



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 152 No. 082
Monday, February 9, 2026

Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 9, 2026

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION ACT

The House resumed from November 27, 2025 consideration of the motion that Bill C-230, An Act to amend the Financial Administration Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts (debt forgiveness registry), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Doug Eyolfson (Winnipeg West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to participate in the debate on C-230, an act to amend the Financial Administration Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

The Financial Administration Act is Canada's foundational statute governing public financial management. It establishes the legal framework and principles that guide financial management across all federal departments and agencies. The act provides the statutory authority for managing public funds and federal assets. It establishes the responsibility of key officials, including the Treasury Board, departmental deputy heads and the comptroller general, in ensuring that government finances are managed effectively and appropriately.

The act covers various aspects of financial administration, including the authorization and control of government spending, the management of Crown corporations, and the safeguarding of public resources. It is critical to maintaining public accountability and transparency in government operations. It requires that expenditures be authorized by Parliament through appropriations legislation, and that spending remain within those authorized limits. This ensures that public money is spent as the elected representatives of Canadians have approved.

The act establishes the Treasury Board as the central financial authority within government, giving it the power to develop policies and practices for sound financial management. It also mandates that deputy heads maintain systems of internal control and conduct regular audits to verify compliance with the act's requirements.

This creates accountability throughout the government hierarchy, from senior management down to individual spending authorities. In doing so, the Financial Administration Act provides the legislative foundation for related accountability mechanisms, including requirements for financial reporting, internal audit functions and the role of the Office of the Comptroller General in promoting best practices.

The Financial Administration Act is essential to the operation of the Government of Canada by ensuring that public finances are managed responsibly, transparently and in accordance with democratic principles. The bill before us today seeks to amend the Financial Administration Act to enhance transparency and accountability regarding large debts and obligations forgiven by the federal government. In particular, the bill would require the President of the Treasury Board to establish and maintain a publicly accessible, searchable online database of debt forgiveness.

The registry would list any debt, obligation or claim of \$1 million or more that has been waived, written off, or forgiven by the Crown in whole or in part, and it would apply to corporations, trust companies and partnerships. Each entry would include the legal and business name of the debtor, the amount forgiven, the time period covered, the statutory authority for the forgiveness, and any additional details deemed necessary by the President of the Treasury Board.

Certainly, any effort to increase transparency and accountability should be commended. I want to thank the member for Simcoe North for introducing this private member's bill. As my colleagues indicated in the first hour of debate on it, we look forward to working together on the bill when it reaches the committee stage.

However, as with any measure, it is important to consider any unintended consequences that may arise from its implementation. With that in mind, I believe Bill C-230 raises a few issues that would need to be examined in committee to ensure that it would not have detrimental impacts. For example, it is worth considering concerns about privacy and commercial sensitivities, and whether the publishing of company names with specific financial details regarding debt forgiveness could unfairly harm their reputation. We must also ask whether such a registry might expose a company's competitive vulnerabilities.

Those are, to be clear, exactly the types of questions committee members should be asking in their careful consideration of any legislation, and I look forward to hearing from experts and stakeholders, as well as from the bill's sponsor, with regard to these important matters.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-230 focuses on corporations, trusts and partnerships. In the case of partnerships, there is not anything in the bill that would prevent the disclosure of a partner's name if the partner is an individual. That may raise potential privacy concerns.

There is also a need to clarify the types of amounts owed to the government that the bill would apply to. For example, Bill C-230 would apply to debts or obligations owed to, and claims by, His Majesty that are owed or that arise under federal statutes. This would cover obligations that are the direct result of a statutory requirement, such as taxes and other charges or penalties imposed by statute. It is less clear the extent to which the bill would cover loans or other amounts that arise under contractual obligations between the federal government and the debtor.

There is also the issue of administrative burden. Building a secure, searchable online platform would likely involve IT infrastructure, procurement and a requirement for integration with existing financial systems. Ongoing maintenance might require staff and budget dedicated for functions such as program updates and troubleshooting.

In addition, departments would need to identify, extract and validate all relevant debt forgiveness transactions over \$1 million. Each disclosure would likely need to be vetted for compliance with privacy laws and confidentiality provisions. This might increase the workload on legal staff to manage risk of litigation from companies concerned about reputational harm.

It is worth asking whether compliance monitoring or audits to verify accuracy and prevent omissions would also be necessary. In a time when the government is seeking to balance its operating costs in the next three years, we must ask ourselves whether this would be the best use of scarce taxpayer dollars. Given the administrative burden the registry would pose, the monetary threshold should perhaps be increased to focus on truly significant debts.

When I look at how the government currently handles tax breaks, fee waivers and debt forgiveness, I am heartened by the degree of accountability and transparency already baked into our system. This is not to say that better is not possible, but a brief overview of our current regime may help inform this debate. The following details of debts forgiven, written off, remitted or waived are already reported publicly in the public accounts: which department made the decision, which law allowed it, how many times it happened and how much money we are talking about. Most remission orders also get published on the Privy Council's order in council website and in the Canada Gazette.

I am thankful for the opportunity to highlight a few of the important challenges the bill raises. That said, I believe the merits of the bill outweigh the challenges, which is why I look forward to the next steps in the legislative process, where a committee can examine the bill more closely.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is always good to see you on Mondays, although, as you know, the same is also true for Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

I will not keep anyone in suspense today. We support this bill, which promotes transparency in the administration of the public finances. As members know, the government is a huge machine with many departments, agencies and Crown corporations. Take, for example, the Canada Revenue Agency, which operates at arm's length from the CRA minister and the government and which is owed certain debts. We support more transparency. That is basically what the member for Simcoe North is proposing today.

What does this bill propose? Basically, it proposes keeping a registry of significant debts owed by certain entities that have been waived, written off or forgiven. When a business, individual or entity owes money to the Canadian government and the government decides to waive, write off or forgive that debt, it will all be entered into a registry that can easily be consulted by parliamentarians, the media and anyone interested in the public finances. We think this is a good thing.

Obviously there will have to be rules and smart parameters governing this. We also think the bill is well written. We are used to seeing well-thought-out bills from the member for Simcoe North. This bill focuses on debts, obligations or claims worth more than \$1 million that are waived in whole or in part, meaning the government partly or totally writes them off as a loss.

What would be in the registry? First, it would associate a recognizable name with the debt, obligation or claim. Sometimes businesses incorporate federally or provincially as numbered companies, and we know that people can hide behind those numbers. This requirement would allow parliamentarians, taxpayers and journalists to clearly identify the entity to which the debt, obligation or claim relates. That alone is a good thing. The registry would also state the period to which the debt, obligation or claim relates, the amount owed, the amount waived, written off or forgiven, and, just as importantly, the act under which the debt, obligation or claim was owed or arose.

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Obviously, the question here is whether this would add to the burden on public administration. A registry seems like a simple thing since the data already exist. They are already in the public accounts. We just need to add a little more information, make it more accessible and intelligible and put it in a registry. The Bloc Québécois believes that the government already has all of this data ready. However, we have to be careful, because this government tends to complicate simple things and make things more expensive than they need to be. We hope that we will not end up with cost overruns of \$3 billion, \$4 billion, \$5 billion or \$10 billion for a simple registry that would make our lives easier and improve transparency.

This is a rather important bill. Of course, we have here the figures from the most recent public accounts. In 2024-25, \$5.3 billion in debt was written off, while \$1.2 billion was forgiven, for a total of about \$7 billion. There was \$166 million under the Old Age Security Act alone.

Is everything okay, Madam Speaker?

• (1115)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): There is some noise coming from the gallery.

The hon. member for Mirabel can continue his speech.

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, it has become second nature for me to remain focused in the House when no one is listening and when others are talking, but I know you are listening to me so that is my first win for the day.

As I was saying, we are talking about \$166 million under the Old Age Security Act. That is a lot of money. Again, we do not want this to become a way to invade people's privacy either, people who have filed for personal bankruptcy, for example. I think that when we are talking about debts of \$1 million or more, we are no longer talking about small tax debts or CERB repayments, which would allow us to identify a specific individual. A debt to the government is a debt to the government, but we are not talking about those small things here, and it is important to mention that.

As I said, Bill C-230 requires little or no additional work on the part of the government. If done properly, it will provide transparency at little or no cost. I think everyone will benefit from that. As I said, it prevents a business from hiding behind a number the day the debt is waived, written off or forgiven. We are not talking about individual cases, so that is good.

What kind of debts, written off by the government in the past, are involved? What kind of debts were forgiven? Were any loans conditionally repayable? For example, there was the Chrysler loan in 2008. I would remind the House that the auto sector was in crisis at the time and the federal government, along with the American government, jumped in. There were stock purchases and investments, but there was also a loan component. In 2008, \$2.6 billion in loans to Chrysler were forgiven. That was part of the industrial strategy, a somewhat defensive strategy. There was a financial crisis. That shows the importance of clearly identifying these kinds of debts, because even if the government justifies them and even if ministers are accountable, this information needs to be easier to access.

Was it known at the time whether the company had a repayment plan? Was it known whether the minister had made any provision to waive or forgive the debt? These are some of the questions we are empowered to ask in the House, where it is easier to get answers without having to comb line by line through public accounts, trying to determine whether something fishy went on.

In a way, this works to the government's advantage. It can describe the situation and tell us what happened, that such and such company was involved and that it is all in the registry. That would encourage healthy debate on industrial policy, and the government can confirm that public funds were not involved and that this was one of the risks involved in the industrial policy.

Another example I could give in the short time I have left is Stellantis, the auto manufacturer that recently received substantial support from both the federal government and the province of Ontario. There are some concerns about lack of transparency from the federal government in the process. This is a significant amount, \$15 billion, about two-thirds of which is under the federal government's responsibility and one-third of which is under the Ontario government's responsibility. However, since that time, the company moved its production of Jeep vehicles to Illinois and the loan conditions were likely not respected.

If the federal government decides to write off or forgive debt in the future, I think it would be a good idea to be able to see it in a registry, which would make our job easier. Members of the opposition, and even journalists, do not always have the same abilities as the government to carry out this kind of research.

I will conclude by saying that everyone in this House knows that the trade situation is far from simple. We are facing tariffs from the giant known as the United States, yet the country still represents a significant portion of our international trade. We are facing the threat of acquisitions, the threat that our companies will find themselves in a vulnerable position. Providing assistance, sometimes in the form of loans, is part of a sound industrial policy. However, granting loans comes with risk. There is a risk of not getting paid back and then having to waive, write off or forgive the loan.

• (1120)

These are strategic decisions, but they are government decisions and the state must be held accountable. The government must be accountable. In today's context, where the government will likely have to become increasingly active in supporting certain parts of our industrial landscape, it will be useful to ensure that this happens transparently, as I said. This will make it possible to track loans that are not being repaid.

That is why we are pleased that this bill has been introduced, and we will be voting in favour of it.

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[English]

Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, whether it is the Epstein files or Santa Claus, the names on the lists are never released. Society has come to the moral place where those who have done wrong are protected: tax cheaters, offenders living among us or parliamentarians who have worked negatively with foreign governments. Everything is withheld behind the false veil of privacy.

Why is it that the government wants to track the information of millions of average Canadians on their laptops but will not go after those who go against one of the most basic social contracts of society, paying taxes? We have a solution in Bill C-230.

In recent years, the CRA has been waiving debts owed to government. Last year, the government waived the following debts: \$4.7 billion in writeoffs, \$10.9 billion in forgiveness, \$0.4 billion in remissions and \$2.6 billion in waivers, for a total of \$18.4 billion. Writeoffs and waivers for taxes owed are done in secret because of privacy provisions under the Income Tax Act. While the CRA is pursuing small businesses and ordinary Canadians for minor amounts owed to government, it is writing off debts owed to government by corporate entities in record amounts.

Canadians deserve to know which corporations are benefiting from the CRA's decision not to collect debts to government. The solution in Bill C-230 is to create a public registry that would require the Treasury Board to publish, annually, a list of corporate entities that have debts owed to governments forgiven, written off or waived if that amount exceeds \$1 million. One million dollars is a lot of money. It is not forgetting to pay back \$20, or "I will get lunch next time."

In 2023-24, 11 companies received \$1.2 billion in combined writeoffs. The 11 companies account for nearly a quarter of the \$4.9 billion in writeoffs approved in fiscal year 2023-24. What are these companies? Right now, we do not know. How would Canadians feel if these were publicly traded companies posting profits or even record profits? What if Brookfield was one of those companies? Right now, we do not know. Why should big corporations get enormous debt writeoffs when they target the little guy for significantly smaller amounts?

I have a message from a constituent, who writes, "They're claiming that I owe them \$126 from a payroll account more than 15 years ago".

Another constituent writes:

CRA has been holding up my return for months—with no proper timetable for a return—and meanwhile they have sent me to collections—causing me not only a large amount of stress and anxiety—but also causing me serious financial strain—in that I have had to take loans out to pay bills and support payments (which would have been covered in my return)

Another constituent is being withheld money from his mother's death benefit due to CRA delays.

He writes:

I followed every instruction I was given, yet I received no communication for months. I assumed my file was being processed, only to learn that it had been discarded. It is incredibly discouraging. This does not reflect a system that serves the people. It feels like the opposite, and that is deeply concerning.

Here's another account from a constituent:

Our mom passed away on February 28th, and her death was reported to CRA. A mistake was made and they deposited OAS into her account 2 months after her death, and then sent us a letter telling us we had to pay it back. Our dad passed away on June 8th; again, his death was reported to CRA but we have been receiving...cheques in his name. Now, we've received a letter from CRA saying they overpaid our dad's GIS for the period after our mom passed to when he passed and we owe them over \$1,900.

How is an agency so incompetent that several mistakes are made [in a single] estate?

● (1125)

It is the Conservatives who have always advocated for transparency in government departments, tax policies and procedures. Motion 43 in the 42nd Parliament, put forward by the member for Calgary Crowfoot, was a duty of care to the taxpayer. If someone is found to be not owing, forgive the amount but also pay for legal fees.

At our recent convention, this resolution was passed:

A Conservative government shall introduce legislation requiring the forgiveness or writing off of any non-personal debt owed to the Government of Canada be publicly announced in the Canada Gazette.

Why does the Liberal government like to collect swaths of information about ordinary Canadians to place moral decision-making into its own hands but will not ever release the names of those who have violated one of the two basic tenets of our society? These are, pay one's taxes, and, pay one's fair share so we can attempt to live in a functioning and compassionate society.

The government has also not released the names regarding foreign interference. The government refused to share which federal politicians wittingly co-operated with foreign interference. The former member of Parliament for University—Rosedale only said, "our government takes foreign interference very, very seriously". The current Minister of Justice also defended this position. This report outlined several activities, such as collaborating with countries like China, including accepting money or favours from diplomats. The National Security Intelligence Committee was chaired by the current defence minister.

Why do they not release the names?

They concealed the scope of the federal job cuts from analysts at the budget office. On November 5, 2025, the budget office asked federal managers for a breakdown of planned savings by program, but public servants and Canadians were left in the dark as to which departments would be affected or how it would impact services.

Release the names on the list.

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The federal government may not want to release information for the benefit of Canadians, but it is eager to pass legislation to infringe upon the privacy and actions of ordinary Canadians. Bill C-8, an act respecting cybersecurity, states that cabinet “may...prohibit a [telecom] service provider from using all products and services provided by a specified person” if it “believes on reasonable grounds that it is necessary to do so to secure the Canadian telecommunications system against any threat”. This order may be kept secret. No warrants are required. This was also attempted in Bill C-2.

Bill C-63, in the last Parliament, proposed increasing the maximum sentence for hate speech, which carried a sentence of five years to life under the Criminal Code. This would have placed it among the most serious offences, such as manslaughter and aggravated sexual assault, which also carry life sentences. That could have effectively resulted in someone being sentenced to life for hate speech, while someone convicted of the sexual assault of a minor receives a maximum of only 14 years, or it is a maximum of 10 years for an individual found guilty of assault with a weapon.

The bill also proposed that anyone who breaks any other federal law motivated by hate be found guilty of a hate crime and subject to a maximum of a life sentence, yet it is no problem at all to forgo paying millions in taxes.

When it comes to protecting their friends and political interests, the Liberals have no problem withholding information or giving cover to their allies to do so. However, when it comes to our privacy and personal information, such as who we like, what we like, where we eat, where we shop or who we communicate with, the Liberals have no problem holding us to account and taking away our rights.

Paying one's fair share of taxes is a basic tenet of Canadian society that allows for the smooth functioning of our society. This is why Bill C-230 should come to pass. Canadians could be made aware of who is paying their fair share to society and, more importantly, why. The government does not want Canadians to know, perhaps because of who is on the list.

What pieces of indigenous art are missing? What are the names in the green slush fund documents? Who approved ArriveCAN? We may never know, but the government has the opportunity, in this moment, to shed some light on society and hold everyone to account regarding paying their fair share.

Let us pass Bill C-230 and work towards starting to achieve this.

• (1130)

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-230, an act to amend the Financial Administration Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

Before I begin my speech, I would like to very briefly address a tragedy in my community. I recently met with a grieving mother in Penticton who lost her son when he was swarmed, assaulted and beaten until he died. That horrifying event occurred four and a half years ago, yet it has still not gone to trial. Justice delayed is justice denied to the family and friends of victims and to this mother. A full and fair day in court should not take almost half a decade.

Returning to the legislation, I want to thank my esteemed colleague the member for Simcoe North for bringing this important legislation forward. He has been a great colleague to me, and I know he is widely respected across this entire chamber.

This legislation addresses one of the most important aspects of governance: transparency in our taxes. Now, while there has always been disagreement across the House on how tax dollars should be spent, there has been an agreement among all parties that we should always be able to see where they are spent. This is what makes this legislation so important. It seeks to cast transparency on potentially billions of dollars lost every year with no window for the public to understand why.

Just a few years ago, a Conservative colleague of mine discovered that the Canada Revenue Agency had written off \$133 million in taxes owed by just one taxpayer. Was this a person? Was this a corporation? The CRA would not say. The CRA did not have to say. Can Canadians know if this was a person or a corporation that benefited from public subsidies? No. When the Liberals approved \$1.2 billion in 11 separate corporate tax debt writeoffs in 2024, were Canadians allowed to know which corporations were involved? No.

In Canada today, corporate debt owed to the Canadian government through the Canada Revenue Agency can be written off, waived or forgiven entirely in secret. There is no requirement for the CRA to tell Canadians which corporation had these debts written off or the reasons they were written off. There is no explanation of how nearly 60,000 public employees at the CRA were unable to collect these enormous outstanding debts.

There is a curtain here that disguises millions, if not billions, in lost collections owed to the government. In fact, just last year, the Liberals wrote off \$18.4 million in outstanding taxes, and billions owed by corporations. That is not right. Ultimately, these are tax dollars lost that Ottawa would move to collect from Canadians elsewhere to make up the revenue shortfall.

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Residents and small businesses in my riding do not often get this type of treatment from the CRA. When their taxes are outstanding, or even just slightly off when filed, they see the letters in their mailbox, the voice mails on their phone and the emails in their inbox. They see interest charges and collection attempts. We see them in our offices regularly. Regular citizens are chased down for small amounts. Many businesses I meet with are frantic because they cannot even get a hold of someone at the CRA, let alone understand what went wrong or why they owe this amount. Sometimes they just need to talk to somebody.

There are single mothers and older Canadians who do not have the means to pay what might seem like a small amount compared with these huge amounts I have been speaking about, but these people are trying their best to do the right thing, so they come into our offices. They should not have to do that. It is time for fairness and transparency at the CRA. This is a start, and that is why I support Bill C-230.

• (1135)

The bill would create an accessible, searchable public registry under the Treasury Board. The registry would annually publish a list of all corporate entities that have had debts owed to the government waived, forgiven or written off, if the amount exceeds \$1 million. Attached to each case would have to be an explanation, and this is extremely important, as to why the Canada Revenue Agency says it is not worth pursuing millions, possibly billions, in outstanding debt.

We know this reasoning exists internally at the CRA. It may even be understandable, such as in bankruptcy proceedings, but the registry would make it clear and public. I know there has been some discussion about the million-dollar threshold for reporting, and I believe the author of the legislation says he is open to good-faith amendments to this.

We should make it clear that the legislation would apply only to corporate entities and is set with that in mind. It is not the purpose of the legislation to shame an individual Canadian or even a family farm that might be going through a bankruptcy proceeding. The focus of the law would be on giving Canadians more information, especially when they see the government seeking to engage in, for example, corporate welfare. It is too common for Canadians to see press releases and ribbon cuttings for public subsidies and tax dollars being used to try to pick winners in our economy, only for those projects or expansions to fall flat.

We have seen this very recently with the Liberals' approach to the auto sector over the last several years, with shiny deals announced only to be followed up with the downsizing of Canadian workers. Now, if these same companies have their debts written off, there is no way for Canadians to know. The bill would shine a light through this fog.

In the age of deficits, when the Liberals continue to insist that debt is permanent, that the budget will never be balanced and that we will always be spending more than we take in, it is even more critical to ensure that the money Ottawa is owed is collected. When we set taxes and undercollect, the pressure always pushes the government to raise more taxes to fill the gap. It is vital to ensure that the highest taxpayers do not wriggle out of their obligations, be-

cause that pressure will ultimately fall on those who can pay less to make up the shortfall.

Proper tax collection is what sets the floor for reducing the tax burden on working Canadians. The record-high amounts that the Liberals have been writing off, with, again, \$18 billion written off in just one year, only sets conditions for more tax hikes.

There were many well-deserved tributes to former prime minister Stephen Harper last week. One of his accomplishments that I did not hear enough about was how, by 2015, he had reduced the federal tax burden to its lowest level in over 50 years. Canadians are no longer the beneficiaries of that sound fiscal policy. To ensure we have the transparency in our tax system that helps to set the conditions for lower taxes, I would call on all members of the House to pass Bill C-230.

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today in good faith and in the spirit of collaboration to get things done, to move Canada forward, and I believe that Bill C-230 can help us do that. Bill C-230 is an act to amend the Financial Administration Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts by establishing a public registry of large debts and obligations that have been waived, written off or forgiven.

At its heart, this bill is about tax fairness, transparency and respect for the small businesses that form the backbone of our economy. Across Canada, small business owners open their doors every morning knowing that success is never guaranteed. They manage payroll, remit taxes and comply with complex regulatory requirements, often at significant risk. They do so because they believe in our country and believe in a system that is fair, predictable and applied equally. Bill C-230 is about reinforcing that core belief for businesses in Canada.

The bill would require the President of the Treasury Board to establish and maintain a public, online, searchable registry to disclose information about large debts or obligations, those valued at \$1 million or more, owed to the Crown by corporations, trust companies or partnerships where those debts have been waived, written off or forgiven. The registry would include the name of the entity, the amount forgiven, the period to which it relates and the statutory authority under which the debt arose. This is not an exercise in blame or punishment. It is an exercise in accountability.

When small businesses fall behind on their tax obligations, the consequences are immediate and visible. Payment plans are negotiated, interest accrues, and enforcement measures are well understood. What has been far less visible, however, is when very large corporate debts, sometimes involving millions of dollars, are forgiven by the federal government. Even when such decisions are justified, the lack of transparency creates a perception of unequal treatment. Bill C-230 would address that gap directly.

By making large-scale debt forgiveness transparent, it would reassure small businesses that there is no separate, hidden system for the biggest players in the economy. It would send a clear message that extraordinary relief must be accompanied by extraordinary accountability.

Importantly, the bill is carefully designed. It would apply only to large entities and only above a significant monetary threshold. It would not expose personal information, nor would it interfere with legitimate tax administration. The bill would also include targeted, consequential amendments to existing tax and excise statutes to ensure that confidential information may be disclosed solely for the purpose of maintaining the registry. In other words, the disclosure is limited, lawful and purposeful.

For small businesses, fairness is not about preferential treatment. It is about knowing that everyone plays by the same rules. When a local retailer struggles to meet remittance deadlines while reading headlines about massive corporate writeoffs, confidence in the system erodes. When that same small business owner gets a call from a CRA agent because they are short by a couple of hundred dollars on their last submission in their CRA online account, it sticks with them. Transparency would restore a sense of confidence in Canada.

This bill would also strengthen fiscal discipline. Public disclosure encourages careful decision-making, ensures that debt forgiven is properly documented and allows Parliament and Canadians to better understand how public funds are managed. Sunlight, as the saying goes, is the best disinfectant. Bill C-230 would not raise taxes. It would not create new penalties. It would simply affirm a basic principle that small businesses already live by every day: Accountability matters.

• (1140)

By supporting this bill, we stand with the entrepreneurs who keep our communities vibrant, who employ our neighbours and who trust their government will treat them fairly. Bill C-230 tells them that when it comes to tax obligations and debt forgiveness, transparency applies to everyone, especially when the sums involved are large.

For these reasons, I urge all members of this House to consider supporting Bill C-230 to provide a degree of accountability and confidence in our taxation system.

• (1145)

Matt Strauss (Kitchener South—Hespeler, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is such a pleasure to rise in support of this very excellent bill, presented by my very excellent colleague from Simcoe North.

The bill is important. It speaks to principles that are fundamental to a just government, to fairness and to transparency. I am sorry to

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say that these principles have been sorely lacking in the actions of the Liberal government over the last 10 years.

For those just tuning in at home, every year for the last 10 years the Canada Revenue Agency has forgiven or written off more than a billion dollars in taxes or loans owed. In the last fiscal year of 2023-24, it was \$18 billion. As my colleague just mentioned, this is on the order of our entire defence spending, which is about \$35 billion a year.

For those watching at home, I am thinking of my friend Dave, who is a plumber, and my friend Ryan, who is a contractor. Yesterday, we had a skating event put on by my office in Kitchener, where I met Dragon, a short-haul truck driver, and Lilly, a grade one schoolteacher. Did they receive any forgiveness on their taxes? Did they receive any writeoffs on their loans to the CRA? The answer is that they did not. The vast majority of these writeoffs went to large corporate fat cats who have big lobbyist budgets and spend a lot of time in the offices of the government across the way.

The CRA is systematically forgiving the taxes that massive corporations owe to the public. The *Globe and Mail* reported that last year only 11 corporations accounted for nearly a quarter of the writeoffs. This arrangement raises the question: Who is the government working for? Is it working for the people or for its friends on Bay Street?

I can think of two cases in recent memory where the same question arose and where the same principles of transparency and fairness were broken all across the land. One was the COVID pandemic and the mom-and-pop stores. At the beginning of the pandemic, I was teaching medicine at Queen's University in Kingston. There was a hardware store downtown that stood for 70 years. It was run by the Vandervoorts and was called the Vandervoort General Store. Unfortunately, it closed after 70 years of continuously serving the community while Canadian Tire, Home Depot and Walmart all stood open.

Similarly, small-time mom-and-pop gyms were closed down while major branches managed to stay open. How did that happen? Through my work in politics, I have come to know some of these lobbyists. They had gigantic contracts lobbying governments, both federal and provincial, to stay open in a way the Vandervoort hardware store simply could not do.

