravest among them were still firing up the barbecue or heading to the pool, and when almost no one was interested in politics while we here were suffocating in our jackets and ties—we were hit by a super closure motion to ram through a bill allowing numerous laws to be suspended, including, in some cases, provisions of the Criminal Code, and giving developers the ability to sit down in a minister's office and push through a project without having to obtain the public's approval. That was Bill C-5, which was passed with the support of the official opposition, who supported not only the bill itself, but also the super closure motion. Now we are being told that we life needs to move fast, and we are going to fast-track the need to fast-track. That is exactly what happened at that time, when political attention was at its lowest.

• (1645)

That is not acceptable to us. No, that does nothing to reassure us. We will certainly not take comfort in the fact that Bill C-15, the 2025 budget implementation bill, will allow the government, and Alto by extension, to circumvent the provisions of the Expropriation Act.

It is incorrect to say that the federal law is the same as the Quebec law, because several provisions of the Quebec law, including the right to challenge and the compensation mechanism, are not the same. It is obvious that the hasty expropriations and the inter-provincial nature of the project will allow Ottawa to circumvent Quebec's laws and regulations by bringing the issues under federal jurisdiction. Quebec does not have exclusive jurisdiction when the project is not entirely within its borders.

Earlier, we were told about disinformation coming from the Bloc Québécois. I heard a lot more disinformation from the other side when they claimed that the Bloc Québécois is against the high-

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speed train, which is a lie. Nothing could be further from the truth. Social licence for projects also means taking into account the experiences of local populations and their socio-historical relationship to the land, whether they are Quebeckers or indigenous people.

I am from Saint-Hyacinthe, but I am rising this evening to talk about Mirabel because it concerns Quebec, and what happens in one corner of Quebec affects Quebec as a whole. Since Ottawa has given itself disproportionate powers under Bill C-5 and Bill C-15, we do not want the feds to repeat the Mirabel fiasco in other projects.

What we are doing today with our opposition day motion is not just correcting a mistake from the past, because it can never be corrected. It is not just to protect the people of Mirabel, but to protect all Quebeckers. If Ottawa was able to traumatize an entire region in 1969 without the carte blanche it now has because of Bill C-5 and will soon have because of Bill C-15, imagine what it will be able to do when this comes into effect.

Hon. Nathalie Provost (Secretary of State (Nature), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a new member of the House and I have not experienced closure. However, I was here when it was very hot. I would like to know the date of the closure. There is another thing I would like to know. There is a lot of talk about Bill C-5. I listened to my lovely colleague's speech until the end. I did not hear that this project was included in Bill C-5.

I would therefore like my colleague to enlighten me, because he is saying things that are not true, and what worries me is precisely the disinformation that is being spread here.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, June 13 was the date of the closure debate. We are checking whether the member voted on it. We will give her the answer in a minute. My colleagues can whisper the answer to me. As far as Bill C-5 is concerned, it definitely does not mention Mirabel or the high-speed rail. It does not talk about the projects themselves, but it offers the ability to assume the powers to carry them out.

Do we know how our colleague voted? No. We will tell her that in a minute.

Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the years, I have noticed that the Liberal government is always very quick to apologize. It makes me wonder why the government suddenly seems so incredibly reluctant to apologize for something that we know full well should never have happened.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, this is what fascinates me. The government has been telling us for a while now that apologies were already given, that it is unacceptable and that it must not be minimized. If true, it would not cost the Liberals much at all to vote for the motion if they think it makes no difference.

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• (1650)

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question for my colleague is this. What is his reaction to the public concern underlying our motion?

People are afraid that their property will be stolen out from under them and that their rights will be violated. How does my colleague respond to the fact that we are being attacked, here in the House, for raising public concerns? We are being accused of spreading dis-information and resorting to petty politics.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, that is an easy answer. So far, the only political games and disinformation I have seen have come from the members accusing us of doing everything we can to block high-speed rail, especially when those members are champions of oil subsidies who are now lecturing us about the environment.

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech. I enjoy working with him on the Standing Committee on National Defence. We have a great relationship.

I would just like to toss the ball back to him and quickly point out that the French term for “fast track” is *voie rapide*.

I am very pleased that the Bloc Québécois supports high-speed rail. I would like to know whether my colleague thinks that four years—for consultations, engineering work and everything else—is too fast to implement a project of this scale.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I thank him for correcting me, just as I corrected him earlier. That is a very fair thing to do. I really enjoy working with him too. I would like to throw the ball back to him along with the compliment.

I gave incorrect information earlier, and I apologize. It was June 16, not June 13. The member for Châteauguay—Les Jardins-de-Napierville had voted in favour.

Now, to get back to the question, I admit I was distracted, and I am sorry. I understand that the question was mainly about the importance of major projects. Does that sum it up correctly?

Tim Watchorn: Is four years too long?

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Is four years too long? It depends on the project. For some, it is.

For example, in the Quebec City region, there is still talk of a third link. The governing party is in the midst of a leadership race. Not all projects are structured in the same way. Not all projects require the same speed or the same level of verification. Not all projects are of the same scope either.

A high-speed train that would cross a huge swath of the country is not something that can be taken lightly. I cannot emphasize this enough: We must be careful with the broad powers and blank cheque granted to the government in the legislative framework that has already been adopted or is about to be voted on and that will allow such measures to be imposed.

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what is progress? In my opinion, that means moving forward as a society toward the common good.

Was Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau's Mirabel Airport project a step in the right direction at the end of the 1960s? No, because the plan for an airport of the future fell through, but also and especially because it was rushed. With the massive expropriations carried out by the federal government in Mirabel, leaving 10,000 people displaced, 3,000 families uprooted, and 97,000 acres of land expropriated when less than 15,000 acres were needed, the project did not lead to progress. It created human tragedies. Hastiness is not conducive to progress.

I have another example, which goes back even further. It is for my western colleagues. The Canadian Pacific Railway was also built quite quickly. Thousands of immigrants came from all over the world, and they did the work in abusive conditions, in mediocre living conditions. Fifteen thousand Chinese workers laboured on a project that ultimately injured and killed them. Six hundred people died during the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Hastiness is not conducive to progress.

When I was a journalist, I did a few news stories on the people in Mirabel whose land was expropriated to mark the 60th anniversary. I remember the testimonies I gathered, and I saw first-hand that the scars were still there. I saw that these human tragedies—when someone is uprooted from their home, when their land is taken from them, even if they are compensated afterward—leave lasting marks. It was the 1960s, a time when, in the name of progress, everything had to move so fast that no one bothered with the human beings who were in the way.

Then along comes Bill C-5, adopted under a closure motion in June, and now Bill C-15, which is still being debated in the House, and once again we find ourselves in a climate of haste. The high-speed rail project has been on the table since the 1980s. This government has been in power since 2015 without making much progress on it. Now, suddenly, it has to be done, and done quickly and forcefully. Rushing as a strategy is dangerous and counterproductive.

Let us look at how this Liberal government intends to proceed with Bill C-15. Among other things, this bill “enacts the high-speed rail network act”. To help people watching understand, it would have been possible to build high-speed rail network earlier, in the old world, before Mr. Trump and the current rush. However, certain rules had to be followed, rules that surely exist for good reason, such as ensuring that people's individual rights are protected.

What is the purpose of the high-speed rail network act? Its purpose is to speed up projects. That is the government's direction. However, when people move faster, they take more risks, and when they take more risks, the risk of injustices increases. In our constituency offices, we all receive calls from citizens who are victims of injustices, who call us because their employment insurance cheque has not arrived, because their old age pension cheque did not come in, because their passport was lost. These things happen. The public service makes mistakes; the government makes mistakes. If we decide to move even faster, we increase the chances of error. I spent 10 years in legal aid trying to correct injustices committed against citizens.

Bill C-15 allows things to move even faster, thereby increasing the risk of error. What we are essentially saying is let us take the time to do things right. Let us make sure that real progress is made, because we are in favour of the high-speed rail project. However, let us make sure that real progress is being made and that we do not create a host of human tragedies.