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Another major example is the SNC-Lavalin scandal. If I were to bribe the dictator of Libya and provide strippers to his sons, I think I would go to jail. However, if I were the proprietors of SNC-Lavalin, I would have the former prime minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, in the Attorney General's office, violating the principle of prosecutorial independence, which by the way is the same principle the President of the United States broke, resulting in his first impeachment. SNC-Lavalin was able to get its lobbyists, who had the ear of the prime minister, to get sweetheart deals for forgiveness, similar to what the CRA is dishing out to massive corporations, while mom and pop get nothing. However, I do not have any interest in bribing the dictator of Libya anytime soon.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Matt Strauss: Madam Speaker, I am glad that got a laugh.

What the bill would do is restore some of the fairness and some of the transparency. If it passes, which I dearly hope it will, and the CRA forgives more than a million dollars in loans or taxes, it would at least have to say who it gave it to and why. I think the vast majority of Canadians would never see a million dollars, let alone have a tax bill of over a million dollars. It is very simple. It does not say that it cannot continue to exercise this forgiveness; rather, it says that the public is owed a debt, that the government, in its boundless wisdom, has decided to write off that debt, and that we need to know whose it was and why. At the very least, it would give us the opportunity to look at the lobbying registry to see how much that corporation paid to lobby the Liberal government and to ask if those two numbers were related.

• (1150)

For those watching at home, I have to say I was so struck, shortly after my election, the first time I opened my parliamentary email. There were literally hundreds of invitations to meet with lobbyists, and there were hundreds of invitations to attend receptions in downtown Ottawa. I instructed my staff, if the meeting did not say Kitchener South—Hespeler somewhere in it, if it was not from a constituent of mine, I did not want to take it.

Let me say that from what I have observed during my time here, many of those meetings and receptions are attended by the members opposite. It is my view that these corporations do not spend all that money on lobbying for no reason. They know how to get a return on investment, and I think they are getting that return on investment, as evidenced by the \$18 billion that the government forgave large corporations in the last fiscal year.

We want transparency. We want the registry. We want to start asking these questions. It was, by the way, my understanding that the common practice, for years and years, was that parliamentarians could at least ask Order Paper questions and put to the government, “Who did you forgive and why?” However, just in recent years, the CRA has stopped providing that basic transparency. We used to have it by convention, and somehow it has gone away over the last 10 years. Now we need to actually write it into the law that this transparency must exist henceforth. I think it is a shame. I wish that we could use the honour system and could continue with our tradition of open government. It is particularly a shame, given that 10 years ago Justin Trudeau came to power promising to have the most

transparent government in Canadian history. In this and so many other ways, we have been betrayed.

That is about as much as I have to say about it. I know that the members opposite like to say that they are in a new government and are doing new things. This would be a tremendous opportunity for them to turn away from the legacy of the Trudeau government and the legacy of restricting transparency and begin to restore that transparency, even in this small way. Again, this is not going to send anyone to jail. This is not going to stop the practice of gigantic writeoffs for corporate fat cats with a stable of lobbyists, but it is at least going to give the public the answers they deserve.

I urge everyone in the House to vote for this bill. For the members opposite, when they vote for this bill, I urge them to consider apologizing for their actions during COVID and apologizing for their actions during the SNC-Lavalin scandal. I hope that Jody Wilson-Raybould and Jane Philpott will be invited back to their caucus soon.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Simcoe North now has his right of reply.

Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House, but it is also a pleasure to rise on Bill C-230, a private member's bill I drafted. I want to thank all of my colleagues, obviously the ones from my own party who spoke in favour of this bill today but also colleagues in other parties who have expressed a willingness to see this bill sent to committee, which I hope we will be able to do at the end of my remarks this morning.

I would also like to thank the legislative drafters, a small team that does great work, Marie-Claude Hébert and Marie Danik, who helped draft this legislation. We should recognize all of the work they do to support private members' business. Unlike government ministers who have legions and a number of resources at their disposal, this group in the House of Commons supports us very well, and we are very well served by their expertise.

To follow up on some of the comments, it is important that taxpayers know how their money is being used. When the government, through CRA, goes after or contacts regular Canadians to pay monies they owe the government and starts charging interest on the first day they miss a payment or the first day they are late for very nominal sums, sometimes as low as \$100 or even less, it is offensive to every sensible person to know that behind the cloak of secrecy, officials within CRA or the government, in general, are waiving millions and millions, tens of millions and, in some cases, hundreds of millions in debts owed to the government. This happens with a stroke of the pen behind closed doors. This is the kind of transparency that we need.

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Unfortunately, we are going backward. My colleague from Kitchener South—Hespeler just mentioned how Prime Minister Trudeau ran on having a very open government, and now the government is deleting its emails and messages after 30 days. That is quite a reversal.

I do not want to get too far ahead of myself and off topic because I understand we have support to see this bill sent to committee. I will have more to say on this if it is successful and comes back to the House, but I would mention that I am open to reasonable amendments. I will make myself available to the minister and his office, who I have been appreciative of so far in terms of getting information and having comprehensive and fruitful discussions. That is how this chamber is supposed to work. We are supposed to collaborate.

This is a great bill and a great idea. We will improve transparency on behalf of all taxpayers.

• (1155)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): 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.

Adam Chambers: I request that the motion be carried on division, Madam Speaker.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I declare the motion carried on division. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

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

• (1200)

SITTING SUSPENDED

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): We will suspend for two and a half minutes.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:57 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

COMMISSIONER FOR MODERN TREATY IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House resumed from November 28, 2025, consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act respecting the Commissioner for Modern Treaty Implementation, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in consideration of Bill C-10, legislation that

would create a new officer of Parliament to oversee how the federal government implements modern treaties.

At its core, I think it is important to note that this bill proposes yet another office and another bureaucracy to monitor the very departments that already struggle to live up to the agreements Canada has signed with indigenous nations. While the intention, I think, is to strengthen accountability, the question before us is whether Bill C-10 would actually deliver on that accountability, or if it would simply create the appearance of doing so.

Because modern treaties govern things such as land ownership, natural resources, financial compensation and more, these are things that we are now talking about more than ever as we see whether the Liberal government is truly going to approve the building of a pipeline to the Pacific, open new mines, get LNG resources to international markets and build the Canada strong that we have heard so much about.

I want to be absolutely clear from the outset that Conservatives recognize the real and long-standing frustration amongst indigenous treaty partners. We support those treaty rights, reconciliation, self-government and, of course, self-determination. We understand why many indigenous governments want stronger mechanisms to hold Ottawa to its word. That is very clear from all of the advocacy that we have heard and the strength of the advocacy from those nations.

What Bill C-10 would do, as it is drafted, would be to replace responsibility with what I think is more paperwork, which would not do what the bill says it is supposed to do. It tries to solve a performance problem by expanding bureaucracy that has already failed. Its latest iteration is a knee-jerk instinct measure, and it would measure its success by the number of reports published, instead of what I think is lacking in this place so often, which is the quality of the results delivered.

Let us go back for a moment to explain where modern treaties came from and what they were meant to fix. They emerged because historic treaties, however imperfectly honoured, did not resolve the indigenous title in large parts of this country. That legal gap remained until the Supreme Court's landmark 1973 decision that forced Ottawa to abandon denial and engage in nation-to-nation negotiation. From that decision came the first modern treaty, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement in 1975, and 26 similar agreements since. These treaties define land ownership, resource rights, compensation and self-government. They are continually protected and legally binding.

For years, there has been one message from indigenous governments, and it has been a consistent message, that Canada signs agreements but too often fails to implement them, which is, frankly, not a surprise to anyone who has been around for any of these conversations here in the House or over the last number of decades in this country. The Senate recommended, in 2008, that Ottawa create an oversight body to ensure that treaties are actually carried out. Treaty partners have repeated that call many, many times since.

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If we rewind to the years when Conservatives were in government, we proved that modern treaties could be signed and implemented when Ottawa stayed focused on outcomes, not simply on bureaucracy and paperwork. Between 2006 and 2015, five modern treaties of self-government agreements were concluded that advanced real economic and governance authority for indigenous communities.

• (1205)

Since then, under the Liberal government, the landscape looks very different. There have been countless new offices, frameworks, strategies and action plans, yet not one modern treaty has been finalized, which brings us to this conversation and why we are having it. The paper has piled very high in Ottawa and places close to Ottawa, while progress on the ground has stalled. If members have heard any of my colleagues speak about this, both in this debate and to wider issues generally, they would have heard that there is a whole bunch of rhetoric, but there are not many outcomes to match the words spoken.

I ask why this matters. This is the backdrop for Bill C-10, the piece of legislation we are discussing today. We are being told that the solution to Canada's poor implementation record is a new commissioner's office, but the oversight mechanisms already exist. The Auditor General has repeatedly examined treaty implementation. Those reports identified concrete failures, named specific departments and recommended very clear actions going forward, yet many of the same issues remain today.

People watching this would ask why that is. It is because nothing happens when a department fails to implement a treaty obligation. No one is held accountable. No one loses their job. No one stands in the House to explain why the commitment was ignored. Meanwhile, the government has built an entire ecosystem of internal bodies: the modern treaty implementation office, the deputy ministers' oversight committee, the modern treaty management environment and so on. Despite all of these federal initiatives, treaty partners still spend their time chasing the most basic compliance from Ottawa. If those structures have not fixed the problem, why should anybody in this place believe that a brand new structure, a brand new office, a brand new title or a brand new bureaucracy would suddenly succeed?

Many indigenous partners originally asked that a treaty commissioner be housed under the Auditor General, an institution that is already built for this kind of work, has already opined on this kind of work and has already given recommendations on the shortcomings of this work. Instead, the Liberals chose the most expensive option, a separate agent of Parliament with its own bureaucracy and its own budget. The real test now is not how many offices exist in Ottawa, but whether the federal government keeps its promises at all.

A commissioner cannot build housing, negotiate a treaty or force a department to meet deadlines it has already blown. Only ministerial responsibility can do that. We have said this time and time again, but only clear performance measures co-developed by treaty partners can do that. It is a real consequence and a failure to suggest that anything else would work.

If a treaty obligation is missed, the responsible minister should stand in this chamber and answer for it. We have not seen that. Se-

nior officials who ignore commitments should not be promoted. Departments that fail to act repeatedly should face consequences from the House. That is what accountability looks like. That is what we want to see. Conservatives believe in a strong, durable, honourable relationship with indigenous nations, and we believe that modern treaties must be more than signed documents.

Here is where we differ and here is what we want, and I will just list them quickly. We want to require departments to act on Auditor General recommendations. We want to mandate public, measurable implementation plans for each treaty. We want to empower indigenous governments as equal partners and not as observers of Ottawa's bureaucracy, and we want to ensure that ministers face consequences. That is the only real way to solve this.

• (1210)

Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was doing a bit of research as my hon. colleague was speaking, and I note that the bill was co-developed with modern treaty partners. I am wondering if there is any evidence to suggest that the modern treaty partners who were involved in the development of this legislation have the same concerns that she raised in her speech.

Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my remarks, it was eight years ago that many of the nations asked that this be housed under the Auditor General. The reason for that is that the Auditor General has the capacity within the office to make recommendations, to find where departments have been coming up short and to provide an avenue to fix that. Just because it has not been done, it does not mean that we should give the job to another officer of Parliament, which would be created here in order to not do that job.

Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, our deputy leader outlined quite well our concerns with this piece of legislation. She hit on the key point that we agree with the diagnosis that Ottawa, the government itself, has not been living up to its word in treaties, whether modern or otherwise, for decades. I think we all agree on that. We do understand the frustration that the co-drafters of this legislation have with the government's living up to its word, so we agree on that.

My friend from Thornhill highlighted where this legislation needs to have some change, which is the accountability part. There are department and auditor general reports that have all outlined the issues with the government not living up to its treaties, but the one part the legislation does not have is the accountability piece. Where is the accountability? That is where our issue stands.

Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. colleague for all the work he has done on this file and so many others.

Government Orders

I have to agree with him. Reconciliation in this country cannot be achieved by expanding Ottawa's footprint and Ottawa's bureaucracy. That is an important point that resonates right across the country because the government has failed so miserably.

Reconciliation is achieved when commitments are honoured and outcomes are delivered. In order for those outcomes to be delivered, there has to be some accountability when they are not delivered. Somebody's head needs to roll, and I say that as politely as possible, but there have to be consequences for when things are not honoured and people do not do their jobs.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on her speech. She talked about something very important, something that I see as a hallmark of the Conservative Party, specifically, government accountability. That is what the Bloc Québécois wanted to pursue with our bill, and yet that is what the Conservatives rejected. Under our bill, the government would be required to table new trade agreements in the House before they are adopted so that members could review them in advance, which is not currently the case.

I would like my colleague to explain how she can talk to us today about accountability when her party rejected a bill introduced by the Bloc Québécois calling for exactly that. I would like her to explain that inconsistency that I see here.

[*English*]

Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the member might not realize that we are speaking to Bill C-10, but I will never apologize for demanding accountability from the government, from the House, from the officers of Parliament and from the bureaucracy, which have promised things in this country and have failed to deliver on outcomes. That is not something that Conservatives will ever apologize for.

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the member opposite raised the need for Canada to engage in nation-to-nation consultation, or duty to consult with indigenous nations.

She spoke about pipelines and other projects. The Prime Minister and our government have been clear that we need consultation and a better relationship with indigenous nations. Her leader has stood in the House and said that the federal government should basically override indigenous rights. Would the member not agree that a stronger, closer relationship between indigenous rights holders and the federal government is necessary?

• (1215)

Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I would like to just put on the record that the government has been anything but clear regarding its plans on building a pipeline in this country or on getting a pipeline to tidewater. In fact, it is the House who has given the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): We are out of time.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-10, legislation that would create a new office of the commissioner for modern treaty implementation. This bill is presented by the government as a step toward accountability and reconciliation, but when we look closely at what it would actually do, or just as importantly, what it would not do, it becomes clear that Bill C-10 mistakes process for progress and bureaucracy for leadership.

I want to begin by stating clearly and without hesitation the principle that guides our position. The problem in Canada's modern treaty system is not lack of oversight; it is a lack of execution. It is not a shortage of watchdogs; it is a shortage of accountability. The solution is not another expensive federal office in Ottawa.

For years now, indigenous treaty partners have raised serious and legitimate concerns about the pace and consistency of treaty implementation. Commitments are made, but deadlines are missed. Responsibilities are spread across multiple departments with no clear line of accountability. Files are passed from one desk to another, while communities wait for obligations that were promised, often many years ago, to finally be fulfilled.

Those frustrations are real and well documented, and they deserve a response that actually fixes the problem, but the government wants Canadians to believe that the solution is to create yet another layer of bureaucracy, a new multi-million dollar office whose primary function is to monitor and report on whether ministers and departments are actually doing their work.

The truth is far simpler. We already know the work is not being done. Indigenous partners know it, the Auditor General knows it, the courts know it and the government itself knows it. What we lack is not information; what we lack is leadership.

Bill C-10 is not accountability; it is political insulation. It would allow ministers to point to an independent office and say that the commissioner will study it or the commissioner will report on it, while the underlying failures continue. At a time when Canadians are struggling to afford groceries, housing and basic necessities, the idea that the federal government's response to failure is to expand bureaucracy rather than demand results is the exact opposite of responsible governance.

No one in the House disputes the importance of modern treaties. These agreements are not symbolic gestures. They are constitutionally protected, legally binding commitments. When they are not implemented properly, the damage is not theoretical. It affects housing, infrastructure, economic development and self-governance. It erodes trust and undermines reconciliation in very real ways.

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Let us be honest about what this bill would actually do. Bill C-10 would create oversight without enforcement, audits without consequences and reports without requiring action. The proposed commissioner would have the authority to review, assess, comment and report, but they would not have the authority to compel departments to release funding, force ministers to meet deadlines, or enforce treaty rights. The power to act would remain exactly where it is today, with the same ministers and departments that have failed to deliver.

Therefore, we must ask ourselves what would actually change. The answer is, very little. We have seen this approach before, and it has failed. Canada does not suffer from a lack of reports; there are dozens of them. The Office of the Auditor General alone has produced audit after audit for nearly two decades. These audits are independent, thorough and clear in their conclusions, yet the pattern is always the same. The reports are tabled, the failures are acknowledged and then nothing happens.

A new office would not fix a culture of inaction. A new commissioner would not manufacture the political will the government has lacked for more than a decade. Oversight without enforcement is not accountability; it is theatre.

Conservatives believe in the responsible use of public funds. We also believe in not reinventing the wheel; we believe in fixing it. The Auditor General already provides Parliament with credible, authoritative oversight. The problem is not that the Auditor General lacks capacity. The problem is that the government has repeatedly ignored the findings. Instead of strengthening accountability within that existing framework, the government's answer is to create another body that would duplicate work and provide yet more reports that can be safely ignored.

● (1220)

Even more concerning is the way Bill C-10 would actually weaken parliamentary accountability. Under the legislation, Parliament itself cannot initiate audits. Only the commissioner, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations or a treaty partner may do so. That means that elected representatives are further removed from oversight, not empowered by it.

The bill also cannot be viewed in isolation from the government's broader record. Between 2015 and 2017, the government created multiple offices, committees and frameworks designed to improve treaty implementation. Despite all of that additional bureaucracy, the government has not concluded one single modern treaty in over 10 years. That record matters.

By contrast, under the previous Conservative government, five modern treaties were successfully negotiated and implemented in just six years. Those agreements advanced self-governance, clarified land rights and created certainty for indigenous communities. They were achieved not through endless monitoring but through leadership, accountability and a willingness to deliver results.

Supporters of Bill C-10 point to indigenous organizations that have called for independent oversight. Their frustration is understandable. Communities have waited far too long for commitments to be honoured. However, it is also important to recognize what treaty partners are actually asking for. They are not asking for more

studies. They are not asking for an Ottawa-based institution to observe their frustration from a distance. They are asking for certainty. They are asking for timelines that mean something. They are asking for a federal government that follows through on what it has already agreed to. They are asking for results.

For many indigenous governments, the problem is not that Canada lacks insight into treaty implementation. The problem is that the responsibility is fragmented across multiple departments, with no single minister clearly accountable when things go wrong. When obligations fall between mandates, nothing moves. When timelines slip, no one answers for it. Bill C-10 does not resolve that fragmentation; it formalizes it.

That is why Conservatives believe that the focus must remain where the Constitution places it, on the Crown itself. The honour of the Crown cannot be delegated. It cannot be outsourced to an independent office. It rests with the ministers, who have the authority, the resources and the obligation to deliver. When that responsibility is diluted, reconciliation does not advance; it stalls. In fact, many indigenous leaders have previously argued that even if oversight needed to be strengthened, it should be done with existing institutions, particularly the Office of the Auditor General, rather than through a parallel bureaucracy.

True reconciliation respects indigenous governments and partners, not as stakeholders managed through an additional federal process. Indigenous nations are fully capable of participating directly in accountability and oversight without another Ottawa-based office inserted between them and the Crown.

The Conservatives do not come to the debate empty-handed. We come with a clear and credible alternative, one that focuses on execution, not expansion. We believe that treaty obligations must be embedded directly into departmental mandates so that responsibility is clear and unavoidable. Ministers must report directly to Parliament on their progress, not to a commissioner. Deadlines must matter. When commitments are missed, explanations must be given and consequences must follow. Accountability must reach the ministerial level, where it belongs. This is how accountability works in every other area of government. Treaty implementation should not be treated differently.

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Reconciliation is not advanced by creating offices. It is advanced by meeting commitments. A commissioner will not build homes, accelerate negotiations or enforce treaty rights. Only leadership can do that. Indigenous people deserve more than symbolic structures and carefully worded reports. They deserve a government that keeps its promises. They deserve implementation, not excuses.

Bill C-10 offers the appearance of action without addressing the cause of failure. For those reasons, Conservatives oppose the bill and will continue to demand not more bureaucracy but real accountability and real results.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a commissioner is an independent officer of Parliament. We already have a number of different commissioners, such as the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and the Commissioner of Official Languages.

This bill would establish a commissioner for modern treaty implementation. This would be a permanent oversight and accountability mechanism specifically designed to hold the Government of Canada accountable to Parliament. A commissioner does not answer to ministers or to the government. A commissioner answers to Parliament. This mechanism would provide greater transparency and accountability to Parliament. Essentially, if there is a problem, people who feel that their rights have been violated can turn to the commissioner.

Why would my colleague deny the modern treaty partners, who worked with the government on the development of this bill, the opportunity to have a permanent oversight mechanism that will be accountable to Parliament?

[*English*]

Kelly DeRidder: Madam Speaker, the Auditor General also can produce independent reports that the minister would be accountable to answer to. Creating another level of bureaucracy is not going to implement actions that are required to meet modern treaty. We do not need another level of bureaucracy. We can already get the reports and the actions from the Auditor General, so let us just work on actioning instead of creating bureaucracy.

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, in the spirit of reconciliation, the Bloc Québécois supported Bill C-77 in the last Parliament and we will support Bill C-10 as well.

From what I understand, my colleague is telling us that having more transparency in the implementation of treaties would create more awful bureaucracy. A few days ago, we voted on Bill C-228, introduced by the Bloc Québécois, which called for free trade agreements to be debated in Parliament. That bill would not have created any new bureaucracy at all. The Conservatives always like to say that they do not mind working long days in Parliament. When it was time to vote on Bill C-228, which did not create any new bureaucracy, my colleague voted against it.

When it comes down to it, is it possible the Conservatives just have a bit of an issue with transparency?

[*English*]

Kelly DeRidder: Madam Speaker, today we are speaking to Bill C-10, and we understand the frustrations of indigenous communities and partners that there have not been any modern treaties completed within the past decade. That understanding is true; it is valuable, and what we want to have from the government is action towards the modern treaty, not creating extra bureaucracy and extra levels where accountability can be mistaken for results based on reports that mean nothing, that are tabled and not actioned. We need action.

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Madam Speaker, back in my day, I was a treaty negotiator for my band. We did not sign a treaty, but I heard the same complaints for 20 years. Members of government and members of the Bloc talk about transparency, which has been alive and well in this place for the last 20 to 30 years. We have seen hundreds of reports go through this chamber on what the first nations are complaining about in terms of implementation. What we are talking about here is accountability. What is the use if the minister in charge will not make a decision or not interact with the first nation that signed one of the highest reconciliation agreements in Canada, which is protected by the Constitution?

Do we need more transparency, or do we need more accountability in terms of Bill C-10?

Kelly DeRidder: Madam Speaker, I absolutely agree that we need more accountability and we need more action. We do not need more research. We do not need more reports. We need to work with indigenous partners and complete the modern treaties of today. We need accountability to make sure it is actually done.

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, my colleague says that, ultimately, a commissioner would just table reports that nobody reads. What about the Privacy Commissioner of Canada and the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, among others?

Can my colleague tell us which other commissioners who report directly to Parliament are useless and why their work is useless?

• (1230)

[*English*]

Kelly DeRidder: Madam Speaker, I just want to clarify. I did not say the reports would not be read. What has been happening is that the reports are read; they are tabled; the failures are acknowledged, and then nothing is done. Creating another level of bureaucracy is not going to change what is happening right now. We need to get things done. We need accountability, full stop.

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Rhonda Kirkland (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today, as always, on behalf of my neighbours and friends in Oshawa to speak about something that touches the honour of the Crown and the relationship that has shaped this country since long before Confederation. That relationship cannot be repaired with press releases, new titles or fresh layers of bureaucracy. It is rebuilt by keeping promises and by doing the work we have already agreed to do. Action, as the hon. member for Kitchener Centre said, is the key here.

For years, governments have talked about reconciliation, but talk without accountability leaves indigenous partners waiting. Bill C-10, the proposal to create a commissioner for modern treaty implementation, is being presented as a fix for decades of federal failures. In truth, it creates another office to point out the same shortcomings we have known about for years. The Auditor General has already flagged them. Indigenous leaders have already flagged them. Treaty partners have already flagged them. The problem is not a shortage of oversight; the problem is a shortage of execution.

Today I want to speak clearly about where treaty implementation stands in this country, what modern treaties actually are and why I do not believe another multi-million dollar bureaucracy will help move us closer to honouring the commitments that have already been made. Modern treaties are comprehensive land claims agreements that clarify land, resources and governance, as well as constitutional rights. Many include self-government provisions. Some stand alone as self-government agreements. They are enforceable and binding. Their purpose is to allow indigenous nations to move beyond the paternalism of the Indian Act and toward true self-determination.

Understanding this matters because implementation is not about creating new oversight offices. It is about ensuring departments respect the authority and commitments already set out in law. We saw this with the Whitecap Dakota self-government agreement that passed with Conservative support in 2023. It is a step forward but not a full modern treaty. There is still work to be done, and that work has nothing to do with the absence of a commissioner and everything to do with the departments not following through. How would a commissioner suddenly fix what ministers have failed to do for years? Ministers already have the ability to demand results, and departments already have responsibilities.

I believe what has been missing is leadership and consequences. We have historical proof. We know progress is possible. Under Prime Minister Harper, five modern treaties were completed in six years. Under the Liberal government, after more than a decade in power, not a single modern treaty has been completed. Currently, 70 indigenous groups are negotiating with the federal government and nothing has been finalized. That is not an oversight failure. That is a failure in leadership.

The government claims Bill C-10 is needed to identify gaps, but we already have decades of reports spelling out those gaps. The Auditor General has produced major audits on treaty implementation, land entitlements, governance barriers and negotiation processes. Many recommendations are still sitting untouched. If the government has ignored the Auditor General's findings for almost 20 years, why would a new commissioner suddenly change any-

thing? Departments do not fail because no one is watching. They fail because there are no consequences when they do.

This is not the first time the Liberals have tried to fix failure by creating more bureaucracy. Between 2015 and 2017, they opened the modern treaty implementation office, the assessment of modern treaty implications office, the modern treaty management environment, the deputy ministers' oversight committee, the reconciliation secretariat and a performance framework. There are six separate entities and not a single modern treaty has been completed. Now they want a seventh office, one with no enforcement power and no ability to hold ministers accountable.

• (1235)

Meanwhile, communities continue to face real challenges. Housing shortages remain severe, water systems remain unsafe and policing is still not recognized as an essential service despite years of promises. Economic development is slowed by federal bottlenecks. Climate impacts disproportionately affect indigenous communities that have been calling for action for years. All these issues are rooted in operational failures, not oversight failures. No commissioner will build a home, repair a water plant or hire police officers. What is missing is political will and departmental discipline.

We cannot overlook the federal failures in procurement and contracting that have hurt indigenous communities. We have seen firms falsely claim indigenous identity in order to win contracts. We have seen millions wasted on programs that produce very little. Do members remember ArriveCAN? It alone is a reminder of how mismanagement can drain not only public trust but also public resources. A commissioner cannot stop fraud or fix broken procurement. Only proper internal controls, transparency, consequences and accountability can do that.

Across the country, indigenous leaders are asking for reliable partnerships and predictable implementation, not more Ottawa-centric offices. They want fiscal arrangements that are clear, timely and fair. They want departments to stop shuffling responsibilities among each other, leaving treaty partners caught in the middle. They want the authority in their agreements respected, not second-guessed.

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This is why accountability must be political, not symbolic. If a department ignores a treaty commitment, its minister should answer for it. If a treaty obligation is delayed, the officials responsible should be held accountable. A commissioner cannot do that. Only leadership can. Indigenous partners should have a direct role in holding departments accountable instead of waiting for another report confirming what they already know.

Conservatives support modern treaties. We support indigenous self-government. We support moving beyond the Indian Act and strengthening nation-to-nation relationships. However, we do not support the idea that accountability can be outsourced to yet another office. Reconciliation is not achieved by hiring more bureaucrats. It is achieved by honouring the commitments we have already made, enforcing obligations and delivering measurable results.

Bill C-10 offers the appearance of accountability but not the substance of it, and that seems to be a recurring theme in the 45th Parliament. We have the appearance of accountability but not the substance of it. We have the appearance of action but not the substance of it. We have the appearance of deals, but these are just MOUs. It is a recurring theme, and this legislation continues with that theme.

The honour of the Crown is not restored by expanding government. It is restored by fulfilling promises that already exist in law. The bill would not make departments work harder. It would not increase ministerial responsibility. It would not enforce treaty obligations. What Canada needs is leadership, execution and real partnership with indigenous governments, not another office monitoring the inaction of others.

Let us do the work of implementing the treaties we already have instead of inventing new bureaucracies to explain why the work has not been done. We need promises kept, not paperwork created. That is what reconciliation requires.

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba (Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I heard my colleague listing the treaties earlier. However, she forgot to mention that we are the first government to establish a national day of remembrance for first nations. That is a powerful gesture that we made to start reconciliation off on the right foot. We wanted to establish a day on which to think about how we can move forward together.

What does she think about this day that we established as a government?

[*English*]

Rhonda Kirkland: Madam Speaker, I am not sure I completely understand the question. I believe it was implied that the Liberal government is the first to speak with first nations, which does not make much sense to me. Perhaps I did not understand the question.

I will reiterate that we either keep our promises or do not. There are promises and commitments that we have made. Adding another layer of bureaucracy will simply add paperwork rather than keep promises, as we are meant to do.

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, let us suppose that what my colleague is saying is true, that the government lacks leadership, that it has not implemented or signed enough treaties and that it has not made enough progress. That may be true.

That said, I am having a hard time following the logic of the member's argument because the government is saying that it wants to have oversight. It wants to have a commissioner with clear standards. It wants to implement the United Nations declaration, to have road maps and to improve relationships.

How is it a bad thing to have a commissioner who will accomplish those tasks? Incidentally, it is somewhat distasteful to compare a commissioner to ArriveCan. That is going a bit far. I get the impression that all passing the bill will do is ensure constant government oversight.

I do not understand how the government is failing to show leadership by having a commissioner with a clearly defined role and mandate. I would like someone to explain that to me.

[*English*]

Rhonda Kirkland: Madam Speaker, I understand the member's point of view. I guess the Liberals are admitting that they cannot do the job unless a commissioner tells them what they are doing wrong or right. They clearly have trouble implementing and making commitments, and following through on ones we have already made. As I said before, promises were made. Let us keep those promises.

Clearly, the legislation is an admission of guilt. The government cannot keep promises unless an outside body forces it to.

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am listening to the debate. The government and our colleagues down the way want more oversight. Speaking as an aboriginal leader, especially regarding the Indian Act, I think there is already a ton of oversight. There are countless committees.

The insult here is that first nations have signed the highest agreement in the Canadian Constitution, yet they are being afforded a different type of disrespect. They are not getting the full partnership the treaty promised. What is outlined in every one of the chapters and provisions is what should be implemented as a partnership. Now we are talking about adding another oversight committee.

Can my colleague talk about what it really means when we say, "Let us hold the minister responsible for implementing a treaty"?

Rhonda Kirkland: Madam Speaker, I think it is just that: We have to hold the minister responsible for implementing a treaty. We already have the commitments and agreements. Another body having to make sure it happens is redundant if the ministers responsible are doing their jobs.

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[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Madam Speaker, listening to my colleague, one would think that the positions of the various independent officers and commissioners of Parliament were useless. The fact is, they provide important oversight that strengthens accountability and promotes transparency.

There are several commissioners, including the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, the Privacy Commissioner, the Commissioner of Official Languages and so on. Does she consider all these commissioners and their roles to be useless and purely bureaucratic? I would like her to elaborate on that because I see them as important offices that help us carry out our functions as members of Parliament and help ensure government accountability.

• (1245)

[*English*]

Rhonda Kirkland: Madam Speaker, I am pretty sure we only have one Privacy Commissioner. We have one oversight for that and one oversight for the others.

Let us remember that, between 2015 and 2017, the Liberal government opened six oversight bodies: the modern treaty implementation office, the assessment of modern treaty implications office, the modern treaty management environment, and on and on it—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Now we have to go to another speaker.

Resuming debate, the hon. Minister of Indigenous Services.

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here today.

[*Member spoke in Cree and provided the following translation:*]

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that Canada's Parliament is located on the unceded and unsurrendered territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

[*Translation*]

I rise today to speak to Bill C-10, which creates a new independent officer of Parliament, specifically the commissioner for modern treaty implementation.

[*English*]

Modern treaties are not symbolic documents; they are legally binding agreements that affirm indigenous rights, support self-government and provide frameworks for economic development, environmental stewardship and cultural revitalization. Modern treaties often take time, in some places generations, to negotiate. They are among the most complex agreements our government undertakes, reflecting the rights, priorities and aspirations of indigenous peoples and Canadians alike. By their very nature, modern treaties and their implementation are non-partisan. Upholding these constitutional commitments is a shared responsibility across all parties and is one that transcends political cycles in governments.

For far too long, the implementation of modern treaties in our country has been challenging. Modern treaty partners have repeatedly raised concerns about delays, challenges in coordination, and

insufficient oversight by federal departments and agencies with respect to living up to their legal duties and obligations.

The bill has come at the request of the nations themselves, which wish to work closely with Parliament and to be able to report to it. While federal departments and ministers are there to honour the relationship and work with them, we want to ensure that modern treaties are treated with the respect and the approach that are clearly outlined in the documents themselves.

[*Translation*]

Calls from indigenous partners have been echoed in reports from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, the Land Claims Agreements Coalition and the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples. Creating the position of commissioner for modern treaty implementation responds directly to these calls.

The bill before Parliament reflects decades of advocacy by indigenous partners regarding modern treaties and collaborative efforts.

[*English*]

At its core, Bill C-10 would establish an independent commissioner for modern treaty implementation. The commissioner would answer to Parliament, the table that the partners have asked to report to and work with. Not even the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, a cabinet minister or the Prime Minister could intervene. This structure is one that my very own nation has used successfully. As the former leader of my nation, I believe it is way beyond the scope of the structure of the government today.

Without the creation of a commissioner, we would be unable to ensure that we could rightfully uphold the relationship at the true level of Parliament at which it should be addressed. The commissioner would be independent: free from political interference and pressures. Their mandate would be enshrined in law, and their reports would be tabled in Parliament for transparency, as well as for enhanced public scrutiny.

The commissioner's role would also be pivotal and fundamental in ensuring culture-specific auditing processes that would supplement the structures that exist at this moment. The commissioner would be empowered to conduct reviews and performance audits of federal departments and agencies to assess how effectively they are meeting modern treaty agreements. This would be a supplemental process that does not exist today.

The recognition of culture and ensuring that we are looking at the entirety, a holistic approach to what the community and the nation are as partners, is a critical step in respecting modern land claims.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

The commissioner will be appointed for a seven-year term with the possibility of being reappointed for one additional term. Such a long but limited cycle ensures both independence and continuity, and will allow the commissioner to exercise the oversight role free from political influence.

[*English*]

The position would be filled by someone who has deep expertise and knowledge of modern treaties. It would be a unique construct to make sure the commissioner has the credibility and understanding to provide consistent, expert and independent oversight over successive governments. That person would be selected in close consultation and partnership with modern treaty partners.

[*Translation*]

This does not duplicate the Auditor General's work. The commissioner's role is complementary but distinct, based on an approach that respects the culture and identity of the nation and the partner.

[*English*]

While the Auditor General provides broad oversight of government spending, the commissioner's mandate would be exclusive to federal modern treaty implementation activities. The commissioner would bring specialized expertise, cultural understanding and a sustained focus on Canada's constitutional commitments to indigenous partners.

The commissioner would have the flexibility to conduct audits and systemic reviews that are tools designed to identify recurring issues and improve how departments work together to enhance implementation of modern treaties. They would also focus on systemic barriers and on long-term solutions that would make the commissioner's role unique in Canada's oversight landscape, with the approach of being based in culture and the understanding of the identity of the partner. This is not reflected in today's government structure.

I wish to respectfully address my colleagues who spoke earlier today who see this as an additional duplication or layer of process. It is not; it is one that would shine the light on the importance of culture and identity for claims holders. For credibility, the commissioner would have to have expert knowledge in modern land claims and would be required to consult and engage directly with treaty partners throughout the review processes. Partners would have the opportunity to comment on preliminary findings, and their written views would be included in reports tabled to Parliament so both federal responses and indigenous perspectives would be heard. This is a critical step.

As the former leader of a modern land claim nation, I must urge my colleagues across all parties to ensure the consideration of the importance of the commissioner's role. Creating space so decisions, reflections and the verification of implementation are taken within the context of culture, language and identity is something that is needed. It is not only in the spirit of reconciliation and the approach

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to partnership; it is something that has been requested from us by our partners.

If we are to truly respect our commitment to modern land claims and treaties, we must undertake this pivotal next step.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-10 creates the position of a commissioner for modern treaty implementation. It will also give indigenous partners a role in the negotiation process for new modern treaties and the assurance that the government's commitments will be honoured.

[*English*]

They will know that the commissioner would be looking to ensure that the Government of Canada not only meets its commitments but also enhances working relationships with the understanding and respect of the cultural context.

I want to ensure that rights and the rights of the future children and grandchildren of the land claims are respected and are supported in future negotiations. True partnership is when we ensure that we invite the partner to work directly with government and report to Parliament. Anything less is not honouring the commitment of what we have signed with them.

• (1255)

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague across the way for her experience with indigenous negotiations, land claims and treaty negotiations.

I think the question on this side of the House is not about the purpose of the commissioner but about the reality of the minister's not being held responsible for not implementing a treaty. Everything in a treaty has provisions in terms of what the Crown should be doing to be an equal treaty partner. Even the bill we are talking about today says nothing that would compel the minister to honour a constitutionally protected, documented treaty.

Is there any type of language that says that the government would actually uphold the honour of the Crown in terms of implementing treaties that have been in existence for the last 30 or 40 years?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty: Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge that the minister would still have the obligation to respond to the partnership. This would not be done away with. The supplementation of a commissioner's being put into place is with regard to the reporting. It is the oversight. It is to ensure that the verification and the validity of the position of the partner would also be tabled to Parliament.

In essence, I believe that it would ensure the strengthening of findings, in terms of the implementation process of the claim. It would be supplementary to the process. I want to ensure that when we are developing the protocol, it is understood by the partner that while they would continue to work with the minister and the federal department, the commissioner would be there to further enhance accountability should there be a gap or a concern for discretion or a pathway forward.

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It is something I think would further enhance accountability directly to Parliament. This is what our partners are looking for.

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister, who I am sure will be pleased to know that I grew up in her riding.

I would like to know how the government will ensure that the role of commissioner is not politicized. I will give the example of another independent officer of Parliament, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who is appointed for seven years through a process similar to the one in Bill C-10. When the Minister of Finance and National Revenue became unhappy with the PBO's findings, he started undermining the PBO's credibility in the media and in committee saying that his was just one of many opinions. That is not to mention what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and National Revenue went so far as to do.

We know that, after seven years, the government did not replace the PBO by consulting with the other parties. It replaced the PBO temporarily and is looking for a new one, without any consent from the other parties. It is politicizing the role of an independent officer, and the appointment process for this commissioner seems remarkably similar to the process for appointing the PBO.

How can the minister assure us that the government will not politicize the appointment of commissioners like it is trying to do right now with the PBO?

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty: Madam Speaker, I also grew up in the riding. It is a treaty territory. The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement is recognized as the first modern treaty.

I think that this process reinforces partnership because I come from a nation that has been submitting reports directly to Parliament, not just to an officer of Parliament, for 50 years. We ourselves chose two commissioners who spoke to Parliament on our behalf.

Philip Awashish, Bill Namagoose and all the people on the Cree-Naskapi Commission truly demonstrated that, when nations have independence and the ability to report to Parliament, they get to define the process, the relationship and the approach to the work. That is why I strongly support Bill C-10.

My nation has been doing this work for 50 years. I am proud to say that this is an exercise based on respect for our culture, our identity and our language. Our reports are prepared in the Cree language and presented to several levels of government, not just Parliament. This gives us the opportunity to introduce ourselves and explain what the agreement is and how we work with the different levels of government.

[*English*]

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-10, an act regarding modern treaty implementation. At the outset, I want to say I am very proud to represent the Treaty No. 6 first nations in Alberta, including the Enoch Cree Nation and the Paul First Nation, as well as the area of the Michel First Nation, which remains the only first nation that was forcibly

and involuntarily enfranchised in 1958. It remains a very sensitive issue to this day. It is still seeking a return to its previous status.

For the last decade, the Liberal government has spoken about reconciliation, yet reconciliation without accountability remains a broken promise. This new office of the modern treaty commissioner would tell us nothing that the Office of the Auditor General and many indigenous leaders across the country have not already told us: that the government continues to fail and that outcomes for indigenous people continue to be poor. The proposal of a new office of the treaty commissioner is presented as progress by the government but would not address the root cause of the problem. It would only go to further creating bureaucracy and bloating a government that continues to fail indigenous peoples.

For the past decade, we have heard repeatedly from the Auditor General and indigenous peoples about where the government is failing to live up to its commitments to first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Repeated findings by the Auditor General remain unimplemented by the government. Just this past October, the Auditor General report on programs for first nations stated that, overall, "Despite an 84% increase in the department's spending on programs since the 2019–20 fiscal year, significant challenges remained in improving services and program outcomes for First Nations communities." It went from \$13 billion to \$24 billion. Accountability for this inaction rests with the cabinet and the government and should not be delegated to another layer of bureaucracy.

I want to talk about what a modern-day treaty is. A modern-day treaty is a comprehensive land claims agreement negotiated between a first nation, Métis or Inuit group and the Crown. In this case, the Crown is the federal government and, in some cases, provincial governments. Modern treaties are aimed at resolving long-standing disputes related to land ownership, resource rights and governance in a defined territory. Therefore, modern-day treaties can include land and resource provisions, financial compensation, and/or governance and decision-making authority. Once they are implemented, modern-day treaties are enforceable under federal law, and modern-day treaties can replace or clarify indigenous rights under historic treaties.

A self-government treaty is an agreement that recognizes and establishes an indigenous government. These agreements grant indigenous groups the authority to make laws in specific areas, including education, health care, culture and local services. The aim is to give more authority and administrative powers to indigenous peoples. These self-government treaties may be part of a modern-day treaty, or they may stand alone. I want to be clear that Conservatives support modern-day treaties. In fact, Conservatives were responsible for negotiating a number of modern-day treaties when we were in government. However, Conservatives do not support the assumption that increasing the size of bureaucracy and spending can compensate for the failures of the Liberal government.

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Under former prime minister Stephen Harper, the previous Conservative government signed five modern-day treaties in six years. That is a good record the government should take some lessons from. The five modern-day treaties include the Tłchq Land Claims and Self-Government Agreement, which happened in 2006; the Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement, in 2009; the Tsawwassen First Nation Final Agreement, in 2009; the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation Governance Agreement, in 2013; and the Déline Final Self-Government Agreement, in 2015. In over a decade in power, despite all the rhetoric, the Liberal government has not negotiated a single modern-day treaty.

The previous prime minister began his tenure by stating that there was no relationship more important to him and to Canada than the ones with first nations, Métis and Inuit people, and yet the former prime minister's rhetoric and the actions of his government did not live up to that promise. Across the country, basic services and community safety in indigenous communities remain far below our national standards. Indigenous police continue to be underfunded. Housing conditions remain unacceptable. Enoch Cree Nation, a relatively well-off first nation right next to a major metropolitan area, cannot even get funding for sewage from the federal government.

• (1300)

We also know there is no lack of documented evidence and reports of where the government has failed. The Auditor General has documented those failures repeatedly and outlined specific ways to address them, yet the government has not acted on them.

I would ask the House if the creation of a new modern-day treaty commissioner would require the government to actually act on the obligations it makes to indigenous communities, as my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley asked. There is nothing in the bill that would require that. If the government is not implementing the recommendations of the Auditor General, what would be any different with a new treaty commissioner?

The October 2025 Auditor General report states:

During our 2021 audit, on November 1, 2020, 60 long-term drinking water advisories were in effect in First Nations communities, despite federal commitments to eliminate them by that year. As of April 1, 2025, there were 35 such advisories.

Nine of these advisories had been in effect “for a decade or longer.”

...we found that the department took initial actions to address several of our recommendations on access to primary health care services by completing studies and assessments, but did not follow through on those steps to improve services.

...some Indigenous Services Canada programs to support First Nations communities do not have clearly defined service levels. For instance, the department has defined service levels for First Nations communities with only 1 province for evacuations during emergencies, and it has not defined service levels for comparable access to health care.

Creating a new bureaucracy in the form of a commissioner would not build any more houses. It would not hire any more indigenous police officers, and it would not ensure clean drinking water. Reconciliation needs to be measured by results, and ministers and their departments should be focused on meeting their existing obligations under treaties and under our Constitution, rather than shirking off those responsibilities to a new office that would

table reports that would go on to be further ignored by the government.

One area of particular concern for me, and I have raised this in the House before, is the government's failure to adequately fund services for at-risk first nations children. Jordan's principle is intended to fund services for these children. It exists to ensure that no child is caught in delays, conflict or jurisdictional confusion, and it is rooted in a principle that we can all agree on: that care for children, not jurisdictional squabbles, should come first.

I want to read part of a letter I received from Nicole Callihoo. She is the education director of Paul First Nation in my riding. Here are some excerpts from the letter: “We are writing today with a heavy heart and a deep sense of urgency. Despite submitting full Jordan's Principle applications and following every step as required, our school has not received the funding necessary to continue services for our students. We are now in the fourth month of the school year, and these delays contradict both the spirit and the purpose of Jordan's Principle.

“In the true way of our ancestors, we did not wait for approvals before taking care of our children. We honoured their needs and began services immediately so they would not experience further hardship or delay. These supports have brought powerful changes. Students who were once quiet and unsure have begun to speak. Those who carried worry and heaviness have started to open their hearts. They look forward to their sessions. Families have shared that they notice new calmness, confidence, and connection in their children. These are not small steps—they are the beginnings of healing.

“However, because the funding [from the government] remains outstanding, we now face the painful reality of stopping these services. Ending supports after children have finally begun to trust and feel safe goes against our cultural teachings and against everything Jordan's Principle stands for. Interrupting care will undo progress, break relationships, and cause harm that could have been prevented. This type of disruption echoes the very history that Jordan's Principle was created to stop.”

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• (1305)

I wanted to share that story because it is an example of how the government is already failing to stand up for first nations communities in my riding. Vulnerable indigenous children, whom the courts decided the federal government would have a responsibility to support, have had their funding from the government cut when they go to school off-reserve. I can tell the House that in communities like mine and communities across the country where there is not a comprehensive K-to-12 education system on-reserve, indigenous students have to go off-reserve to go to high school or junior high. When they do that, when children suffer from impediments like those, Jordan's principle should be there to provide funding for them. The government cut that funding, and it has been devastating for those families.

We do not need a commissioner to tell us the government is failing. We are here talking about it in the House right now. We need action to support those families that are being hurt by the government's cuts related to Jordan's principle. We need real action to support all of those first nations that are facing boil water advisories and facing a government that has been continually breaking its word with first nations. That is why we are going to stand up here and represent them and fight for them.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba (Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague's remarks. All he did was praise the accomplishments of his former government, the government of Mr. Harper, whom we can name here and whom he mentioned in passing.

I did not hear him offer any solutions. All he said was that this bill would create bureaucracy, that it would create many issues. I would like to know what solutions he proposes so that first nations can have a concrete tool for implementing their declaration while limiting the creation of new administrative structures.

[*English*]

Dane Lloyd: Madam Speaker, we talked about these solutions in the last election campaign. We wanted to give more powers to first nations to take control over their resource development and allow them to collect the revenues needed so that they could build up their own nations. They could build up local services. That is not to say we want the government to take a step back. The government could lean in, together with those increased resources for those first nations so they could be empowered to support their citizens.

Enoch Cree Nation in my community is a great success story, with the River Cree Resort and Casino. It has had oil and gas development and agricultural development. When first nations are empowered to develop their own resources, we see prosperity created on first nations, and we need government to lean into that as well.

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague is quite right when he says that the government often fails first nations.

I represent the Mohawk community of Kanestake in the House. I know that there have been problems with water pollution caused by criminal groups, among others. I have been hounding the government about this for years, but I cannot even get a call back. The government has shown real indifference to this issue.

My colleague thinks that the government lacks leadership when it comes to treaty implementation. Still, does he not think that having a commissioner who could serve as a sort of liaison with first nations communities would be a better way to keep a closer eye on the government, particularly a government that does so little? Would it not ultimately be an accountability tool that would allow us parliamentarians, as well as first nations themselves, to keep an eye on the government?

[*English*]

Dane Lloyd: Madam Speaker, I am familiar with the first nation community in the member's riding. My ancestors came to this country with the Mohawk peoples in 1783, fleeing the United States at the time. It is absolutely unacceptable that first nations continue to face these challenges in a country as wealthy as Canada. What we are seeing with issues like talking about creating a new commissioner is a government that is talking about window dressing, when what we really need to be talking about are tangible investments to make life better for indigenous peoples in this country. It is performative, and what we really need is accountability.

That is why I am very proud, as a member of Parliament who represents communities in the Treaty No. 6 area, to stand up in the House and fight for them and hold the government accountable, to ensure it takes action to live up to its promises.

Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Parkland for mentioning Jordan's principle. Half of our school divisions in the province of Saskatchewan are well behind in funding from the federal government, and that has caused a lot of stress around the board tables. In fact, many school divisions have actually had to make cuts in educational assistants because they had planned ahead of time and then all of a sudden the cheque from the federal government did not come to give the support.

I just want to thank the member for bringing up Jordan's principle and ask for his thoughts on the school divisions' issues with the federal government.

Dane Lloyd: Madam Speaker, this is a huge issue in my riding, in my hon. colleague's riding and in ridings across the country, where school divisions, which are primarily provincially funded, have been receiving support from the federal government following the court decision on Jordan's principle. That court decision stated that for at-risk indigenous youth, the federal government would be there to provide support for educational assistants and additional supports to help many of these children, who are struggling with very unique challenges, to get ahead and up to the same level.

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The government members have decided to withhold funding from groups like the Parkland School Division, resulting in layoffs of over 100 educational assistants in our area. That is hurting not only indigenous children but all the children in the school district, and the federal government is squarely to blame.

• (1315)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to address Bill C-10 and a fundamental issue in our nation's history: the relationship between the Crown and indigenous peoples, which must be grounded in honour, trust and, most importantly, the fulfilment of promises.

This relationship demands more than words. It demands action, yet for too long under this government, we have witnessed a pattern of rhetoric outpacing results. Over the last decade, for the Canadian federal government, reconciliation has become more of a slogan than a measurable reality. Under Bill C-10, we find another example of this trend.

Bill C-10, the commissioner for modern treaty implementation act, purports to establish a new agent of Parliament to monitor, review and audit how federal departments implement modern treaties with indigenous nations. The commissioner would conduct performance audits, assess compliance with treaty obligations objectives and the honour of the Crown itself, and report the findings to Parliament after sharing drafts with relevant departments and treaty partners.

On paper this sounds reasonable. However, far more important, in practice, it likely amounts to a multi-million dollar distraction that simply duplicates existing oversight mechanisms, lacks any real enforcement power and diverts precious resources from where they are truly needed: direct implementation, infrastructure, housing, clean water and economic opportunity for indigenous people.

Let us be frank about what modern treaties represent. These are comprehensive, hard-won agreements, often comprehensive land claim settlements, often including self-government provisions, that resolve long-standing disputes over land, resources, governance and rights. They establish enforceable federal law and empower indigenous nations to exercise authorities in areas like education, health, culture and local services. They are meant to foster true partnership, self-determination and prosperity, moving indigenous communities beyond the paternalism of the Indian Act.

Conservatives have a proud record of advancing these agreements. Under former prime minister Stephen Harper, we successfully negotiated and signed five modern treaties in just six years: the Tłı̨ch̨o land claims and self-government agreement, which was finalized in 2005 and 2006; the Maa-nulth First Nations final agreement in 2009; the Tsawwassen First Nation final agreement in 2009; the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation governance agreement in 2013; and the Délı̨nę final self-government agreement in 2015. These were not symbolic gestures. They delivered land, resources, financial settlements and governance powers that have enabled economic growth and community-led decision-making. In stark contrast, the Liberal government, now approaching 11 years in power, has signed exactly zero new modern treaties.

Seventy negotiations languish today in limbo, as they have for years. Basic commitments, such as ending long-term boil water advisories, which were, by the way, promised to be completely resolved by 2021, remain unfulfilled in dozens of communities, to the detriment of these communities. Housing shortages persist. Policing is under-resourced in many areas, and climate vulnerabilities hit indigenous nations hardest. As for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, many still gather dust.

The Auditor General, a commissioner who already has powers to document all of these issues, has extensively documented these failures, repeatedly, over the last 11 years. There have been more than 20 reports that have highlighted chronic issues: inconsistent departmental interpretations of treaty terms; delayed or incomplete fiscal transfers; fragmented responsibilities across Indigenous Services Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations, Justice Canada and the Treasury Board; and most damningly, a complete absence of consequences when obligations are ignored.

Key audits include the 2013 comprehensive review of modern treaty implementation, the 2016 report on the Labrador-Inuit claims agreement and follow-ups in subsequent years showing little meaningful progress on any issue by the Liberal government. Even as recently as 2005, the Auditor General's follow-up on first nations' programs underscored ongoing implementation gaps and unsatisfactory actions on prior recommendations, yet the government responds not with decisive leadership but with more bureaucracy, as we find in the bill before us.

• (1320)

In this bill, we find another commissioner, another office, another \$10.6 million over four years with ongoing annual millions of funding that could instead be used to fund homes, water systems or job-creating projects. The commissioner in this bill would review, monitor, assess, evaluate and report, but those are words that the Auditor General's mandate already has.

Unlike the Auditor General, this new role offers no binding recommendations, no penalties for non-compliance and no ability to compel departmental action. Reports under the bill would filter through the minister before Parliament sees them, how convenient, risking dilution or delay. Parliament itself has no power to initiate audits under this new recommendation. This is not robust accountability. It is simply performative oversight designed to deflect criticism from the federal Liberal government's lack of action.

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Indigenous leaders and treaty partners deserve better than more endless reports. They deserve results. The Supreme Court's 2024 Restoule decision on the Robinson treaties reminds us what happens when the Crown fails its duties for generations: breaches of trust, prolonged litigation and eroded confidence. We cannot afford to repeat that cycle with modern treaties.