So what does this legislation say? It says, among other things, that Alto will not be required to get approval from the Canadian Transportation Agency. The Canadian Transportation Agency was probably useless anyway. That is probably why it was created. It was meant to be useless and slow down business. That is why, today, we no longer need the approval of the Canadian Transportation Agency. I am sure that all the people who have worked at the Canadian Transportation Agency and who were appointed to it by this government feel that they have served no purpose all these years.

• (1655)

When Alto submits proposals for the high-speed train route, they will be deemed approved by the agency, which raises the risk of errors and injustice.

Furthermore, Bill C-15 grants Alto significant powers in terms of expropriation and the right of first refusal to speed up construction of the high-speed rail line. How it will basically work is that land is going to be expropriated now and assessed later. Alto will be able to expropriate land within a corridor 10 kilometres wide. That seems like a lot to us. It is not playing political games to say that the people of Mirabel are concerned. It brings back memories of Mirabel in the 1960s, when 97,000 acres were expropriated when only 15 were needed.

Alto will be allowed to expropriate land now and do the environmental assessment later. Will that speed things up? Of course it will. However, what will end up happening is that after expropriation and assessment, the conclusion may be that the route should not pass through there because the impacts are too great. People will have already been expropriated, and Alto will end up with land that it does not need. This brings back memories, and that is what members on the other side do not seem to understand.

Another Liberal innovation is public hearings. Sections 9 and 10 of the Expropriation Act require the responsible minister to hold public hearings on a proposed expropriation in the event of opposition. However, Bill C-15 will exempt Alto from holding this public hearing and will also exempt it from having to obtain the consent of cabinet in order to decide to expropriate. Will this speed things up? Of course it will. Does it increase the risk of error and injustice? Yes.

Next, there are work prohibitions. That is worth noting. Once Alto has expropriated land, it will be able to request a prohibition on work. We are concerned about this, and some citizens are concerned as well. Suppose I live in the 10-kilometre-wide corridor—10 kilometres is wide—and I have work to do on my property, or I need to invest in my farm business or something else. With a work prohibition, I cannot. It prevents a lot of activities from being undertaken. That is the problem with this initiative. We are told that things will be imposed and sped up, but there are people who will suffer injustices and who will be unable to take steps to develop their property.

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Furthermore, apparently, all that can obviously be done by email, which it is also faster. We could use a bailiff, because when we need a serious thing done, we send in a bailiff. Once again, however, it is more complicated and more expensive, but it provides assurance that people were served their documents by hand. Here, however, people are going to receive notice of their eviction by email. That just shows how seriously we take the process.

We are very sorry to dampen the Liberals' enthusiasm for high-speed rail. We like the idea of high-speed rail too, but we cannot bring ourselves to applaud along with them and dismiss the very legitimate concerns of people on the ground, who were told the news.

We are told that consultations are in progress. What we are seeing are happy hours and immersive experiences. They tell us that they want to make it festive. It may appear that way, but the lack of sensitivity is glaring. Finally, our motion today is simply to say that things need to be done the right way to prevent human tragedies. That is how progress is achieved, and that is how we move forward as a society toward the common good.

• (1700)

Caroline Desrochers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is truly appalling to see a fear campaign being waged and to see this House being used to spread misinformation.

My colleague knows full well that the Expropriation Act of 1985 was overhauled to ensure that consultations are included. He also knows that the railway legislation that we introduced in the budget implementation bill goes even further by ensuring consultation, the impact assessment, and consultations with indigenous peoples, as well as providing more clarity on regulatory processes.

They are saying that we are out there holding happy hour consultations. That is such a disingenuous way to describe the very serious and very robust process taking place.

I am a bit perplexed, because my colleague seems to be saying that, yes, they support the project, but at the same time they are trying to scare people and saying that we are not doing things the right way.

Alexis Deschênes: Mr. Speaker, if anything, I wish that my colleague were right and that this were all made up, because I would be less concerned for the people over there. Some mayors are now saying that they are not being consulted. That is a fact.

What does Bill C-15 do? It exempts the project from a number of protections that were enshrined in law. These are legitimate concerns, and it worries me when my colleague dismisses them out of hand because her party is in power. This tells me that they lack sensitivity, perhaps even intellectual curiosity.

Business of Supply

Bernard Généreux (Côte-du-Sud—Rivière-du-Loup—Kataskomiq—Témiscouata, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we learned today from the member for Beauport—Limoilou that the cost of the Quebec City tramway has risen to \$13 billion, whereas it was estimated at about \$750 million several years ago. Now, it is going to cost \$13 billion and construction has not even begun.

Obviously, we are all in favour of public transit. Nevertheless, we are currently talking about 20 kilometres of tracks costing Quebec \$13 billion. What is the estimate for building 1,000 kilometres of tracks across Canada's farmland?

• (1705)

Alexis Deschênes: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from eastern Quebec and I often talk about trains. We are currently discussing high-speed rail, this major project, but there is also the problem of Via Rail's passenger train service, which I think both of us are concerned about, but that is a separate issue.

On the issue of cost, obviously that is a point that deserves to be raised and studied. If we go too fast, without taking the time to do things right, we run the risk of waking up to a disaster, as happens all too often.

At the end of the day, however, we believe that investing in mass transit is necessary.

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech and his excellent analysis of the situation, which clearly states that we basically want the project to succeed. However, we want it to be done properly. We want to protect the rights of our constituents.

We agree with the claims that the legislation was improved in the 1980s. What concerns us are the bills currently being studied to allow things to move faster.

I would like my colleague to tell me what he thinks the outcome will be. Does he understand why the government members tell us that they do not support the motion? Basically, the government members have repeated every part of the motion all day long. They should then theoretically agree on its content. When we vote on a motion, we have to read it and ask ourselves whether we agree with its content. I believe that the answer in this case is yes, whether they like it or not.

Alexis Deschênes: Mr. Speaker, it would be difficult for me to speculate on what is motivating my colleagues' position on our motion. I think the general idea is that this is a great project and we want everything to be great.

Nevertheless, we have to be very careful in life. It is like when someone wants to build something and is too hasty. I believe that we are the voice of reason in all of this, and perhaps this is not welcomed. We are saying that we want to get things done, but they have to be done properly.

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like several of our colleagues have already done, I would like to take this opportunity to mention that yesterday, one of my employees celebrated five years of service. I would like to thank India La Haye for her work and congratulate her on this recognition.

Now let me return to the motion and the subject at hand. Ultimately, what we are discussing here is the Alto high-speed rail project. I have already said several times here, in response to certain colleagues from the Bloc Québécois during their speeches, that I too believe that what happened in 1969 is unacceptable and inexcusable. I have said it before and I will say it again, but it is no longer 1969. It is 2026. In the meantime, a lot has changed, and a similar situation would not and will not happen in the case of the Alto project or any other public infrastructure project.

A comparison is being made here, as our colleagues from the Bloc Québécois have pointed out several times. It reminds me a lot of what was also said in 2016-17 about the Réseau express métropolitain, or REM, project in the Montreal area. The government at the time also made certain legislative changes to ensure that the project would be carried out quickly, on budget and on schedule. There were also all kinds of fear campaigns. People said that it would be the end of the world, that it would never happen, that it was impossible, that no one could do it. They said that the government had given the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec the power to seize people's properties. All of that was said. Many concerns were raised by several political parties at the time, parties that were in fact related to our colleagues in the Bloc Québécois.

Now, several years later, the REM project is a reality, despite the problems associated with the pandemic, among other things. There have been some strange incidents, such as the discovery of explosives in the Mont-Royal tunnel, but none of the disastrous and catastrophic scenarios that were raised at the time came to pass. There has been no confiscation of private property either. I understand the concerns of people in the Mirabel region, but to suggest that the 1969 scenario will repeat itself nowadays is a stretch, because we are not in the same situation at all.

What exactly is the Alto project? This high-speed rail line connecting Quebec City, Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto has been a topic of discussion for about 30 years. For all sorts of reasons, some good and some not so good, it never happened. It never materialized. Successive governments have all ended up backing down and abandoning the project for all sorts of reasons. Now, however, our government is firmly committed to moving forward and making this project a reality. We are going to take a structured, organized approach, having learned lessons from the past while carrying out other government and infrastructure projects.

• (1710)

Of course the rift of 1969 still hangs over our heads. It is something that we still think about to prevent such situations from happening now.

That is why we created a project office, Alto, to do this preliminary work. We also created a private consortium, Cadence, with companies that have extensive experience with this type of project to ensure that we take the time we need, but no more, to complete such a megaproject. We want to ensure that we complete this project within a reasonable time frame so that we can control costs.

Alto is a government agency that represents the government. It has begun this groundwork. I would even say that we are in the pre-consultation phase. We have established a corridor that is rather wide, very wide even. Of course, the route is far from final. I think that we are doing things right. By taking four years to carry out this project, we are making sure that things are being done quickly, but not too quickly for a project of this magnitude.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Order. It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forth with every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion.

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

• (1715)

Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Monday, February 9, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to call it 5:30 p.m., so we could begin private members' hour.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

NATIONAL STRATEGY ON HOUSING FOR YOUNG CANADIANS ACT

The House resumed from October 29, 2025, consideration of the motion that Bill C-227, An Act to establish a national strategy on housing for young Canadians, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as far as I am concerned, we are resuming debate and I am resuming my speech, because I was barely able to begin it the last time. The two minutes I had was barely enough time to say good evening.

I will pick up where I left off. Housing is an issue that is—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, the member speaking is certainly a member who asks questions. I invite him to listen first and then ask questions.

Housing is an issue that is extremely important to me because there is a major housing crisis in my region, like everywhere else. It is hitting us so hard that the city of Saint-Hyacinthe, which is home

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to two-thirds of my riding's population, has long had the dubious distinction of having the lowest vacancy rate in Quebec. I think it is somewhere around 0.4%. Today, it has gone up, and that is a good thing. For a long time, however, it remained at an extremely dangerous rate of 0.4%. It is the same as saying there were no more vacancies at all. It is as simple as that.

On top of this, there has been a series of fires in downtown Saint-Hyacinthe. The people they affected were primarily vulnerable individuals, many of whom did not have insurance. It was even more difficult to relocate them afterward and help them out of the hardship the fires had caused.

Of course, the Saint-Hyacinthe region is not in an easy position either. We will never have extremely advantageous vacancy rates for the simple reason that we have the best farmland in Quebec. It is not a region that can easily be rezoned either, but there are still ways to implement smart, responsible projects.

We obviously fully agree with the intention behind the bill, namely, to promote access to affordable and secure housing for young Canadians and Quebecers aged 17 to 34. There is no issue with the intention itself, but we will vote against the bill because, unfortunately, it is a useless empty shell that claims to create a national strategy while containing nothing whatsoever to that effect. At best, it will allow the government to boast that it has a strategy and claim to have the expertise to show the provinces how to proceed, because centralization and Canada-wide standards are second nature to Ottawa.

The government already has a multitude of programs and, in any case, its only role is limited to transferring money to the provinces and, potentially, transferring ownership of federal lands that are not being used. That would be relevant if that were the case, but this bill would amount to giving the government carte blanche right now. Although it provides for consultations with the provinces and other stakeholders, we have plenty of examples where consultations are limited to sending emails without any actual dialogue. Basically, these consultations are essentially briefings. That is what they end up being. People are told what is going to happen, and that is about it.

Quebec and the municipalities have a much better understanding of the local realities of their residents. That is the virtue of decentralization. Even though the federal government claims to want to collaborate, the usual "Ottawa knows best" attitude leaves little doubt as to how it will respond to such a strategy, and that is not very reassuring. If the past is any indication of the future, it is not at all reassuring.

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The federal government already has a \$55-billion, 10-year program and is struggling to make it work because of all the red tape. Now it wants to add to that. In any case, Ottawa does not build anything. The municipalities do all the work. That is why we are calling for all housing funding to be unconditionally transferred to Quebec. That would be a much better solution than what is being proposed here. That is the simplest and most economical way to create favourable conditions for housing construction. By adding conditions, the federal government adds public servants, in both Ottawa and Quebec City, to create reports and track the money that is spent. This approach is both costly and inefficient.

What is more, Ottawa's definition of "affordable" is inadequate. We want the government to adapt, adjust and clarify the definition of "affordable" in relation to housing so that the funding is actually used to build affordable housing.

• (1720)

The bill gives any designated minister the mandate to conduct consultations to develop the national strategy on housing, although, as I said, the word "consultation" is debatable. However, the government could conduct these consultations without a bill. Do we need a bill to say that a project or consultation should be launched? I see this as window dressing, a potentially useless empty shell.

The strategy, which is not created by the bill—for the reason I just mentioned—would aim to ensure greater access to affordable and secure housing for young people, that is, people aged 17 to 34. As I said, there is no problem with that. To develop the strategy, the minister will conduct consultations with representatives of provincial, territorial and municipal governments and other groups.

Not everything about this is crazy. There are things that make sense, such as cracking down on real estate flipping, but it is clear that the best solution would be to provide unconditional funding for any Quebec initiative to develop student housing as a way to take pressure off the residential and rental market, particularly in the regions and at the initiative of colleges and universities. I have a few in my riding. I have the CEGEP, the Institut de technologie agricole du Québec, the faculty of veterinary medicine, and the vocational school. All of them could benefit.

Fundamentally, the housing crisis needs to be taken seriously. It should be our chief concern, because housing must be seen as a right. Some community organizations are doing outstanding work in many places to keep tenants informed of their rights, because not all landlords are able to keep them adequately informed all the time. There are organizations doing outstanding work in that area.

Of course, we need to be able to build. Building takes money. Addressing the housing crisis involves more than simply drafting a bill that does not launch a strategy, but rather a discussion. Ottawa's track record when it comes to discussions is a little unsettling. Maybe the funding could consist of a permanent reinvestment. For example, 1% of the government's annual budget could be earmarked for housing construction. It could be that. It could be a fixed percentage that would stay the same year after year, regardless of inflation, and that would also reflect increases in costs and expenses. The percentage would always stay the same.

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise today for the second time in 2026 on behalf of the people of Les Pays-d'en-Haut.

We are studying Bill C-227, an act to establish a national strategy on housing for young Canadians. The bill speaks to me personally. I have two children, aged 20 and 23, who are in university. They have to pay exorbitant amounts of money for housing in Montreal. In the coming years, they will have to find another place to live or buy their first home.

Bill C-227 would require the minister to consult with other levels of government as well as stakeholders to develop a national strategy on housing for young people and ensure greater access to affordable and secure housing. We all know that coordination between levels of government is crucial to get results. During my time as mayor of a small municipality, I worked with the provincial and federal governments on a project to build 30 housing units for seniors, and I can confidently say that the complexity of the programs and the time it takes for files to be processed discourage those who want to create housing, whether they are municipalities or non-profit organizations. In our case, five years passed between the initial announcement and the completion of the project. We need to do better.

Bill C-227 aims to develop a coordinated national strategy to examine these unique barriers and identify targeted solutions in collaboration with provinces, territories and municipalities. That is what is needed now.

Speaking more specifically about young people, young Canadians today are faced with a housing market that is unlike anything we have seen before. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find a home, even a rental. The result is a generation that is struggling to put down roots. This challenge is being felt across Quebec and Canada. Without affordable housing options, young Canadians are faced with difficult decisions, such as turning down a job that is too far away, delaying starting a family or feeling disadvantaged compared to previous generations. This undermines Canada's long-term productivity and economic growth.

To address these issues, two things need to be done: more money must be put in the pockets of young Canadians, and housing must be built. In the past nine months, our government has done exactly that, and I would like to outline the measures we have put in place to promote affordability for all Canadians and to enable young people to pay their mortgage or rent. As soon as we were elected, we eliminated the carbon tax for individuals. We have made generational progress for Quebecers, notably by granting a tax reduction for the middle class, which allows Quebecers to keep more money in their pockets. We are talking about savings of approximately \$800 per family.