True reconciliation requires executive responsibility, not administrative expansion. Departments must prioritize treaty fulfilment in budgets and operations. Ministers must face consequences for lapses through performance evaluations, public scrutiny or even personnel changes when the failures are systemic. Indigenous governments should have direct funded channels to flag issues and demand response without bureaucratic intermediaries, as is outlined in this bill.

There are many other ways that the government could do better on all of these fronts. For example, it could enforce existing obligations directly by tying ministerial and deputy ministerial performance reviews explicitly to treaty compliance metrics, ensuring personal accountability for delays or breaches. The government could strengthen the Auditor General's monetary capacity by allocating dedicated and highly structured resources within the OAG for specialized recurring modern treaty audits with faster follow-up mechanisms and mandatory parliamentary briefings. It could impose strict response timelines that would mandate that departments must provide detailed action plans and progress updates within 90 days of any Auditor General finding or treaty partner complaint.

The government could accelerate stalled negotiations by setting clear timelines and processes for concluding the 70 ongoing talks, redirecting funds from redundant offices to bolster negotiation teams and support direct implementation. It could redirect the proposed costs associated with this bill towards achieving tangible priorities, including housing construction, clean water infrastructure, policing enhancements and economic development in treaty territories. The government could better empower indigenous-led oversight mechanisms by supporting direct oversight protocols that allow modern treaty partners to trigger departmental reviews and enforce transparency with new federal layers. It could advance economic reconciliation by fast-tracking resource partnerships, revenue sharing and development projects under existing treaties to generate jobs, self-sufficiency and community wealth.

The government could consolidate duplicative entities, instead of creating more of them, by merging or eliminating overlapping post-2015 offices into a single streamlined accountability framework with real, actual enforcement authority. It could enhance dispute resolution tools to better ensure expedited access to mediation, arbitration or tribunals in treaty disputes, reducing costly court battles. The government could shift to outcome-based metrics by replacing vague reporting with clear, public key performance indicators, such as homes completed, water advisories lifted and governance powers exercised. These are all things that would demonstrate visible progress as opposed to another bureaucracy.

Reconciliation is not measured by the number of offices in Ottawa or the volumes of reports produced. It should be measured by safe homes built, clean water flowing, strong policing in communities, thriving economies and the full honouring of nation-to-nation promises. Conservatives stand firmly for indigenous economic em-

powerment and accountability that delivers results, not more red tape.

We will not support Bill C-10 in its current form because it distracts from leadership failures and perpetuates delay. Let us instead demand action, enforce what already exists, hold people accountable and deliver for indigenous persons, who have waited long enough.

● (1325)

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, as a member of INAN, the indigenous and northern affairs committee, I welcome a lot of the member's suggestions because the criticism we get from the government is that we do not have suggestions. The member has touched upon a lot of the issues, specifically one that has hit my riding.

Does the member think they could work with what they have available now, or does the process need to change? In my riding, the Exshaw School was going to have to close because it was reliant on the neighbouring Stoney nation, which had all its kids there, and the government was not paying for the school. The school was about to close until the eleventh hour.

Does the member think it is just that the Liberals do not get things done, or do they need to change the process entirely?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, my colleague would know from hearing testimony from indigenous persons at his committee that the reality is that when there are critical issues on the ground or ongoing generational issues, what often happens is that they get raised and then they go into this black box ether of multidepartmental malaise and event horizon that results in nothing. It results in more reports and more obfuscation, and that is not how we are going to achieve reconciliation in Canada.

Again, I tried to put forward concrete recommendations for the government to move away from more bureaucracy, more paternalism and more complaints, ending up in an endless morass of bureaucracy, and toward real key performance indicator-based outcomes that we can measure, like more schools built and boil water advisories lifted. This is where we need to go, and it is very disappointing to see yet another bureaucracy put in place as opposed to talking about actual outcomes.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Calgary Nose Hill for sharing her perspective with us, although it is not one that I share. The Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-10. We think it is a good idea to have a commissioner.

However, if the bill is passed and a commissioner is appointed, I am concerned about the appointment process. Earlier, I gave the example of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who is also appointed for seven years, who is independent of Parliament, and whose appointment—which is supposed to be a consensus decision—is becoming politicized. We know that the Minister of Finance has done everything possible to undermine his credibility and that the Liberals may be in the process of choosing the new Parliamentary Budget Officer without consulting the other parties. I wonder what my colleague thinks about commissioners being appointed by the Governor in Council, which basically means by the Prime Minister.

Does my colleague not think that, if the bill is passed, we should perhaps try out a new method and have an appointment process that directly involves Parliament?

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, I also have concerns about the politicization of the Parliamentary Budget Officer appointment. I think Parliament should have more influence and oversight in that appointment process. However, at the same time, the member also gave the exact argument for why colleagues in this place should not be supporting this bill. A better option to have more oversight would be to have fenced, allocated resources within the existing scope of the Auditor General's office, because it has teeth behind its processes.

I believe, if Bill C-10 passes, indigenous persons are going to experience more delays, more obfuscations and more politicization, as opposed to achieving actual results. We should be talking about lifted boil water advisories, economic opportunities and resource partnership development. That is where we need to be driving, and that is what we should be talking about here.

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is very good this morning to hear the comments from the members opposite and their new-found respect for treaties and also for reconciliation.

I am just wondering how the member opposite would reconcile that with the comments from her leader that the federal government should override indigenous rights in order to get pipelines built, regardless of the objection of those rights holders.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, first of all, the Leader of the Opposition sat in a government that successfully negotiated and finalized six modern-day treaties. My colleague opposite sits in a government that has negotiated zero treaties over 11 years. The proof is in the pudding.

Second of all, the Prime Minister, the leader of the member's party, has claimed that he wants to build pipelines, yet he cannot point to a shovel in the ground. I think what is going to happen is that the Liberals' voter coalition is rapidly going to fall apart because they do not have the chops to do exactly what my colleague opposite said, which is advance resource development processes while—

• (1330)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): We are out of time and need to resume debate.

The hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk.

Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-10, an act respecting the commissioner for modern treaty implementation.

At its core, the bill responds to long-standing concerns raised by indigenous communities about the need for greater federal accountability in implementing modern treaties and agreements. These treaties are essentially comprehensive land claims agreements that are negotiated between first nations, Inuit and Métis groups and the Crown to resolve long-standing disputes in defined territories.

I want to recognize that indigenous communities have long asked for a mechanism to ensure that Canada fulfills its promises under these treaties. However, the way the bill seeks to achieve that goal raises important concerns about accountability, clarity and the impact on existing property rights.

First, many of the functions the commissioner would perform are already done within the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations. By codifying them in law and creating a new office, we risk duplicating roles, blurring the lines of authority and diffusing ministerial responsibility.

Despite appearances, the commissioner for modern treaties implementation would not be an officer of Parliament like the Auditor General or the Ethics Commissioner, who are appointed by and report directly to Parliament itself. They are independent of government and do not exist to hold the executive, the Prime Minister and the cabinet to account.

However, under Bill C-10, the commissioner would be appointed by cabinet, via the Governor in Council, on the advice of the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations. This means the commissioner would sit within the executive branch, the Prime Minister's cabinet, and not the legislative branch. While the commissioner would table reports in Parliament, they would answer to the very government they are meant to monitor. Parliament could not direct them, remove them or review their work in any substantive way. This is a very serious oversight gap.

We have seen this problem before. The Canada Infrastructure Bank was designed with similar intentions: to be at arm's length, efficient and transparent. Instead, it became a costly entity with limited parliamentary scrutiny, spending billions while accountability remained murky. This new proposed office, with \$10.6 million over four years, risks following the same path.

Government Orders

I also note that no external oversight mechanisms are built into Bill C-10, which is a very big omission. There would be no independent review body overseeing the commissioner. There would be no performance audit or sunset clause. There would be no clear consequences for failing to act on findings. There would be no mandatory parliamentary committee review at fixed intervals.

These omissions of accountability are not abstract. They would have real-world consequences, particularly when it comes to land and resource rights. In provinces such as Alberta and British Columbia, people are, right now, experiencing the practical impacts of uncertainty due to overlapping land rights. Landowners with fee simple title, which is the form of title most Canadians own their home under, are worried. These landowners believed their property rights were secure, but they are discovering that they may need to consult indigenous groups before doing things like building a dock, harvesting timber or even walking through nearby forested areas.

The Cowichan Tribes v. Canada decision has shown that even the long-held title ownership Canadians have in their homes and lands does not always confer absolute control. This has created a great deal of uncertainty for landowners, lenders and the real estate market. As treaty rights continue to expand across the country, this decision would continue to touch more communities, municipalities and resource-rich regions across Canada.

• (1335)

As these modern treaties are implemented, we must also prepare Canadians for the changes that will follow. This is why the roles, powers and accountability mechanisms of the commissioner must be clearly defined, which is something that is not present in the bill and that the bill fails to do. We do not need a new layer of bureaucracy with undefined reach into matters that affect both indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians. It is crucial that the government communicate all policies and legal shifts openly and honestly with Canadians. Canadians deserve to understand not only the rights being affirmed for indigenous communities but also their own rights. Canadians also need to understand how their rights, including property rights and resource rights, may be affected.

This is about transparency and fairness. People cannot respect or adapt to what has been hidden from them. If we fail to prepare the public and if these developments arise suddenly or unevenly, we risk confusion, frustration and unnecessary division. For years, the government has talked about reconciliation, but without accountability and without clarity, reconciliation will never be achieved. The path ahead must therefore include national education that explains how treaty rights and private ownership rights coexist under Canadian law and how governments intend to manage those inter-sectionalities.

Canadians must not be left to learn through conflict or court cases. They must be included through dialogue, communication and truth. The relationship between Canada and indigenous peoples must be built on trust, integrity and transparency. Trust is not created by removing ministerial responsibility or by insulating bureaucracies from scrutiny. We cannot allow the new commissioner to become a parallel system of governance funded by taxpayers, shielded from oversight and empowered to make decisions that could change the relationship with Canada's indigenous peoples,

property rights in Canada and the economic stability of the country without direct accountability.

There is a basic irony here in the government creating a treaty commissioner who could not be overlooked. At its core, the implementation of treaties is the responsibility of cabinet ministers. These are elected officials who are accountable to Parliament and to Canadians, and whose role is to ensure that government programs and policies uphold the law and meet Canada's obligations. Bill C-10 would create a new, cabinet-appointed office to audit and monitor federal departments, effectively outsourcing a core ministerial responsibility.

I am not kidding. The government is creating an office to monitor whether it does the very job taxpayers elected it to do. Taxpayers pay ministers close to \$350,000 every year, yet the ministers have the audacity to outsource their responsibility to commissioners they appoint. The Liberal government is taking outsourcing, obviously, to another level. This is simply circular accountability, where ministers evade ownership of the consequences of their decisions. This so-called independent commissioner would likely become a shield for government, allowing ministers to deflect responsibility and accountability from treaty implementation and land rights. The proposed arrangement raises some fundamental questions. If a minister's duty is to ensure compliance, why is an independent office needed to check that they are doing their job?

In short, and in closing, while the spirit of the bill aims to improve accountability and transparency, it actually risks the opposite by allowing ministers to abdicate their duty to Parliament and hide behind the commissioners. This is why any discussion of oversight must focus on holding ministers directly accountable. We must ensure the commissioner's work supports, rather than substitutes, democracy and responsibility.

• (1340)

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there were a lot of interesting points made by the member opposite. In particular, I take her point about property rights and economic stability.

She noted, at the beginning of her comments, that the bill on the commissioner for modern treaties was built and developed with the support of, and in consultation with, indigenous rights holders and indigenous communities across Canada.

I wonder how she would respond to them, in that the bill would implement specifically what they have been asking for.

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Leslyn Lewis: Madam Speaker, the important issue is one of reconciliation. If we implement a system that blocks accountability and allows the ministers to deflect responsibility, it would not lead to reconciliation.

It is very important that, with Bill C-10, people recognize that this system would ensure that the minister would appoint a commissioner, and that the commissioner would then be accountable to the same minister who appointed them. This would deflect the responsibility of the cabinet, which is supposed to be accountable for reconciliation in this country.

[*Translation*]

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are talking about creating this position through Bill C-10, which we are debating today. We can only commend the creation of this position as an important step.

I am a member of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. For genuine reconciliation with indigenous peoples to occur, we must ensure that action is taken for indigenous women and girls. How many reports show that they are disproportionately affected by problems of all kinds? What does my colleague think about that?

[*English*]

Leslyn Lewis: Madam Speaker, there are a number of recommendations in the report that deal with the status of indigenous women. What is important for reconciliation, and for indigenous women to feel empowered, is making sure that whatever system is in place is not filled with bureaucracy but rather responds to their needs and does not deflect responsibility away from ministers.

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Madam Speaker, in Canada, we already have one of the most senior and most powerful institutions. The Auditor General is already saying that Canada is failing at its treaty obligations. There are half a dozen oversight committees. There are aboriginal groups advocating for government to live up to its commitments under treaties. There are also the treaty provisions themselves that speak to accountability.

Would the creation of a new commissioner compel the ministers and the government to live up to treaty obligations?

Leslyn Lewis: Madam Speaker, it would absolutely not. It would not compel.

In fact, it would create another layer of bureaucracy the government could deflect its responsibilities onto. The Auditor General has an auditing mechanism already in place. The bill would infuse another layer of bureaucracy and make it even more complicated for indigenous communities to hold the government to account, because the government would then have a commissioner as a buffer whom it could blame for all its failings.

Tako Van Popta (Langley Township—Fraser Heights, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are talking about the creation of a commission for modern treaty implementation, which would replace the very effective work that has been done by the Office of the Auditor General. The Auditor General is responsible for reviewing government operations for accountability, transparency and the effective use of public funds.

Does my colleague agree that this new commission would have an inferior mandate, in that it would not have to audit the effective use of public funds?

• (1345)

Leslyn Lewis: Madam Speaker, yes, this new position would not have to audit public funds. In fact, it would be a buffer to ministers answering for what is done with these funds.

Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today and speak to this legislation, Bill C-10, an act respecting the commissioner for modern treaty implementation.

This legislation is presented by the government as a path to improved indigenous relations and accountability, yet when I look closely at both the text of this legislation and the lived realities of the people I represent, I must say that sadly, the legislation will neither improve relations between the government and indigenous people nor increase accountability. I believe this bill is fundamentally misaligned with the priorities of urban indigenous communities like Saskatoon West.

Saskatoon West's population is approximately 18% indigenous, according to the 2021 census, which is a rate that is far higher than the national average. Saskatoon West is an urban riding and a community where indigenous people are teachers, business owners, nurses, parents, students, entrepreneurs, tradespeople and neighbours. They live in apartment buildings, single family homes, rental units and multi-generational households throughout our community. Indigenous people in Saskatoon need results, not more bureaucracy.

What is Bill C-10? In short, it is more bureaucracy. Bill C-10 proposes the creation of a new federal office of commissioner for modern treaty implementation. The commissioner is tasked with monitoring, reviewing and reporting on treaty implementation, but monitoring, reviewing and reporting are not solutions; they are processes and paperwork. It is another layer of bureaucracy that Ottawa can point to when asked why tangible progress has not been made.

We must ask simple questions: How will this new commissioner create jobs in Saskatoon West? How will they make housing more affordable? How will they lower the cost of food and energy for families struggling to make ends meet? The answer, quite simply, is that they will not. This legislation would do nothing to grapple with the real economic pressures facing urban indigenous residents. It would do nothing to create meaningful employment opportunities, make housing more accessible and affordable in our city or reduce the extraordinarily high cost of living that burdens all families every month.

Government Orders

When indigenous families in Saskatoon West tell me that they are struggling to keep up with the cost of groceries, they are not talking about treaty implementation reports; they are talking about real life and real household costs that are compounded by federal tax policies that raise the price of goods, fuel and transportation. An example is the industrial carbon tax, which has pushed up the cost of diesel, natural gas and transportation across the economy. This tax may be an abstract policy for some here in Ottawa, but for families in Saskatoon West, it translates directly into higher heating bills in the winter, higher gas prices at the pump and higher prices for everything that has to be delivered by a truck, including groceries, clothing and household goods. For indigenous seniors on fixed incomes, this means hard choices between heating their homes and buying food; for indigenous parents working minimum wage jobs or multiple part-time jobs, it means stretching every dollar just to keep a roof over their children's heads; and for indigenous youth trying to launch careers, this means fewer opportunities and more barriers.

This is not rhetoric; it is what I hear every week from constituents in Saskatoon West. What indigenous communities in urban Canada and in my riding of Saskatoon West need are policies that empower, employ and uplift them, not policies that just observe and report. They need real job creation and skills training. Indigenous youth and adults in our community deserve sustainable employment that offers a living wage.

The Conservative plan, rooted in economic growth, will remove barriers to investment, cut red tape for small businesses and help urban indigenous entrepreneurs succeed. This is the kind of approach that creates dignity and independence, not dependence on endless studies. Like many places in Canada, housing is also a crisis in Saskatoon West. Indigenous families, like all families, struggle with unaffordable rents, limited supply and skyrocketing prices. Building more homes means more supply, which means lower prices. Conservatives have long advocated for removing the federal policies that slow housing construction, cutting needless regulatory barriers and incentivizing both private and indigenous-led housing.

Conservatives support strong relationships with indigenous leaders that are rooted in accountability. If departments fail to uphold their commitments, there should be real consequences, not another memo to a bureaucratic office. If funding is promised, it should be delivered on time and in full. If jobs or housing targets are set, they should be measured independently and transparently, but with teeth, not just reports.

Indigenous residents of Saskatoon West are not interested in symbolic gestures. Like all Canadians, the indigenous people in the riding of Saskatoon West are interested in outcomes, including jobs that pay, homes that are affordable, children who are safe and futures that are bright. Bill C-10 does not deliver these outcomes; it will not reduce food costs or lower energy bills. Nowhere in this debate are Liberals talking about creating jobs that indigenous and all youth are desperate for. The Liberals are making no effort to build the homes that families need to live in housing they can afford. The government must do better, and we must do better.

• (1350)

I have already said that this legislation is about building bureaucracy. Ronald Reagan famously said, "If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it." We have seen time and again from the Liberal government that the solution to every problem is more government, another department and more layers of bureaucrats. To a hammer, everything looks like a nail. That summarizes the government. We have seen this approach repeatedly.

Starting with indigenous affairs, the Liberals split the former indigenous and northern affairs Canada department in 2017 into two new departments: Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, and Indigenous Services Canada. The stated goal was to improve service delivery and reconciliation. The real-world result was more deputy ministers, more bureaucracy and more spending, while indigenous communities continued to face housing shortages, boil water advisories, health gaps and treaty implementation failures. Indigenous Services Canada was sold as the delivery department. Years later, outcomes have not really improved, and here we are with Bill C-10. The lesson is clear: Creating a new department did not fix the problem. It added complexity.

The same pattern appears in climate and environmental policy. When the Liberals repeatedly missed their own emissions targets, they created the net-zero advisory board in 2021. This body has no authority, no enforcement power and no accountability mechanism. It exists to advise, audit and report, while Canadians pay higher costs and targets are still missed. This is the exact same model as is proposed in Bill C-10. They also replaced the environmental assessment regime with the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada in 2019. The promise was better assessments. The reality has been longer approval times, regulatory uncertainty, stalled projects, lost investment and fewer jobs. With more regulation comes less certainty and fewer results.

Government Orders

In housing and infrastructure, the pattern continues. The government launched Build Canada Homes and rebranded funding envelopes, but communities are still waiting years for approvals. It created the Canada Infrastructure Bank in 2017, claiming it would unlock investment and accelerate major projects. Billions were allocated, but project delivery was slow. Even the Auditor General raised serious concerns. When housing affordability spiralled out of control, the response was not to build more homes or remove gatekeepers. It was to create the federal housing advocate in 2021, an office that can issue reports and recommendations but cannot build a single home. Housing affordability continues to worsen.

Bill C-10 fits this exact pattern. Just like with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Indigenous Services Canada, the net-zero advisory board, the Impact Assessment Agency, Build Canada Homes, the Canada Infrastructure Bank and the federal housing advocate, the bill risks becoming another Liberal monument to process over results.

The debate we are having today is about something fundamental: the honour of the Crown, and the relationship between the federal government and indigenous people. That relationship is not built through org charts, offices or glossy annual reports, but on trust, action and delivery. Unfortunately, after nearly a decade in power, the Liberal government has demonstrated a consistent pattern. When it fails to deliver results, it creates another level of bureaucracy and calls it progress. This legislation, Bill C-10, is a perfect example of that.

Let us be clear about what the commissioner could and could not do. They would have no binding authority. They could not compel departments to act, enforce treaty obligations or impose consequences on ministers or officials who fail indigenous treaty partners. What are we doing here? What would the commissioner actually be able to do? They could observe and report. Then what? Indigenous nations would still be left to do what they have always been forced to do under Liberal governments: hire lawyers, go to court and fight the Crown to enforce agreements that are already law.

We already know where the failures are. The leaders have told us. Parliamentary committees have heard it. The Auditor General has reported on it repeatedly. The problem is not a lack of oversight but a lack of execution. Creating a commissioner does not fix that.

It is worth reminding the House that modern treaties are not symbolic documents but constitutionally protected agreements in federal law. Implementing them is not optional, yet under the Liberal government, not a single modern treaty has been finalized, despite more than 70 groups currently being in negotiations.

The Conservative record was much better at completing agreements. Until such time as the Liberals start putting the needs of the indigenous people of Saskatoon West ahead of those of the bureaucrats in Ottawa, I cannot and will not support this legislation.

• (1355)

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with respect to projects of national interest, we heard over and over again from the many witnesses at the natural resources committee that the path forward for Canada is working in

reconciliation with indigenous rights holders to get projects built and to share that economic prosperity.

Can the member opposite comment on his leader's opinion that the federal government should override those rights in order to build pipelines?

Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, within the member's question was the whole point of this. People, whether they are indigenous people or all people in Canada, quite frankly, are asking for results. People want to see results. People want to see their lives get better. They want to see better job prospects. They want to make more money. They want to have a roof over their heads. They want to have their families protected and their lives made better in Canada with the promise of Canada. This kind of legislation is not helping them.

This legislation would create bureaucracy. It would probably create jobs here in Ottawa. It would spend a lot of money doing something that we can already do in the systems, groups and bureaucracy that we already have.

Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, in Canada we have several means of protecting civil liberties, whether it be law enforcement, the Canadian Armed Forces or other mechanisms. In that same line of thinking, indigenous people deserve just as much protection as all Canadians. I wonder if the member agrees that the more that we have to ensure that there is implementation of important contracts like the modern treaties, the more measures like this are necessary to ensure that the treaties are being implemented.

Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, of course it is important. We have laws in this country that need to be enforced and things that need to be done. The government has obligations to all kinds of people—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Order. It is very difficult to hear ourselves think in here. Can we check on what is happening in the courtyard, please?

The hon. member for Saskatoon West.

Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, the government has obligations to fulfill things like treaties, but another bureaucracy would not solve that problem. We already have ministers. We have two indigenous departments in the government. We have an Auditor General. There are many, many ways that these kinds of things can be enforced and implemented, and that is what needs to be done. We need action on these things. We need them to be done, not to create more bureaucracies the government can just point to and say, "Well, we did this," instead of actually acting.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]*

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague and congratulate him on his speech.

Today, the Conservatives are saying that this new position of commissioner for modern treaty implementation would not be good for indigenous communities. I would like to remind my colleague that, when Bill C-5 on projects of national interest was being studied in June, indigenous communities were not consulted. At the time, the interests of indigenous communities were not important to his party. Now my colleague is saying that the interests of indigenous communities are important after all.

Last June, the Conservatives did not think it was important to consult these communities on a bill their party supported using a gag order imposed by the Liberals. Now, regarding Bill C-10, which seeks to create a commissioner responsible for helping indigenous people enforce treaty law, consultation is suddenly important. I wonder if my colleague can explain this rather blatant inconsistency.

[English]

Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, it is important for us to consult all people, whether for a new pipeline or whatever the project might be. Once again, I am coming back to the point that this legislation would not actually help that. We already have the mechanisms in government. We have departments and ministers. We have an abundance of bureaucrats. We have an Auditor General. We have so many different ways that we can consult with communities in Canada, particularly with indigenous communities in Canada.

Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, my friend from Saskatoon West highlighted quite well our position on this bill. We agree that the government has been failing for decades to live up to the words of treaties, modern or otherwise. We appreciate the frustration the partners have had with this. The problem we have with this legislation is that there would be no enforcement. What would the consequences be? I think the member would like to comment more.

● (1400)

Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, my colleague hit on a wonderful point here, that ultimately there need to be teeth in legislation. When we do things around here that are meant to help people, there should be ways for those reports or mechanisms that come back from commissioners, or whoever it might be, to actually generate results, because, ultimately, that is the goal. We want results. We need results in this country, and that is something we are sorely lacking right now.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

*[English]***IRAN**

Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Iranian Canadians' hearts ache every day. It is the silence after an email that never delivers, the fear when a loved one cannot be reached and the worry that a simple act of courage will be met

with violence. In our communities across B.C.'s Lower Mainland, many are living this reality right now, as they have relatives and friends in Iran facing repression, detention and worse. To them, I want to say clearly, I hear them and they are not alone.

We mourn those who have been lost, including the victims of flight PS752, and we stand with families still seeking truth, justice and accountability. I will keep listening to Iranian Canadians, and I will keep pressing the Government of Canada to work with partners to defend human rights and protect our communities here from intimidation and foreign interference.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATE

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, St. Thomas More was the Lord Chancellor of England, and he was imprisoned and executed because he refused to violate his conscience. Today, watching the sentencing of Jimmy Lai, it is impossible not to see the parallels between More and this modern champion of truth and justice.

Jimmy Lai fled mainland China and arrived in Hong Kong as a penniless refugee at the age of 12. He went on to become an incredibly successful entrepreneur and media mogul. After the Tiananmen Square massacre, he fully oriented his resources toward freedom, democracy and justice.

Lai was baptized by another Hong Kong democracy hero, Cardinal Joseph Zen, right after the infamous handover. As a man of faith, Lai fearlessly redoubled his efforts to defend his home from tyranny. For his fight, Jimmy Lai has now been handed a 20-year prison sentence. Christians will see these events through the lens of the cross and redemptive suffering. Lai's fight for Hong Kong does not end today. It only grows through his sacrifice.

I call on the Prime Minister to speak out in support of Jimmy Lai's release.

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OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Shannon Miedema (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Olympics take off, Canadians from coast to coast to coast are cheering on our team Canada athletes. I am especially excited to support our national women's hockey team. This is a strong team made up of talented players from across the PWHL, including Blayne Turnbull, from Stellarton, Nova Scotia.

I want to shout out head coach Troy Ryan, who grew up in Spryfield, which is in my riding of Halifax. As a long-time advocate for women's hockey, Troy has coached teams such as the Toronto Sceptres and the women's team at the 2022 Olympics. He is a proven leader and a great representative for Halifax and Canada.

I congratulate our team Canada players and staff, and all athletes participating in events in Milano Cortina. Canada is proud to have them representing us.

* * *

OLYMPIC MEDAL WINNER

Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a treat to rise today in the House to congratulate Megan Oldham on her incredible bronze medal performance at the Milan Olympics. Megan's achievement is the result of years of hard work, discipline, sacrifice and relentless effort, but the quiet determination it takes to compete on the world stage is what we saw.