To reduce the upfront cost of buying a new home for young people and stimulate new home construction across the country, we eliminated the GST for first-time homebuyers. That represents savings of up to \$50,000. That is very encouraging. We also know that the FHSA, the tax-free first home savings account, is an extraordinary program. My children contribute to it, as do many young Canadians. It represents tax-sheltered savings of nearly \$40,000 toward our young people's first home.

Canadians work hard to afford housing, but high mortgage payments are a barrier to first-time home ownership, especially for young people. That is why we have relaxed certain mortgage criteria to allow more young people to qualify for a loan. More recently, we announced the new Canada groceries and essentials benefit to protect Canadians' purchasing power. We will put more money directly into the pockets of millions of families. This allowance will benefit more than 12 million Canadians. Child care and dental care programs and school breakfasts will also help ease the financial burden on families.

In addition to proposing all these measures to make life more affordable for Canadians, we have also been working on building homes.

• (1725)

We have created Build Canada Homes, a new federal agency that will finance and build affordable housing on a large scale. It will also act as a catalyst for a more productive residential construction industry. This is a bold approach that will have positive spin-offs for young people across Canada.

One of our government's key commitments is to double the pace of housing construction in Canada to 500,000 units in 10 years. By combining access to federal land, development expertise and financing under one roof, Build Canada Homes will enable us to build new housing more quickly and easily. As of today, 4,000 homes will be built on federal land, with a significant portion of that being affordable housing.

In Quebec, things are also moving forward. We have a shared commitment to take action to increase the province's housing supply. The governments of Canada and Quebec are stepping up their collaboration to accelerate housing construction and support community development. Through a joint collaboration table, the two governments will work together to fund housing projects aligned with their shared priorities, to simplify and accelerate approval processes and to ensure better coordination between municipal and community partners.

That is exactly the spirit behind Bill C-227. As the former mayor of a small municipality and an engineer by trade, I am well aware that all of these new housing units will have to be serviced by roads, water systems and sewers. Recognizing that accelerating housing construction requires major infrastructure investments, the Government of Quebec and the federal government have also announced the signing of a Canada housing infrastructure fund agreement.

We will invest close to \$1 billion, which Quebec can use in accordance with its policies and local needs to upgrade and develop

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critical infrastructure, including the drinking water, waste water and storm water infrastructure essential to new housing developments.

These measures and investments and Bill C-227 will provide young people with more housing opportunities. In my riding of Les Pays-d'en-Haut, the average price of a single-family home is \$540,000. The average price of a condo is \$385,000. The average rent for a one-bedroom apartment ranges from \$1,200 to \$1,500 a month.

Most young people in my riding work in recreation and tourism, whether in restaurants, hotels, shops or ski resorts. They tell me that it is extremely difficult to afford housing on the wages they earn. Many young people are leaving Les Pays-d'en-Haut for other regions where housing is less expensive. That is unacceptable.

Bill C-227 allows us to take another step in the right direction. I can say that we are here for young people. I hope that my colleagues across the aisle will prioritize the demands of our young people and vote in favour of this bill. On behalf of my children and all young people across the country, I thank the member for Sackville—Bedford—Preston for his work on this issue.

• (1730)

[English]

Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by saying it is an honour to rise on behalf of my constituents, the good people of Brandon—Souris and of Westman. It is an important topic we are discussing here today. I often hear from constituents, when I am back at home and when I am here, about the challenging housing climate we are living in. No part of Manitoba is escaping that.

I represent Brandon, the province's second-largest city. I also represent some of the smallest communities in our province. There seems to be a lack of housing and affordable housing options just about everywhere one goes, regardless of the size of the community. We know that action does need to be taken on this front, so it is good to hear that my colleague, one member of the class of 2025 whom I have had the pleasure of meeting, has brought the bill forward. I am glad to hear that somebody on that side of the aisle is thinking about young people and affordable housing.

Members on the front bench on the Liberal side seem to think everything is doing great, all their initiatives have been a roaring success over the last 10 years, there should be no housing shortages and the programs run perfectly. We know this is not the reality on the ground that our communities and young people across the country are facing when they are trying to get out of their parents' house and into the housing market themselves.

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While we appreciate the member from Nova Scotia's bringing this forward, unfortunately it is only another framework, which is part of the problem in terms of why there is a housing shortage in this country. We are very skeptical on this side of the House that it would have any impact on improving the situation. In fact it could quite likely make it worse.

Young Canadians do not need another strategy from the Liberals. They have had a few. They already have the national housing strategy. They already have the housing accelerator fund. They have other programs under the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The Liberals have all kinds of different initiatives, such as Build Canada Homes, that they have announced and announced.

Almost no homes have been built relative to the amount of money that has been allocated to all the different initiatives, strategies and frameworks. Why is that? It is because the Liberals have put so many barriers in place to actually accessing the money; it is completely burdensome for builders to access it. I hear from them often. Brandon got money under the housing accelerator fund, so I ask why more affordable units are not being built in the city.

The developers, quite honestly, have been very candid with me that there is so much red tape and bureaucratic nonsense at the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and hoops to jump through and boxes to tick, that many of them have just completely walked away from dealing with the government and trying to build the units. It is just so difficult to get anything built through it. They do not need to build affordable housing units; they are running successful businesses on their own.

The government needs developers to be doing it, so it should be making it as easy and as accessible as possible for businesses to be incentivized to build affordable housing units and to build homes that people can afford to buy. I do also get concerned that we are often talking just about affordable rental units and not about incentivizing the private sector to build homes and encourage home ownership. Too often the Liberals get sidetracked talking just about the rental market, with not enough time spent focusing on home ownership.

We had hoped that Build Canada Homes might take a different approach. It has been a pretty slow start, but nonetheless we still have hope that the Liberals will perhaps find a way to remove the bureaucracy that they have massively expanded and put in the way, so builders can actually get to work and build homes that Canadians can afford.

• (1735)

Also too often, I must say, programs are focused on the major urban centres in our province. The motion today is talking about young people and affordable housing. I represent a lot of very small communities, as do many others in this chamber. Often, I hear about young people having to leave small rural areas because there is nothing available to buy.

Some of those towns may have just one builder, or they may not even have a builder and would have to bring one in from another community. Those builders are coming in at the request of, perhaps, a retiring farmer who has a little bit of money, and the builder is eager to build a large home for their retirement.

However, there are very few houses of an affordable size being built in our rural communities, which means young people leave. They have good jobs, but they cannot find anywhere to live. They do not want to stay with their parents anymore. They want to get out, live independently and move into that phase of their life, but there is nowhere to live, so they take off for Brandon, Winnipeg, Regina or somewhere else, and we lose them. We lose their job, their spouse's job, and their kids out of the schools. Our rural communities are fading away.

We have to make sure that these programs that the Liberals continue to deliver are accessible to small towns and small municipalities. To some people in this chamber, the city of Brandon, with 56,000 people, is small. I am talking about a town of 1,000 people. Those municipalities do not have a whole lot of extra staff to fill out immensely complicated applications for government grants and programs. They are running as lean as they can possibly run already.

I hear that from builders too. Builders in small towns do not have massive staffs with the time and resources to fill out application programs. Quite often, it is the builders themselves who are doing the books, either very early in the morning or very late at night, and then they are working on a job all day. They do not have time to sit down and spend hours and hours building an application for a large government program.

The Liberals need to stop talking about frameworks and strategies. All that means is red tape, red tape and more red tape. They need to get all of the red tape they have added over the last 10 years out of the way so that people can actually get out there and build homes.

We would strongly encourage our colleague who brought this forward to maybe consider adding some red tape reduction measures to this bill. It would still move through the legislative process, I am sure, with hopefully some measures that would not add to the regulatory burden for builders but actually remove some of that burden. Those measures could get added on to the bill as we move along. At that point, then, it might actually give builders in this country some optimism.

It is also important to recognize that we often hear the Liberals say they do not think we have any solutions. They say all we do is complain all the time. Perhaps it is just that they do not like our solutions, but we have a number of them. I would just like to outline a few of them here today.

One is reducing housing costs by cutting the GST on all new homes under a \$1.3-million build cost, saving up to \$65,000 on the cost of a new home and \$3,000 a year in mortgage payments.