When Canadians watched Megan stand on the podium, they did not just see a medal. They saw the payoff of commitment, resilience and belief. She reminded young athletes all across Canada that excellence is built one day at a time, often far from the spotlight.

On behalf of Canadians, I want to thank Megan for representing our country so beautifully and so classily. Her determination is incredible, and her success is a source of pride for her hometown of Parry Sound, the people of Parry Sound—Muskoka, all Canadians in sport and all of us here in the House. I invite all my colleagues to congratulate Megan on her bronze medal performance.

* * *

● (1405)

[Translation]

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Claude Guay (LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, housing affordability is the number one concern for people in my riding. Rents are too high, young people are unable to save up enough for a down payment and seniors are worried that they might be forced out of their own neighbourhoods.

[English]

This is why my top priority from day one has been simple and clear, to build more homes.

[Translation]

Last year, I announced two new social housing projects in our riding. These projects are now making headway and creating housing for real people in our community. With the new Canada-Quebec housing agreement and our collaboration with Build Canada Homes, even more local projects are already in the works. Every new home we build means more than a roof over someone's head: It means stability for a family, dignity for a senior or person experiencing homelessness, and resilience for our community.

[English]

We are building faster, building smarter and delivering results where it counts.

* * *

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, February 22 is Canada's National Human Trafficking Awareness

Statements by Members

Day, and this is thanks to the hard work of the all party parliamentary group to end human trafficking and modern-day slavery. Human trafficking is a crime that turns people into objects to be used and exploited. It is vicious and it is profitable. It is happening right here in Canada.

In the book of Isaiah, God calls each of us to learn to do what is right, to seek justice and to defend the oppressed. In Canada, the vast majority of human trafficking victims are women and girls who were born right here in our nation. However, we know that human trafficking can happen to anyone.

As we approach National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, I want to encourage my colleagues and all Canadians to do three things: learn the signs of human trafficking; know the national hotline, 1-833-900-1010; and help raise awareness in their communities. May we be relentless, courageous and committed as we seek to eliminate all forms of human trafficking and modern-day slavery right here in Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA'S AGRICULTURE DAY

Marianne Dandurand (Compton—Stanstead, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, agriculture is a highly strategic sector in Canada. It feeds our communities, supports the economy and helps Canada feed the world.

Now more than ever, we need to see the agriculture and agri-food industry as a pillar of our national security. Our farms are among the most productive in the world, despite the fact that we have a harsh climate and a shorter growing season.

Since today is Canada's Agriculture Day, I want to thank farmers in the Eastern Townships and across the country. Feeding our nation is no small matter. It is crucial.

[English]

Canadian agriculture is a strategic sector. It feeds our communities, strengthens our economy and allows Canada to help feed the world. Food production and security are also matters of national security.

In the eastern townships and across the country, farmers and food producers are a source of strength and pride. On Canada's Agriculture Day, I want to recognize the essential work of those who feed us.

* * *

[Translation]

VALÉRIE MALTAIS

Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations to La Baie native Valérie Maltais for bringing home Canada's first medal of the Milano Cortina Olympics by winning bronze in the 3,000-metre long track last Saturday.

Statements by Members

This Olympic medal puts Saguenay, Quebec and Canada on the map. Valérie was named Speed Skating Canada's female athlete of the year in both short track and long track, and she has won various medals around the world, including Olympic gold in team pursuits. This is a testament to her determination and exceptional character. Her remarkable journey inspires our youth and reminds us that the greatest success stories can start in our communities and regions.

Chicoutimi—Le Fjord and all of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean wish her the best of luck in her upcoming events and in the rest of her career.

Thank you to Valérie for making us so proud.

* * *

FRANCO NUOVO

Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Franco Nuovo just passed away unexpectedly, without warning, almost brazenly. We thought he was away for what, a week? Now, we are left wondering who will brighten our Sunday mornings, who will join us for a coffee. As Leonard Cohen put it, “Hey, that's no way to say goodbye”.

As a commentator, critic and host, Nuovo picked up where Le Bigot left off as our weekend companion. He was a familiar voice on Quebec's airwaves for decades, one of that increasingly rare breed of radio hosts who have an opinion about everything, who are cultivated and a little arrogant, tender-hearted yet tough.

I want to thank Mr. Nuovo for all his outbursts, for all the help he gave to emerging artists, for all the lively interviews, for all the pauses, the laughter and the on-air camaraderie.

* * *

● (1410)

[*English*]

LOCAL AUTHOR

Braedon Clark (Sackville—Bedford—Preston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Rachel Reid, a Canadian author and a constituent in my riding of Sackville—Bedford—Preston. As of this week, three of Rachel's novels, all from her Game Changer book series, have spent well over a month on the New York Times bestsellers list, reaching the number four position for combined print and e-book fiction. Books from her series also occupy the top five positions on the Globe and Mail bestsellers list for Canadian fiction.

Rachel's work has found readers around the world and has even made the leap to the small screen, with the TV adaptation of her book *Heated Rivalry* becoming a smash global sensation. Through her writing, she has helped expand the types of stories and perspectives that reach mainstream audiences, breaking down barriers and reminding us that Canadian stories are the best stories.

I would like to congratulate Rachel on her remarkable success. She has made our riding, our province and our country proud, and we all cannot wait to see what she does next.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Jagsharan Singh Mahal (Edmonton Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Edmonton residents are paying the price of inaction in the Liberal extortion crisis.

Every day I hear about extortionists and gangsters who are threatening families and businesses in Edmonton and across the country. Meanwhile, the government has done nothing but weakened sentencing and pushed catch-and-release bail. Liberal Bill C-5 scrapped mandatory jail time, and Liberal Bill C-75 forces judges to release repeat violent offenders back into our communities.

Criminals should fear the law; law-abiding Canadians should not. Under the Liberal government, extortion is up 330%. A Conservative government will bring back mandatory minimum sentences for extortion. These criminals deserve to be in jail, not on bail. It is time to stop crime, end the chaos and bring home safe streets to Edmonton.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FRANCO NUOVO

Sophie Chatel (Pontiac—Kitigan Zibi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the sudden loss of Franco Nuovo has shaken Quebec as a whole. Like many francophone listeners across Canada, I could count on his voice, his personality and his insights to set the tone for my Sunday mornings. He knew how to create unique moments by making radio a meeting place, a space for dialogue and exploration, but above all, for culture.

His passing is an incredible loss for Quebec, which has lost not only one of its warmest voices, but also an extraordinary host, journalist, columnist and, most importantly, a passionate advocate for culture, engagement and the francophone community. For more than five decades, Franco informed, inspired and brought us together.

We offer our sincere condolences to his family and loved ones, as well as to all those who loved him and listened to him faithfully. We share their grief.

* * *

[*English*]

THE COST OF FOOD

Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three years ago the Liberal finance minister promised Canadians that he would stabilize food prices. Well, he failed.

Since that promise, lettuce is up 40%, beef is up 27%, and baby formula is up 13%. While Liberals excuse their failure as a global phenomenon, the facts tell a different story. Canada now leads the G7 in food inflation. It is double what it was when the Prime Minister took office and twice the U.S. rate. The result is that Canadians are forced to make 2.2 million visits to food banks every month. Food bank usage has more than doubled under the Liberals.

Now the finance minister is offering another temporary rebate that will not lower the price of a single grocery item. That is not a long-term solution; it is an admission of failure with no plan to pay for it.

Let us be clear, food price inflation is a Liberal, homegrown, made-in-Canada crisis. Conservatives have a plan: axe the industrial carbon tax, scrap the fuel standards that is adding 17¢ a litre and increase competition in grocery chains. Will the Liberals drop the excuses, stop obstructing Parliament and support a real food affordability plan, or will they keep serving up Liberal rhetoric on empty plates?

* * *

• (1415)

[*Translation*]

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CANADIAN SKI MARATHON

Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight a major winter event in my riding that takes place every year, the Canadian Ski Marathon, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. Held on February 6, 7 and 8, this great tradition brings together thousands of skiers and volunteers from across the country.

The Canadian Ski Marathon shows off our landscapes, our northern trails and the spirit of achievement and solidarity that drives our communities. The trails go through Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, and one of them ends in the municipality of Montebello, a community that is proud to contribute to the success of this iconic event.

I want to acknowledge the outstanding work of the organizers, volunteers and municipalities that are participating and whose commitment made it possible for the Canadian Ski Marathon to thrive for more than six decades. For 60 years now, this event continues to be a source of pride for our region and for Canada as a whole.

* * *

[*English*]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls—Niagara-on-the-Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's decision to scrap its EV mandate confirms what Conservatives have said all along, which is that a forced 100% EV sales target was unrealistic and only created uncertainty.

Bringing back EV rebates now offers little to Canada's auto workers, including those in St. Catharines, when up to \$2.3 billion in taxpayer incentives will be subsidizing U.S. auto production and when the U.S. is putting U.S. tariffs on Canadian-made vehicles.

Canada's auto sector supports hundreds of thousands of good-paying jobs. Decisions affecting it should put Canadian workers who are working in domestic production first. That is what our workers deserve, yet Canadian auto workers are now left asking what their future will be when over 95% of the EVs the Liberal government will be promoting will come from outside of Canada.

Oral Questions

Sadly, under the Liberal government, no job is safe. The Liberals promised the Canada-U.S. trade deal to protect Canadian jobs, but instead, they are supporting foreign manufacturers. Donald Trump is smiling—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Sherbrooke has the floor.

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[*Translation*]

SHERBROOKE'S INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

Hon. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with only days remaining before the new defence industrial strategy is unveiled, I would like to highlight a remarkable achievement by one of our own companies, DARIT Technologies.

In a national challenge held in Ottawa as part of the Department of National Defence's IDEaS program, DARIT Technologies took first prize, worth \$1 million. After rigorous testing by defence experts, the Canadian Armed Forces, the RCMP and a number of partners, DARIT Technologies' urban drone detection solution won the day. It consists of surveillance equipment based on a unique acoustic detection technology.

Sherbrooke has reason to be proud. This award is a testament not only to the technological excellence of DARIT Technologies, but also to the vitality of our innovation ecosystem. I sincerely congratulate its entire team for putting a spotlight on Sherbrooke and helping us strengthen security and innovation in Canada.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

YOUTH

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everywhere we look, life is getting harder for young people after a decade of the government. Finding a place to live is harder because home prices, rents and mortgages have doubled. Getting a job is harder because youth unemployment is still double the national average. Even buying groceries is harder, because food inflation is up 100% under the Prime Minister's watch. After paying for the basics, there is barely anything left, and often nothing at all.

How can anybody on the other side of the House stand behind a record that has completely failed an entire generation of Canadians?

Oral Questions

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way as the government has supported Canadians in what undeniably is an uncertain time, the Conservatives have fought against. Conservatives have stood up time and time again against Canadian families, against Canadian workers and against Canadian children. They have been voting down things like the school food program, enhancements to EI, work and support for families, and early learning and child care. No matter the solution, all they can do is obstruct and get in the way.

Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister can pretend everything is fine, but she is clearly not listening to anything anybody says in the House. Maybe she will listen to Miriam from Toronto, who is 26 years old. She works 12-hour shifts as a nurse. She told CTV News, "Saving for a home [is] completely out of reach right now." She said that she is barely making ends meet, even after going to school, getting a good-paying job and doing everything she was told to do.

Is the minister really saying to young people who have done everything right that they should just lower their standards and accept a future of just getting by?

• (1420)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the government is saying to young people is that they can help us build big things in this country, and Canadian young people are stepping up to help. All across the country, Canadian youth have been taking advantage of skills training, in partnership with provinces just like Ontario, to make sure that as we build big things, they are on the frontline in the skilled trades, building bigger and building better.

However, the Conservatives will vote again and again against the very people they say they help, including young people.

In the member's own riding of Thornhill—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Barrie South—Innisfil.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last 10-plus years have been incredible if one is a well-connected Liberal insider or lobbyist friend, or has business connections to the Prime Minister. Every leading indicator says that the Canadian economy is in free fall, and while the well-connected people get to gorge on the all-you-can-take taxpayer buffet, auto workers, tradespeople, families and single moms struggling to pay rent and mortgages, young people who have lost hope and seniors who cannot afford groceries are being told they have never had it so good.

What happened to all the grand promises of the last election? Were they not more about the Liberals' self-preservation than about solutions to fix the self-inflicted wounds they have caused over the last 10 years?

Hon. Gregor Robertson (Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Develop-

ment Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a plan to attack affordability across this country; it starts with housing, but it certainly extends to tax breaks, as we saw in recent weeks with respect to groceries. There was also a tax break for 22 million Canadians last year.

We are delivering on affordability. We are focused on a first-time homebuyers' tax break of up to \$50,000 and on building affordable homes for young Canadians at an unprecedented scale.

John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, by every metric, every problem Canadians faced before the last election is getting worse. Food costs have doubled, food bank use has doubled and housing starts are almost non-existent. There are mass layoffs and plant closures across all sectors of our economy. The interprovincial trade barriers still exist. There is still no trade deal with the U.S. Half a trillion dollars in investment capital has left Canada. Deficits are ballooning, and Canada's debt is at record levels.

In the last election, the Liberals promised affordability, lower prices and real relief for Canadians, so after a year of higher costs and broken promises, which part of that do the Liberals actually think they have delivered on?

Hon. John Zerucelli (Secretary of State (Labour), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe the member does not know, but we are in the middle of a trade war. Despite that, Canada's economy has been resilient.

Canadians have created over 160,000 jobs since September. Wages are rising. Inflation is now within the target range. However, we are not stopping there. We are building big, building bold and building now with Canadian lumber, Canadian steel and Canadian unionized workers. We are making the largest infrastructure investment in Canadian history, to strengthen communities and to create more jobs and long-term careers in the trades.

While the Conservatives continue to object and to play games in Parliament, we are working for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

G rard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more essential than food.

People cannot live if they do not have enough to eat. Sadly, though, Canadian families, all Canadian families, are facing the worst food inflation of any G7 country, at 6.2%. Inflation is twice as high as in the United States. Canadian food banks are overwhelmed.

Oral Questions

When will the government take concrete and effective action to really tackle inflation head-on, with good results against food inflation?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, grocery prices are indeed rising; we know that, which is why we are in problem-solving mode.

We have proposed a solution to Parliament—a clear solution that is also supported by the Conservative side—which aims to give \$1,200 back to a family of four and \$900 back to a single person. We are here to help Canadians in these times of food inflation.

Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we need measures that have an impact and produce concrete, long-term results, because the situation is getting worse.

When I was doing my grocery shopping this weekend, the grocery store manager came up to talk to me. He was discouraged. He told me that moms and dads are now the ones stealing food. That is how bad things have gotten. The Retail Council of Canada has confirmed this, stating that nine billion dollars' worth of food is stolen from grocery stores.

When will the government implement concrete measures to combat food inflation in the long term?

• (1425)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are here for Canadians, and we are here for the long term.

The program is planned for a five-year period, which will help support families throughout this time of rising grocery prices. We are also here for Canadians through other programs such as the Canada child benefit and the national school food program.

The good news is that the federal government and the Quebec government have signed an agreement. We will be there for kids and families. We will be there for everyone across the country.

* * *

PENSIONS

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister revealed that 85,000 pensioners have been having issues with their OAS benefits because of the Cúram software, in some cases for nine months.

The government was warned by its own public servants as early as this summer. However, the government today seems content to say that, if people have indeed been affected, we should give them their names. When there are 85,000 names, these are no longer isolated cases. This is turning into another fiasco, like Phoenix or the passport crisis.

Why did the Liberals wait until 85,000 people were affected before taking action?

Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the switch for OAS has been completed.

It came in under budget. More than seven million seniors are now receiving their benefits on time through a modern system. The total cost of Cúram will cover four separate projects. The amount that was planned and approved for the life of the project was \$6.6 billion.

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

Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there was a time when the Liberals told Quebeckers to stay in Canada or lose their pension. Now, they are telling Quebeckers to stay in Canada even if they are no longer receiving their pension.

What is more, they will pay a fortune for this fiasco, because the Cúram software has already incurred nearly \$5 billion in cost overruns. Denying pensioners their OAS is expensive.

How come every time the federal government gets involved we end up with skyrocketing costs and no service?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Secretary of State just provided an update of the situation.

This government modernization will allow seniors to register for OAS so that they can receive their benefits promptly and accurately. Obviously, if there are cases—and I think that if there were, members of the House would have heard about them—our colleagues are invited to share those with us. However, I can assure the member that the few errors that have been made are being—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Shefford.

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister said that 85,000 retirees are having problems with their old age security payments because of the federal government.

When 85,000 people are affected, it is time for the Liberals to stop treating them as isolated cases. The government needs to pour resources into resolving these cases, which are piling up in Ottawa. The problems with the Cúram software need to be fixed. Civil servants need help to better serve the public. At the very least, Ottawa needs to start taking the problems seriously.

When will the federal government get to work for these people?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are seven million Canadians receiving OAS.

The computer systems used to administer this program have been modernized. This improvement and modernization of government systems will enable seniors to register online instead of waiting at a Service Canada office or on the phone, for example.

Those 85,000 people are still 85,000 too many, we agree, but the errors are being corrected and people will be—

Oral Questions

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

* * *

[English]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Liberal government announced \$2.3 billion in subsidies to buy electric vehicles. Electric vehicles manufactured in the United States will be eligible for this subsidy. It is inconceivable that the Liberal government would launch a multi-billion dollar, taxpayer-funded program that will directly benefit the American auto sector at a time when Trump's tariff war has cost Canada 5,000 jobs and counting in our auto sector.

Will the Liberal government reverse course and stop American access to the \$2.3-billion subsidy, yes or no?

● (1430)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed, I have good news. Last week we announced our auto strategy based on two objectives. The first is making sure we support auto production here in Canada and support those who invest in us, basically the companies that produce cars in Canada. The second is making sure that we embrace where the industry is, which is electrification, and where it is going.

Apart from the Conservatives, everybody has been in favour of it: Premier Ford, the unions, the industry and even environmentalists and consumer groups. Why do the Conservatives not get—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, do members also know who is in favour of this? It is Donald Trump, because \$2.3 billion is now accessible to his auto market, when his tariff war is costing our economy thousands of jobs. It is, again, inconceivable that the Liberals would manufacture a program that gives the American market access to billions of taxpayer dollars.

Why would we subsidize the American auto sector at a time like this? Will the Liberals reverse course, yes or no?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of time and respect for my colleague, but I must say I do not understand why no Conservatives will ever say that they oppose the U.S. tariffs on auto workers. I do not understand why they have not been vocal in defending the jobs in Brampton, and in Ingersoll at GM, saying that the U.S. tariffs on auto workers are unjustified and unjustifiable.

Meanwhile, we will make sure, as we did in the 1980s when auto plants from American car companies were being closed, that we embrace the Japanese automakers. We will do that, and we will endorse companies that build EVs.

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the happiest person in North America when the Liberals announced their EV subsidy plan was Donald J. Trump. Let me explain.

He has explicitly said he wants to take every single Canadian auto job and bring it down to the United States. Under the Liberals, he

is succeeding; 5,000 auto workers have lost their jobs. The plant in Brampton that was supposed to build the Jeep Compass is now in the United States. The U.S. is succeeding under the Liberals. Auto workers do not want their tax dollars going to subsidizing American-made vehicles.

Will the minister look auto workers in the face today and say that no Canadian tax dollars will go to Trump's America to build vehicles?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, do members know what we do on this side of the aisle? We look people in the eye and say we will defend their jobs, and that is exactly what this auto strategy is about. It is about supporting auto production in Canada. We are making sure that we are talking to Koreans, to Germans and to Chinese to create good jobs in this country.

We will not just let our industry go bit by bit to the south. We will fight for these jobs. We have an auto strategy, and the Conservatives should get with the program.

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I almost feel bad for the minister, pathetically trying to justify sending money to Donald Trump's America to subsidize the production of American EVs. The President has declared economic war on Canada. He has said he wants every single Canadian auto job in the United States, and under the Liberals, he is succeeding. The Canadian auto economy is being decimated. The Liberals' plan is to allow the American auto manufacturers access to Canadian dollars for EV subsidies. It is disgraceful. It is unconscionable.

Will the minister apologize to Canadian auto workers for this terrible policy?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's increasing his rhetoric does not actually make him right. What is right is that we have met the tariffs by the U.S. administration against our auto workers with countertariffs. Every time production reduced in Canada, what did we do? We made sure that we limited market access. We limited it to Stellantis by 50% and also to GM by 24.2%. We will invest in the companies that invest in us, and we will make sure to create good jobs in this country.

Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CAMI workers were devastated last year when they lost their jobs, but it got worse. Last week they received their layoff payout, only to see that more than half of it was clawed back in taxes. That is thousands of dollars, and many of them cannot afford to wait for next year's tax return. They need the money now to pay their bills, their mortgage and their rent, and to put food on the table.

Will the Liberals work with us, stand with CAMI auto workers and provide immediate tax relief so they can afford to live?

• (1435)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only party fighting against workers is the party opposite, whose members voted against the budget, wherein we outline the work we have been doing to protect workers for exactly this situation. Thanks to the proactive vision of the government to protect workers in these situations, workers who are separated from their employment can now keep their last pay. They do not have to wait for EI, and indeed, long-tenured workers like many of these, will receive an additional 20 weeks of benefits on top of supports for readjustment.

We have been there for workers, we will be there and we certainly will not vote against them.

Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did not get an answer to my question, but it is sadly ironic that while Canadian workers are losing their jobs, and while more than half of their payouts are taken by taxes, the Liberals are handing out \$2.3 billion in subsidies for American-made electric vehicles. All this is happening while the U.S. is slapping tariffs on Canadian-made autos.

Canadian tax dollars should not be funding American-made EVs, so my question is very simple: Why is money being taken out of the pockets of auto workers to fund American jobs?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the member, and I know he cares about those workers, as do we. The CAMI plant in Ingersoll is a half-hour from my house. I regularly speak to Mayor Brian Petrie, who is doing an excellent job in very trying circumstances. I know the business owners who rely on the presence of the plant. I know the leaders and the staff of the social agencies that are responding to the crisis on the ground. We should work together on their behalf.

The member also knows that for the severance pay he is referring to, the CRA is treating it as always, which is as a matter of Canadian law. It is time to put away politics; let us work together on behalf of the people of Ingersoll and the auto sector.

Oral Questions

Harb Gill (Windsor West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has committed \$2.3 billion to subsidizing EVs, yet most EVs sold in Canada are made outside our country. The industry minister herself admitted that only one EV is made in Canada. Canadians are being forced to subsidize rebates for American-made cars, while over 5,000 Canadian workers have lost their jobs to U.S. tariffs.

Why is the Prime Minister forcing Canadians to subsidize American-made EVs, instead of putting Canadian workers first and adopting the Conservative plan to cut the GST on all Canadian-made vehicles? Would that not make more sense?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct my colleague. There is not only one EV made in Canada; there is the Dodge Charger, of course, but there is also the Pacifica, and more to come.

We have two battery plants. One is an LG battery plant in Windsor, which the Conservatives are against, and we still do not understand why. There is one being built as we speak, by Volkswagen, which is good news; there are 3,000 jobs coming to St. Thomas.

When it comes to our auto workers, we will continue to fight for them. We will not sit idle while a lot of the industry is going through its most difficult period in decades. We will fight for them.

* * *

[Translation]

TRANSPORTATION

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government has been criticized for doing nothing to address Driver Inc., but it gets worse: Not only is Ottawa doing nothing to stop these drivers, it is awarding them contracts. Canada Post has done business with at least 25 companies that hire Driver Inc. drivers, including one who was directly involved in a fatal accident. Worst of all, the federal government was notified two years earlier by the Canadian Trucking Alliance.

When will the Liberals finally create a registry of crooked companies instead of hiring them?

Oral Questions

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post obviously works with many trucking companies across the country. The CEO of Canada Post assures us that the company in question had no ties with the Driver Inc. model. A statement of expectations, a code of conduct and the consequences of non-compliance are clearly spelled out for all suppliers under contract. As a government, we obviously expect Canada Post to meet those standards.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post has hired 25 companies that use Driver Inc. drivers. The Liberals have been aware of the problem for at least two years. We have proposed 10 solutions. Not only do they refuse to implement them, but now they are contributing to the problem. At this point, it is no longer a matter of wilful blindness. Now they are complicit.

The Liberals just gave Canada Post \$1 billion. Can they at least make sure that that money does not go to shady companies?

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and to the Secretary of State (Defence Procurement), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post is proud to work with many trucking companies across the country. In doing so, the CEO of Canada Post has ensured us, it has no engagement with the Driver Inc. model. All contracted suppliers are provided with clear expectations, a code of conduct to abide by and consequences for non-compliance. We, as a government, expect Canada Post to abide by these standards.

[Translation]

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the member for Beauport—Limoilou told us in the House that the cost of the Quebec City tramway had reached \$13 billion. That is \$5 billion more than what is set out in the agreement between Quebec City and the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec.

Can the Minister of Finance confirm whether the cost of the Quebec City tramway is \$7.6 billion or \$13 billion, as the member for Beauport—Limoilou said?

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

[English]

The Quebec tramway has an investment of \$1.44 billion from the federal government, and we continue to invest significantly in public transit across the country through the Canada public transit fund, as well as the build communities strong fund, where there is tens of billions of dollars available to allocate towards transit if the House supports the budget. Quebec, other provinces and cities will have access to the build communities strong fund with the support of the House to fund major transit projects.

[Translation]

Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, \$1.4 billion was promised nine years ago. That is the first part. Now we have gone far beyond that, and the member for Beauport—Limoilou says that the project cost now sits at \$13 billion. The federal government promised to pay 40%. At \$13 billion, will the Liberals be able to follow through?

Nothing in the current budget is provided for Quebec as a whole. There is no budget for public transit. Does that amount to zero for Quebec City, or can the Liberals tell us otherwise today?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Beauport—Limoilou has done more for the tramway in his nine months here and in the House than anything the member has done in his 10 years in the House. I can assure him of that.

Unlike that member, our government has been supporting the tramway project since 2018. To date, the federal commitment, as my colleague just said, amounts to nearly \$1.4 billion, which clearly shows how important this public transit project for the Quebec City region is to us.

Obviously, we are still in discussions with Quebec concerning the Canada public transit fund and funds available under the Canada community-building fund.

* * *

PENSIONS

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' mismanagement repeats and repeats like a broken record. In 2022, they gave us the ArriveCAN app. The budget was \$86,000, but the actual cost was \$60 million.

Five years later, the same Liberal team is back with more IT scandals, this time with Cúram. The initial budget was \$1.6 billion, but the actual cost is \$6.6 billion, and it is a failure. The Minister of Transport tells us that there are a handful of cases, but in fact, 86,000 seniors are waiting for their money.

What do you have to say to seniors like Sylvie Bolduc in my riding? By the way, your answer is going out live on air.

The Speaker: I do not have an answer. I can confirm to the hon. member that I do not have an answer to give.

The hon. Secretary of State for Seniors.

*Oral Questions***INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the OAS modernization is now complete and it came in under budget. More than seven million seniors are receiving their benefits on time through a modern system. The total cost of Cúram will cover four separate projects. The \$6.6 billion is the amount planned and approved for the life of the project.

I invite the members opposite to give me the names of the seniors affected, and we will assist them.

Bernard Généreux (Côte-du-Sud—Rivière-du-Loup—Kataskomiq—Témiscouata, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers saw the cost overruns of SAAQclie. Hundreds of millions of dollars were wasted. That is a drop in the bucket compared to the federal fiasco involving Cúram, which cost \$6.6 billion instead of \$1.6 billion. That is \$5 billion in cost overruns for a failed software program that was supposed to deliver old age pensions and does not even work properly. Currently, there are 86,000 seniors who are not receiving their money because of federal incompetence. The Liberals are still wasting billions of dollars, and Canadians are paying the price.

What is this government going to do with this federal version of the SAAQclie fiasco?

• (1445)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to tell Ms. Bolduc, who is obviously listening to us, and to the constituents of all the MPs here, that one case is indeed too many. We are going to resolve every last one. Ms. Bolduc and everyone else will receive every cent of the benefits to which they are entitled. However, that is beside the point. We have modernized government technology infrastructure that will serve Canadians well and provide both better service and faster access to OAS.

Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new Cúram software for managing OAS benefits is a complete disaster. Not only has it exceeded its projected costs, but it works so poorly that employees themselves give it a rating of 5 out of 10 or less. According to one employee, if the department had listened to public servants, they could have developed a system that was a thousand times easier to use.

Why should seniors suffer the consequences of this federal version of the SAAQclie fiasco?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is simply incorrect. There are not cost overruns. In fact, the project is on budget and 7.4 million OAS clients were migrated in March of 2025. Seniors can apply directly online. This is a 60-year-old system. Indeed, Canadians expect us to keep our IT systems modernized, and that is exactly what we are doing. If the member opposite has a constituent who needs help, he can please give them our name. We can certainly accelerate their case.

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the United States government has unilaterally started a trade war against Canada—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I really could not hear a word of that, so we will have the hon. member start from the top.

John-Paul Danko: Mr. Speaker, the United States government has unilaterally started a trade war against Canada. In response—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: There is obviously a subtext here somewhere, but let us put that aside in good faith. I do not want to call anyone out on this side either.

The hon. member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

John-Paul Danko: Mr. Speaker, the United States government has unilaterally started a trade war against Canada. In response, the Prime Minister has committed to doubling non-U.S. trade, with direct measures to help Canadian businesses adapt and grow.

Can the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources tell the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: This is going to make question period a little lengthier than I had anticipated. I was going for a new record today of 3:03 or 3:04, but I do not think that is going to happen. We are going to give it another shot. We have to or else this is going to go on for a long time. We will cut into committee time and everything.

The hon. member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas has the floor, and let us see if we can get through it. We will try from the top.

John-Paul Danko: Mr. Speaker, the United States government has started a trade war against Canada. In response, the Prime Minister has committed to doubling non-U.S. trade, with direct measures to help Canadian businesses adapt and grow.

Can the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources tell the House what our government is doing to support Canadian businesses impacted by unjustified American tariffs?

Hon. Tim Hodgson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are standing shoulder to shoulder with workers and businesses facing the impacts of unfair and unjustified U.S. tariffs, with targeted support to help businesses adapt, retool and stay competitive. That includes \$1 billion through the regional tariff relief initiative, which is helping businesses protect jobs and diversify to new markets.

Oral Questions

We are not just helping businesses weather this moment; we are building Canada strong.

* * *

• (1450)

EMPLOYMENT

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have been disappointed to see that the Prime Minister is not delivering on his promises. He promised the strongest economy in the G7, but we lost 52,000 private sector jobs last month. He promised to build at speeds unseen in generations. We are actually losing jobs at speeds unseen in generations.

Conservatives have offered solutions like the Canadian sovereignty act and the Conservative youth jobs plan, which Liberals continue to oppose. When will they reverse course and start creating jobs, instead of more job losses?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservative slogans, rhetoric and obstruction do not feed Canadian families. We have cut taxes for 22 million Canadian families. We have cut the GST for first-time homebuyers. We have cut the consumer carbon tax. Just a couple of weeks ago, we announced the Canada groceries and essentials benefit, which will put up to \$1,900 in the pockets of working families.

On this side of the House, we are going to continue to be laser-focused on affordability for families. That side should stop the obstruction.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I truly have no idea what that member is focused on, but my question was about the results of his policies. Now, let us talk about the results: 52,000 private sector job losses, 28,000 in manufacturing alone. That is just in the last month. He talked about the price of food. We have food inflation in this country that is more than double the food inflation in the United States.

If this member cannot answer a question about the results, when will he look at those Statistics Canada reports? If he sees the problems that every other Canadian can see, when will the Liberals reverse course?

Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader and that member actually supported giving millionaires child benefit cheques. Think about that. Let me say it again. They supported giving millionaires child benefits. They voted against the school food program. Every other affordability program we have put forth, they have voted against.

That party is focused on obstruction. We are focused on delivering for Canadian families.

Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are losing jobs, plants are shutting down and investments are fleeing. Canada lost 52,000 private sector jobs last month alone. Workers and families are paying the price, from GM employees in Oshawa to forestry families in Quebec who are struggling to put food on the table. This is the opposite of what the Prime Minister promised.

When will the Liberals admit that their rhetoric is far from the reality that Canadians face and finally listen to common-sense Conservative solutions?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 134,000 jobs were created in the past year. Wages have been outpacing inflation for almost three years, with a rate of inflation that is well within the Bank of Canada's guidelines at 2.4%. However, we will not rest on that. We cannot, because the aim now must always be to secure Canada's future. Budget 2025 puts a foundation for that in place.

Will the Conservatives join us and put the politics aside? Let us work on behalf of our constituents. Let us work on behalf of Canada right now.

Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised the fastest-growing economy in the G7, yet GDP growth is currently at zero. Manufacturing, auto and forestry sectors are all declining, and families in Haldimand—Norfolk fear for their livelihoods as the economy weakens. Despite this economic decline, the government has not repealed a single anti-development law.

When will the Liberals finally admit that their economic plan is failing and remove the barriers and tax burdens holding back Canadian workers and the economy?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, almost 240 agreements have been signed between the federal government and various municipalities, large and small, for the housing accelerator fund. They want to talk about getting things done and anti-development. The facts do not line up with that narrative. The reality is that we need to build more: duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes. That is the kind of vision being put in place through that agreement.

If they do not want to listen to Liberals, that is fine. They can listen to former prime minister Stephen Harper, who just the other day advised all members of Parliament to work together on behalf of this country. The time is now. Let us rise to the occasion. It is a moment of crisis, a moment of rupture. We can respond right now.

• (1455)

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador continues to face one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada at 10.7%, which is well above the national average. Statistics Canada reports that 52,000 private sector jobs were lost since last year, and the Bank of Canada says that economic growth next year is expected to be just 1.1%. Businesses are delaying expansion and investment. At home, that means fewer projects, fewer jobs and more people leaving to find work.

When will the Prime Minister admit his economic plan is failing, listen to our solutions and remove the barriers that are preventing job creation for Canadians?

Hon. Joanne Thompson (Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have good news for the member. In budget 2025, we are growing this country. We are growing rural Newfoundland and Labrador and the rest of Canada. We are working to invest in our apprenticeship programs. We are building schools. The challenge is that this member, part of the opposition, is obstructing at every step.

Let us grow Canada. We need to work together.

Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that the Prime Minister promised the fastest-growing economy in the G7, yet GDP growth is stalled at zero and GDP per capita is flat. Young people are leaving home because they cannot find steady work. We have proposed a Canadian sovereignty act that would rapidly advance resource development by repealing job-killing laws such as the oil and gas emissions cap, reward those who build and protect Canadian innovation.

When will they listen to our ideas so people can stay, live and work in the place that they love?

Hon. Joanne Thompson (Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to remind the member opposite from Newfoundland and Labrador that voting against the bills that support Canadian workers, Canadian communities and the building of our country and our province of Newfoundland and Labrador is obstruction. If the member wants to see our province of Newfoundland and Labrador grow, I can tell her that we are ready, but that side of the House needs to work with us.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, small businesses are paying the price for the Prime Minister's economic inaction. In January, 52,000 private sector jobs were lost and \$39 billion in investment fled to the United States. Canadian businesses are delaying expansion and workers are losing their livelihoods. The Prime Minister promised the fastest-growing economy in the G7, but growth is flat and not a single anti-development or major regulation has been removed by this government.

When will the Prime Minister empower the private sector to build at a scale necessary to protect Canada's economy in the face of American threats?

Hon. Jill McKnight (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has a plan to build Canada. He has laid it out, and we are taking action to advance that. Individuals in British Columbia want to see the investments that we are making. They want to see the major projects move forward. They want to see the new housing, and they want to see us grow this economy to be the strongest economy in the G7.

We are moving forward with this plan. Can we count on the Conservatives to join us?

Oral Questions

Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Clarke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised the fastest-growing economy in the G7, yet under his watch, \$58 billion of net investments have fled to the United States and we have lost 28,000 manufacturing jobs. Promising to build a pipeline is not enough. Creating a new bureaucracy is not enough. Reapproving projects over and over again is not enough. We need shovels in the ground, and we need them in the ground now.

When will the Prime Minister do what he promised, build at a scale we have not seen in generations and work with Conservatives to stand up for our sovereignty against the American threat?

Hon. John Zerucelli (Secretary of State (Labour), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 160,000 new jobs have been created since September. Wages are up and inflation is within the standard rate. We know that certain sectors such as auto are feeling the pain from the tariff war, but we have a plan that was laid out in our budget, which was introduced in the fall. Unfortunately, the Conservatives are blocking the budget at committee.

If that member wants to make a difference for workers in his community, pass the budget so we can unleash the power, build in this country, protect jobs, support communities and build our country. Will the member do it? Will the Conservatives do it?

* * *

● (1500)

EMPLOYMENT

Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just attended an event hosted by SPEATBC in a room full of highly trained engineers and technologists. They were asking whether the next round of manufacturing investment will stay here in Canada or go to the U.S. They want solutions so that their jobs are secure. StatsCan says that we lost 28,000 jobs last month in manufacturing alone. That means fewer shifts, tighter budgets and more families struggling to get by.

The government has to recognize that what it is doing is not working. When will the Liberals listen to our constructive solution to this urgent problem?

Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, building a strong economy is not just about looking at any single sector. It is about looking at all sectors. It is about making sure we are investing in the economy of the future today, making sure we are investing in technology, making sure we are investing in artificial intelligence, and making sure we are creating the jobs of the future in industries where Canadians can lead.

Oral Questions

As we work to support our manufacturing sector, we are also making sure that in health sciences, life sciences, biotech, technology, e-commerce, digital, AI and quantum, Canada will continue to lead and create the jobs of the future today.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a functioning health care system relies on modern data infrastructure. However, at a time when data is travelling at lightning speed, too many doctors and nurses are still forced to use outdated technologies, like fax machines, to share information about their patients.

Can the Minister of Health tell us what measures our government is taking to eliminate these barriers, improve security for patients and, in doing so, save lives?

Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. The time that patients spend waiting for their medical records to be transferred instead of receiving care can be fatal. At the same time, health care professionals spend far too much time printing documents and not enough time helping people.

Bill S-5, the connected care for Canadians act, which we tabled last week in the Senate, will break down silos and build health data infrastructure for all Canadians. I look forward to working with members of the House and the Senate to get this bill passed once it is introduced.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant South—Six Nations, CPC): Mr. Speaker, extortion is a national crisis, exploding 330% since the Liberals took office. In Surrey, Calgary, Brampton and across Canada, Canadians are being threatened, shot at and firebombed, while criminal gangs and violent non-citizens extort families, all thanks to Liberal inaction.

Will the Prime Minister support our plan, supported even by the NDP premier of B.C., to bar extortionists and serious criminals from exploiting refugee claims, or will he continue shielding criminals while Canadians pay the price, often with their lives?

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been meeting with those who have been impacted by extortion. I want to extend my condolences to those who have been impacted.

We need to work in collaboration in order to ensure that extortion is addressed. We need the party opposite to pass critical pieces of legislation, including Bill C-2. Virtually every law enforcement agency head I have spoken to has asked for lawful access to become law in Canada. It is one of the most important tools to ensure that extortion is addressed.

We need to stop the obstructionism and make sure we have the critical tools that are important for law enforcement.

Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, extortion has surged by 330% since the Liberals took office. Across our country, Canadians are under attack, and the Liberals are rejecting Conservative plans to stop this violence. Now convicted extortionists are exploiting loopholes in our justice and immigration systems by filing refugee claims to stay in Canada.

Will the Liberals back our Conservative plan, also supported by B.C.'s NDP premier, to bar non-citizens convicted of serious crimes from making refugee claims, or will they continue to side with the criminals?

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second bill we brought forward in this Parliament was Bill C-2, which addresses this very issue and provides other measures, such as lawful access. I am glad to see that the Conservatives have somewhat co-operated and split that bill to create Bill C-12, which is now in the Senate. This will create an ineligibility for precisely these types of people, who try to exploit our system. They will no longer be able to apply for asylum.

I would like the members opposite to also co-operate on lawful access, because we need to catch these criminals.

● (1505)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals voted against a Conservative amendment to Bill C-12 that would have barred non-citizens convicted of serious crimes from abusing our asylum system and making refugee claims. That is crazy.

Will the Liberals agree with Premier David Eby that the amendment is a proposal that should be accepted, and that non-citizens accused of serious crimes should not be able to make refugee claims? That is kind of bananas.

Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been following these cases very closely. In the case of B.C., where some people have filed for asylum, Bill C-12, which is in the Senate right now and progressing nicely, would make those particular claimants ineligible to file for asylum. We are closing those loopholes. We are working tirelessly to make sure that extortionists are caught.

Will the Conservatives help us give law enforcement the tools that are needed? I am asking for this. The lawful access measures in Bill C-2 are needed in order to catch child pedophiles and extortionists.

* * *

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Jessica Fancy (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, advancing gender equality is key to building a strong and prosperous Canada where everyone can succeed. While the Conservatives minimize coercive control as normal family behaviour and debate 2SLGBTQI+ rights at their conventions, the government is making sure that organizations across the country have the support they need.

Can the Minister of Health share how we are empowering and strengthening national women's organizations across Canada?

Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the Minister for Women and Gender Equality announced over \$15 million in funding to support national women's organizations across the country and strengthen capacity building. This means a stronger and more sustainable national women's sector. It means greater capacity to support the organizations driving progress on gender equality. It means stronger collaboration to advance opportunity, safety and rights for women and girls everywhere. This is how we build Canada strong, where we—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills North.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Hong Kong has sentenced newspaper publisher Jimmy Lai to 20 years in prison simply for exercising his rights and freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of association, which are guaranteed in an international treaty, the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

First, will the government reiterate its call for Jimmy Lai to be immediately released? Second, will the government acknowledge that his imprisonment is a violation of an international treaty and of international law?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is deeply disappointed by the tragic sentencing of Jimmy Lai in Hong Kong.

We call for the immediate release of Jimmy Lai. In fact, we have consistently spoken out against the national security law since its imposition in 2020. While in Beijing, I reiterated Canada's long-standing position to my counterpart: The persecution of journalists, media workers and activists is unacceptable.

Canada will always support a free—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Nunavut.

Oral Questions

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, before the election, the Liberals planned to cut the Inuit child first initiative. When Inuit heard this, they spoke up by the thousands. Under pressure from Nunavut, the Liberals promised to extend the program. Since being elected, the Minister of Indigenous Services promised an announcement on the ICFI. Nine months later, far too many Inuit children are still being kept below the poverty level, and there has still been no announcement.

Will the minister finally act to help Inuit children, or should they feed themselves on her promises?

● (1510)

Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for being really consistent in representing her members.

The message has been clear to me that we need to respond. That is why we have been working with our partners and look forward to what the next step is going to be. I am sure the member will be pleased to see what that is going to be. I am looking forward to what the message will be when it comes out very shortly.

Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, when my colleague, the member for Nunavut, was asking her question, a page actually walked across the aisle in front of her. I just want to bring that to your attention and ask whether we could have the member repeat her question.

The Speaker: I did not see it. There is activity in the House. We try to have the picture stay clear of people entering and exiting, but it is, above all, a Parliament with pages and support staff. I am afraid I will not be able to do that.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, members of this place who are in unrecognized parties get a 35-second opportunity once a week. I take members at their word.

I wonder if it would not be appropriate, as we do for each other all the time, to ask for unanimous consent for the member for Nunavut to ask her question again.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member did have a chance to ask her question. It was, I thought, a fairly pointed question and there was an answer delivered.

*Business of Supply***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

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

The House resumed from February 5 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Mirabel relating to the business of supply.

[Translation]

Call in the members.

• (1525)

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

*(Division No. 66)***YEAS**

Members

Aboulttaif	Acan	Diab	Diotte
Aitchison	Al Soud	Doherty	Dowdall
Albas	Ali	Duclos	Duguid
Allison	Alty	Duncan	Dzerowicz
Anand	Anandasangaree	Earle	Ehsassi
Anderson	Anstey	El-Khoury	Epp
Arnold	Auguste	Erskine-Smith	Eyolfson
Baber	Bailey	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake)	Falk (Provencher)
Bains	Baker	Fancy	Fanjoy
Baldinelli	Bardeesy	Fergus	Fisher
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval	Fonseca	Fortier
Battiste	Beaulieu	Fortin	Fragiskatos
Beech	Belanger (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River)	Fraser	Fry
Bélanger (Sudbury East—Manitoulin—Nickel Belt)	Bendayan	Fuhr	Gaheer
Berthold	Bexte	Gainey	Gallant
Bezan	Bittle	Garon	Gasparro
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas	Gaudreau	Gazan
Block	Blois	Généreux	Genuis
Bonin	Bonk	Gerretsen	Gill (Calgary Skyview)
Borrelli	Boulerice	Gill (Calgary McKnight)	Gill (Windsor West)
Bragdon	Brassard	Gill (Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan)	Gill (Abbotsford—South Langley)
Brière	Brock	Gladu	Godin
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins	Goodridge	Gould
Caputo	Carney	Gourde	Grant
Carr	Casey	Greaves	Groleau
Chagger	Chambers	Guay	Guglielmin
Champagne	Champoux	Guilbeault	Gull-Masty
Chang	Chartrand	Gunn	Hajdu
Chatel	Chen	Hallan	Hanley
Chenette	Chi	Hardy	Harrison
Chong	Church	Hepfner	Hirtle
Clark	Cobena	Ho	Hoback
Cody	Connors	Hodgson	Hogan
Cooper	Cormier	Holman	Housefather
Coteau	Dabrusin	Hussen	Iacono
Dalton	Dancho	Idlout	Jackson
Dandurand	Danko	Jaczek	Jansen
Davidson	Davies (Niagara South)	Jivani	Johns
Dawson	DeBellefeuille	Joly	Joseph
Deltell	d'Entremont	Kayabaga	Kelloway
DeRidder	Deschênes	Kelly	Khalid
Deschênes-Thériault	Desrochers	Khanna	Kibble
Dhaliwal	Dhillon	Kirkland	Klassen
		Kmiec	Konanz
		Koutrakis	Kram
		Kramp-Neuman	Kronis
		Kuruc	Kusie
		Kwan	Lake
		Lalonde	Lambropoulos
		Lamoureux	Lantsman
		Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles)	Lapointe (Sudbury)
		Larouche	Lattanzio
		Lauzon	Lavack
		Lavoie	Lawrence
		Lawton	LeBlanc
		Lefebvre	Leitão
		Lemire	Leslie
		Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
		Lightbound	Lloyd
		Lobb	Long
		Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Ma
		MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacDonald (Cardigan)
		MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Mahal
		Majumdar	Malette (Bay of Quinte)
		Malette (Kapusking—Timmins—Mushkegowuk)	Maloney
		Mantle	Martel
		May	Mazier
		McCauley	McGuinty
		McKelvie	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
		McKnight	McLean (Calgary Centre)
		McLean (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke)	McPherson

Routine Proceedings

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on National Defence in relation to Bill C-11, an act to amend the National Defence Act and other acts. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in relation to Bill C-14, an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the National Defence Act, regarding bail and sentencing. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

* * *

[Translation]

OLD AGE SECURITY ACT

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-261, An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (amount of full pension).

She said: Mr. Speaker, introducing a bill that directly affects the daily lives of our constituents is always an important moment in a parliamentarian's life. In my riding, as in many regions, a large proportion of the population is 65 years of age or older. In Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, it is about 20% of the population.

Everywhere I go, the message is the same: People can no longer make ends meet. No one should have to choose between rent, groceries and medication. No one should contribute their entire working life and then experience financial anxiety in retirement. As we know, the enhanced pension starts only at age 75. That decision has created a real injustice. Two people who have worked their entire lives do not have access to the same basic conditions, simply because of their age. I find that incomprehensible and deeply unfair.

I am proud to join my colleagues in correcting this inequality, recognizing the immense contribution of our seniors, and offering them what they deserve: a dignified retirement, starting at age 65.

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

Melillo	Ménard
Mendès	Menegakis
Michel	Miedema
Miller	Mingarelli
Moore	Morin
Morrison	Morrissey
Motz	Muys
Myles	Naqvi
Nater	Nathan
Nguyen	Noormohamed
Normandin	Ntumba
Oliphant	Olszewski
O'Rourke	Osborne
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon	Poillievre
Powlowski	Provost
Ramsay	Rana
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Reynolds
Richards	Robertson
Rocheffort	Romanado
Rood	Ross
Rowe	Royer
Ruff	Sahota
Saini	Sarai
Sari	Savard-Tremblay
Sawatzky	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Seeback	Sgro
Sheehan	Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Small	Sodhi
Solomon	Sousa
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stevenson	St-Pierre
Strahl	Strauss
Sudds	Tesser Derksen
Thériault	Thomas
Thompson	Tochor
Tolmie	Turnbull
Uppal	Valdez
Van Popta	Vandenbeld
Vien	Viersen
Villeneuve	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin
Watchorn	Waugh
Weiler	Wilkinson
Williamson	Yip
Zahid	Zerucelli
Zimmer	Zuberi— 330

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

McKenzie	Roberts
Sidhu (Brampton East)	van Koeverden— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, the time provided for Government Orders will be extended by 11 minutes.

Routine Proceedings

• (1530)
[English]

PETITIONS

PACIFIC SALMON

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a petition on behalf of constituents in Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford who are seeking certainty for funding for the salmon enhancement program beyond the current budget end of March 31. The salmon enhancement program is a great educational tool in the province of B.C. that teaches biology and the salmon cycle to many youth. This program is administered by the Pacific Streamkeepers Federation to provide training to volunteers who protect the aquatic health, habitat status and stock assessments within their communities. They therefore call upon the Government of Canada to reconsider how the \$544 million of cuts to DFO are administered, so as not to affect program spending specifically.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am standing on behalf of individuals who are in support of MP Tamara Jansen's private member's bill, Bill C-218, an act to amend the Criminal Code with respect to medical assistance in dying. The Government of Canada intends to expand medical assistance in dying to individuals whose only medical condition is a mental illness. However, petitioners say that it is treatable, recovery is possible, and experts agree it is currently impossible to predict when a mental illness is truly irremediable. Expanding MAID in this way risks suggesting that some lives are beyond saving while many Canadians still struggle to access timely—

Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This is not to discredit my esteemed colleague on her petition, but she did mention a member of the House. Maybe it is best if she highlights the member's riding instead.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I thank the hon. member for that. I was going to correct the member afterwards, but it is Cloverdale—Langley City, instead of the name.

Also, I believe we have a lot of noise coming from the lobby outside. I think we will try to get to that, although it sounds like it is quieting down.

I will ask the member for Yorkton—Melville to quickly finalize her comments.

Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. He is absolutely correct on that point.

The Government of Canada intends to expand medical assistance in dying to individuals whose only medical condition is a mental illness. Mental illness is treatable, recovery is possible and experts agree that it is currently impossible to predict when a mental illness is truly irremediable. Petitioners have many reasons to suggest that this bill is not in the best interests of Canadians. Families and communities are concerned that people who could recover through treatment and support may instead lose their lives.

Bill C-218, the right to recover act, would amend the Criminal Code to ensure that mental illness alone is not considered a grievous and irremediable condition for the purpose of MAID.

Therefore, these individuals are calling upon the Government of Canada to pass Bill C-218 to stop the expansion of MAID to those whose sole underlying medical condition is a mental illness.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have one other petition.

Citizens across this nation have been very concerned about the direction Bill C-9 is going and have indicated that they are concerned that the Liberal-Bloc amendment to Bill C-9 could be used to criminalize passages from the Bible, the Quran, the Torah and other sacred texts. The state has no place in the religious texts or teachings of any faith community.

Freedom of expression and freedom of religion are fundamental rights that must be preserved. Therefore, these individuals call on the Liberal Government of Canada to protect religious freedom, uphold the right to read and share sacred texts, and prevent government overreach in matters of faith.

WEALTH INEQUALITY

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour today to table a petition on behalf of Vancouver Islanders and British Columbians. They highlight that wealth inequality in Canada is rising, with more Canadians struggling to afford the basics of life while corporate profits continue to break records. They highlight that austerity measures very often exasperate inequality. The federal government is planning austerity measures including a massive cut of \$25 billion to the publicly funded jobs and programs that Canadians rely upon, and the federal government has and plans on further cutting taxes on the wealthy. They also highlight that climate change is worsening, causing Canadians to project \$25 billion in losses each year, and a wealth tax could, as per the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, generate more than \$32 billion in the first year alone.

Petitioners call on the House of Commons to reconsider the sweeping cuts to Canadian jobs and services and, lastly, to propose a bill to fund good-paying jobs, public services and the transition to a sustainable economy by making corporations and the wealthiest Canadians pay their fair share.

• (1535)

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise on behalf of the citizens of Cambridge to table a petition to withdraw Bill C-9 and requesting that this government uphold and protect freedom of religion and freedom of speech, as these fundamental rights must be preserved.

Bill C-9 would allow the state to prosecute those who express deeply held religious beliefs the government finds offensive. Citizens ask to protect religious freedom, uphold the right to read and share sacred texts, and prevent government intrusion into faith.

ARMS EXPORTS

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a petition in support of Bill C-233, which would close the arms loophole. It is signed by residents of Thunder Bay, Ontario, and gathered by Palestinian Solidarity Thunder Bay. The group says that they requested to meet with the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North, hoping that she would table the petition, but could not get a meeting. Therefore, they have asked that I table their community's call for the House of Commons to enact legislation to close existing loopholes in Canada's arms export laws, including removing exemptions for the United States, strengthening oversight and reassuring that Canadian arms are never used to commit or facilitate human rights abuses.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of Skeena-Bulkley Valley.

The petition calls for the government to scrap the reckless expansion of MAID to those suffering with a mental illness as a sole underlying medical condition. They also state in this petition that this is wrong since the government has already failed to meet its promises to expand mental health supports.

WATER

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today on behalf of constituents in Saanich—Gulf Islands who are concerned with irresponsible practices from industry and large multinational corporations that have led to the destruction and denigration of much of Canada's waterways and wetlands. They are also concerned for the sustainability of our groundwater.