Another is identifying 15% of federal buildings and lands to sell for housing in livable new neighbourhoods within 100 days. That would allow us to build thousands of new homes much faster than the glacial pace that we are seeing.

We would cut building taxes. We need to incentivize municipalities to reduce development charges. We would then reimburse them up to a maximum of \$50,000 and scrap the underused housing tax, which costs more to administer than is collected.

We need to remove gatekeepers to fast-track homebuilding through shovel-ready zones that the federal government would create, so that municipalities could then enable builders to get in right away and get the work done. We need to tie federal infrastructure dollars to results. That goes for municipalities as well.

The carrot-and-stick approach is not new. We need to start incentivizing municipalities to bring down development fees, so that builders can build without adding development fees on to the cost of rent. I mean, we could have a building with 15% affordable housing units. The rest of the units in that building could also be reasonably priced, but when municipalities are doubling or tripling their development fees, all that just gets passed on to the consumer, the young people who are trying to rent in this country until they can save up for a mortgage and get into their first home.

Those are the ways that the federal Liberals could use the billions of dollars that are tied up in bureaucratic red tape and actually deliver more affordable homes and units for young Canadians.

• (1740)

[Translation]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ): Madam Speaker, as I talk about housing, I would like to also broach the subject of young people, justice and hope.

First, let us talk about our young people. They are buckling under the weight of a triple crisis: unaffordable housing, crushing debt and unemployment, which is two times higher than other generations. In fact, 59% of people under 35 report having serious housing problems. That figure is 38% for the rest of the population. Rents are skyrocketing. The cost of a two-bedroom apartment in Quebec has increased by nearly 8%, while average salaries have only increased by 4.5%. The average income of students in Quebec is approximately \$16,500 per year, and they spend an average of \$11,220 on housing. That does not leave much at the end of the month.

People are so desperate that 10% of student tenants report sharing a one-bedroom apartment with two other people. Worse still, unemployment among young people aged 15 to 24 soared to nearly 14% in December 2025. It reached a peak of 14.7% in September 2025. That was the highest rate in 15 years.

Youth homelessness has also been on the rise in recent years. An estimated 20% of homeless people in Canada are between the ages of 13 and 24. There are 6,000 young people experiencing homelessness every night, and 35,000 young people experiencing homelessness over the course of a year. This is a generation that is facing challenges, often unable to find housing, deeply in debt, or stuck in precarious employment.

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Now let us talk about intergenerational justice. Mortgage debt remains overwhelming. The average rate has risen from 2.5% in 2020 to over 7% in 2023. When they were 25, baby boomers could easily buy a home. With just one or two modest incomes, they could make a down payment, and the payments generally represented one-third of their income. Today, young people need to save for 14 to 20 years to make a 20% down payment. Even with lower interest rates, the absolute price of housing is 10 to 15 times higher when adjusted for inflation. However, incomes have not increased 10 to 15 times. Rather, they have increased two to three times since the 1980s. The result is that, without significant parental assistance, buying a home at age 25 is often impossible for the majority of young people.

Even for me, as someone who is not a baby boomer, it was easy to do that as soon as I started working. When my group of friends and I in the Gaspé were in our 20s, no matter what work we did, it was obvious that we would become homeowners. We were going to work and buy a house. The size could vary, but access to a property was not really an issue in the early 2000s. Now, it absolutely is. These young people feel a sense of injustice that I understand and that we must address.

Let us talk about hope. There is hope; there are solutions out there. There are a multitude of programs that already exist, and the government could invest more in them. We believe that an additional \$7 billion should be invested over five years in the rapid housing initiative, and an additional \$1.7 billion over five years to address homelessness, which is half of what the Parliamentary Budget Officer said would be needed to reduce this tragedy by 50%. It would take an additional \$1.5 billion over five years for municipal infrastructure. So there are several things we can do. There is hope, provided the government takes action.

We also believe that the federal government should transfer all of the funding for housing to Quebec with no strings attached. Quebec has already set up an affordable housing program, and we think that the federal government should contribute to it directly.

Until these things happen, the Bloc Québécois will work to streamline federal programs and try to ensure that they align with those of Quebec so that the money goes where it should, to housing for Quebecers. In order to give hope to our young people and respond to their legitimate aspirations, we need to resolve the alignment issues between Quebec and Ottawa.

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● (1745)

Along with the Government of Quebec, the federal government made an announcement in Quebec City on January 21. It was announced that the portion of the Canada housing infrastructure fund earmarked for Quebec was finally being transferred. It was a \$1-billion announcement, but the important thing to remember is that this fund was announced in April 2024 by the Trudeau government. Unfortunately, it took until January 2026 before an agreement was reached and the funds could be released.

It is an interesting program because it enables municipalities that want to develop a residential area to seek grants to invest in sewers, water systems and roads. However, as long as Quebec City and Ottawa fail to reach an agreement and as long as Ottawa wants to impose conditions in areas that are not under its jurisdiction, it will delay things. It is easy enough to understand, and it could have a fairly direct impact. If, two years ago, municipalities had already been able to obtain funds to invest in their infrastructure, housing projects could already have been completed. Homes would already be under construction and part of the problem would be solved. However, what happened instead was a series of lengthy negotiations between the federal government, which wanted to impose its conditions, and Quebec, which wanted to defend its jurisdiction.

Housing takes a lot of effort and coordination by all the partners. I see it in my riding. Housing projects get started by organizations and municipal housing offices. Every time, these people have to do cartwheels to move their project forward while meeting the deadlines set by Quebec and the federal government. Last fall, there were times when some projects were in serious jeopardy because Quebec grew tired of waiting for a confirmation, but a federal election was in progress.

We also see that some programs are not properly aligned. That is something this government can work on. I also think that it needs to acknowledge that Quebec has jurisdiction and that its own role is to transfer funds. If that happens, each province will finally be able to set up programs the way they want. Programs will be better suited to provincial realities, and housing can get built. In any case, this is what we propose as a way to give hope, especially to our young people.

As for Bill C-227, unfortunately, it does not address the hopes of young people and the intergenerational justice we are seeking. We, in the Bloc Québécois, oppose this bill. My colleague spoke about it a few minutes ago. This bill seeks to develop a national housing strategy for young people through consultations. It raises issues of policy consistency and public efficiency.

It is a very short bill that tells us that a national strategy will be developed and that consultations will be held. It is important to be wary of legislative bloat. We know that the government does not need a law to consult young people and the provinces. All it takes is a telephone or a computer and an email. All of my colleagues from all parties here are in fairly constant consultation with groups that have housing projects in their ridings. I am convinced of that. As for the notion of consultation in this bill, it is rather astounding.

Furthermore, developing a strategy when one has already been launched is, unfortunately, an initiative that we consider unnecessary. We believe that the Government of Canada has already con-

sulted sufficiently. What it must do is respect Quebec's jurisdiction and transfer funds to Quebec. That is how to give the provinces the means to act to restore hope to our young people and to re-establish the intergenerational justice that we have unfortunately lost in recent years.

● (1750)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Before resuming debate, I would remind members to please be very careful with the way they move papers on their desks. Those sounds are amplified for the interpreters.

Chi Nguyen (Spadina—Harbourfront, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of Bill C-227, an act to establish a national strategy on housing for young Canadians, introduced by the member for Sackville—Bedford—Preston.

I represent Spadina—Harbourfront, one of the most densely populated ridings in the country and one of the youngest. In fact, I want to thank my youth council, which is meeting for the first time this evening back in the riding.

According to the 2021 census, 94% of homes in my riding are in buildings with five or more storeys. Our median age is just 32 years old, nearly a decade younger than the national average. Over the past few decades, Spadina—Harbourfront has been transformed with rapid growth, bringing thousands of young people to live, work, play and build their futures in the heart of our city. We have reshaped the Toronto skyline, bringing more people closer to jobs, transit and community. We have created opportunities for young people to live near where they work, study and build their lives.

This growth has not come without pressures, but it offers important lessons for the national housing conversation we have been having over the past several years. One of these lessons is the vital role that non-market housing, particularly co-operative housing, plays in keeping communities livable and inclusive, especially for young and low-income households. Co-operatives like Harbour Channel Housing Co-operative and Arcadia Housing Co-op, in my riding of Spadina—Harbourfront, are thriving waterfront communities, where residents share governance, build strong neighbour-to-neighbour support systems and access stable, below-market housing in one of the most expensive areas of our country.

These homes have allowed families, seniors, newcomers and young people to remain in the downtown core for decades. They stand as powerful examples of the type of housing enabled by legislation such as this. The fact that these communities are still thriving today is not accidental. It is the result of deliberate public investment and long-term thinking.

The challenge we now face is not a lack of what works, but a failure to scale it for a new generation of Canadians. A national housing strategy for young Canadians that meaningfully considers co-operative housing alongside student housing, purpose-built rentals and pathways for first-time buyers is not just sensible; it is long overdue. As serious as our government is about building homes, we must also be serious about building the right mix of homes, so young people can actually afford to live in the communities they study in, work in and help to build.

Why is this overdue? It is because our young people today face a housing affordability crisis unlike any generation since the post-war period. For far too many, home ownership is out of reach. Even securing a stable, affordable rental has become a challenge. When young people cannot afford housing or cannot move for housing, the consequences extend far beyond shelter.

As I knock on doors in my riding, I hear the same message again and again. Young people and young families want to stay in the communities they love. They want to build their careers here, raise their children here and remain close to the networks and supports that make urban life possible.

However, the homes we build must reflect the lives people are trying to live. We cannot keep building cities as if they are only for singles and short-term renters. If we want young Canadians to put down roots, our housing supply must include family-friendly homes that make long-term life in our downtowns possible. The ripple effects are obvious: lower productivity and economic growth, and decreased well-being, both over the short and long term of one's life.

The economic case is just as compelling. A 2024 report from the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis found addressing housing unaffordability could generate \$24.4 billion in additional disposable income, increase our GDP by \$22 billion and create 189,000 jobs, while delivering \$5 billion in new tax revenue. These are real, tangible benefits for young Canadians and our entire economy.

When housing instability begins to shape who can move, who can work and who can plan for their future, it stops being only an economic problem and becomes a social one with real consequences for safety, autonomy and equality.

Let us be clear. Housing insecurity is not gender-neutral. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has reported that women are more likely to experience acute housing need, and those rates are higher for racialized women. For young women in particular, the shortage of accessible options, whether it is emergency shelters, transitional housing, co-operative housing or affordable units, can carry serious safety implications.

Without safe and affordable alternatives, some young women cannot leave unsafe and unhealthy living situations. Some remain trapped in abusive relationships simply because they have nowhere

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else to go. This is why housing is about far more than affordability alone. It is about safety, it is about dignity, and it is about security.

● (1755)

A national housing strategy for young Canadians must also reflect this reality. Housing lives at the intersection of personal autonomy and personal security, and this must find its way into our legislation. This is precisely why Bill C-227 is so important. Establishing a national housing strategy for young Canadians would ensure that federal housing policy responds not only to market pressures but to the social realities that shape young people's lives.

The economic and social benefit of government action to address affordability is clear, and our government understands that. With the launch of Build Canada Homes, the federal government is taking decisive steps to accelerate the construction of affordable housing at scale through a single, streamlined agency. By financing and prioritizing non-profit housing, including transitional, supportive, co-operative and affordable housing, the federal government would be ending a decades-long retreat from building homes that Canadians can truly afford. This would create real opportunities for young Canadians, not only to find housing that meets their needs in the short term but to build the conditions for home ownership in the future.

By easing the costs faced by non-market builders, Build Canada Homes would increase supply of deeply affordable housing, help cool an overheated market where these housing options have not been sufficiently built and ensure that housing policy once again works in the public interest. By establishing a national housing strategy for young Canadians, as Bill C-227 seeks to do, the purpose and impact of Build Canada Homes becomes sharper and stronger, ensuring that federal investments deliver real, generational impact for Canada's young people.

Housing is foundational. When it is unstable, everything else becomes unstable too, especially for young people who are trying to establish themselves. The government is building Canada strong by recognizing housing as essential infrastructure. Bill C-227 builds on that momentum, recognizing that young Canadians face unique barriers in today's housing market and that meeting those challenges requires coordination, data and long-term planning.

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The evidence is clear. Addressing housing affordability strengthens our economy, boosts productivity and creates opportunities. Housing insecurity and instability carry real social costs, especially for women and those seeking safety, dignity and independence. Through Build Canada Homes, our government is acting to scale what we know works. Bill C-227 would enhance that effort by ensuring young Canadians are not an afterthought but a focus of our plan.

For these reasons, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation and vote in favour of Bill C-227.

• (1800)

Jonathan Rowe (Terra Nova—The Peninsulas, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is a rumour spreading. It has been around a while, but it lingers. People thought that by now this rumour would be dead, but unfortunately, it still lives on. In almost every corner of Canada, we hear the three big words: Canada feels broken. Why? Why does Canada feel broken? Once we start asking that question, we will get many answers, but at the core of all those things, I see one issue that affects almost every neighbourhood across this country: a housing crisis.

Housing conditions have changed dramatically in recent years. Cost has risen faster than wages. Demand has increased. Supply has not kept pace, and young Canadians are feeling the pressure more than any generation before them. Housing is not just about shelter. It is about economic stability. It is about mental health. It is about whether young people can make a wooden box into a home. Young Canadians are not asking for guarantees or handouts; they are asking for fairness. They want to work. They want to contribute. They want the same opportunities as the generations before them. They want to own a home.

In my province, we face the highest unemployment rate in the country. Add that to rising rents, rising home prices and limited supply, and young people are being forced into impossible choices. Some are staying with their parents. Some are even staying with their grandparents. These are grown men and women, oftentimes older than me, working full-time, yet still having to face these unfavourable choices.

I went to university. I got a degree in civil engineering. Even with a degree that offered great employment like that, in order to afford a home, I still had to work two jobs. I would work week on, week off at a gold mine. On my weeks off, I would work with a consulting company in the oil and gas sector. These are the consequences of the inflationary Liberal decade. Us young people have to work twice as hard to get the same things our parents had.

We are seeing even greater consequences of the lost Liberal decade. Youth shelters are full. Housing wait-lists are growing. Homelessness, once unthinkable at this scale, is now a reality in communities across my province and this country. Over the summer, I was able to have a tour of the Salvation Army homeless shelter in St. John's. I spoke with a few young men in the cafeteria. I heard their stories. They started out not much different than we did.

Unfortunately, somewhere along the way, they lost hope, and when hope was lost, they searched for something to fill that void. Like many young people, especially young men, they turned to

drugs. Why did they lose this hope? As the inquisitive young man that I am, I asked workers at the facility that exact question. A young lady working there came up to me and said, "All these men, they just hit their breaking point. We see these kinds of surges when the economy gets bad. They lose their jobs, which causes stress. They often lose their wives and their families too, and they end up here." How heartbreaking.

Her statement stuck with me because what we do here in Ottawa does not just affect our economy. It does not just affect unemployment, and it does not just affect housing stats. It affects real people, real Canadians, people who are hurting and looking for hope. Now these men are homeless. They have no jobs, and it is like a dog chasing its tail. Last night, as I was writing this speech, I came up with a revolutionary idea. What if we started building more homes to create more jobs for these young men and to give families homes to live in? I think that is an idea we can all get behind. The question is, how?

Economics 101 is a lesson on supply and demand. As supply increases, the demand decreases. This means that the more homes we have in Canada, the lower the demand will be, and prices will begin stabilizing to make houses more affordable for all Canadians. The solution seems simple: build more homes. Unfortunately, nobody in this country seems to be doing that. Why? Canada has an abundance of land, we have record high unemployment, and we have young families ready to move in. Once we start talking to developers, though, they will quickly tell us it is often the government's fault.