They are calling on the House of Commons to update Canada's water laws and ensure that no industry or corporation's profit line can take priority over the health of our waterways. They want to ensure that there are specialists and experts guiding the Parliament of Canada to protect our water.

AIR TRAVEL TO INDIA

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table yet another petition in regard to many of the constituents I represent and beyond, in particular in the city of Winnipeg. They have been advocating for the need to see more direct flights from the city of Winnipeg going into India or at the very least Europe. This is because of the growing size of the community and the demand to be able to travel to countries like India. They are calling upon Parliament to encourage the Winnipeg Airports Authority and other organizations to get on board so that we can see more flights.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr.

Government Orders

Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time, please.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

COMMISSIONER FOR MODERN TREATY IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act respecting the Commissioner for Modern Treaty Implementation, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me start by acknowledging that Canada's Parliament is located on the unceded, unsurrendered territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin people, whose presence here reaches back to time immemorial.

I am honoured to rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill C-10, an act respecting the commissioner for modern treaty implementation. This legislation represents a vital step forward, one that would strengthen accountability, enhance transparency and build trust with modern treaty partners across the country. It would also reinforce our shared commitment to reconciliation and to ensuring that Canada keeps its promises.

For too long, there has been a gap between the commitments made in modern treaties and the reality of their implementation. This bill would take a significant step toward closing that gap. By establishing an independent agent of Parliament, the commissioner for modern treaty implementation, Canada would ensure that progress on modern treaty obligations is transparent, measurable and accountable. This is not a symbolic gesture. It is a concrete, practical reform that would support real progress in implementing the rights and relationships enshrined in modern treaties.

Our government has made significant policy changes that enable us to conclude treaty negotiations faster and more effectively. As a result, Liberal governments over the past decade have signed or initialled five modern treaties, including, most recently, with the Manitoba Métis Federation in 2024. Right now, Canada's new government is nearing the initialling of six new modern treaties, and we will continue to advance this important work alongside indigenous partners. This bill and the commissioner it would create would build trust, enhance transparency and deliver the results that modern treaty partners have been advocating for. When it comes to modern treaties, we intend to listen to indigenous partners.

Government Orders

The commissioner would provide independent oversight of federal activities related to modern treaty implementation, ensuring that progress is visible and its shortcomings are addressed transparently. Through regular reporting and public accountability, Canadians and modern treaty partners alike would have a clear picture of how Canada is meeting its obligations. Accountability is at the heart of this legislation.

The commissioner would join a distinguished group of agents of Parliament, officers who safeguard the principles of our democracy, like the Auditor General, who ensures public funds are used effectively; the Privacy Commissioner, who protects Canadians' personal information; the Information Commissioner, who upholds the right to know; and the Commissioner of Official Languages, who defends linguistic rights across federal institutions. Each plays a vital role in strengthening public trust, yet until now, there has been no independent oversight to ensure that Canada fulfills its constitutional obligations under modern treaties. That is the gap this legislation would fill.

The commissioner would have full and direct access to the information required to evaluate federal performance, a level of independence on par with other oversight officers such as the Auditor General and Privacy Commissioner. This is the benchmark of openness and accountability, essential to maintaining public confidence and ensuring credible, evidence-based oversight. Transparency is not about blame. It is about clarity, openness and shared progress.

When modern treaty partners, Parliament and Canadians can see how modern treaty implementation is progressing, trust grows. Imagine a future where all Canadians can access clear information on where treaty commitments are being fulfilled and where more work is needed. That is what this bill would deliver.

Transparency empowers communities, strengthens governance and builds the foundation for a better relationship between Canada and indigenous peoples. Transparency and trust make good governance stronger. They turn promises into measurable progress and ensure that reconciliation is grounded in evidence and results.

Reconciliation takes shape through the everyday work of implementing commitments, resolving gaps and fostering trust. This legislation would move reconciliation from aspiration to administration, ensuring that the work of partnership is measured and maintained. Modern treaties are at the core of this journey. They affirm indigenous rights and outline shared responsibilities for the future.

● (1540)

However, treaties are only as strong as their implementation. The bill would ensure that implementation will be guided by independent oversight, clear reporting and mutual accountability. By embedding transparency and accountability into our systems, we are advancing reconciliation not just with words but with action.

The commissioner's work would complement Canada's commitments under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. These frameworks remind us that oversight and accountability are not obstacles to reconciliation; they are its foundation.

What is great about the legislation is that it was co-developed with modern treaty partners. Over 130 indigenous governments and organizations were engaged in shaping this proposal, ensuring the design reflects their experience and priorities. That process has already built trust, and that trust will continue once the commissioner begins their work.

As the Tłı̨chǫ Government stated, "The Commissioner for Modern Treaty has been decades in the making. This is an exciting moment that our hard work together has paid off, and this important mechanism for accountability and oversight will be established."

Through ongoing engagement and dialogue, the commissioner would ensure that the perspectives of modern treaty partners are reflected in the reviews and recommendations. This is how partnership becomes policy and how reconciliation becomes reality.

Modern treaties are much more than legal instruments. They are blueprints for opportunity. They provide a framework for governance, education, infrastructure and economic development. When implemented effectively, they enable indigenous governments to plan long-term, attract investment and create jobs. By improving implementation and accountability, the bill would strengthen those outcomes, not only for indigenous peoples but for all Canadians.

Modern treaties contribute to stronger local economies, better infrastructure and sustainable growth. When indigenous communities thrive, Canada thrives. As an agent of Parliament, the commissioner would report directly to Parliament, ensuring independence from political influence. These reports would highlight successes, identify challenges and recommend systemic improvements to ensure better outcomes. This accountability mechanism would serve both Parliament and modern treaty partners, providing transparent information and supporting continuous progress.

Accountability is not about perfection. It is about persistence, learning and the courage to adapt. It shows modern treaty partners that Canada is prepared to hold itself to the same standard of responsibility it asks of others.

The bill is about accountability, trust and reconciliation in action. It ensures that Canada fulfills not only the letter of its modern treaty obligations but also the spirit, grounded in partnership, respect and shared responsibility. The commissioner for modern treaty implementation would bring independent oversight, greater transparency and meaningful accountability. This is not a cost but a tool that would prevent disputes, strengthen relationships and deliver lasting results.

Government Orders

We have made progress, but we know there is more to do. Let us seize upon this opportunity to make reconciliation real, not only with words but with measurable results. The bill strengthens the institutions that uphold reconciliation, not by rewriting the past but by ensuring accountability for the future. By supporting the act, we affirm that transparency and trust are the cornerstones of our shared journey forward. *Meegwetch. Qujannamiik. Marsi.*

• (1545)

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what can Parliament not do that is contained in Bill C-10? My concern with the bill is that it is simply an admonishment that Parliament has not been doing its job holding the executive accountable already.

What is to stop the existing standing committee from issuing a report or conducting an audit? Parliament already has these powers. Why do we need another officer of Parliament to do the job of parliamentarians?

Ron McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, while it is true that existing committees can undertake studies of this kind, many committees do a lot of work on many different things.

What is important about this approach is that it is a focus mechanism that is deeply integrated in our relationship with indigenous people and would allow this new agent of Parliament to focus very directly, on an ongoing basis, on matters that are of concern to indigenous partners.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's intervention on modern treaties was heartfelt and sincere.

This commissioner will indeed play a role vital to us as parliamentarians. We will be able to take responsibility and ask the right questions. In short, we support this bill. I had the opportunity to speak at first reading.

Here is my question. After my speech, I received a lot of feedback, especially from the Land Claims Agreements Coalition. Incidentally, it will be holding an event on Parliament Hill tomorrow, and I encourage all parliamentarians to attend.

If there is one person who is especially important to this coalition, it is Jim Aldridge. I would like to propose that this bill be named after him in committee. It would be known as Jim Aldridge's bill. I think this would mean a lot to everyone who has had a hand in modern coalition issues over the past few decades. I would like my colleague to comment on this idea.

[*English*]

Ron McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's support for the bill.

In terms of what we call it, that is really up to the legislation. I have no objection to his suggestion, but I would suggest that once it, hopefully, passes second reading, this is something that could be addressed in committee.

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague made a key point here: that this legislation was co-developed with treaty partners and indigenous rights holders in order to ensure accountability, oversight and transparency and to build trust.

I wonder if the member could elaborate on what the input was from rights holders and how it was included in the legislation that is before us.

Ron McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I have a list here of dozens of indigenous partners that were consulted. In my speech, I mentioned there were 130 organizations and indigenous governments that were consulted.

This position of an independent agent of Parliament has been requested by indigenous partners and peoples for at least 20 years. It is critical in being able to focus on the deficiencies in the processes and to make sure that we achieve effective progress going forward.

Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I completely agree that this is such an important act of reconciliation. I wonder if the member agrees that reconciliation not only happens through government but has to be an effort by everyone who can help ensure that indigenous peoples have a better sense of well-being.

I wonder if the member agrees that with the Conservatives being opposed to this bill, it also shows they are not supporting reconciliation with the modern treaty partners.

Ron McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with my hon. colleague about how important this bill is for all of us, each and every person in this country who benefits from a long-time establishment on former indigenous lands, unceded and unreconciled. We all have a stake in the outcome, and we all have something to offer going forward.

Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in reference to the debate that just took place, I do not believe the Liberal government has passed very many treaties in the last decade. It is almost as though the Liberals are slapping themselves on the wrist for not doing their job.

Today, I rise to oppose Bill C-10, an act respecting the commissioner for modern treaty implementation. The stated aim of the bill is better accountability in modern treaty implementation. It sounds attractive, but what this bill would really do is create another officer of Parliament and another office, expanding oversight without enforcement, duplication without delivery and bureaucracy without results.

Government Orders

At the heart of this debate is a constitutional first principle. Signing and enacting treaties is the duty of the Crown, of the executive, and not of Parliament. Our core functions in the House are to debate, scrutinize and approve spending, as well as to hold the executive to account. Creating an officer of Parliament to hover over executive treaty work veers away from our legislative remit and blurs lines of responsibility.

The bill's machinery of appointment, mandate, review, audit and tabling would recast a fundamentally executive obligation as a parliamentary oversight project, which is a category error. Parliament should enforce accountability through votes, questions, committee scrutiny and the public accounts process, not by inventing new officers to monitor what ministers should already execute. The honour of the Crown is upheld by action, not by multiplying overseers.

Modern treaties are not obscure documents. They are transparent, publicly accountable instruments that reconcile aboriginal rights and title with Crown title and give certainty to all parties. They are accessible. Nothing is redacted and they acknowledge one country, one set of laws and management plans designed to benefit everyone.

My colleague, the MP for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, has noted that modern treaties provide the most transparent and accountable form of reconciliation. Nobody is put at a disadvantage and the final agreements can be accessed and read by anyone. The member from the Haisla Nation would know better than most people in this chamber.

The bill would hand the commissioner discretion to set priorities, conduct reviews and performance audits, issue findings and recommendations, and table final reports in Parliament. It would require coordination with the Auditor General to avoid duplication and provide access to information and immunity provisions, yet nowhere does the bill compel ministers or departments to act when they fail to meet treaty obligations. It would be monitoring without muscle.

For years, the Auditor General has produced reports detailing implementation delays and fragmented responsibilities. The problem has never been insufficient reporting. The problem has been a lack of ministerial responsibility and follow-through. Adding a new office and more reports would not build a single home, deliver clean water or move one project to completion. Accountability requires consequences, not another commissioner.

If we want real progress, we must return to fundamental ministerial responsibility. We should mandate clarity and require the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations to embed modern treaty implementation milestones in departmental mandates and Treasury Board frameworks, so obligations would not be optional, but operational. We should have routine reporting to Parliament. The minister could proactively report to Parliament during Routine Proceedings, tabling quarterly treaty implementation statements, including what has been met, what has been delayed and how each delay would be fixed, with specific dates and supporting documents. This is how Parliament is supposed to exercise its core function of scrutinizing performance and spending in public.

We can act on audits. When the Auditor General flags failures, the minister should table an action plan, perhaps in 60 days, and

committees should hold accountability hearings until commitments are met. There should be consequences for non-performance, tying senior official performance pay to treaty milestones and, where chronic delays persist, changing leadership. Accountability must be felt inside departments, not outsourced to a new office.

● (1555)

My colleague from the Haisla Nation emphasized that overlap issues among first nations should be worked out between the affected nations and not left to the courts or government to impose solutions. This is real partnership that respects indigenous leadership to resolve boundaries through negotiation rather than litigation.

He notes that we need to call out the current government for not living up to its obligations to treaty bands that negotiated in good faith and sets out two practical Conservative solutions. Number one is that the government needs to do its job to respect and implement treaties. Number two is that, if a treaty band has an issue with government, it should go to MPs to help its representatives amplify its voice. It should come to Ottawa to hold us accountable for what we are here to do.

These principles align with a ministerial responsibility model. They empower the parties to solve overlaps, require the minister to remove federal roadblocks, and ensure Parliament has the performance lens to see whether the minister has, in fact, delivered.

Members can consider the bill's architecture. The commissioner's appointment and tenure mandate is framed around assessing consistency with Crown honour and broad objectives, discretion over reviews and audits, reports tabled by Speakers and referred to committees, annual and special reports, parliamentary reviews within 10 years, independent reviews every five to seven years and consequential amendments adding the office to key statutes. All of this is oversight machinery, but there are no enforcement levers to compel execution of obligations already within our laws.

Government Orders

We are proliferating process instead of guaranteeing performance. We are not fixing diffusion over responsibility across departments; we are adding a new layer above it. By making an officer of Parliament central to executive treaty functions, we would be subtly shifting accountability away from ministers and towards an umpire whose principal tool would be a report. That is not how we deliver reconciliation.

Canadians are facing real affordability pressures. The answers cannot be to grow administrative overhead while frontline outcomes stall. Dollars should flow to delivery, not duplication. If we need transparency, we can use existing parliamentary tools such as committee mandates, Order Paper questions, supply votes, public accounts and Auditor General follow-ups, so performance and spending are scrutinized where they belong.

The preamble to Bill C-10 invokes UNDRIP, modern treaties as living documents and the honour of the Crown. Those are important aspirations, but they are realized only when governments do what they have promised, on time and in full, not when we create a new office to monitor yet another delay.

Modern treaties do deliver certainty for indigenous governments, neighbouring communities, investors and private property owners who need predictable rules. This is reconciliation by results, grounded in the rule of law.

Conservatives, of course, support modern treaties and indigenous communities seeking to move beyond the paternalistic Indian Act. We will oppose Bill C-10 because it confuses monitoring for delivery. Conservatives will insist on ministerial responsibility, acting on audits and the respect of a practical approach, one that leads to real results.

The honour of the Crown is not measured by the number of commissioners we appoint; it is measured by promises kept. Modern treaties deserve execution, not another report. For these reasons, I will vote against this bill.

• (1600)

Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned that Parliament's remit is not only legislation but also holding government to account. He mentioned many times the Auditor General. I would remind the member that the role of this new commissioner is exactly in parallel with that of the Auditor General. Its job is to inform Parliament, to make Parliament more able to hold ministers to account and to hold government to account.

Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I will note, as I did in my speech, that there are many reports from the Auditor General outlining the issues we have had with implementing treaty rights for indigenous peoples of Canada. They have never been followed through on.

The argument I was making throughout my speech is that we do not actually enforce the mandate of the executive of the Crown to fulfill treaty obligations. I do not believe another officer of Parliament would lead us to better objectives.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lestiguj, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and

his explanations. The Bloc Québécois supports this bill and believes that it gives parliamentarians a tool to put pressure on the executive branch in the event that it fails to meet its obligations.

I understand what my colleague is saying. We should be able to expect the government to do its job and we, as MPs, could apply pressure. However, let us consider the example of the Auditor General of Canada. She is the one who informed us last October that when people were calling the Canada Revenue Agency, they were getting accurate answers only 17% of the time.

Why does my colleague not think it would be beneficial to have another tool that could keep us more informed as parliamentarians?

• (1605)

[*English*]

Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, what lies behind my opposition to this is that we, as individual members of Parliament, have so much more power than I think almost any of us even attempt to exercise. If this bill is successful, all the powers outlined in Bill C-10 for the actions of the commissioner, the officer of Parliament, would be for what we as members of Parliament already can do.

If we care about seeing treaties operationalize, and in the context of British Columbia this is so important right now, first and foremost we have to devote ourselves as MPs to holding the minister accountable. We can do that through the tools we have already. It is up to us, the elected people. We should not dismiss our responsibilities.

William Stevenson (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can feel the hon. member's frustration with regard to what has gone on. Does he see a pattern over the last 10 years? This is just an extenuation of what has gone on with things not being accounted for when it comes to the Liberals dealing with certain things, specifically things in the Indian Act. How is this going to make anything better?

Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I wish I were standing here today and the Minister of Indigenous Services was before Parliament saying that they had signed multiple treaties that were going to empower young indigenous Canadians to start businesses, have access to their resources and have better certainty for home ownership. However, we are not there, and we have not seen any of that in the last decade. That is unfortunate.

I do not believe in establishing another officer of Parliament because it will lead to more red tape. Again, in the last 10 years, there have been no treaties signed. Why not? Where has the minister been? The minister has not done their job.

Government Orders

Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why does the member oppose this commissioner?

Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I oppose the establishment of another officer of Parliament because it would degrade the work we should be doing as members of Parliament and would not take concrete action to hold the minister accountable for their responsibilities to sign treaties. There is no consequence for not signing treaties in this bill.

Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Clarke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise. Once again I would like to take 30 seconds to thank the wonderful people of Northumberland—Clarke for sending me here again, for a third time. It is a privilege of a lifetime and an honour of a lifetime to work for them here in the House of Commons.

Of course, we are here today to talk about Bill C-10. I will go over it relatively briefly, as there has been debate already on this very important bill.

Bill C-10 would establish the independent commissioner of modern treaty implementation as an agent of Parliament. It would create the office of the commissioner to support this role. The mandate of the commissioner would be to conduct reviews and performance audits on federal government institutions' activities related to implementing modern treaties, comprehensive land claims and self-government agreements with indigenous peoples post-1970s, and to monitor and report on how well the federal government fulfills its obligations, commitments and relationships under these treaties.

It would aim to promote accountability; rebuild trust between the Crown and modern treaty partners, indigenous groups and self-governing first nations; and address long-standing, for more than 20 years in many cases, calls for better oversight and implementation of treaty promises.

The commissioner would report the findings to Parliament to help ensure that the government's actions would align with its treaty obligations. The commissioner would not have enforcement powers and would focus on independent reviews, auditing and reporting, rather than on direct intervention.

Of course, Conservatives support modern treaties, and if someone has been reviewing the debate, they would see that my comments would be squarely within the Conservative argument. Of course, we believe in these debates and we believe in the treaties, but we believe ultimately in enforcement; the government needs to take action to rectify wrongs as opposed to having another level of bureaucracy. Let us face it: After a decade of Liberal rule, if agencies, bureaucrats and offices were to create solutions, we would be living in the best economy in the world.

The reality is that, despite the Prime Minister's promises, we languish near the bottom of the G7 economies, even though we have many different government agencies, including a housing agency and a national projects office. I might take a moment to pause and discuss the national projects office. I worked closely with my Liberal counterparts to legislate the creation of the national projects office, but here we are, nearly a year later, at least eight months, and as of yet no projects have been approved. Because of an Order Paper question, we know that the government has spent close to a mil-

lion dollars, and probably more, because the answer is a little dated now, yet no projects have been approved

There has been a pattern over the last 10 years. The so-called new government is continuing the ways of the so-called old government: If in fact there is a problem, it creates a new government office. Ronald Reagan once said that the closest thing to eternal life in this world is a government office. Despite the fact that we do not have results, we just get more and more government offices that spend more tax dollars without getting results. In fact in some cases we get the exact opposite of the outcome we want, which in this case is the administration of treaties in accordance with legislation and in accordance with the path towards truth and reconciliation. This is because, as we build more and more bureaucracies, the truth gets more and more obscured.

We need to hold civil servants accountable. That starts with the government, quite frankly. We need parliamentarians to step up and not be afraid to criticize the government and not be afraid to criticize the actions of their civil servants and hold them accountable if they are not taking the necessary actions and steps of treaties as we go forward.

Conservatives support treaty rights and the process of reconciliation with Canada's first nations, Inuit and Métis people. In the span of six years, the former Conservative government negotiated five modern treaties. The Liberals have negotiated none in ten years in office. The Office of the Auditor General has conducted over two dozen reports, including audits, since 2005 into treaty negotiations and matters that affect indigenous people.

● (1610)

Rather than demanding accountability from "Ottawa knows best" bureaucrats, the Liberals propose creating new layers of bureaucracy and spending more money at a time when Canadians can ill afford it. I might say, it is a particularly poor time to spend funds that could go directly towards the implementation of treaties. Money could go directly towards helping or assisting first nations, for example in making sure that every indigenous child has access to clean drinking water, which was a pledge made in 2015 by the Liberal government. The Liberals committed that, within five years, every indigenous child would have access to clean drinking water. Here we are in 2026, and that pledge still has not been made good on.

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The first step towards truth and reconciliation is the truth part. The second part is living up to our promises, our commitments. If we commit to anyone that we are going to do something, it is the very basis of human nature, of any type of code of morality from any religion, or any secular code, that we need to live up to that commitment. We are here in 2026 talking about a promise that was made in 2015. Before implementing another level of government bureaucracy, why do we not just live up to the promises made in the House to first nations peoples?

Too often, whenever the Liberals see a problem, they see a government agency they need to create. The Liberals should in fact look back at their own track record. Between 2015 and 2017 alone, they created a web of entities: the modern treaty implementation office, assessment of modern treaty implications, performance networks, oversight committees and the reconciliation secretariat.

The government has a very poor record when it comes to modern treaty interpretation and enforcement. The government is, quite frankly, not getting it done. The answer is not another level of bureaucracy. It is not another set of regulations. It is simply the same thing that I am sure all parliamentarians try to instill into their children: that when they make a promise, they live up to that promise. That is what the government has to do. No matter how many levels of bureaucracy are stacked on, it does not necessarily mean that the promises will be lived up to.

What we require are ministers and senior officials who take ownership of their legal duties and processes, whether under modern treaties, self-government agreements or historical agreements. A commissioner will not change the culture; accountability will. In fact, I have written letters to multiple ministers, several about local indigenous issues. The great Alderville First Nation is within boundaries of the Northumberland—Clarke riding. Its people have forwarded issues, and I have still not had a response to those issues.

Instead of responding to Parliament, the accountability that exists in the House, the Liberals are just going to try to obscure and move things over to another bureaucracy, saying, “Look over there. We don’t want this responsibility. We don’t want this accountability.” Instead they are going to put it on another bureaucracy that will without doubt spend millions, if not more, of Canadian taxpayer dollars without actually making life any better for indigenous people.

We need a government that lives up to its promises and truly walks us down the path of truth and reconciliation, making life better for all Canadians, making life better for all indigenous peoples, making life better for all children across the land and making sure that every indigenous child has access to clean drinking water.

• (1615)

Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is concerned that there is no enforcement capability in this agency, while at the same time he is bewailing what he considers the creation of a bureaucracy. I would suggest that if enforcement were incorporated, that would mandate an enormous bureaucracy.

In truth, there would be no bureaucracy around the position. This is all about using the bureaucracy of the House of Commons to

hold the government to account. The role of the agency would be to be a tool of Parliament so Parliament can be kept informed on an ongoing, live basis of situations that need action and so the House can hold the government to account.

Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, the head of those bureaucracies is the minister. If the minister feels as though they are not getting results, she should walk down to the office and fire them.

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think the new office will be useful because it can provide us with information on treaty compliance.

However, I wonder whether it should also have coercive powers to ensure treaty compliance. Does my colleague think that is a good idea?

[*English*]

Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, if government officials are not respecting the treaties, then the minister, through accountability, has to hold those folks responsible. If that means finding new people, then do it. If that means firing people who are not actioning the implementation of the treaties, then do it.

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this debate is centred around accountability in terms of the minister or the government not honouring or respecting treaties, yet it is already written into the provisions. One of the most powerful and most senior institutions the government has is the Auditor General, who says the government should respect treaties, but the government ignores that. There are oversight committees that have been talking about exactly what is contemplated in this bill, and the government ignores it.

To my colleague, I agree, but does this add or take away from the frustrations that first nations are experiencing in treaty bands today?

• (1620)

Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, the member would be in a much better position to answer his question than I am. From my experience of talking to the first nations who are located within the riding of Northumberland, one of their big frustrations is the fact that they cannot get answers. They get pushed from one bureaucrat to another. They seek nation-to-nation communications, clarity and answers. They do not need another bureaucracy. They do not need another federal office.

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, listening to multiple speeches today, it seems like the main objection is that this creates an additional bureaucracy, but that is ignoring the fact that this is actually built in consultation and collaboration with indigenous leaders and indigenous rights holders.

What would the member say to those indigenous rights holders who are asking for this legislation?

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Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I would go back to the original point that ministers have the ability to set in place the accountability and the responsibility within existing legislation. Let us have a culture of accountability and responsibility. Let us implement the treaties. Let us walk, or in fact run, down the path to truth and reconciliation.

Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a great nation. I think all of us can agree on that. We and those who came before us have worked to build a country that all Canadians can feel proud to be part of, but we are not perfect. We have not always lived up to our ideals as a nation. One area we have fallen short is when it comes to our obligations to our indigenous people.

Our nation is a relatively young one. The relationship with indigenous people predates the establishment of Canada as an independent country, with first nations negotiating treaties with the British Crown. With Confederation, Canada took on the responsibility for those agreements, agreeing to hold up our end of the bargain. Too often, we have not lived up to our commitments, observing neither the spirit nor the letter of law. I hope that we have learned from past mistakes and that the distrust in the relationships between Canada, indigenous people and those who came here later can be mended.

According to the Canadian Encyclopedia:

Indigenous treaties in Canada are constitutionally recognized agreements between the Crown and Indigenous peoples. Most of these agreements describe exchanges where Indigenous nations agree to share some of their interests in their ancestral lands in return for various payments and promises. On a deeper level, treaties are sometimes understood, particularly by Indigenous people, as sacred covenants between nations that establish a relationship between those for whom Canada is an ancient homeland and those whose family roots lie in other countries. Treaties therefore form the constitutional and moral basis of alliance between Indigenous peoples and Canada.

In our fact-based world, we are sometimes uncomfortable with the idea of anything having a moral basis. The idea of morality, of something being instinctively right or wrong, seems to have gone out of fashion in some circles, which may be why the Liberals have introduced this legislation, Bill C-10, the commissioner for modern treaty implementation act. By creating a new position and accompanying bureaucracy, the Liberals are attempting to deflect from the fact that they have not lived up to their moral obligations. Instead of doing what is right, they are trying to deflect attention away from what they are not doing, which is not living up to their responsibilities under the treaties signed with first nations.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada called on the federal government to “Renew or establish Treaty relationships based on principles of mutual recognition, mutual respect, and shared responsibility for maintaining those relationships into the future.” In order for that to happen, the Liberals must first admit that they have failed to respect the treaties between our country and its first nations.