• (1805)

Developers spend years and thousands of dollars trying to acquire the land, the permits, the developmental fees and the approvals, oftentimes having to work with three levels of government. Once again, the developers want our government and bureaucrats to simply get out of the way, but the Liberal government wants to do the opposite. The Liberals now want to introduce a new bill so they would be directly involved in maintaining the illusion that they are trying to put out the fire they started.

This is not the first time that the Liberals have done this. In 2017, they launched a national housing strategy that was administered by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. If they already have the solution, why do they need to repackage the same old plan? They spent over \$115 billion to build 170,000 homes. That works out to \$676,000 per home. The money was wasted on bureaucracy.

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Can members imagine how many homes we could have built if the Liberals had worked with the Conservatives to remove the GST on new home builds? Taking off GST would have instantly saved 5%, which would have encouraged thousands of Canadians to build new homes right across this country. By partnering with Canadians, we could have stretched our dollar and built 95% more homes with that same dollar.

Instead of letting Canadians keep their own money, the Liberals want to keep taxing things such as housing, which they call a human right. Then they give that money to corporations and landlords to build homes, not for young people to own, but to rent. “Own nothing and be happy” is the slogan of the Liberals' plan for their new world order.

Young people do not want to rent their whole lives; they want to own a home, a place where they can paint their kids' bedrooms and build a fence for their dog. They want to own a home that builds equity toward retirement and gives them pride and hope for the future. This cannot be done by building rentals; it is achieved by letting the free market do its thing.

For generations, we had a system. Young people would buy a small starter home from a middle-aged family. This allowed them to build equity and their careers. When it was time to have kids, they could sell off their starter home to another young family and afford to build their new family home, perhaps even their dream home. Once their new home was built and their family raised, couples often decided to sell their home to the next generation as they downsized for retirement. Using their equity from the sale, they could build a small home for retirement. Once their lives came to an end, the family would sell off the property so that a young couple could start their journey on this housing cycle. Hakuna matata, it was the circle of life.

When bureaucrats got in the way, they damaged the whole cycle. It became too difficult for people to build new homes and move up the housing ladder, so they just stayed. No homes were built, the demand grew and prices skyrocketed.

Give a man a fish and he is thankful; give five men a fish and the whole village wants one. That is the problem with handouts: Everybody gets in line with their hand out. Investors no longer want to build homes with their own money because they are in line, waiting to see if they will win the Liberal lottery. Even in housing, instead of making housing incentives that would encourage all Canadians to build homes, the Liberals want to pick winners and losers.

Last year, the Liberal government announced that it wanted to build programs similar to the one described in this bill to build modular homes. Is it a coincidence that, when our Prime Minister was the chair of Brookfield, it acquired a modular home company called Modulaire Group? I think Canadians are curious, and even anxious, to see how much Modulaire, Brookfield and our Prime Minister will financially benefit from the programs in this bill.

It is time to build homes and hope. It is time to be more focused on getting our hammers up instead of our elbows.

• (1810)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Sackville—Bedford—Preston for his right of reply.

Braedon Clark (Sackville—Bedford—Preston, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank all my colleagues who spoke today to my bill, Bill C-227. In particular, I want to thank my colleagues from Spadina—Harbourfront and Les Pays-d'en-Haut for their comments.

I want to touch on a few things here quickly. The first is that one of the privileges I have had in my life, in addition to being here, was serving as a member of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly for about four years. I served most of that time as the housing critic for my party. One of the things I learned during that experience is that housing, more than any other issue facing our country, demands collaboration, co-operation and teamwork between levels of government. It is simply not possible to say one level of government by itself is going to fix the housing crisis or make any difference for anybody, especially for young people.

Cities set bylaws. Cities do zoning. Provinces provide affordable housing and deal with homelessness. The federal government, in my view, has a critical role to play to set policy, set strategy and put forward a system so that, in all corners of this country, from Victoria to Halifax to Nunavut, and all the places in between, young people have hope for the future. We will not achieve that if we simply go into our silos and say, “The federal government only does this, while the province only does that and the city only does that.” That is one of the reasons we have ended up in the situation we are in today.

I also want to touch on one other comment that was made during the debate. My colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe called the bill useless. That is offensive to me, as I have thick skin and it does not bother me, but I will say that it is offensive to the young people across this country whom I spoke to over the last number of months while developing this bill.

I visited people at the University of Ottawa two weeks ago. Dozens of students in their late teens and early twenties whom I spoke to came up to me afterwards and said, “This is interesting. What can we do? How can we help?” They came to my office here on the Hill a couple of days later, filmed videos with me and put the message out there that the government is interested in solving the housing crisis for young Canadians. It is offensive to the young Canadians I met at Saint Mary's University in my hometown of Halifax and the students in Nova Scotia who are interested in making sure that they are part of the solution, rather than part of the problem. That is the essence of what I have put forward today.

My colleague from Brandon—Souris has a background very similar to mine in the provincial legislature in Manitoba. He talked about red tape reduction measures, which is an interesting step forward.

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What I would ask is that all of us work together to bring this bill forward to committee, sharpen it and make it as good as possible so that young Canadians have hope and a vision for the future, so that all those people whom I have spoken to over the last number of months feel that the federal government and all parties have their back on this issue, because I know, on this side of the House, we have their backs.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): 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.

• (1815)

Braedon Clark: Madam Speaker, I would request a recorded vote on this matter.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 11, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

EMPLOYMENT

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, over the last few months, I have been visiting university campuses and talking to young people across this country. I was at Carleton earlier this week. I spent some time there talking to students and debating against the member for Winnipeg North. We had a great time. I certainly did, anyway.

The question I have been asking students is whether they are better or worse off than their parents' generation. I have had lots of great conversations with young people about how they perceive their present reality, present challenges and the opportunities they are going to face in the future. Overwhelmingly, young people tell me that they feel they are worse off than their parents' generation. When we talk about why, the areas that they focus on are job opportunities and the inaccessibility of home ownership, as well as the price of rent. This week at Carleton as well, I heard a bit about food prices as a contributing factor to the challenges they are facing: the cost of food, the cost of homes and how difficult it is to find a job.

In this context, combined with the anecdotal evidence I am hearing from students, we see in the job numbers how youth unemployment continues to be very high. It continues to be at recession levels. In the fall, the youth employment rate dropped to its lowest level in over 25 years, and the reasons for this are clear. This issue has been studied at the human resources committee. Various experts have identified the government's failure to support economic growth and economic development, its failure to effectively man-

age an immigration system in line with Canada's economic interests and its failure to support good training policies, as well as challenges in terms of geography and regions where there is lower versus higher unemployment. Because of this, we have seen high youth unemployment.

Conservatives have been constructive on this. We have put forward the Conservative youth jobs plan. We put this forward in the fall as well, and the Liberals have yet to act on it. Our plan proposes specific initiatives to unleash the economy, to fix immigration, to fix training and to build homes where the jobs are. It is interesting that they have not implemented any of these constructive ideas we have put forward. It is also interesting that in the context of training, Liberals are moving in the wrong direction.

In fact, they announced in the budget that it is their intention to no longer fund student grants for students who are going to private institutions. This means that those who go to a private career college will no longer be eligible for these student grants, but if they take any program at any university, they will be. That is unfair. Penalizing career colleges that are providing practical vocational skills at a time when we have serious skills mismatches in our economy is clearly a big mistake.

Today, the Minister of Jobs and Families was before the human resources committee. I asked her if this was still the government's policy, if it still intended to defund students who were trying to get an education at a career college, and she could not answer. She spent about three minutes refusing to answer the question. I had to go to the deputy minister, who confirmed that it is, in fact, still the government's policy, sadly, even though it is not in the budget implementation act.

Why is the government attacking youth who want to study these vocational programs and why does it not fix the problem?

Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad my colleague has been visiting university campuses. Members of the House may not know I was vice-president at the University of Calgary before being elected. Youth employment and youth education are issues near and dear to my heart, and I am very happy to have the privilege of answering the member's question.

Students certainly face challenges they did not face in years past. One we hear about a lot on university campuses, of course, concerns the very challenging and tumultuous world we are in: climate change beset by anxieties that students did not have to deal with in previous generations. Of course unemployment is one of those challenges as well. Creating youth opportunities is one of the things the current government and any government should be very fixated on.

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As the member said, though, a lot of that is anecdotes, and I captured my share of anecdotes over the years as I was doing my job for the University of Calgary, but I do want to talk a bit about job numbers. In April 2025, when the government was elected, youth unemployment was 14.2%, which we can all agree is too high, with 63% participation. The most recent job numbers from December 2025 show unemployment had reduced to 13.3%, with 63.2% participation: lower unemployment and marginally more participation. It is good progress, but there is still work to be done.

Those numbers are comparing us against ourselves and seeing some progress within the government's mandate, but let us also talk about the United States. In the U.S., youth unemployment was 10.4% in December. That sounds a lot better. I do want to caution though about comparing apples to oranges. Canada and the U.S. measure youth unemployment differently, because Canada includes 15-year-olds, and Canada also has a higher student participation rate.

What I want to point out is that in April 2025, the U.S. youth unemployment rate was 9.6%. The United States is actually going the wrong way, while Canada is going the right way. I think that speaks to the steps the government has taken.

If we want to do more, there is a simple solution. It is called the budget implementation act, which includes a number of supports for youth: \$1.5 billion over three years. It has supports for 20,000 youth; student work placements, 55,000 opportunities; and the youth climate corps. That is to say nothing of the general priorities that will create jobs, provide housing and mental health benefits.

While I appreciate the concern, I think the figures tell a bit of a different story. This is work we are going to continue to push on. I am happy to say we will be building on progress we are already seeing.

- (1820)

Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is completely wrong about the figures. He says that the youth unemployment rate is moving in a good direction, but actually in the previous month it was 12.8%. In the latest numbers we have up until today, it was 13.3%. There is an increase in the youth unemployment rate, which we have seen in the month-over-month numbers, and it is quite a significant increase.

There are also the absolute levels. Overall, these are recession levels of youth unemployment. Young people are experiencing unemployment in larger numbers than we have generally seen in the past. Under the Prime Minister, we hit the worst youth employment rate in over 25 years.

Fundamentally, all the parliamentary secretary has to offer are inaccurate talking points, and he did not really answer the question I asked, which was why there were cuts for students attending career colleges. Why is he attacking students attending career colleges?

Corey Hogan: Madam Speaker, I would invite members and anybody watching to look at the statistics themselves. Of course, someone can pick month-over-month numbers, but if we look at the trend line, we see that it is very clear: Progress is being made, and that progress is absolutely contrary to what the United States is see-

ing, where the trend is going in the other direction. I think that speaks very well for us here.

In terms of the private colleges question, that is of course very complicated. It brings into it the market prices and the market forces that private colleges have, the incentives and their ability to charge whatever tuition they wish. Of course, there are challenges when we start using public dollars in that way.

Canada has a number of great public institutions, from SAIT in my own riding, which is one of the largest polytechnics in the country, to Seneca in Ontario, as well as many other options that people can continue to make use of government benefits to be able to attend.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to speak on the importance of Canada's bountiful natural resources, specifically the industries vital to my home province of British Columbia.

Our forestry industry gainfully employs many men and women across my riding. It has put food on the table and a roof over the heads of Canadians for decades and has the potential to do so for decades more, but Canada's lack of a softwood lumber agreement like we had under the Harper government has left our industry at the mercy of tariffs across four presidential administrations now, all under the Liberal government's watch.

The most recent lumber tariffs have caused deep concern in my riding, especially in Grand Forks, where the Interfor mill is now operating at reduced capacity, and that is more than some other mill communities in western Canada can say. Thousands of jobs have been lost just recently. Just last month, we saw the permanent closure of mills in Crofton and 100 Mile House, B.C. Similarly, mills in northern Alberta and northern Ontario have recently closed as well. These are not just jobs but entire communities being lost.

The Liberal government lacks the clear vision and real, immediate focus on where Canada's lumber market needs to be, which is restoring access to the U.S. market. Promises of loans, domestic building and memorandums of understanding in Asian markets are all welcome, but they will not help if our sawmills shut before these opportunities turn real.

The U.S. represents well over half the market for Canada. Restoring access there needs to be a priority. It should have been a priority for the Liberals when our last deal expired a decade ago. European lumber suppliers operating at lower tariff rates are already trying to seal the supply chain, which for decades has been the lifeblood of lumber communities across Canada and British Columbia.

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I also wish to discuss the importance of mining in my riding. Copper Mountain in the Similkameen valley is a vital operation for the region, producing the copper, gold and silver required to build the self-reliant and greener Canada we need. Without these precious metals, electronics and sustainable technologies simply could not function. It is clear that for us to have a prosperous and richer Canada, our critical minerals are essential, but for them to be used they must reach the market.

The Similkameen, however, has seen the basic infrastructure that Copper Mountain relies on, the roads and bridges, damaged and closed because of greater risks of flooding. The Liberal government promised it would help our region build back after the damaging floods in 2021, but instead of working with the region, it refused. It refused the community's mitigation plan and provided nothing in return. We have gone years without proper mitigation infrastructure being installed. If left undone, this will challenge our ability to mine our critical minerals.

Last month, I wrote to the Prime Minister and several of his ministers about this, calling for him to approve the plan presented by the town of Princeton. I have still received no reply. The government says it wants to be a government of action and not words, yet too often, words on paper are its approach to our natural resources.

When will the government show—

• (1825)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I completely agree that the forestry sector is a vitally important sector for Canada. It is part of our Canadian identity. It is, of course, part of our Canadian economy, and the tariffs and duties that are being levelled on us are completely unjustified.

It is true that we are seeing mill closures. We are seeing strain across the entire system, whether that be in primary saw milling or in pulp industries and associated industries, and we do need to resolve this with the United States. Everybody appreciates that. The United States is 85% of our export market for softwood lumber, for example. That is not going to be replaced, at least in any kind of short term, by any of these other opportunities, so we need to make sure that we are working to get a deal.

In the meantime, there are two other streams of activity that we need to do. First, we need to support the companies, workers and communities that are going through these challenges. The government has given \$2.5 billion to that effect. We also have a task force that is looking at other supports and other ways we can get through this moment. Second, we need to be thinking about how we make sure we are not in a situation like this going forward. That is where we start talking about a clear vision for a future forestry sector, and I believe we have one.

A forestry sector requires four components. It requires access to capital. The federal government can help with that. We can help make markets. It requires infrastructure. That is certainly something that allows us to get to markets and, in general, produce products. It also requires the skills and the talent, and it requires access to tim-

ber. The last of those, of course, is a provincial jurisdiction, but it is something we can work with people on.

We have the wood. We have high-quality timber, and we know that the Americans need the wood. Timber prices are currently low in the United States, which is why the higher costs that come from Europe have been competitive, but that will not always be the case. They need us as much as we need them down south, and we will get a deal. However, in the meantime, we need to work toward supporting our industry.

On mining, I will look into the mitigation plan that the member discussed. I am not familiar with it myself. I am not familiar with the deficiencies or the concerns, but I will certainly look into that. I appreciate the member's advocacy on behalf of her constituency. These are vital sectors that the government needs to support.

• (1830)

Helena Konanz: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the concern. I wonder why it has taken over 10 years. We still do not have an agreement with the United States, through many presidents, so we cannot blame everything on President Trump.

Energy workers want to see a pipeline. Forestry workers want to see some kind of deal with the Americans. My particular riding crawls along the United States, so it is important that we keep those. We actually have six border crossings, and that is one of the reasons we need to make the deal with the United States.

However, I do want to say I will send the member the letter that I sent to the Prime Minister in the last couple of weeks. These mitigation plans for Princeton were promised since—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Corey Hogan: Madam Speaker, I will action those when I receive them. I appreciate the member's advocacy.

I want to cap this all by saying we want to grow. We want to build. We want to have the strongest economy in the G7, but some of that requires the plans we have put into motion actually being allowed to be put into motion. That includes passing the budget implementation act.

It is vitally important for this country that we are able to proceed on those economic initiatives that would strengthen our economy, build jobs and provide supports to Canadians.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The motion to adjourn the House is now 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 6:32 p.m.)

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