On October 21, the Auditor General released a report on first nations as a follow-up to the six previous audits done since the Liberals formed government in 2015. Those audits covered a range of programs important to the health and well-being of first nations communities, including programs providing access to primary health care, emergency management services and safe drinking water. Despite Indigenous Services Canada increasing its program

spending by 84% in the past six years, there remain significant challenges in improving services and outcomes for first nations communities. For example, there are nine communities with drinking water advisories that have been in place for a decade or longer. How can this be acceptable in Canada in 2025? Whatever happened to Justin Trudeau's promise in 2015 to end drinking water advisories. Sadly, his words seem like more hollow promises, cynically uttered by Liberals to gain votes, knowing they would not deliver on their promises.

• (1625)

According to the Auditor General, Indigenous Services Canada has made unsatisfactory progress in addressing the needs identified in previous reports; 53% of those issues are not resolved. Do the Liberals understand their failure in this matter? Instead of ensuring that the identified needs of indigenous communities are being met, they are now proposing to create more bureaucracy.

We do not need a commissioner for modern treaty implementation; we need a government that understands the needs of Canadians and that lives up to its commitments to them. It should not take another bureaucracy or bureaucrat to ensure that Canada does the right thing. It should not take another bureaucrat to ensure that Canada lives up to its treaty commitments.

Keeping our word used to be a Canadian value. Why does the government think it is necessary to invent a new bureaucracy to ensure that it keeps its word? Is it that the Liberals are so used to making promises and then not keeping them that they need someone to keep them in line? We need to live up to our treaty obligations. We should not need a new government department in order to do that.

It is important to note that the proposed commissioner would deal solely with the modern treaties between Canada and our first nations. The modern treaty era began in 1973, after a Supreme Court of Canada decision that recognized indigenous rights for the first time. The decision led to the first modern treaty, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, signed in 1975. Since then, Canada has negotiated and signed 26 treaties with indigenous groups in Canada, 18 of which contain self-government provisions or associated self-government agreements.

Before 2000, modern treaties were negotiated in the form of comprehensive land claim agreements, and only a few modern treaty partners negotiated self-government agreements separately. Since 2000, all modern treaties have included provisions for self-government. The federal government and modern treaty partners co-developed Canada's collaborative model treaty implementation policy in 2023.

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Conservatives support the treaty rights and the process of reconciliation with Canada's first nations, Inuit and Métis people. We recognize that more needs to be done to advance those rights, which include self-determination and self-government. Conservatives, under former prime minister Harper, negotiated five modern treaties in the span of six years. In more than a decade, the Liberals have negotiated none with the 70 indigenous groups currently negotiating with the government.

True reconciliation comes with meeting our commitments to Canada's first nations. We should not need a new level of bureaucracy to make sure that, as a nation, we keep the agreements we sign. The Auditor General has pointed out where we are failing in our treatment of indigenous peoples. Years are going by, and problems are not being solved. No wonder reconciliation seems no closer than it was a decade ago. Rather than demanding accountability from "Ottawa knows best" bureaucrats, the Liberals are proposing to create a new layer of bureaucracy, which of course means spending more money at a time when Canadians can ill afford it.

There is no need for the bill. Rather than create a commissioner for modern treaty implementation, why do the ministers and departments responsible for treaty negotiation and implementation not do their jobs?

• (1630)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we look at what indigenous communities themselves would like, we see that the support of having an independent officer of the House of Commons seems to be a very strong step forward with respect to both reconciliation and a higher sense of accountability and transparency. Why does the Conservative Party not support the independence of that agent's answering to Parliament?

Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, what is appointing bureaucrats going to do? There are no results being delivered by the government as far as this file goes. There has been nothing done and no progress made in the last 10 years. What is the point of appointing someone? It is just to add another bureaucracy. I do not think the community is looking for that. The community is looking for action and looking for results, and unless those results are delivered, there is no point in adding another bureaucracy.

[*Translation*]

Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have seen overwhelming support for this bill from first nations. I believe that the commissioner will be a watchdog who will conduct research and provide us with information so that we can enforce the treaties if the government fails to do so.

That said, I think the commissioner should also have coercive powers. What does my colleague think?

[*English*]

Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, I think the debate here is between delivering results and showing signals that really do not deliver anything to the people. The community wants results. It wants more action. It wants to see that things are progressing properly, and some of the issues the community is facing need to be resolved. That is what the community is looking for.

How to approach that, in our opinion as the Conservative Party of Canada, is that we need to see results and we need to make sure that the people responsible for these files, the minister and the department, do their jobs.

Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his great speech on Bill C-10. He could not have outlined it better.

What we are really looking for from the government is a bit of action on a whole host of things. This bill is just adding bureaucracy instead of getting the government out of the way and doing the things that it says it is going to do, much the same way as it says it is going to build pipelines and then does not build pipelines. The government said it was going to build national infrastructure at speeds unseen before and we are not seeing this. Once again, we see the relationship with the first nations in this country. This is just an appeasement, just a smoke and mirrors kind of thing.

Does the member have any comments on that?

Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, in the last decade, the government has not negotiated a single treaty with the indigenous community. That tells us a lot. There are 70 groups right now negotiating with the government. They are going to continue to negotiate and negotiate, but no one, especially the government, is showing any results. The government is not showing us the truth of what it is doing. Unless we reach that point, it is really pointless to continue developing bureaucracy after bureaucracy. I believe the community is looking for action. It is looking for results and that is where the Conservative Party is standing on this issue.

• (1635)

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to disagree about the importance of the implementation of this commissioner to hold government to account. Often, treaties have been signed and those agreements have not been implemented. It has been uneven, inconsistent and ignored. We heard that this morning from Chief John Jack from Huu-ay-aht First Nations and Chief Wilfred Cootes from Uchucklesaht. They are calling for the commissioner to hold the government to account to ensure that when treaties are signed, they are actually implemented.

Why are the Conservatives going against the calls to action by indigenous peoples in this country who want to work nation to nation to support their people and build a better, healthier Canada?

Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, in the system that we have for our democracy, I believe that Parliament should keep the government in line. If we need to add layers and layers to keep the government in place, then what are we doing here? Why are we here? We are here to represent the people and defend their rights, and I think Parliament should have the power to do that, not another new bureaucracy.

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[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, The Budget; the hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City, Natural Resources.

[*English*]

Tako Van Popta (Langley Township—Fraser Heights, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we are talking about an act respecting the commissioner for modern treaty implementation. What would it do? The enactment would provide for the appointment of a commissioner of modern treaty implementation. The commissioner's job would be to conduct reviews and performance audits of the activities of the government related to the implementation of modern treaties, or rather, the government's failure to implement treaties. This is a failure that the Office of the Auditor General, another agency of Parliament, has pointed out in numerous reports. For years, the Auditor General has been shouting from the treetops that the government must take the treaty process seriously, and for 10 years, the Liberals have done nothing. They have dragged their feet.

Admittedly, this is not a problem of just the last 10 years; it has been brewing since the early days of Confederation. However, I must highlight that under the Conservative government of Stephen Harper, Canada negotiated five modern treaties. Since then, in the last 10 years, there have been zero, which is the problem.

The need to expedite treaties, as I said, goes back to the early days of our history, to the 1850s in British Columbia, when the British Crown claimed sovereignty over Vancouver Island and the mainland, what we now call British Columbia. There were some early treaties under Governor James Douglas, the Douglas treaties, over Vancouver Island. After that, subsequent governors and colonial legislatures dropped the ball.

In 1871, British Columbia became part of the Canadian Confederation, and at that time, the federal government took over some of the responsibility for treaty negotiations under section 91 of the British North America Act, but it too dropped the ball. This is continuing right now. The Liberals are continuing not to pick up the ball, not to run with it.

What are the Liberals doing? They are hiding behind this proposed legislation. They want to appoint a commissioner to take a look at all of this, to see why things have not been happening. This is another unnecessary bill from a government that is lacking creativity. It is becoming a crisis.

The recent decision of the British Columbia Supreme Court in the Cowichan Tribes case underlines what happens when the Crown does not follow through with its commitments to respect indigenous rights. What do we get? We get community unrest, economic uncertainty and confusion. What did the judge say in that case? She said that aboriginal title is superior to fee simple title, which is a basic form of land ownership that everyone understands and that forms the very basis of our modern capitalist system. Our economy, banking system, financial security, home ownership and retirement planning are all based on the concept of fee simple.

Now people and businesses in the Richmond area, where these lands are, as well as right across the whole province, are worried that their fee simple title is not as secure as they thought it was. What is important too is that banks and financial institutions are also starting to doubt the indefeasibility of fee simple title. We have heard of some big real estate deals collapsing on account of banks feeling nervous. The provincial government steps forward and says it will guarantee those loans, but that is not the solution. The solution is to deal properly and effectively with the first nations people and enter into treaties.

The land at the centre of this dispute is not in some remote area of British Columbia where the land is still owned by the Crown. No, it is right in the heart of metro Vancouver. There are commercial properties there, shopping malls, residential neighbourhoods and even a jet fuel tank station supplying nearby Vancouver International Airport. Quite frankly, Vancouver cannot operate without these lands staying pretty much exactly the way they are, so we have a very big problem.

What is the solution? This speech is not about how to resolve the Cowichan lands challenges. I have some ideas, but that is not what we are talking about. Today we are talking about how we go forward with implementing modern-day treaties so we avoid ongoing issues like this and the economic uncertainty that arises. I raise this case only to point out how important and urgent it is that we move forward.

● (1640)

Throughout B.C., there is a lot of work to be done. I am thinking of metro Vancouver and first nations communities in highly urbanized areas, like the Kwantlen First Nation in my home community of Fort Langley, or the Katzie First Nation in the northern part of my community, or the Semiahmoo in neighbouring White Rock. None of them have treaties, and they are losing confidence in the treaty process, so I welcome the debate, as people in my home province are concerned.

However, it is not all negative. There is good news. In British Columbia, there have been some notable success stories in the ongoing quest to implement modern treaties. I want to talk about the Tsawwassen First Nation settlement of 2009.

The Tsawwassen First Nation land, like the Cowichan land, is in metro Vancouver, surrounded by very valuable land. It is close to the port of Vancouver and the B.C. ferry terminal. There is a lot of good farmland there as well. This is one of the five modern treaties that were successfully negotiated during the Harper years, and it is a leading example of what can be done in an urbanized setting.

The treaty transferred 724 hectares of land to the Tsawwassen First Nation community, which now holds it in fee simple. It is something they can take to the bank, which is not something they could have done under the Indian Act. The Tsawwassen First Nation community is acting on that. Its people have developed the land so that it is bringing prosperity to their community. They have a couple of very large shopping malls and industrial properties supporting the nearby port, and there is still lots of farmland available. Of the 724 hectares, I believe 500 is still farmland. This is very rich farmland, right in the Fraser River estuary, which supports Canadian food security and sovereignty.

We have two examples coming out of British Columbia. One is a very good one, the Tsawwassen First Nation, and one is not so good, the Cowichan Tribes case. I suppose the latter might also be a good example of what could go wrong, underlining the urgency of moving forward.

To get back to the main topic, Bill C-10, an act respecting the commission for modern treaty implementation, people who were expecting that the bill would actually accelerate the treaty process in British Columbia and throughout Canada will be disappointed. The bill is simply about setting up a new bureaucracy to keep an eye on existing bureaucracies that have failed time and again to get the job done.

In my years in this Parliament, I have observed time and again how the Liberals act. Their politics is performative politics. They want to appear to be doing something about whatever is being debated in the Parliament of the day, the issues of the period. If major projects are being held up because of federal bureaucracy getting in the way, then let us set up a Major Projects Office. If housing is unaffordable and new houses are not being built, then we have an office for that too. Now, if indigenous treaty rights are not being respected, then let us set up a commission. However, it is not necessary. The Liberals appear to be doing something, but in fact, the bill before us would do very little to move the needle forward.

I have just three words for the Liberals: “Do your job.” They should stop the performative arts, stop preening in front of the cameras, roll up their sleeves and, finally, for once, do the hard stuff.

• (1645)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it somewhat unfortunate that Conservatives do not understand or appreciate the importance of having an agent of Parliament being assigned in this area. I think it would do wonders in terms of everything from the modern-day treaties to the whole movement towards reconciliation. I think they are underestimating the importance of reconciliation by not necessarily supporting Bill C-10.

Does the member believe that there is any connection between reconciliation and the idea of having an agent of Parliament to deal with modern-day treaties?

Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, indeed, we already have an agent that is responsible for that. That agent is called the Auditor General. The unfortunate part is that the Liberals have not been taking the reports from the Office of the Auditor General seriously. That applies to many matters, including when reports comment on their

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lack of action on indigenous rights and settling treaties. That should have been done a long time ago. It is time for them to do their job.

Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, representatives from that side of the House, the government, claim that the Conservatives have no idea what we are really talking about, when what we are talking about is accountability.

I was a chief councillor. I was a chairman of the treaty negotiations. I was actually part of First Nations Summit, an advocacy group based out of Vancouver of all chief negotiators. I know of the six oversight committees that are actually fighting for basic accountability. There is also the Auditor General, the highest, most powerful, basically non-political group in Canada, who has been telling the government that it has to respect treaties. The only group in the House that does not respect accountability for treaty implementation is the government. Would my colleague agree that basically there are enough provisions in the treaty, as well as organizations that are demanding accountability from the government—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The hon. member for Langley Township—Fraser Heights.

Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley on the work he has done with the Haisla Nation and others in British Columbia for advancing indigenous reconciliation. I thank him very much for that.

With respect to accountability, the member pointed out correctly that the Auditor General is the ultimate holder to accountability of the government, and that office is being ignored. I predict that the Liberal government would ignore what this commissioner would say.

Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we heard again this morning about the uneven, inconsistent and sometimes ignored implementation of the treaty process. We have heard from the nations wanting this treaty commissioner to absolutely ensure that treaty implementation happens. Now, we hear Conservatives say, “Well, that is a waste of money.” However, what is costly is not implementing a treaty because, when treaties are implemented, it creates jobs. Those nations want to participate in the economy. They want to move forward.

We hear also from the Conservatives all the time that the government should have done more. Absolutely, the government should do more, but so should the official opposition. Will the Conservatives admit that they need to ask more questions when it comes to indigenous issues in this place, as the official opposition?

• (1650)

Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, indeed it is the government's job to implement these treaties. As the opposition, our job is to hold the government to account, as it is that member's responsibility as well.

Adjournment Proceedings

We need the Conservatives to form government. I am thinking of the Harper days when we actually got the job done. It can be done, and we are waiting for the government to finally take action to get the job done.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

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

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I understand that we will be carrying it on division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

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

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 6:41 p.m. so we could get into the late show.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

THE BUDGET

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the late show has never come so early.

I am rising tonight to raise an issue that I initially put before the House on December 9, 2025. I am rather proud of the fact that I seem to have been the first member of Parliament to have put this on the public record. Hopefully people noticed, and yes, there is a growing coalition who wants to raise awareness of the issue I first raised here on December 9. It is division 5 within the omnibus budget bill, Bill C-15, which, at over 600 pages, takes a while to read, get through and study.

I want to categorically put it on the record right now that I see no sign that the Conservatives are filibustering Bill C-15, the omnibus budget bill. It takes a while to study a budget implementation act of over 600 pages. I also believe that since the bill was put up for first reading on November 18, there is no sign of delay since the House, by unanimous consent with my objection, adjourned a day early on

December 11. We have only been back a little while, and 600 pages plus changing 20 different laws takes some time.

I maintain, as I did on December 9, that the most egregious section of the bill is the one that says that a minister can, on personal discretion, deciding it is in the public interest, exempt the application of any Canadian law, except the Criminal Code, from application within their area of jurisdiction and that they will make this public not immediately, not soon, but according to the act, as soon as it is feasible, with no time limit on that.

Since the time that people have become alarmed about this, there has been testimony before committee. Because, as we just did, we passed Bill C-15 on division at second reading, we did not have a recorded vote, which is why I have not been able to state on the record that I cannot possibly vote for the budget implementation act as currently drafted with the sections found in division 5.

Since then, because it did pass on division at second reading, it has gone to the finance committee and other committees for study. I found it interesting, in going over the witnesses put forward, the ways in which the Liberals are trying to justify this extraordinary power grab by individual ministers to exempt any entity from the operation of any Canadian law except for the Criminal Code.

The defence of this provision first started with the response by the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, who answered and said that because “Canada has world-class innovators and entrepreneurs,” we need to build the strongest economy and “we are reducing red tape”, because division 5 of Bill C-15 is to amend the Red Tape Reduction Act. The hon. parliamentary secretary continued, “As part of this process, we are reducing red tape to broaden the use of something called regulatory sandboxes to help foster and spur research...and innovation.”

Since that time, the concept of regulatory sandboxes has been expanded upon by the witnesses from the Treasury Board before the committee. The witnesses put forward that there were “misconceptions in the public domain”, and they wanted to explain all that because what they said to the committee was that regulatory sandboxes are a “well-established governmental tool” to allow the testing of innovative products.

Where does this well-established governmental tool come from and where is it defined? Even after going back to amend the Red Tape Reduction Act, Bill C-15 does not include any definition of “regulatory sandbox”—

• (1655)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): I have to interrupt the hon. member and proceed to the response.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

Claude Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as our economy pivots and modernizes, it is important to appreciate the fact that existing regulations may not fit the needs of new and emerging technologies. This can cause significant delays or even stop new products or services from entering the Canadian marketplace. Doing so can hamper Canadian entrepreneurship and innovation, reduce competition and make life less affordable for Canadians.

That is why, in order to help regulation keep pace with innovation, our government committed in budget 2025 to expanding the use of regulatory sandboxes through amendments to the Red Tape Reduction Act. As members know, regulatory sandboxes are commonly used devices that permit a new product or service to be tested in the marketplace under a temporary set of rules and controlled by regulatory supervision. This can help regulators safely decide whether to make any permanent regulatory changes to how that product or service should be regulated.

Our government is of the view that regulatory sandboxes would help support economic growth, reduce red tape, and improve Canada's investment environment by permitting new products and new technologies to get to market in a safe and efficient manner.

However, the concerns raised by the member opposite are valid. I would like to reassure my hon. colleague that it would not be the wild west; there would be guardrails in place. Indeed, the government has included safeguards in both the legislation and supporting policy to ensure that regulatory sandboxes would be used responsibly and consistently across the government. Our goal is to protect the economy, the environment and the welfare of Canadians in the use of regulatory sandboxes.

Bill C-15 would not allow ministers to exempt any person or business from any federal law for broad policy purposes. For example, the legislation includes several safeguards, including providing clear time limits for exemption; requiring exemptions be in the public interest; requiring that public health, public safety and the environment be protected; and limiting exemption to individual entities. Exempting entire sectors of an industry or fast-tracking an entire major project is not within the scope.

The legislation also includes explicit transparency and accountability requirements that would allow for continued oversight and prevent executive overreach. The minister would have to publish exception orders and an explanation of the decision-making process, while protecting confidential business information as required by law.

Furthermore, the President of the Treasury Board would have to table an annual report in Parliament listing all exemption orders issued in the previous fiscal year, the rationale for each, and the ministers responsible. This oversight mechanism would ensure that Parliament is informed and able to scrutinize the use of these authorities.

Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I will try to watch the clock carefully, because I cannot possibly take apart even the so-called conditions that are found in proposed paragraphs 12(3)(a) through 12(3)(e) at page 301 of the bill. They are highly discretionary.

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The bill would do no such thing as create guardrails; it may create small children waving by the side of the road. It is not a piece of legislation that is well drafted, nor are any of these terms defined, including “public interest” and “regulatory sandbox”. The minister would be allowed to work within their own discretion. Furthermore, the transparency could be as much as a year after the exemption has been granted saying that a federal law does not have to be obeyed.

I would prefer better drafting. I urge the government to amend Bill C-15. If it means what the government has its Treasury Board Secretariat say in committee, it ought to have drafted it to say so.

● (1700)

Claude Guay: Mr. Speaker, ministers could not use these provisions to exempt themselves or others from obligation under statutes such as the Conflict of Interest Act, for example. The authorities would apply it only to laws within a minister's portfolio and only for the purpose of testing and innovating under regulatory supervision. Nor is it intended to bypass important protections and lead to regulatory changes that compromise safety or environmental standards.

Regulatory sandboxes are a valuable tool. We would use them to support innovation and to help grow our economy, making it more competitive by creating environments and processes for companies to grow in a way that continues to protect the best interests of Canadian workers, consumers, businesses, the public and the environment.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada needs a pipeline. We are a sovereign, resource-rich nation. We produce energy the world wants, yet instead of building the infrastructure that would allow us to sell that energy at full value, the Prime Minister has tied our economic future to a net-zero framework so complex, so conditional, that we are assured it will take forever and cost the max. It goes without saying that approving a nation-building pipeline is not the responsibility of the NDP Premier of B.C; it is a federal responsibility, and it rests squarely on the Prime Minister's desk.

Let us be clear about what is happening in the background. I want to demonstrate that by following a Canadian dollar, one loonie, through the system as it now stands under the Prime Minister. Let us follow it through the Pathways carbon capture project, which the Prime Minister has attached as a condition to the pipeline Canadians so badly need.

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First, the carbon capture project itself is risky. It is massive. It is expensive. It is not about affordability; it is about net-zero ideology once again.

In a normal market, investors look at that and say there is too much risk and no return. Since the free market is not interested in these mega-expensive net-zero projects the Prime Minister wants so badly, what happens next? The government steps in and sweetens the deal. This is called de-risking. Ottawa offers investment tax credits. It builds guarantees and backstops. It creates funds designed to absorb losses if things go sideways to ensure there is little risk for the project investor.

In plain language, the government tells the investor not to worry because, if this does not work out the way they hoped, the taxpayer will carry part of the risk. Right there, our humble little loonie transmogrifies, as Calvin and Hobbes would say. It changes from a free-market loonie into an insurance loonie. It moves onto the taxpayers tab.

Here is where Canadians should really stop and pay attention. There is talk that our retirement savings could now be part of this. The Prime Minister talks as though pension savings could be a tool for the government's nation-building agenda. However, is that what Canadians voted for? Did they elect him to find a clever way into the CPP cookie jar? Every paycheque, whether for teachers, public servants, even the translators working right now to ensure my words are heard in French, includes a mandatory deduction for their retirement.

This is their money, and it was deliberately placed out of politicians' reach years ago, which was supported by the Conservatives, precisely so they could not redirect Canadians' retirement savings towards political priorities. Pension funds were designed to be protected from political interference. Their job is to invest responsibly, not to chase ideological projects dressed up as policy.

Here is my key point: We know that, if a project is too risky, it should not qualify for pension investment, but with fancy footwork, the government could de-risk it on the back of the taxpayer and suddenly the project would look safe enough on paper. The spreadsheet improves and projected returns stabilize, not because the risk disappeared, but because middle-class Canadians are now holding the bag. When things go sideways, who carries the risk? Public dollars will absorb losses. The middle-class family will absorb the loss in the form of taxes and inflation. That loonie quietly shrinks in purchasing power.

This is ultimately a question of integrity and fairness. In a free market, risk and reward go hand in hand. Those who take the risk bear the consequences, good or bad. That connection creates discipline and it forces careful decisions, but when the government alters that relationship and stacks the deck, someone loses. When will the Prime Minister stop hiding behind expensive, inflationary, ideological preconditions and approve a pipeline to get to the Pacific to let Canadians get full value for the resources we have in abundance?

• (1705)

Claude Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are com-

mitted to making Canada an energy superpower, both in clean and conventional energy, while protecting our environment, including northern B.C. coasts, and respecting indigenous rights, something we did not hear in the member's elocution.

So far, the government has not received a proposal for the project being referenced by the member opposite. If this pipeline is to be considered, as with any other project, the government is committed to robust consultation with indigenous people. We have been clear that indigenous people must benefit from our efforts to get major projects built faster.

Last summer, the Building Canada Act was passed, an important step toward increasing certainty surrounding infrastructure and natural resources projects. The Major Projects Office is streamlining federal approval processes to accelerate the completion of major projects. These projects include ports, transmission lines, critical mineral projects and both clean and conventional projects. In the Building Canada Act, we emphasized that one of the criteria is that it should advance the interests of indigenous people.

Today, many of the projects referred to the Major Projects Office include indigenous communities as partners with ownership stakes and co-operation agreements. This includes the Red Chris mine expansion in northwest B.C., which is being developed in partnership with the Tahltan Nation. It includes the Iqaluit hydro project in Nunavut, a 100% Inuit-owned renewable energy project. It includes Canada's Crawford nickel project in northern Ontario, with agreements having been signed with Mattagami First Nation, Matagami First Nation and Flying Post First Nation for early employment opportunities and long-term economic benefits.

These nation-building projects show how indigenous partnerships with the government and industry are unlocking Canada's potential, making Canada an energy superpower while honouring indigenous rights. This effort is bringing jobs to our communities across the country and higher wages to Canadian workers and is creating opportunities for indigenous people.

The government is increasing regulatory certainty, attracting capital and protecting our industry from dependence on American exports as we face the trade war imposed on us by the United States. As part of this work, we concluded a historic memorandum of understanding with Alberta. It is based on concrete solutions, more rigorous and effective industrial carbon pricing, significant private sector investment in clean technology and responsible energy development for workers and communities. The MOU will bring about, as the member mentioned, the Pathways project, a massive carbon capture project reducing emissions across the oil sector as we work toward net zero by 2050.

When it comes to the west coast pipeline, I understand that the Government of Alberta has begun consultations with indigenous rights holders. Premier Danielle Smith already stated that Kitimat is no longer being considered as one of the options for the pipeline project. Important discussions have already been held with Premier David Eby, who expressed openness to such a project if the conditions are met.

Our approach is based on collaboration with indigenous people, Alberta and British Columbia. It is about working together to get projects built faster with certainty, while creating jobs and strengthening our economy.

Tamara Jansen: Mr. Speaker, Canadians do not need another process or another framework. They need a pipeline. We are a resource-rich country watching other nations move ahead while we debate conditions and caveats. A pipeline to the Pacific is not an experiment. It is not a theory. It is basic infrastructure, the kind Canada has built before and the kind for which they should already be moving dirt.

Under a Conservative plan, this would be straightforward and less costly. We would approve the project, set a clear route, respect

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federal jurisdiction and get shovels in the ground, with no ideological add-ons, no extra net-zero preconditions and no endless detours. The reason the pipeline is not built is not because Canada cannot do it. It is because the Prime Minister will not. He keeps adding conditions. He keeps outsourcing responsibility. He keeps pretending a province holds a veto over a project that is squarely federal. Leadership means making a call.

My question is simple: When will the Prime Minister approve a pipeline to the Pacific so that Canadians can finally get to work?

● (1710)

Claude Guay: Mr. Speaker, the government will always work with indigenous people to find the right way forward when it comes to building energy and natural resource projects. These projects can strengthen our economy, diversify our trade and build the resilience we need to face the trade war with the United States. At the same time, they can represent incredible economic opportunities for indigenous people. That is why many projects referred to the Major Projects Office include indigenous nations as partners with equity stakes.

That is why one of the first actions of the government was to double the indigenous loan guarantee program from \$5 billion to \$10 billion. We are making Canada an energy superpower, while respecting indigenous rights.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 5:12 p.m.)

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